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Reading Regionalism.

Objects, Words and Spaces: Reflections of Regional Realism at the Museum of Liverpool.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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New Zealand.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how museums and galleries can reflect regionalism through their objects and words and in the spaces (exterior, interior and symbolic) that these words and objects occupy. It also observes the scope and application of regionalism as a genre through which museums can narrate the stories and realities of their regional communities.

In Northern England, urban regeneration initiatives have resulted in stimulating a renaissance of cultural industries, in particular a rejuvenation of city museums as the arts and culture sentries of their region’s material heritage. There is much evidence in the North demonstrating that regional identity is progressively celebrated in its museums and galleries and it is the recent popularity in representations of northern experience that deems this area of research significant. However, an initial literature review highlighted a lack of accompanying or documenting museum literature. Furthermore, although regional objects are exhibited as community or cultural signifiers, regionalism is not defined as an applicable museological concept.

This thesis perceives regionalism as a multifaceted notion with permeable boundaries. It is positioned within a conceptual framework that is extracted predominantly from ideas of place and space, human geography and critical regionalist theory, which are subsequently applied to museological contexts.

A visual method, photo-documentation, is utilised to collect evidence from a contemporary purpose-built museum, the Museum of Liverpool, purely dedicated to regionalism: the region and its people. Photo-documentation captured not only the tangible context of place but the sensory relationship between human inhabitants and their regional space while object case studies demonstrate the viability of regionalism.

This thesis aims to show that the application of regionalism in museums is critical, significant and socially inclusive because spaces of regionalism can accommodate performability: regional voice, consciousness and participation.
Dedicated to my remarkable children  
Kale, Lucia, Eloise  
& Delilah.

It is their unconditional love that keeps me going and makes everything possible.
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Abbreviations

LCM - Leeds City Museum
LMG - Leeds Museums & Galleries
MOL - Museum of Liverpool
NML - National Museums Liverpool

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