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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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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 performativity: 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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Chapter One

It's Grim up North¹

Chapter one begins with an extended personal anecdote. This is because when research commenced my domestic situation set the scene and influenced the formation of the topic which progressed into a thesis proposal. This chapter will also demonstrate how my own ideas and observations developed my central argument: it will state why this topic is relevant, necessary and current and it will outline my aim, scope and research process.

Introduction

Essentially this thesis is about community and, more specifically, museums and their regional communities. It explores regionalism and how such a concept, that juxtaposes individualism and similarity, is articulated within the museum context.

Its origins began in Yorkshire in 2011 during a clement spring. My tiny terrace house garden, normally strewn with the dregs of icy winter at that time of the year, was a cacophony of colours embroidering the new-born foliage. The weather had had a pleasant effect on my Leeds' neighbourhood resulting in two street parties, the first to celebrate the nuptials of William and Kate and the second to revive the success of the first. Balmy nights and extended

¹ A descriptive phrase often applied to the towns and cities of Northern England. For elaboration and examples of contextual usage see footnote 8, page 22.

hours of warming sunshine allowed children the opportunity to “play out” while neighbours gathered on each other’s terrace house steps to natter about the daily events. Such images are generally associated with the South. Counties like Somerset, Devon and Dorset claim languid summers in cottage gardens with strawberries and cream.



Figure 1.1 *'Playing Out' in Milton Terrace, Leeds, 2011.*

A cheerful mood was also emanating from the North West in the City of Liverpool. On July the 19th, against an azure sky, was the grand opening of a much anticipated *new* Museum of Liverpool (MOL). A few doors down the majestic Royal Liver Building, named after the iconic avian creatures perched on its highest peaks, invited the public to celebrate its centenary.

Usually, climatology establishes perceptions about places: the North commonly conjures up images of grey skies silhouetted by bricked terraces and factory chimneys. Predictably, the Met Office UK states that “...places in the east and south of the UK tend to be drier, warmer, sunnier and less windy than those further west and north” (2013b,

para. 4). Correspondingly, due to topography and altitude, the North West hosts not only the coldest point but also the wettest place in England and in the North East the area's "...western and eastern boundaries are the main influence on its climate. The high altitude of the Pennines creates an environment that is frequently cool, dull and wet" (Met Office, 2013a, para. 5). I had certainly come to understand the concept of gritting a footpath and the importance of anti-freeze, and quickly learnt how to take control of my Volvo in the snow and, when walking, maintain balance on the dreaded black ice.



Figure 1.2 'Snow Days' *Milton Terrace, Kirkstall, Leeds, 2010.*

But that spring, the mixture of sunshine and celebration illuminated a community spirit in the North. It was such luminosity that launched the journey of this thesis because I began to ponder on what made Northerners distinct from their Southern national counterparts and how such disparity is articulated in northern museums.

At this time, it was my fifth year in Leeds. I had lived in the same street and same back-to-back, side-to-side, red brick terrace block with my husband and children throughout our stay. Over this period we had gradually been integrated into the neighbourhood.

The apex of this community is its Anglican church; initially built for the factory workers of the Industrial Age to whom the village parish was no longer accessible, and who consequently required spiritual guidance to abstain from working class immoralities. This 19th century beacon loomed over our terrace house and regardless of one's devotion it is where most members of this community celebrate Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance Day, weddings and christenings; and mourn loss. Its parochial council govern a small Church of England primary school which the neighbourhood children, irrespective of denomination, culture and ethnicity, attend and where every student and every teacher know each other's names; such familiarity spills out from beyond the church and the school and encircles the surrounding community.

Local hearsay informed that the foundations of the church, the school and other fixtures had all been laid with medieval stones shed from the neighbourhood's 12th century abbey, a physical reminder of entrenched community history and continuous connection²; these local stories are also narrated in the adjacent Abbey House Museum. In its five productive centuries, pre-dissolution, the monastery was responsible

² "The community of Kirkstall had its origins in 1147" (*Cistercians in Yorkshire*, n.d., p. 1).

for the establishment of the district including its road layout, creation of a mill, and the forge.³ The continuous use of the latter deems it one of the longest operational industrial sites in the United Kingdom.⁴ The finely preserved Cistercian monument, Kirkstall Abbey, is where the community still celebrate their annual parade and festival; enjoy falconry, jousting and archery displays; and purchase local produce at a monthly market. It is where I watched my children sing in the Nave and Cloisters and witnessed a multiplicity of live acts including the British Shakespeare Company's performance of *Henry V*, a BBC rendition of *Frankenstein*, the Northern Ballet Orchestra's classical *Fantasia* and a concert by Leeds' natives, the Kaiser Chiefs; all against the backdrop of the evocative ruins on the bank of the River Aire. It is a place where the community can rest, reflect and take pleasure in recreation. It is not just a monument to the past but a living reminder of a common history and identity which is embodied in a community spirit.

In such a community everyone's public and private lives are common knowledge and it took me a while to get my head around this aspect of northern life, especially as an expatriate of a city where namelessness is common place and privacy valued. In my first year, I was aghast at arriving home from work to find that my husband had hung up my

³ "The White Monks were skilled craftsmen, producing leather goods, pottery led work for plumbing, weaving and metalwork (Kirkstall Forge being a reminder of this). It has been said that the dissolution prevented what was rapidly becoming the first industrial revolution, so skilled were the Cistercian foundries" (Kirkstall.Org., n.d. para. 6).

⁴ "Founded as a monastic forge at the very opening of the 13th Century, it can justly claim to have been...in continuous work for 750 years" (Butler, 1954, p. IX).

knickers in the front yard in full view to all in the street; or mildly irritated that what was supposed to be a swift walk to the off licence meant listening to the lengthy gripes of Pat, a born and bred local and resident of the street for many decades; and embarrassed that any of our domestic disagreements became common knowledge due to the intimate architectural arrangement of the terrace block.⁵

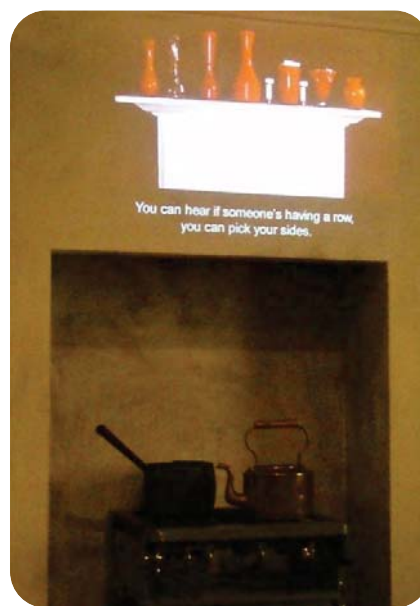


Figure 1.3 *"You can hear if someone's having a row, you can pick your sides", Living Back to Back, LCM, 2011.*

Ironically, though, it was this familiarity, along with patriotic street parties, school closure snow days, gathering conkers, the turning on of the Christmas lights, and the nearby surrounding dry stone walled Yorkshire Dales and heather-dressed moors, which wove together a community identity

⁵This intimacy is aptly articulated in the 'Living Back-to-Back' terrace house exhibit, part of *the Leeds Story*: a permanent exhibition at the Leeds City Museum which is discussed on pages 25-29.

that I began to cherish and now, having returned to New Zealand, lament its absence.

It was also this type of community spirit that I wanted to explore further in my thesis. But it wasn't just about identity, or a shared history or culture. It was all of these things and more. There is a fierce sense of loyalty in Northern England and one's affiliations are determined by boundaries (not just between the North and South) and landscapes; and the dialects, myths and realities that take place within these boundaries and clothe these landscapes.

Dialect is the fundamental and most distinctive signifier of Britain's regional boundaries and one's place within them. While it "... is estimated that over 95% of the population are monolingual English speakers" (BBC, 2014, para. 1), (sometimes bilingually spoken with a Celtic minority such as Scottish Gaelic, Lowland and Ulster Scots, Irish Gaelic, Cornish, Manx and Welsh: the latter being the only language of Britain officially recognised legislatively),⁶ dialect or vocabulary, accent and intonation, varies considerably across English counties.

Within these counties, dialect can be further distinguished between regional districts or subdivisions. For example, in

⁶ In 1993 the Welsh Language Act "...established the principle that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality, in the conduct of public business in Wales" bestowing the right to speak Welsh in court and granting the Welsh language official status in Wales (Welsh Language Commissioner, n.d.). In addition, Cornish, Irish, Manx Gaelic, Scots, Scottish-Gaelic, Ulster Scots and Welsh are protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 1992, ratified by the United Kingdom in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2014 & Council of Europe Treaty Office, 2015).

Yorkshire and the Humber, linguistic variations occur between the North, East and West Ridings.⁷ Distinction can also be identified in specific words and phrases. For instance, the words ‘down’ becomes *dahn*, ‘none’ – *nooan* and ‘home’ – ‘*oame* in West Riding or *doon, neean and yam* in the North and East (Kellett, 2008, p. 13).

Standard English	West Riding of Yorkshire variation	North and East Riding of Yorkshire variation
down	<i>dahn</i>	<i>doon</i>
none	<i>nooan</i>	<i>neean</i>
home	<i>‘oame</i>	<i>yam</i>

Table 1.1 *Comparing Variations in Dialect, 2014.*

Variations in accent and intonation will also occur not only across Ridings but also within Ridings. For instance, each Riding is further subdivided into wapentakes and the pronunciation of words can differ between such ancient boundaries. However, what is immediately apparent for visitors to Northern England is the significance in variation that occurs within relatively close geographical boundaries establishing an acute degree of regional idiom and expression.

⁷North, East and West Ridings are the three administrative divisions devised by the Viking settlers, more than 1100 years ago in the Yorkshire Regions. The Ridings System consisted of a parliament made up of Dane representatives from each Thridding. “To this day, Yorkshire, [England’s largest county] consists of a North, East and West Riding...” but no fourth, or South, Riding” (The Yorkshire Ridings Society, n.d.).

Grammatical idiosyncrasies also occur. While working as a teacher in Wakefield, I frequently corrected students' written and spoken use of the double negative and conflicting tense and tried to explain why they were grammatically incorrect. I was inevitably met with confused stares and often told by my students that it was *I* who was wrong, that their parents, grandparents and great grandparents use such phrases.

In the West and North East Ridings phrases such as "*Ah dooan't want nowt ner mooare*" (I don't want nothing no more/I don't want anything else) and "*E nivver said nowt neeaways ti neean on 'em*" (He never said nothing never to no none/ He never said anything at all to anybody) or "*Ah'm sat dahn*" (I'm sat down) are standard practice and are probably as early as the still commonly used Viking phrase, "*Ey up!*" (Look out!) and euphemism, "*By gum!*" (By God) (Kellett, 2008). I gradually came to understand that *I* was in fact wrong and realised that it was my misapprehension that prompted students to ask, "Miss, what language do you speak in New Zealand?" or "How long have you been learning English for, Miss?"



Figure 1.4 'Patrick (Pat)',
Milton Terrace, 2011.

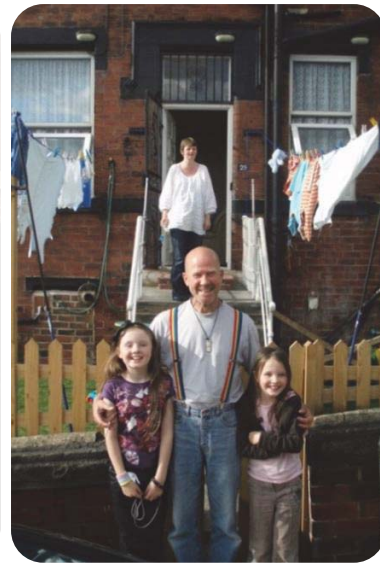


Figure 1.5 'Lionel & Helen
(with Lucia and Eloise)',
Milton Terrace, 2011.

Variation in pronunciation and grammatical idiosyncrasies not only convey identity but also allegiance to one's native land. It is because of these boundaries, landscapes and loyalty that aforementioned Pat from Leeds, or West Riding, distrusted and distained another neighbour, Lionel, also a *Yorkshireman*, because Lionel was originally from Hull, or East Riding and it is words such as *dahn*, *nooan* and 'oame as opposed to *doon*, *neean* and *yam* that denoted their distinct regional identity and entrenched rivalry.

Boundaries are the reason why the Pennines, for example, still represent the divide between the counties Yorkshire and Lancashire, a rift which finds its origins in the Battle of Bosworth Field over five centuries ago, and is symbolised in each region's white and red rose emblems. This sort of rivalry is expressed not only in distinct dialects and unique

words, but also in the way that football fans are so intensely loyal to their local club. These codes of identity, of which history, dialect, food and sport are all indicators (I observed), relate not just to boundaries but more specifically regionalism.

Aligned with this regionalism, is an element of realism. A phenomenon that produced the phrase “It’s grim up north”⁸



Figure 1.6 ‘19th Century Campaniles’, *Tower Works, Leeds, 2011.*

⁸A well-used phrase often quoted in cultural, social and political commentaries, and therefore, self-perpetuating. However an academic authority determining its origins is difficult to locate. The on-line Urban Dictionary states the term is an “English phrase used by residents of the South to describe the Northern half of the country. [It] Stems from the period of history when the north was highly industrialized” (Brigante, 2005). Certainly the phrase is often utilized to express the South/ North divide. Examples of this use include a song ‘It’s Grim up North’ by the band KLF: their video represents the drab grey perception of the North through black and white cinematography enhanced by relentless rain and a motorway backdrop. The lyrics merely list towns and cities of the North performed with monotone expression, however the song ends with the staunch message “Will rise again”. The KLF were apparently inspired by graffiti brandishing the phrase “...that appeared at the M1/M25 junction. This in turn prompted Nottinghamshire MP Joe Ashton to table a motion in the House of Commons on uneven regional development...” (MacDonald, 2012, para. 5).

and that provoked the reaction from a southerner I spoke to, who was taken aback by the fact that I had lived in the North declaring “It’s scary up there! It’s very tribal” (personal communication, February, 2013).



Figure 1.7 ‘The Dark Arches’, Granary Wharf, Leeds, 2011.

It is true: and it is this resolute realism that ultimately produced such cultural indicators as gritty Kitchen Sink cinema; the aesthetic carrions depicted in the *danse macabre* works of Damien Hirst; the mythological poetry of Ted Hughes; that sublimely bleak piece of literature *Wuthering Heights* as well as the melancholic music of Morrissey: who, in his autobiography, described the North as “... a separate country – one of wild night landscapes of affectionate affliction” (2013, p. 197).

Until recently this grimness had materialised in decrepit urban centres necessitating an explosion of regeneration projects which have resulted in a ‘Northern Renaissance’. This *Renaissance* has advanced cities like Liverpool as a

European Capital of Culture⁹ and Leeds as the ‘Knightsbridge of the North’.¹⁰



Figure 1.8 ‘The Leeds-Liverpool Canal’, Leeds, 2011.

Fresh urban regeneration initiatives have also resulted in stimulated rejuvenation of cultural industries, in particular city museums as the arts and culture sentries of their regions’ material heritage. There is much evidence in the North to demonstrate that regionalism is celebrated in its museums and galleries. For instance, the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle has a new permanent display entitled *Northern Spirit*, that commemorates the creative history of the region,

⁹ Liverpool was designated as a European Union Capital of Culture in 2008. The Commission of the European Union established the title in order to recognise the richness and diversity of European cultures, celebrate shared characteristics of European cultures, increase a sense of belonging and foster an appreciation of the role culture plays in the development of cities. The Commission also acknowledges that the award provides designated cities with regeneration and image enhancing (both internal and external) opportunities while boosting tourism and rejuvenating the recipient city’s cultural endeavours (European Commission, 2015).

¹⁰ In 2005 Lonely Planet labelled Leeds the ‘Knightsbridge of the North’ due to the central shopping precinct composed of Victorian arcades that accommodate an array of high street shops. Since then numerous sources such as BBC News (2005), the Telegraph (2012) and Welcome to Yorkshire (yorkshire.com, n.d.) have utilised the slogan.

in 2011 the MOL was opened: "...the largest newly-built national¹¹ museum in Britain for more than a century, and the world's first national museum dedicated to the history of a regional city"¹² (National Museums Liverpool (NML), 2011, p. 24) and the Leeds City Museum (LCM), newly housed and reopened in September 2008, devotes a gallery to the *Leeds Story*.¹³

Regional realism: 'Living Back-to-Back'

The Leeds Story narrates the story of Leeds as it has been utilised and shaped by pre-historic inhabitants through to its contemporary residents. I was drawn to one exhibit within this series of displays: a reconstruction of the interior of a back-to-back terrace house. It captured my attention when laying the foundation for my thesis proposal speaking to me on a personal and an academic level. This articulation was in the form of visual connection and spoken word.

The display is composed of a basic room that visitors can enter, with a fire place/cooker, wash basin, two chairs, a cupboard and a window that depicts an exterior street scene lined with identical dwellings. An audio-visual is projected above the fireplace in which several Leeds locals talk frankly about their experiences living in a back-to-back house.

¹¹ As part of NML, the MOL is legislated as a National Museum by an Act of Parliament. The origin of this connection appears to be historically related to the establishment of Liverpool's World Museum in the 19th Century. This juxtaposition created by dichotomies such as national and regional are canvassed in chapter 2.

¹² This declaration is further clarified in chapter 3, pages 72-73.

¹³ Also referred to as the *Leeds Gallery* and the *Story of Leeds*.

While terrace houses are common in England, and particularly Northern England, the back-to-back¹⁴ design was banned nationally in 1909. However, as Leeds had already obtained planning consent, the back-to-back continued to be built in central areas like Kirkstall, Armley and Burley until 1937. As a result there are approximately 23,000 still inhabited today, deeming the buildings iconic to the City of Leeds. Furthermore, the back-to-backs embody social history and are synonymous with 19th and early 20th century working class realities particularly in relation to the connection between housing, (with overcrowding, poor ventilation and sanitation issues) ill health and death rates (well above the national average). In his annual Unitarian Domestic Missionary's Report, 1857, Edward Hall noted that:

They are built back-to-back, with no possibility of good ventilation, and contain a cellar for coals and food, the coal department being frequently tenanted with fowls, pigeons, or rabbits and in some cases with two or three of these. There is a room from 9-14 feet by 10 to 12 or 14 feet to do all the cooking, washing and necessary work of a family, and another of the same size for all to sleep in (Thoresby Soc., 1979, p.323).

Although laden with historical reminders, my realities of the back-to-back were significantly different: the basement had

¹⁴ Built for the burgeoning working class of Leeds in the 19th century, back-to-back houses belong to a block of terraced houses backing on to another terrace under a single roof. When they were first built, blocks of up to eight houses had to share the same outside privies. Developers tried to fit as many cheap houses as possible on to the land available. By 1918, 70% of people lived in back-to-backs. Despite a national ban from 1909, Leeds continued to build back-to-backs until 1937 as planning had already been approved" (LCM, 2011).

been turned into a large kitchen, dining and laundry space, a top story with two extra bedrooms had been added providing our family of six with ample living space while modern plumbing, double glazing and central heating provided luxurious comfort and healthy conditions. However, the essence still remained and the uniform exterior design undeniably recognizable as a symbol of this distinct region of the North.

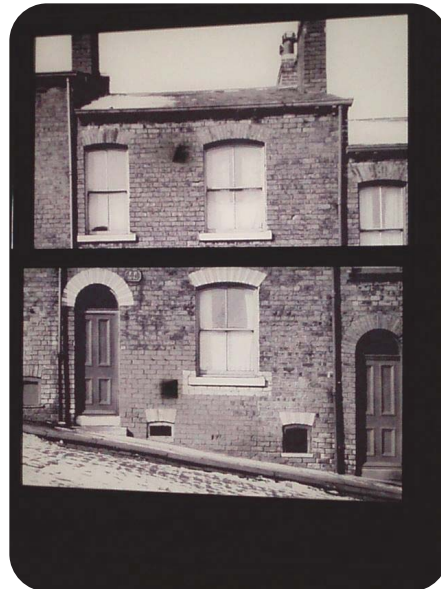


Figure 1.9 *'Living Back to Back'*, LCM, 2011.

In the projected film, modern realities, or the experiences and perceptions of living back-to-back, are articulated by Leeds residents. They speak of community: “community spirit...cool...friendly...You do hear people coming and going ...if someone is having a fight you can pick sides...”; and sensory reactions: “because it is solid brick it does actually put out a lot of sound...It is a bit confusing when you first

move in...When someone comes upstairs next door you think that they are coming up your stairs... I just feel safe, shut the world out, you know what I mean...”; and identity “brings back memories...good memories and bad memories...your house represents you as a person, doesn’t it?... I have always lived in a back-to-back and I’ve never had a back door... (LCM, 2011).



Figure 1.10 *“It’s quite difficult but I like it”, Living Back to Back, LCM, 2011.*

It was a simple formula but all so familiar and what seized my attention as a visitor was the fact that I could relate to the immediacy of this part of the exhibition, feeling at home within the display and identifying with the perspectives of the interviewees. In addition, through these perspectives visitors “gain an understanding of living in a back-to-back house...feel that museums are not just about looking at things...enjoy listening to other people’s stories and thinking about their own experiences and opinions [and] experience

a physical involvement with the gallery”¹⁵ (Leeds Museums & Galleries (LMG), 2007, p.1) Furthermore, the back-to-back terrace house reconstruction, the final display in the chronological structure of *the Leeds Story*, contributes to a sense of historical continuity and occupation of this regional landscape as it is intended to mirror an Iron Age hut at the beginning of the gallery.

It is the recent popularity in *these* sorts of representations of northern experience that deem this thesis a topic of interest. It became my aim to examine how the unique regional identities of Northern England were depicted in their museums.

Location for fieldwork

After careful consideration the Liverpool City region was selected as the location for fieldwork for the following reasons. First, the Leeds – Liverpool Canal was in close proximity to my home in Leeds providing a permanent reminder of how essential the Port of Liverpool had been to northern industry. In the 19th and early 20th Centuries the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, was crucial in its role connecting the two cities; it was a commercial artery, pumping materials and goods to and from these vital industrial organs, via the nucleus, Manchester. The importance of Liverpool was also demonstrated by the fact that *all* northern towns were linked to the Port of Liverpool through the canal system.

¹⁵ AV project: *Living Back to Back* (LG.AV.S13). Visitor experience: intended learning, emotional and behavioural objectives.



Figure 1.11 'Milestone on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal', Leeds, 2011.

Second, although I had visited the city often, selecting a museum in Liverpool allowed me to be more reflexive than if I had focused on a museum in the city of my residence, Leeds. Although my topic was inspired by personal experience, research findings could be analysed objectively rather than subjectively by selecting Liverpool and therefore not significantly influenced by personal connections or emotive reactions.

Third, the most decisive factor was the opportunity to collect visual material from a contemporary purpose-built museum purely dedicated to regionalism, situated in its iconic Pier Head landscape. On one side it boasts the Mersey, another Albert Dock, and another the three graces: the Royal Liver, the Port of Liverpool, and the Cunard, iconic buildings and landmarks which constitute part of a UNESCO designated

World Heritage Site deeming Liverpool a 'Maritime Mercantile City'.¹⁶

Rationale for research: Why regionalism?

Aside from my own curiosity, what deems this topic of interest and what makes it necessary to Museum Studies requires clarification. While my preliminary research determined a rise in thematic depictions of regionalism in museums and art galleries, 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.

¹⁶The World Heritage Committee inscribed Liverpool on the World Heritage List in 2004 as a Maritime Mercantile City on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv): "**Criterion (ii)**: Liverpool was a major centre generating innovative technologies and methods in dock construction and port management in the 18th and 19th centuries. It thus contributed to the building up of the international mercantile systems throughout the British Commonwealth, **Criterion (iii)**: The city and the port of Liverpool are an exceptional testimony to the development of maritime mercantile culture in the 18th and 19th centuries, contributing to the building up of the British Empire. It was a centre for the slave trade, until its abolition in 1807, and for emigration from northern Europe to America. **Criterion (iv)**: Liverpool is an outstanding example of a world mercantile port city, which represents the early development of global trading and cultural connections throughout the British Empire" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 44). This "exceptional testimony" is exemplified in six areas in the historic centre and docklands containing a great number of "...significant commercial, civic and public buildings..." (ICOMOS, 2004, p. 127).

Aim and Scope

Reflecting regionalism in museums and galleries

The purpose of this thesis is to examine 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. In the field of material culture objects or artefacts are studied as the “...beliefs – values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time” (Prown, 1982, p. 1). Gell (1992) asserts that objects are perceived to have their own agency but they possess this agency because they are entangled with networks of human sociality (as cited in Geismar, 2011). They are also viewed as palimpsests both as material culture objects and metaphors for memory and history (Stabile, 2013) and because objects transcend their everyday experience leading us to profound understandings about what it means to be human: it is about “subject creating object creating subject” (Miller, 1987, as cited in Geismar, p. 213) The objects (and words and spaces) examined in this thesis are understood as possessing their own agency, as metaphors of memory and history and connecting and mediating human experiences. They will also be examined as metaphors of a regional identity, a collective consciousness and in their ability to facilitate performativity within a regional context.

Application of regionalism as a genre

This thesis will also critique the general scope, validity and the application of regionalism as a genre through which museums can narrate the stories of their communities. The 'realism' in my thesis title relates to these stories or the realities, identities and collective voice of a regional community. This thesis will not appraise the strengths or weaknesses of the MOL in meeting visitor expectations or delivering policy. It will however assess which regional stories are told by the Museum and which parts of the regional community remain silent.

Research Design¹⁷

Coinciding with the commencement of this research was a multitude of personal events that eventuated in the tough decision to leave England and return permanently to New Zealand.¹⁸ Expediently, a trip to the MOL was organised to assess the most prudent research methodology for this thesis under the circumstances of re-location and re-settlement.

¹⁷ Interviews with NML project and curatorial staff were initially considered in my research proposal as an additional method of research and a Low Risk Notification was recorded by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (July, 2011). When contact was made in 2011, the NML advised me that they were not in a position to answer any questions regarding the MOL until the following year. As the field work was scrutinised and writing began it became apparent that interviews were not a necessary component of the research design. At times minor clarifications have been sought on particular issues via personal correspondence.

¹⁸Due to relocation and resettlement a thesis suspension was granted to accommodate for the interruption. An extension was also granted in 2014. Examination of the literature within this area is up-to-date and the topic remains critical and relevant to museology.

I arrived in Liverpool on a September evening accompanied with my new born daughter, Delilah, and her seven year old sister, Eloise, who was acting as a helper. The streets were relatively quiet as we navigated our way downtown from Lime Street Station to the Atlantic Tower Hotel, a building designed to emulate the bow of a ship, which I had selected strategically for its convenience to the MOL. The Hotel lobby, staffed by friendly Liverpudlians, implied that it had long ago been splendid but on this day the ornamentation was worn and the fixtures dull and soiled from four decades of human use.

We were armed with quiet expectation when we entered our 6th floor room and were certainly not prepared for the abundant panoramic view that greeted us. A window that spanned the entire western wall displayed a pictorial scene that reached out and beyond to a visual feast of Mersey and Pier Head, and people coming and going in waves on the ferries from Birkenhead, the Isle of Man and beyond. But in the foreground, to the left of this vista, was the ultimate prize: the Royal Liver Building, with its Doric colonnades and clock towers whose domed turrets are crowned with the City's supreme symbols, the majestic Liver birds. Like the hotel lobby, their gilding has faded, but these 18 foot sculptures could not fail to impress. It was such a privileged sight that precise details, like the feathery relief of their half upraised green copper wings and the sprig of seaweed held within their beaks, could be admired.

In awe and animated with excitement, Eloise grabbed our camera and started capturing. She photographed the people as they arrived and departed on the Mersey ferries. She photographed the actions that took place on the River. She snapped goings on in the street several levels below. And she captured the iconic buildings on the Pier as the sun set in the background.



Figure 1.12 *'The Royal Liver Building, Liverpool by Eloise', 2011.*

Later, over dinner, I looked at the photographs that Eloise had taken. Her approach was honest. She did not photograph with an agenda and as a result what she captured was the essence of Liverpool; the icons, the people and their everyday actions. I realised that this was how I wanted to research, via a visual methodology, documenting and (later when back in New Zealand) analysing a sense of regionalism within the MOL.

Subsequently, I visited the MOL on two separate occasions to collect photographic evidence. The purpose of the first visit was to select and photograph objects and spaces that have the potential to explore the iconography of regionalism. The images were briefly scrutinised before the second visit in order to identify areas that required further documenting. The purpose of the second visit was to ensure that all potential areas had been photographed and to explore spaces that were heavily populated by visitors on the first occasion. I collected my images instinctively and was drawn to the second floor of the MOL as the layout of *Wondrous Place, the People's Republic* and *Skylight* galleries establish a sense of continuity within this space. I documented around 300 potential images. They are one of my primary sources of research evidence.

Photo-documentation

The production of photographs in research belongs to the range of qualitative visual methods employed by social science researchers. Both Sarah Pink and Sandra Weber outline the benefits of utilising images as a contemporary method. For example, according to Pink (2006a) photographic visual research methods can "...focus on the context in which photographs are produced, their visual content, their tangible material qualities and the context in which they are interpreted and made meaningful" (p. 223). Furthermore, the visual is gaining increasing importance as a social research method or documenting tool because "...visually we can communicate knowledge, experiences and

ideas in ways that we cannot using only written or spoken words” (Pink, 2006b, p. 321). Weber concurs, by drawing on the writing of Berger and Bruner, she states that when we

...plan, analyse, imagine, think, or critique, our thoughts are associated with and largely constituted by images...[however] seeing or being surrounded by the visual, doesn't always or necessarily mean that we *notice* what we see. It is the *paying attention*, the looking and the taking note of what we see that makes images important to art, scholarship, and research (2008, pp. 41-42).

Therefore, images can persuade others to consider our ideas, our opinions, our theses and our conclusions.

Pragmatically, the production and use of photographs in research is useful as the images can be captured and viewed instantly and support fieldwork performed under access and time constraints.¹⁹ Furthermore, images can channel everyday things (objects, spaces, people) in a novel or extraordinary way and giving a new “...symbolic visual twist to plain old things works well because we do not have our guard up against the mundane, allowing it to break through our everyday perceptions and get us to think outside of the theoretical box” (Weber, 2008, p. 45).

Photo-documentation, or making photographs as part of a research project, can be valuable in illustrating the connection between people and their surroundings. For example, within the images researchers can “...study

¹⁹ Photo-documentation appealed to the style of my research for numerous reasons outlined in this chapter but it also aided in reducing the obstacle of collecting suitable research evidence under time constrains and my pending departure from the UK.

streetscapes, human travel patterns, and interrelationships between adjacencies, to better understand the meanings people associate with place” (Kopec, Sinclair & Matthes, 2012, p. 152). In addition, Gillian Rose asserts that photographs are well suited to urban research because they can convey

something of the feel of urban places, space and landscapes, specifically of course those qualities that are in some way visible: they can suggest the layout, colour, texture, form, volume, size and pattern of the built environment, for example, and can picture people too. Photographs can thus capture something of the sensory richness and human inhabitation of urban environments (2012, p. 298).



Figure 1.13 *'Landscapes' the People's Republic Gallery, MOL, 2011.*

However, Rose also emphasises that human experience in urban environments is diverse and that not

...all spaces are equally safe to everyone; not everyone has the power or resources to use towns and cities as they want; processes of deprivation, marginalization and privilege profoundly affect how urban spaces are used and seen by

different social groups. And many visual methods ...are deployed with the aim of exposing the ways in which social positions and relations are both produced by, and produce, distinct urban experience (2012, p. 299).

Furthermore, Rose refers to Collier, one of the earliest advocates of the use of photographs, who declared that photographs in research are reliable sources of evidence, as “precise records of material reality” (p. 299) and that their precision and unique detail provides valuable data for analysis.

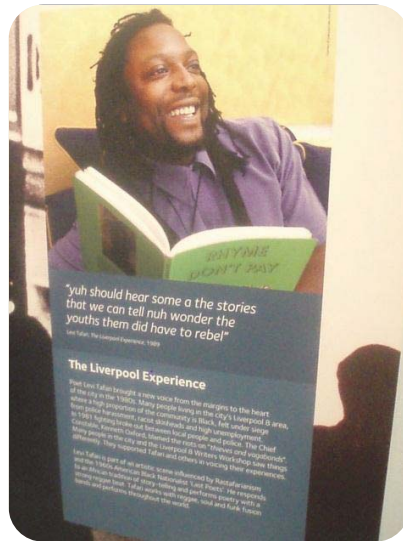
John Grady (2004: 20) agrees: ‘pictures are valuable because they encode an enormous amount of information in a single representation’. Photos are valuable too for the way they convey ‘real flesh and blood life’, according to Howard Becket (2002: 11), making their audiences ‘bear witness’ to that life (Holliday 2004: 61) (as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 299)

Thus, photo-documentation is an appropriate method employed for this thesis in order to illustrate social relations, identities and urban experience as well as the sensory engagement with space and place, within a regional context. In addition, for this thesis the photographs provided a wealth of information as “...valuable records of what was really there when the shutter snapped” (Rose, 2012, p. 299). For the reasons stated above it is the photographic images that substantiated one of the primary sources of evidence for this thesis. The method used to analyse the photographic evidence is outlined below.

Practices to guide the use of images in academic research can include Barthesian models of denotative and

connotative interpretation.²⁰ Certainly structural semiology provides applicable guidelines for the broad analysis of regional identity within the photographic evidence collected. For instance, denotative readings of my visual evidence imparted factual information, accentuating an image's "...literal, descriptive meaning - the apparent truth, evidence, or objective reality that the image documents or denotes" (Weber, 2008, p. 42).

Such readings allowed me to gather visual information about people, place and events at the MOL. For example, I discovered that:



Poet Levi Tafari brought a new voice from the margins to the heart of the city in the 1980s” and that the “Gerard Gardens was a new-style tenement block built in the 1930s with the ‘luxury’ of indoor toilets and hot and cold running water” and that “More than 1.5 million Irish men, women and children fled Ireland in the 1840s because of ‘The Great Hunger’.

Figure 1.14 *“yuh should hear some a the stories that we can tell nuh wonder the youths them did have to rebel”* Wondrous Place, MOL, 2011.

ports, Liverpool was the destination for many of them (MOL, 2011).²¹

²⁰ Suchar (1997), Van Leeuwen (2004), Weber (2008).

²¹ When (MOL, 2011) is placed in text it refers to the information gathered within the museum from sources such as gallery information and object labels. When MOL, 2011 is placed within captions it refers to my photographic images that were taken at the MOL in September and October 2011.

A denotative reading also allowed me to gather statistics.

For instance:



Figure 1.15 "The most deprived 10% in the country" the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

56% of Liverpool's residents live in an area that is ranked within the most deprived 10% in the country/Death from coronary heart disease is 53% greater in Liverpool than nationally/22.9% of people claim incapacity benefit in Liverpool, almost twice the national average (MOL, 2011)

Through a denotative reading I was able to appreciate quotes that express personal opinions regarding the City region. Such as:

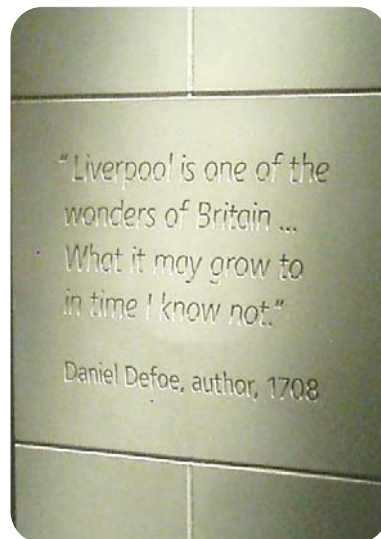


Figure 1.16 "Liverpool is one of the wonders of Britain..." the People's Republic, MOL, 2011

Liverpool is one of the wonders of Britain – What it may grow to in time I know not /There is no doubt in my mind that the crater of the volcano was not London, but Liverpool /Liverpool is a city of expatriates dumped in a corner of Lancashire where they don't belong, who have joined in a haphazard way and made something original out of it (MOL, 2011).

In contrast, a connotative reading considers more "...culturally specific meanings. Connotative meanings refer to the cultural and historical context of a specific image, as well as to the social conventions, codes, and meanings that have been attached to or associated with that image in a particular context" (Weber, 2008, pp. 42-43). Therefore, in relation to Liverpool, specific cultural and historical contexts, such as issues surrounding slavery, the consequences of emigration, and the effects of unemployment, are implicated within a connotative context. Connotative meanings in relation to regionalism and regional identity are explored further within the case studies of Chapter 4.

The main limitation of photo-documentation, as a specific and distinct method of research, is that it does not emerge from a particular theoretical position or framework "...there remains no clearly established methodological framework to discuss the uses of photography in social science research (Rose, 2012, p. 300). Rose suggests that to overcome this limitation that the photographs must be considered as having their own agency either as "...self-evident evidence, or as evidence whose significance is established through the research process" (2012, p. 300). For this process, Rose cites the work of Charles Suchar (1997, 2004, 2006) who has developed a critical visual method to ensure that his photo-documentation is not merely illustrative. The first stage involves producing the images with a clear conceptualisation between the research topic and the photographs being taken.

Producing photographs with a clear conceptualisation of my research topic and aims enabled me to ensure that I was gathering valuable evidence. Between my visits to the MOL, I scrutinized this evidence to test that this link was apparent and to ensure that the photographs were not merely illustrative: 'holiday snaps' or 'visual travelogues'. This step was crucial because once I had returned to New Zealand the validity of my photographic evidence would be crucial.

Suchar's subsequent stage involves coding. Photographs are compared, grouped and regrouped as further codes emerge.

He says that he finds 'that reference to very detailed visual documents, and the information they contain, allows for a closer link between the abstractive process of conceptualizing and experientially derived observations' (Suchar (as cited in Rose) 1997: 52) And although the photographs show him patterns that would not otherwise be evident, their significance depends on Suchar's systematic coding of what they show. They are used as descriptive devices, the meaning of which must be established by the researcher (Rose, 2012, p. 303)

For this research studying the images through Suchar's method of systematic coding ensured that this progression from the abstractive process of conceptualizing and experientially derived observations was achieved. It also exposed issues and uncovered themes and categories under which the photographs could be grouped. Predominantly *my* images could be coded as either expressive or spatial, with some cross over.



Figure 1.17 'Coding – Spaces', 2012



Figure 1.18 'Coding – Words', 2012



Figure 1.19 'Coding – Expressive', 2012

Under the heading of expressive, the thematic categories regional history, realities and identity began to consolidate, while images depicting spatial elements illustrated interplay between exterior, interior and tangible and intangible spaces. I also began to see thematic contrasts between images, objects and words: celebration and sorrow, new and old, realities and fictions, and I began to see affirmations of identity in words and objects. Furthermore, an iconography of regional signs or symbols emerged.

It is within this symbolic reading that the photo-documentation method can be used to:



Figure 1.20 'Liver Bird', the People's Republic Gallery, MOL, 2001

"...interpret the messages conveyed by a particular culture, such as hieroglyphics and sculptures...in an attempt to understand a cultures language, mythology, and important symbols used to represent concepts" (Kopec, Sinclair & Matthes, 2012, p. 152). Therefore within my photographs, through the iconography conveyed, a language of regionalism, rich with mythology and symbolism, could be

deciphered. Such regional language, verbal and visual, is discussed in chapter 4 in relation to object case studies.

Object Case Studies

As a method of social science research case studies can be a useful strategy, specifically “when the inquirer seeks answers to how or why questions” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 29) such as ‘how museums and galleries can reflect, regionalism through their objects, words and spaces’. The method can also be prudent “when the object of study is a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context, when boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear” (Schwandt) such as regionalism as a museological concept and the application of regionalism in museums.

According to Bergesen (2009) the limitation with case studies²² of cultural objects, like painting and sculpture, is that the “object’s meaning is usually thought to be the product of some interpretative grid, world view, set of assumptions, received categories...” (p. 383). For example, in terms of this study, regionalism (as defined by the discourses

²² The issue of generalisation or transference to other studies is also considered a limitation in relation to the case study method (Keddie 2006). For this thesis object case studies were selected to demonstrate how the MOL reflects regionalism through their objects, words and spaces therefore to extract the methods the MOL used to narrate the stories and realities. These methods are summarised in chapter 5 and could be transferred to further studies or practical museological research. Furthermore, Schwandt (2007) notes that the issue of generalisation does not cause limitation in case studies such as those selected for this research: that “aim to discern and pursue understanding of issues intrinsic to the case itself”. As the MOL is dedicated to this history of its region, all objects, words and spaces within the Museum will, prima facie, be intrinsic to the understanding of the issue of regionalism.

in chapter 2) is the interpretative grid through which the case studies will be examined. However, in order to overcome this limitation Bergesen argues that objects as case studies should be perceived as not just passive, or submissive, to external interpretation but to be aware that they also “emit meaning on their own...The case is a portal to knowledge of the whole” (pp. 383 & 390). As a result:

There are two implications of this for case-study analysis. First the relation between the specific case and the thing it purportedly represents is not an independent relationship, and second, variation in meaning derives not from applied interpretative grids, but from the internal structure and other properties of the case study itself (p. 385).

Consequently, while the case studies in chapter 4 are examined in order to understand how museums and galleries can reflect regionalism through their objects, these objects’ inherent meanings or internal structures will also be considered as well as their socially constructed context.

Summary

Chapter 1 has described how this thesis materialised through a mixture of personal and academic observations and experience. It outlined how integral landscape and boundaries are to regional identity and how strong affiliations can be. It observed that regional identity is progressively celebrated in Northern England museums and galleries and it is the recent popularity in representations of northern experience that deems this area of research significant and critical. Furthermore, it has set the location

for fieldwork and outlined the aim, scope and research design that guided the research process.

Preview of chapters

In order to develop a clear conceptualisation, to extract information and significance, to understand the iconography captured within the photo-documentation method and to articulate findings, a review of the concepts regarding the topic of regionalism and regional identity is required. Therefore, discourses around various approaches to regionalism are canvassed in chapter 2. The second part of the chapter aligns these concepts with a museum context. Chapter 3 sets the scene. It explores the social landscape of Liverpool in order to further understand how this landscape influences expressions of regionalism within the MOL. Chapter 4 analyses case studies to examine the way this regionalism is reflected by the MOL through their objects, words and spaces. Chapter 4 also aims to show that the application of regionalism at the MOL is critical, significant and socially inclusive in its accommodation of performability or regional voice, consciousness and participation. Finally in chapter 5 my findings are discussed and a conclusion reached. It also considers the potential for further study and the application of regionalism in a broader museological context.

Chapter Two

*An object of mystery*²³

Defining regionalism

The first part of this chapter reviews the literature and canvases the discourses regarding regionalism. Surveying concepts concerning the region and regionalism will provide the framework, or what Bergesen identifies as the interpretative grid, and the parameters for subsequent chapters. Due to an absence of regional theory in museological literature, this chapter adopts a multi-disciplinary approach. Part 2 of this chapter aligns these concepts to a museum studies and material culture context.

As identified in the previous chapter, there is evidence in the North to confirm a trend towards representing the region in its museums and galleries.²⁴ Despite globalisation and the “triumphant march of information technology” (Griswold, 2008, p. 1) many agree that cultural regionalism is flourishing.²⁵ In fact in a globalised world the local, the

²³ (Harrison, 2006, p. 38). This quote refers to the elusive nature of the region, one of the concepts explored within this chapter.

²⁴ *The Leeds Story* and *Northern Spirit* and the Museum of Liverpool are all examples of this type of representation.

²⁵ Griswold asserts that cultural regionalism has not regressed in response to globalisation and the world wide infiltration of information technologies but regional culture has in fact utilised elements of globalisation and technology to “celebrate their place-specific distinctiveness” (p. 1). Griswold uses literary regionalism to demonstrate such productive regionalism. Katz & Mahoney state that the in a “...modern world increasingly homogenize and standardized by the forces of globalisation, the regionalist impulse is still very much alive” (2008, p. ix). This thesis includes a case study that uses international consumerism, specifically fashion, to produce regional identity: *Made Up- the Liverpool Look* can be found in chapter 4.

particular, or regional, has become more unique, special and essential and therefore increasingly relevant, timely and crucial as area of research. However, an exhaustive review of literature revealed that this occurrence has not been specifically articulated in museological theory or in museum practice²⁶ to date. Therefore, this chapter searches outside museological literature turning to human geography, the arts, architecture, anthropology and cultural studies in order to identify and define ‘the region’ and ‘regionalism’.

Part 1

Literature Review

The definition of regionalism is multifaceted and finds discourse in an array of disciplines in which meaning can shift depending on context. The notion of regionalism usually belongs to the geographical domain that aims, according to the human geographer, John Harrison (2006), to locate localised processes within a global context. This positioning is supported by Jones & MacLeod (2004) but they acknowledge a distinction between ‘regional spaces’ and ‘spaces of regionalism’.

²⁶ Many museums and galleries have acquisition and exhibition policies, mission statements and aims that support regional content and promote local creative industry. However, my assertion relates to regionalism as a museological theory or as articulated in museum practices in particular *how* museums and galleries can reflect regionalism through their objects and words and in the spaces that these words and objects occupy and the application of the genre of regionalism as a socially inclusive space that can accommodate performativity, regional voice, consciousness and participation.

Regional spaces refer to the "...technological spillovers, inter-firm agglomeration and a locally distinctive stock of institutional assets" (Jones & MacLeod, p. 435). This "regional clustering of economic assets", under the authority of the NML or LMG for instance, would include regional museum and gallery buildings and their collections "furnished with their own idiosyncratic 'regional innovation systems' and institutional thickness" (Jones & MacLeod, p. 435).

Spaces of regionalism relate to the "(re)assertion of national and regional claims to citizenship, insurgent forms of political mobilization and cultural expression and the formation of new contours of territorial government" (Jones & MacLeod, p. 435). Accordingly these spaces of regionalism exist within the museums and galleries and could be interpreted as "cultural expression" within the collections as well as the 'functional space', objects, exhibits, ideas, interpretation and visitor interaction "...with which to cultivate performative citizenship" (Jones and MacLeod, p. 435). To summarise, in a rudimentary geographical context regional space can either refer to the classification of space by organizations while regionalism refers to the regional consciousness of individuals (Paasi, 2003).

However, Harrison, Jones & MacLeod and Paasi all concur that the region cannot be so clearly demarcated. That the 'region' is subject to shifts and variance because regional, or locality, geographers have only managed to articulate such

spaces in terms of place or constituency and urban geographers struggle to define the boundaries of a regional city, prompting Harrison to ask, “what is a region?” (2006, p.26) Thus the ‘region’ is an *object of mystery*, an ‘enigmatic concept’ (Jones & McLeod, 2007) and a ‘complicated category’ (Paasi, 2010). Economic geographer John Allen states that ‘regions’, as manufactured human constructs, can never be natural or complete, merely existing in relation to particular criteria. This is because, according to Allen, regional studies are always performed for a purpose, through a specific lens. He states that, whether theoretical, political, or cultural, there is always a specific focus because one:

cannot study everything, and there are always multiple ways of seeing a place: there is no complete ‘portrait of a region’. Moreover, we want to argue, ‘regions’ only exist in relation to particular criteria. They are not ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered, they are our (and others’) constructions (Allen, 1998, p. 2).

Anthropologist Barbara Bender asserts that because of the elusive nature of landscape our theories and research, we “should embrace ambiguity and contradiction, eschew closure, recognize that people, things, places are always in process, and that the boundaries between them are permeable and imbricated” (2006, p. 310). These notions of the region as an entity with amorphous boundaries, never complete - ours and others constructions - are explored within two of object case studies discussed in chapter 4, *the Liverpool Map* and *Liverpool Cityscape*. These objects or

regional constructs articulate the multiple perceptions regarding the Liverpool City region and support the theory that a 'portrait of a region' is never complete.

Regionalism is also a predominant genre in the fields of literature, art and architecture. One source, Art Papers (2013), refers to the term regionalism being "...about site specificity – it emphasises the role of place, the specific qualities of particular geographical environments, and the significance of socially embedded or artistic practices" (p. 13). Additionally, Griswold (2008) states that at its most basic regionalism is a recognized association between culture and place because it "...focuses on cultural expressions of place, both in the more passive form of regional culture and in the more assertive form of regionalism" (p. 4).

Representations and symbolic qualities of local landscapes are abundant in art and literature, and being able to read regional iconography establishes recognition "...of one's place within a system of places..." which "...orients people, not just geographically, but also socially. Such orientation is vital for both individual identity and interpersonal communication". So as an artistic style, regionalism "...is a sharply distinctive and celebratory depiction of the culture of place as in the [American] Midwestern regionalist painters of the 1930s..." (Griswold, p. 14), therefore forging a unique regional identity.

Such sharply distinctive and celebratory expressions of place are clearly stated at the MOL. As an illustration of this, the spoken and written word of Liverpoolians is acknowledged within 'Writing Liverpool' a section of the *Wondrous Place* gallery. Here playwright Willy Russell (*Blood Brothers*, *Shirley Valentine*) compares sky and light for the Impressionists to the nature of the spoken word in Liverpool: because in Liverpool it is the spoken word that illuminates the regional landscape with expressions of identity.

In 'Writing Liverpool', television writers are exemplified as embellishing the landscape with Scouse²⁷ expression and the Liverpool experience. These writers include Carla Lane with 'savage yet gentle' Scouse humour in such sitcoms as *The Liver Birds* and *Bread*, Alan Bleasdale with *Boys from the Black Stuff*, a drama depicting working class realities in Thatcher-era Liverpool, and Jimmy McGovern with *Hillsborough*, a drama-doco retelling the horrendous 1989 football tragedy. Producers and creators also saw the potential in bringing the Liverpool experience to the screen. For instance, when Phil Redmond²⁸ created *Brookside*, a locally produced soap opera, it was perceived as different from others within the genre "It's different from other soaps - its more real, it's like watching the news or a football match" (MOL, 2011). Therefore, through cultural expressions

²⁷ Scouse relates to the distinct cultural aspects of the Liverpool City region while Scouser relates to its inhabitants whose dialect and intonation are particular to the region. Aspects of Scouse culture will be discussed in chapter 3.

²⁸ Phil Redmond established a local television production company, Mersey Television and was also responsible for creating *Hollyoaks* and *Grange Hill*. He is referenced in chapter 4 as the Chair of NML and was the creative director for Liverpool's Capital of Culture.

of Scouse dialect and local realities these writers and creators emphasise the role of place, and establish interpersonal communication by articulating a socially embedded iconography and forging a unique regional identity. Regional voice, experience and realities are analysed within the case studies in chapter 4.



Figure 2.1 *'Boys from the Blackstuff' Writing Liverpool, Wondrous Place, MOL 2011.*

According to Griswald (2008), without people such as Lane, Bleasedale, McGovern and Redmond who articulate the regional voice on behalf of communities, space is merely 'an empty theatre'. Region expression transforms space into place and the empty theatre becomes a regional stage. This premise is extracted from the ideas of Yi-Fu Tuan who argues that space is merely a concept but by contrast place is "a centre of meaning constructed by experience" (1975, p. 152). He argues that place provides individuals "with a sense of coherence of inner lives with the outer world, a reassuring sense that selfhood and culture are interrelated (rather than the world as alienating)" (Yi-Fu Tuan as cited in Katz &

Mahoney, 2008, p. xvii). Therefore, regional places are created through performability: regional voice, consciousness and participation.

In architecture, regionalism is style that understands buildings and design in a localized context. In practice, it “strives to sustain and refine successful design strategies that are culturally embedded within a region, that emanate from the landscape, and/or that speak to the values, customs, and needs of its inhabitants” (Heath, 2009, p. xiii). This result in designs that give, according to architectural theorists Lefaivre and Tzonis (2003, 2012), the first to utilize the phrase critical regionalism, priority to the identity of the particular rather than to universal dogmas “a bottom-up approach to design, that recognises the value of the identity of a physical, social and cultural situation” (Tzonis, 2003, p. 11). According to cultural sociologist Wendy Griswold, within these creative industries “place is less a geographical fact than a human accomplishment. It is both socially produced and socially productive...usually this is just local knowledge, people being at home in a certain place, knowing the boundaries, the special symbols” (2008, p. 4).

But regional culture can manifests itself in a more potent version which is more assertive and self-aware:

Geographer D.W.Meinig [1986] defined this type of regional culture as “...that which is characteristic of a group of people who are deep-rooted and dominant in a particular territory, who are conscious of their identity as derived from a common heritage, and who share a common language and basic patterns of life” This more self-conscious, more emotionally charged version of

regional culture can be distinguished by the term *regionalism*. Regionalism aggressively promotes its own cultural expression (Griswold, pp. 14-15)

When summarizing Meinig, Griswold is careful to distinguish between provincials, who believe that their world is *the* world, and regionalists, who assert distinctiveness, rather than ignorance, in relation to a global context. Furthermore, according to art historian and historian Katz & Mahoney, regionalism once perceived as a reaction against “the forces of modernism” has emerged as a forceful “endeavour to make a claim for the role of place and space” (2008, p. ix) and that the continuous erosion of place deems regionalism vital and urgent.

Architectural theorist Heath (2009) states that within such regional landscapes architectural tactics have the potential to promote cultural expression by probing “...changing social and environmental conditions for sensitive and meaningful responses that are critically engaged in the current human situation” (p. xiii).

The cultural studies critical regionalist, Douglas Powell, describes regionalism as articulating our “sense” of what is distinctive about a particular spot on the landscape with a critical awareness of how that spot is part of the broader configurations of history, politics, and culture. Powell’s methodology has implications for museology as he also states that simply talking about place - or, more specifically, “the local” - is not enough, that the regional can and should be evidenced with material culture: “Critical regionalism’s

insistence on places and their cultural artefacts as dense palimpsests of broader forces represent an intentional challenge to the tradition of “regionalism” that informs most literary and cultural criticism” (2007, p. 19).

Powell also asserts that the regional has been negatively dichotomised against the modern. For example, since the high period of modernism the region has been categorised as ‘provincial’, a ‘corny backwater’ and in the last half of the century historians have perceived regional history as “where one goes for a nap” (2007, p. 19).

A recent transcript of an art historical discussion between panellists and curators highlights this issue. The discussion focussing on the “relationships between the local, region and the global as related to art and the concept of a geographical “centre””, acknowledged that “regionalism” has often been *positioned* as a response to contemporary art of a presumed “contemporary art world” that privileges a global language free from the idiosyncrasies of a specific geosocial vernacular” (Art Papers, 2013, p. 13).

Is it possible then that such a dichotomised academic attitude is why regionalism has been largely ignored or marginalised in museological literature, playing the ‘passive’ to the ‘active’ urbane metropolises of culture? Could many museums be tentative about being labelled regional in apprehension of associated with the ‘provincial’, ‘corny backwater’ or ‘passive other’? Is this why the MOL declares that it is a national museum that tells stories of a regional City?

In England the problem also seems to be related to the fact that the concept of regionalism, as it applies to museums and galleries, has been defined in terms of fleeting political devolution and constitutional infrastructures, such as Regional Development Agencies (RDA), established by New Labour to implement economic strategies in England's regions. While the RDAs did have some impact in the North, for example, the North West Development Agency secured more than \$33 million towards the MOL, their purpose and associated language opposes the concept of regional identity and consciousness. Jones and MacLeod (2004) exemplify this ideology in the following extract:

This devolution of institutional capacity from London has been couched in a language of democratic opportunity [while] their remit being strictly limited to economic development [and] their key objective would appear to be quite literally the production and constitution of regional economies...In this context, RDAs can be conceptualised as the latest in a long line of initiatives designed to remedy England's long-standing regional 'problem' [but within] New Labour's programme for English devolution, no meaningful attempts have been made to debate the 'geographical basis of regions'...Moreover, certain street-level events expose the tensions between New Labour's centrally orchestrated regionalization and demands for a locally rooted regionalism more receptive to questions of political participation, citizenship and culture (pp. 433-434).

Conceptual framework

The first part of this chapter has provided the following conceptual framework:

- a. Regions are composed of regional space and spaces of regionalism; the latter provides the most potential for performativity;
- b. Regions are never complete entities, they are always in process and their boundaries are subject to shifts and variance;
- c. Regional expression (creativity, words, dissonance) articulates the landscape and conveys an iconography that establishes regionalism or regional identity;
- d. Without the expression of regional culture, space is similar to empty theatre, through such expression space becomes place. Place is socially productive and socially produced through the performability of regional voice, consciousness and participation;
- e. Regionalism should be evidenced by artefacts, objects or material culture, as symbols of the historical, political and cultural continuums of a particular spot on the landscape.

Part 2

Collecting and displaying the region –
connotations for museums and galleries.

The variant, but not significantly dissimilar, meanings and descriptions of regional space and regionalism illuminate definitions, approaches and an understanding of the potential of regionalism. They have provided the contextual framework and parameters which can subsequently be applied to a museological context; for example, to examine how museums and galleries can reflect regionalism through their objects and words and spaces.

From the definitions it should be understood that the boundaries of regional space cannot be prescribed and that the construction of a region depends on a criteria applied by individuals, their histories and/or their communities. Furthermore, either the representational and symbolic qualities of regional spaces convey identity through a cultural vernacular or language of a regional consciousness. Museums and galleries have the opportunity to represent regional identity by providing spaces of regionalism which should be used in a manner that is not dictated nor constrained by fixed boundaries and therefore accommodating performability: regional voice, consciousness and participation. Such performability is discussed in chapter 4 in relation to the complex arrangement of tangible and intangible space within *the People's Republic* gallery.

In addition, regional places and their cultural artefacts are “dense palimpsests” and as evidence of material culture can provide layers of meaning relating to human accomplishment. Artefacts as objects of regional culture can represent, at varying levels, relationships to the region such as what people of a region have in common, a link to a region, or even a transient understanding from someone unaffiliated with the region such as a tourist or a visitor. Objects as evidence of regional culture should be collected by, and displayed in, museums and galleries to provide their regional communities with an assertion of ownership and affiliation and as means of celebration or commemoration. The potential of such objects should be considered when commissioning and acquiring objects.

Furthermore, through regionalism museums have the potential to challenge. Regionalism can be politically, socially and culturally charged and it can probe, change or ‘critically engage in the current human situation’. Using a regional perspective museums and galleries can provide a forum for such a challenge, inquiry and transformation to take place. The MOL illustrates how regionalism can be politically, socially, and culturally charged in ‘Writing Liverpool’, discussed in Part 1 of this chapter, by acknowledging that:

Liverpool suffered in the 1980s. Unemployment, the 1981 riots in Toxteth, and the Hillsborough disaster in 1989 all affected people living here deeply, as did the control of Liverpool City Council by the extreme ‘Militant’ wing of the Labour Party. Writers like Alan

Beasdale, Jimmy McGovern and poet Levi Tafari showed working class communities fighting forces beyond their control (MOL, 2011).

Referring to *Boys form the Blackstuff*, Beasdale, states “unemployment was the biggest political question of the...I wrote in a blind fury about what was happening” (MOL, 2011) and in reference to *Hillsborough* McGough asserts that the “process of writing a drama-doc is as important as the drama-doc itself. It must empower the powerless” (MOL, 2011). Furthermore, Poet Levi Tafari’s cultural charged expression of place incorporates the African tradition of story-telling with reggae beats and spoken word. His poetry brought “...a new voice from the margins to the heart of the City in the 1980s” when he articulated the realities of the largely black community living in Liverpool 8 (Toxteth and Dingle) who “...felt under siege from police harassment, racist skinheads and high unemployment” (MOL, 2011). Therefore, museums can channel such discourses via regionalism.

In displaying or exhibiting such expressions of regionalism, museums too can ‘critically engage in the human situation’. Furthermore regionalism can be all-encompassing. It is not specifically gender, race, ethnicity, class demography, or other cultural or physical distinctions (Katz & Mahoney, 2008, p. ix) but it is all of these distinctions and more. Regionalism gives museums the opportunity to deliver objects, exhibitions and displays in a way that is, in an

increasingly globalised world, urgent, crucial and popular but most of all socially inclusive.

Summary

This chapter has provided an 'interpretative grid' consisting predominantly of ideas regarding spaces of regionalism and expression of place. It also considered critical regionalist theory and its insistence on socially embedded designs and material culture. The second part of this chapter has discussed the impact of such a conceptual framework or interpretative grid on museums and galleries. This framework will be applied and the thesis statement tested against the case studies in chapter 4.

The varying interpretations of regionalism canvassed in this chapter all stem from the assumption that the landscape (geographical, political, cultural, social) is an essential element of regional identity, expression and consciousness. The following chapter explores the social landscape of Liverpool in order to further understand how it influences expressions of regionalism within the MOL.

Chapter Three

The Landscape of a Region

The two essential elements of regionalism are the landscape and the people. In order to better understand the application of regionalism at the MOL, this chapter explores the landscape, specifically social landscape that shapes, and is shaped by, its inhabitants and their unique culture. This chapter sets the scene in three parts. Part one examines Liverpool as a Scouse region, part two introduces the MOL and considers its place within this landscape and part three examines Liverpool as a renaissance city.

Part 1

*The people are savage yet gentle*²⁹

The Social Landscape

I visited Liverpool as a tourist on several occasions before my thesis was conceived. On my first journey, when disembarking the TransPennine Express at Lime Street, I was struck by the grandeur of St. George's Quarter,³⁰ an exemplification of the region's prosperous merchant and

²⁹ A quote by Carla Lane displayed in the *Wondrous Place* gallery, MOL, 2011, describing the Scouse inhabitants of Liverpool. She created essentially Scouse characters in her Liverpool comedies the *Liver Birds* and *Bread* referred to in chapter 2. In the latter show, the Boswell family lived in Dingle (also the setting for Beasedale's *Boys from the Blackstuff*), Liverpool 8, an inner-city working class district.

³⁰ Named after its quintessential neoclassical hall, and including the impressive Victorian architecture of William Brown Street: the World Museum Liverpool, the Walker Gallery and the Central Library, it forms part of Liverpool's World Heritage site.

maritime history. Such opulence is echoed throughout the City in a sublime abundance of arresting architecture, proving to visitors its worthiness as European Capital of Culture and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.³¹ Still in awe of Liverpool's architectural legacy, it was to be the intensely Beatlesque intonation of a tremendously welcoming Scouse hotel proprietor to which I was subsequently transfixed. The most conspicuous, pertinent and charismatic characterising feature of the City is its Scouse inhabitants and their unique culture and on every trip, thereafter, I would initially be taken by surprise, as if I had been transported to another country, but nevertheless, captivated by each encounter with consistently openhearted, obliging and fervent Scousers.



Figure 3.1 'St. Georges Hall', Liverpool, 2007.

³¹ See footnote 16 on page 31.

The purpose of this first visit was to experience 'International Beatle Week' and to indulge my husband's and eldest daughter, Lucy's, passions for the world's most famous Scousers. It is a fascinating annual occurrence, when copious tribute bands, with names like The Repeatles and The Silver Beats, play in venues across the City, including iconic Matthew Street, site of the infamous Cavern. During this celebration dedicated pilgrims converge from all over the world to rejoice the "fab four". Another journey, to see 80's Liverpoolians, Echo and the Bunnymen, led to numerous encounters with Scousers severely passionate about their local musicians and eager to talk about their creative heritage.³²



Figure 3.2 'Echo and the Bunnymen at the O2 Academy', Liverpool, 2008.

Scouse affinity with music has been frequently noted. For instance, Paul Du Noyer (2007) writes that in

³² This creative heritage is represented within *The Liverpool Map*, a case study examined in chapter 4.

Liverpool even conversation must work as entertainment: it isn't twinkling or gentle, in the Irish way, but hard, competitive and cruel. But Liverpool art is always trying to turn rage into beauty... Liverpool lives for entertainment of every kind. But above all it lives for music...because music is the heart of Liverpool (pp. 3, 4 & 5).

Du Noyer asserts that Liverpool made more music, more passionately than most cities. That it was in the "personality of Liverpool to do so" (p. 63) a personality that developed in such a way due to its role as a significant seaport. Via seafarers and migrants, diverse and innovative genres of music were historically transported to, and eagerly assimilated by, Scouse culture. Noyer also claims that this sort of connection to the rest of the world has established a type of national separatism: "As far as Scousers are concerned, Liverpool is not a provincial city but the Capital of itself. It's deeply insular, yet essentially outward looking, it faces the sea and all the lands beyond but has its back turned to England" (p. 5). I experienced this phenomenon on that first visit to this global city when standing amongst a universal crowd watching Scandinavian and Canadian tribute acts. It was not at all about England, nor was it just about the Beatles, as the Country's greatest musical export; this celebration was about the rest of the world and Liverpool's importance in it.

Scouse takes its name from a regional dish: a type of stew. It is presumed that it arrived with Scandinavian sailors, but has been developed over time to meet the needs of Irish and Welsh migrants. The dish can, therefore, pose as a cultural

analogy for the “identity and character of Liverpudlians” (Kierans & Haeney, 2010, p. 102) as their dish, their music and even their dialect are intrinsically connected. For example, Du Noyer selects the metaphor “verbal stew of Scouse” when referring to the union between Scouse accent and music:

If it’s true, as one theory goes, that human speech began in song, then some accents are always trying to get back there. Liverpudlian is one of them. You could hear that sing-song musicality in the suburban, south Liverpool speaking voice of the Beatles; even their deadpan statements carried a lilt, not to mention timing, of metronomic precision. The north Liverpool dockland voice is harsher, faster, more threatening. It can sound like a rusty sub-machine gun, but it carries the driving beat that powered rock’n’roll. Melody and rhythm were already lurking in the Liverpool accent. It only awaited a few guitars and a drum-kit to liberate them (2007, p. 8)

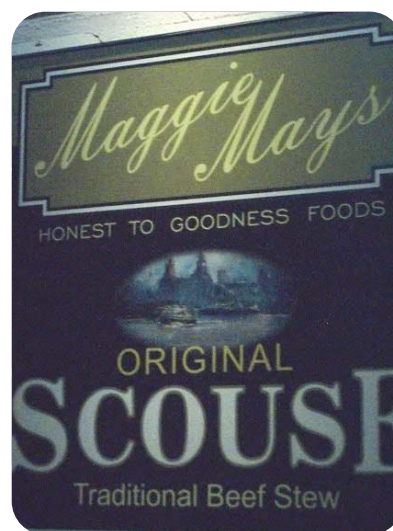


Figure 3.3 ‘Maggie Mays Original Scouse’, the People’s Republic, MOL, 2011.

The Scouse culture is unique, not a variation of its Cheshire or Lancashire neighbours³³. Scousers are, according to Lancastrian Stuart Maconie (2008), the “...Basques of Lancashire, a race apart with a language and culture that seems to bear no relation to any of the people around them” (p. 62). This is because signifiers such as dialect, like much else in the city, owe “...its roots to Liverpool’s position as a port. The melting pot created by the influx of people from far and wide³⁴ was the foundation of the distinctive Scouse sound”. Like other northern dialects, the extent of intonation and range of Scouse words used by Liverpoolians will vary depending on spatial, historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds or circumstances (Crowley, 2012). Nevertheless, the major influence:

³³ England is structured into 9 administrative regions. Liverpool falls within the North West along with Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria. Pre-1998 Merseyside was one of 10 regions before it was merged with the North East. Merseyside is now a metropolitan county, made up of 5 boroughs, including the City of Liverpool. The Liverpool City region has a population of approximately 445,200 (2010) in its 30 wards (Young & Sly, Office for National Statistics, 2011).

³⁴ Liverpool’s diverse population includes Europe’s oldest Chinese community and Britain’s earliest Black African community. The Chinese community forms the largest single ethnic minority in the City. By the 1850s the Blue Funnel Line had established a trade route between China and Liverpool, importing cotton, silk and tea. Many Chinese sailors who had been employed by the company settled in the City and by the 1890’s, Chinese shops and businesses were trading in Liverpool. Liverpool’s Black African community dates back to the early 18th century. The current City population includes over 9000 people of Black African origin and over 4000 with a Caribbean background. Several families in the West African and West Indian communities can trace their roots back ten generations to Liverpool’s slave trade era. Welsh, Irish, German, Scandinavian, Jewish, Greek immigrant communities have also contributed to the culture of the City. Liverpool’s diversity is also illustrated by the fact that it houses the first Swedish church built outside Sweden, had one of the first mosques in Britain and opened a Synagogue in 1874 (Royal Geographical Society, 2012).

comes from the influx of Irish and Welsh into the city. The mixing of these different accents and dialects, joining with words and sayings picked up from global maritime arrivals, all fused together to create the unique Scouse sound. Every tide brought ashore a new imported verb and many stuck becoming part of everyday language (BBC Liverpool, 2008).

Scouse is undeniably working class. The City can be a “desperately sad place” (Du Noyer, p. 5). On the English Indices of Deprivation, Liverpool was ranked the most deprived local authority in 2004, 2007 and 2010. The most deprived wards in Merseyside, and in fact England, cluster in a ring pattern around the City Centre known as the inner core.³⁵ Kierans and Haeney (2010) perceive that the dish, Scouse, is a metaphor for this hardship “... as both culinary artefact and identity marker [it can] be traced from its historical origin and symbolic links with urban poverty” (p. 102). I once asked a colleague of mine from the Wirral, across the Mersey from the City, why she did not speak with a Scouse accent. She responded that because her parents were middle class, “they forbade me to”.

Scouse is a dialect, a local dish, and a creative spirit but fundamentally it is a way of life. It is also a collective voice, composed of diverse and distinct cultures which perceive Liverpool as a global city, a ‘capital of itself’. It is through the objects, words and spaces at the MOL that the stories and realities of this regional culture can be narrated.

³⁵Liverpool City Council, Executive Summary: 2010.

Part 2

The Museum of Liverpool



Figure 3.4 'Liverpool Cityscape' (2008) by Ben Johnson, MOL, 2011.

Liverpool was selected as the setting for this thesis partly due to this unique regional identity and, as outlined in chapter 1, the opportunity to collect material from a contemporary purpose built national museum dedicated to a the narratives of particular region. This means that the entire museum is about the history of the City and the MOL also claims that it is the world's first museum to achieve such status, that while other museums have been dedicated to the history of capital cities, the MOL is the first national museum to focus on a regional centre (C. Paillard³⁶, personal correspondence, 18 October 2012). According to preliminary architects, 3xn, the essential ambition of the MOL was to become a tribute to history and present: "...the World's

³⁶ Clara Paillard, Administrative Assistant, MOL.

leading city history museum, showcasing social history and popular culture [that] will look at Britain and the world through the eyes of Liverpool” (3xn, 2011, para. 4).

On the morning of my first field trip, the waterfront is relatively subdued. It is a Saturday, and the commuters have reprised their weekend roles, leaving Pier Head available for families, friends and lovers to saunter about in their own time. Although it is September it will be a fine day in the City of Liverpool – summer has been stalwart this year but the impending day’s warmth is temporarily stalled by a brisk chill disembarking from the River. The morning cloud lingers but specks of blue threaten to brighten the sky and colour the Mersey. However, the rivalry between land and sea, cloud and sky is insignificant on this Pier, it is the Three Graces that dominate the stage and command our attention. These regal buildings, remnants of a maritime merchant heritage, but still fully functional, as council offices and utilised by local and national companies, have recently been joined by another ‘Forth Grace’. It is a large building, not at all in *grace* or class like its siblings, and seeming out of place in style and character but more befitting a set from the original Star Wars trilogy. Nevertheless, this new building, the MOL is no less important, as a forum to hold and tell the stories of this region’s inhabitants.



Figure 3.5 'MOL', Pier Head, 2011.

In time, it too will become an icon of Liverpool. The building itself was designed to reminisce the

trading ships which at one time dominated the harbour, while the façade's relief pattern puts forward a new interpretation of the historical architectural detail in the 'Three Graces.' The enormous gabled windows open up towards the City and the Harbour, symbolically drawing history into the Museum, while at the same time allowing the curious to look in. The outdoor areas around the Museum offer seating with views to the water adding to the dynamic urban environment and serving as a meeting point for locals and visitors alike. (3xn, 2011, para. 2)

The stark white atrium foyer is relatively busy and the attentive visitor services team are quick to direct the public to those galleries that have been completed and are open. To my left is *Global City*, a gallery that tells the story of Liverpool's role in "...the making of Britain and its Empire" (MOL, 2011). The small entrance to this gallery is congested by visitors, so I ascend the stairs to the galleries on the

second floor as it will be several months before the first floor is completed.

Wondrous Place

On the southern side is the gallery *Wondrous Place*, a space dedicated to the city's creative and sporting personalities. It too is crowded. The large window emits heat that makes the gallery stuffy. There are many displays closely packed together and there is not much space for quiet contemplation. Displays are organised thematically. Sport and music are the most populated areas with the latter culminating in the Beatles Show. However, isolated words provide alternative tools of interpretation. For instance, predominantly displayed is a William Burroughs quote that cites Liverpool as the "centre of human consciousness". These words give the visitor a sense of being somewhere truly unique and the impression that this regional consciousness is, and has been, well defined and integrated for a significant period of time.

Areas of dissonance: celebration and sacrifice

Certain objects do not fit neatly or sit comfortably into the organisational scheme of this gallery. In these areas of dissonance, other aspects of a regional consciousness can be read. One such area is the positioning of two pieces of art adjacent to, yet distinct from, one another. The first, *Art Matters: the Pool of Life* represents prosperity, the second

Miss El Salvador, is a sculpture that confronts the viewer and conveys a sense of suffering.

The painting, *Art Matters: the Pool of Life*, is an epitome of the celebration of regionalism, commissioned to acknowledge Liverpool's 2008 status as Capital of Culture. According to the artists, the Singh Twins³⁷, their collaboration sought "to capture the spirit of what the year was about by reflecting Liverpool as a vibrant city with a rich and lively cultural life to be proud of" (The Singh Twins, n.d, para. 7) (see figure 3.6). *The Pool of Life* "combines elements of the traditional Indian miniature with more modern western aesthetics" (para. 1) and as a result it is enriched with complex, but easily recognisable, regional narrative and symbolic regional iconography. *Miss El Salvador* is not so easily read.

In *The Pool of Life* the City is represented as a metaphoric stage at the "centre of a creative universe, rising from the river Mersey" (The Singh Twins, para. 1). The foreground of this stage utilises Italian Renaissance iconography, specifically the Three Graces. However, these mythological figures are reinterpreted to represent the region's cultural diversity and allude to the charm, beauty and creativity of Renaissance Liverpool. They also symbolise the MOL's aforementioned architectural neighbours.

³⁷ Amrit and Rabindra Singh are twin sisters from Birkenhead, Merseyside. Their paintings are often accredited to the Singh Twins, asserting that art can be a collaborative, rather than an individual, process.

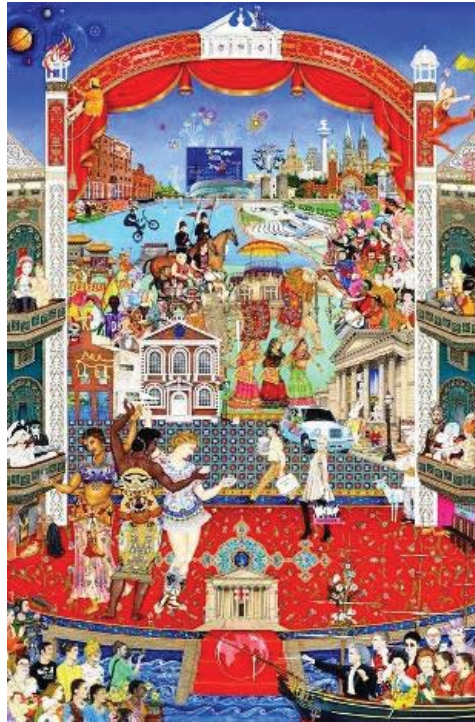


Figure 3.6 'Art Matters - The Pool of Life' (2008), by Amrit and Rabindra Singh, MOL, 2011.

They hold up and present to the people of Liverpool the 'Fourth Grace' – the MOL. The City's renaissance "in preparation for 2008 and beyond is signified by a representation of proposed development plans for the waterfront"³⁸ (Singh Twins, para, 5). The regional iconography is therefore positive and prosperous. This Museum and its stories, objects and people of the region are, through association, part of this renaissance.

³⁸ Ironically in 2012 UNESCO placed Liverpool on the 'List of World Heritage in Danger' and has threatened to revoke Liverpool's status as a World Heritage Site if certain waterfront development plans go ahead. This conflict between redevelopment and cultural heritage is discussed in part 3 of this chapter.

However, this sentiment is immediately challenged by *Miss El Salvador* created by socialist artist Arthur Dooley³⁹,



Figure 3.7 '*Miss El Salvador*' (date unknown) by Arthur Dooley, MOL.

described by the Museum as a Liverpudlian firebrand, whose outspoken and controversial voice fought to make art accessible for all (MOL, 2011). We are also told that this sculpture, *Miss El Salvador*, typifies the fight for justice that was at the heart of Dooley's work. Here the caption refers to, "Liverpool as a city with a long history of poverty and unemployment. That this harder side of city life has inspired artists like Dooley to fight for equality" (MOL, 2011).

The subject of the sculpture is mysterious but certainly conveys a sense of suffering and injustice. Heightened by its positioning next to the *Pool of Life*, the sculpture establishes a striking contrast, or sense of dissonance, in relation to the celebratory nature of its neighbour. For example, a

³⁹ A Liverpudlian sculptor (1929-1994), Arthur Dooley's work was driven by his socialist motivation and influenced by his theological beliefs. Many of his works can be seen in religious settings around Liverpool. He was also an activist that not only brought attention to social inequalities but inequalities within the art world as well.

juxtaposition is evident in the sacrificial iconography such as the bowed head, positioning of the feet and the fact that the torso is wrapped in wire, conveying Christ like suffering and, in context with the caption, alludes to displacement: those houses, jobs and community spirit that may have been sacrificed in pursuit of redevelopment, which Dooley had actively protested against. Suffering, injustice and displacement are further established by the fact that the figure's face is concealed, thus metaphorically representing those without a voice.



Figure 3.8 'Miss El Salvador' (date unknown), by Arthur Dooley, MOL.

As *Miss El Salvador* was discovered in the Dooley's studio after his death, the muted nature of the sculpture is intensified by a lack of artist intention giving the visitor the opportunity to interpret. A regional realist interpretation is aided by the contrasting of this sculptor with its painted neighbour and the fact that it is located in a gallery and museum dedicated to the stories of the region. Furthermore, the Museum has elected to position the

sculpture in a way that is uncomfortably close to viewer⁴⁰ further indicating an intention to confront with issues of hardship or injustices.

Therefore, in this part of the gallery regional performability takes place. The viewer is invited share in the celebration of regional identity, as part of a thriving Renaissance Liverpool, but is also met by a regional consciousness that represents the realities of those who do not, or cannot, share in this prosperity.

Skylight Gallery

I continue to the airy *Skylight Gallery*, a nexus between galleries, which offers an alternative to the stuffy clutter of *Wondrous Place*. On one side is Mike McCartney's Liverpool, a series of photographs portraying the artist's impression of his city, through varied but mostly positive images or in McCartney's own words, "nice memories" to amuse "the Scouse palate" and "make you smile" (MOL, 2011). The subjects of such images range from his well-known brother, Sir Paul, to Scouser dramatist Willy Russell. McCartney also depicts regional iconography in his work. For example, one such photograph is a visual illusion that combines two regional icons, Liverpool's Shanghai Arch, the largest Chinese arch outside China⁴¹, with the "Paddy's Wigwam" from the Catholic Cathedral; alluding to the City's significant Chinese community and the Liverpool's "social and cultural life

⁴⁰ After *Miss El Salvador* was found in the Dooley's studio it was exhibited by the Liverpool Academy of Arts where it was hung in an elevated position emulating the crucifixion.

⁴¹ Royal Geographical Society (2012).

influenced by its strong Irish connections” (MOL, 2011). His intention is therefore successful.

Directly opposite another impression of Liverpool dominates the Skylight gallery for its sheer size and detailed representation. *The Liverpool Cityscape*⁴² is a painted landscape by Ben Johnson. Its subject matter is a meticulous aerial view of the City, which reinforces locality, by utilising regional iconography in a photorealist style. It reminds visitors of what lies beyond the wall on which it hangs.

The People’s Republic

Feeling revived, I slip through the doors to *the People’s Republic*: a gallery devoted to the “people of Liverpool” and their amazing stories” (MOL, 2011):

The ‘People’s Republic’ gallery is about the experience of living in the city: what it means to be Liverpudlian, how people have left their mark on Liverpool and the impact and issues caused by dramatic social change over the last 200 years.

In this gallery you can explore the diverse stories and unique identity of Liverpool and its people. Be inspired by the everyday and extraordinary contributions people have made over its turbulent history, and join in and debate issues affecting the city today.

Here is where I find the most acute expressions of regional consciousness and from where the majority of the research material is collected. Here is where museum space, or regional space, transfigures most acutely into the ‘regional

⁴² *The Liverpool Cityscape* is discussed further in chapter 4, part 3.

consciousness of individuals', performability or spaces of regionalism.

Summary of Parts 1 and 2

The first part of this chapter has outlined the social landscape of Liverpool in order to provide a background in which to better understand how the MOL reflects its regional community through their objects, words and spaces. It has acknowledged that Liverpool has a rich and significant history, evidenced by an abundance of grand architectural icons. It has also recognized a fervent Scouse regional culture that is in fact composed of many cultures and defined by layers of lyrical expression both in spoken word and music. But it has also noted that Liverpool can be a "desperately sad place" due to the extent of deprivation. The second part of this chapter looked inside the MOL and considered its place in this landscape and saw the importance for a regional museum to represent local endeavour, beauty and pride but also to negotiate all aspects of the region and its Scouse inhabitants; aesthetic or unpleasant, rich or poor, *savage yet gentle*.

Part 3

This is a divided city. Don't pretend it isn't. Break the borders down and create real community⁴³

A Renaissance City

Regionalism is often dichotomised against metropolitan settings and is therefore perceived as rural or as having provincial properties. However, as identified in chapter 2, the region is more about a certain group of people or community demarcated by a shared sense of cultural expression. The region that the MOL seeks to depict is defined as a city region. Griswold states that:

Localism in the form of the practical and cultural penumbra surrounding a city constitutes yet another type of regionalism. Cities and towns have distinctive cultural characteristics (dialect, cuisine) and are at the hub of social networks and institutions that can be mobilised for economic and political ends (2008, p. 106)

This part of the chapter considers the concept of 'city', how the concept relates to Liverpool and the 'penumbra' associated with the Liverpool City region, in order to better understand the reflection of this region within the objects, words and spaces at the MOL.

⁴³Anonymous 2009, *The People's Republic*, MOL. This quote conveys the contrasts that are discussed in this part of the chapter and the discrepancies that have become features of renaissance cities.

In reference to the perception of 'the city' as a concept, Patrick Le Galès offers ways of understanding their development and entity:

From Babylon, Athens, Rome, and later Florence, to the present era's so-called global cities comes the idea that cities are places where culture flourishes, where civilization reaches its highest point of complexity and sophistication. The density and diversity of interactions are supposed to stimulate innovations in all sorts of ways, to free urban inhabitants from traditional cultural constraint (2005, p. 341)

Le Galès also identifies that since the early days of urbanisation five 'competing conceptions' of city characteristics have been evident:

- The material city of walls, squares, houses, roads, light, utilities, buildings, waste, and physical infrastructure;
- The cultural city in terms of imaginations, differences, representations, ideas, symbols, arts texts, senses, religion, aesthetics;
- The politics and policies of the city in terms of dominations, power, government, mobilization, public policies, welfare, education;
- The social city of riots, ethnic, economic, or gender equalities, everyday life, and social movements;
- The economy of the city: division of labour, scale, production, consumption, and trade.

All of the elements of a cultural city (imaginations, differences, representations, ideas, symbols, art texts,

senses, religion, aesthetics) are evident in the case studies (chapter 4) as reflections of regionalism at the MOL but material, political, social and economic characters inevitably feature, often in a conflicting manner. Also Le Galès asserts that while cities are presented by academics as “centres of innovation and culture” (p. 341), by contrast, the city is also portrayed as a place of “darkness, chaos, violence, riots, exploitation, marginal life and deviance, destruction and oppression” (p. 341).⁴⁴

Historically in the United Kingdom, towns were generally awarded a city status because they either housed a diocesan cathedral or this status was conferred by way of a royal charter (UK Cities, 2015, paras. 1 - 2). Liverpool did not become a city until the 1880s after petitioning by its Borough Council and due to its burgeoned population (from 78,000 in 1801 to 685,000 by 1901).⁴⁵ Liverpool officially received its City status during what Le Galès names a new wave of urbanisation: the industrial city: “...places where capital was tied up in major fixed assets, with labour forces that varied in composition and size, and with a high level of internal diversity” (pp. 342-343) and therefore by its nature, characterised by the form and organisation of social structure, the industrial city is “...first and foremost a place of social conflicts, inequalities, urban poverty, social segregation, and speculation” (p. 343). Such was the post-industrial landscape, due to the decline in industrialisation,

⁴⁴ Some of these conflicts and contrasts are discussed on pages 88-92.

⁴⁵“The borough council petitioned for Liverpool to be given city status, which it achieved in 1888, and by the early 20th century it was proclaimed the 'Second City of the Empire'” (UNESCO, 2015, para. 5).

or productivity, which resulted in northern cities becoming “a mix of derelict land and buildings and new cultural or housing activities” (p. 343). Liverpool’s landscape has highlighted such contrasts and these will be examined in relation to the *Liverpool Map* in chapter 4.

But the city is always metamorphosing and never complete. “The city is seen as a fluid process, constantly reshaped, chaotic and indeterminate, subject to rival and contradictory claims” (Le Galès, 2005, p.345) and out of a post-industrial landscape arose a ‘renaissance’.

The MOL project was part of the City’s regeneration scheme.⁴⁶ Liverpool, like Manchester, Newcastle and Leeds has undergone a transformation in the past decade; it has been rejuvenated. Therefore, the landscape of this thesis encompasses another dimension; that of a renaissance city.

Renaissance is the word often used by the media when referring to urban renewal or regeneration in northern cities, spawning newspaper headlines that declare Leeds ‘Yorkshire’s Renaissance City’⁴⁷ or ‘UNESCO sets seal on

⁴⁶The Museum of Liverpool acknowledges that it has been made possible “...with generous support from major funders, including the North West Development Agency (NWDA), The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). Robert Hough, Chairman of the NWDA, commented: “The rejuvenation of Liverpool’s world-famous waterfront is a major part of the legacy the NWDA leaves for this city and the region. The Museum is a great and fitting representation of Liverpool’s identity as a cultural Mecca, celebrating the city’s past and looking towards a bright future. The NWDA invested more than £33 million towards the build of the Museum” (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2011, paras. 5-6).

⁴⁷West, B. (2010, January, 24). *Visit Leeds, Yorkshire’s renaissance City with galleries, theatres and shopping*. Mail Online.

Liverpool's Renaissance'.⁴⁸ The word *renaissance* is connotative of a period of capital and cultural success and it is this type of regeneration which has largely enhanced arts and heritage projects and allowed for the building, restoring and housing of museums and galleries in which regional projects have been displayed.

In western narratives the story of modernity traditionally begins with *the* Renaissance when culture is liberated from the clutches of the ignorant Middle Ages which was characterised by low productivity, low level urbanization and compartmentalised worlds (Pieterse, 2011):

the Renaissance is history's hinge and western capitalism is its high point. The marker of the European moment is invariably the trope of the 'modern' (as in modern history, modern capitalism, the modern world, modern world-system, modern society, modernization, etc.) (p. 151)

The Northern Renaissance could be interpreted in a similar way. Either it could literally mean "rebirth": a revival of the traditional arts, literature and culture of the northern regions. Or conversely, it is the modernizing or "liberating" of these "compartmentalized" or "ignorant" northern cities from low productivity and low level urbanization, or in other words renaissance equates to an upsurge in homogenous property development and investment.

⁴⁸See note 9, chapter one, for the European Commission's commendation which spawned headlines that celebrated Liverpool's new status and renaissance such as The Guardian (2004, July, 03).



Figure 3.9 *'Renaissance Liverpool For Sale', 2011.*

Many amongst the cultural sector believe that latter is true resulting in the marginalisation of arts and heritage and an obliteration of people's sense of place. For example, in her exhibition "Souvenir" a northern based artist Pippa Hale explores the connection between regional identity, commodification and regeneration by revealing the post-renaissance similitude of regional cities. In this work, she conveys the standardisation of city centres; demonstrating that unique historical and cultural aspects of city features can be easily disregarded in the pursuit of regeneration:



Figure 3.10 'Souvenir' (2003) by Pippa Hale.

walk down the main shopping street in Leeds city centre and you could be in Manchester, Liverpool or Hull, or anywhere in the UK for that matter. Our high streets are saturated with the same shops, cafés and bars all selling the same brands (Press Release: Pippa Hale, Souvenir, 2003, para. 1).

The Museums Journal also refers to mere surface change and although Liverpool has become a 'must-see city' that:

has been transformed over the past five years, it could be argued that the new shopping complexes and hotels are just papering over the cracks. There was a stark reminder in June [2008] that the city is still very impoverished, when a joint report from the Centre for Cities and the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion pointed out that Liverpool has more people on benefits than any city in England, with more than a quarter out of work. There will also be the inevitable post-Capital of Culture hangover to nurse (Simon Stephens, 2008, p.39)

In addition, artist Terry Duffy sites the Liverpool studio, Arena, as a typical example of

how a group of artists bring energy, regeneration, attention, vision and potential to a derelict, disowned and forgotten place

only to find that they have contributed to making the place acceptable, liveable and gentrifiable... However, unfortunately for us, it is also a typical and stereotypical example of how a derelict, low rent, low rate area of a city becomes regenerated by artists only to find that property developers and the City Council want them out and replace by high rent, high rate commercial premises and gentrified apartments (1996, p.p. 123-124).

In fact so significant are the adverse effects of regeneration on this Maritime Mercantile City that UNESCO expressed 'serious concern', placing Liverpool on the 'List of World Heritage in Danger' in 2012 (retained 2013 & 2014) warning that Liverpool's status as a World Heritage Site may be revoked if 'Liverpool Waters' waterfront development goes ahead.

The Committee contended that the development will extend the city centre significantly and alter the skyline and profile of the site inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004. Furthermore, experts argued that the redevelopment scheme will fragment and isolate the different dock areas visually. The Committee warned that if the project is implemented, Liverpool may entirely lose the outstanding universal value for which it was given World Heritage status (UNESCO, 2012)

Despite this warning, Liverpool City Council has supported the project and outline planning consent has been granted.

In his odyssey to find 'the North', social critic Maconie asks, "Does the north still exist? Are the hand-wringing cultural theorists right when they talk of a Britain of identikit prefab towns each with a Body Shop, Costa Coffee and Waterstones?" (2008, p. xii) My acquaintance from the

Wirral certainly was pleased with the shiny new malls and brand stores of a revamped Liverpool, expounded their virtues when she arranged to meet me in a central Liverpool franchise pub, J.D.Wetherspoon, one of around seven hundred across the UK.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Kierans & Haeney indicate that Scouse as 'culinary artefact' has also been recently repositioned as a cultural symbol of urban regeneration served in trendy cafes and reputable restaurants (2012) such as Maggie Mays and the Malmaison and Crown Plaza hotels. However, Maconie notes a dissonance in other parts of the City that consist of just "...kebab shops and boarded up pubs and the feeling that Liverpool's undoubted renaissance is going on somewhere else and to someone else" (2008). This sentiment was captured by photographer Christian Petersen who visually conveyed the social realities in Liverpool's inner city community of Everton:

⁴⁹ "The company started operating in the 1970s, but began its remodelling in the early 90s when it started selling off its smaller premises and buying up larger ones close by. There are now around 700 Wetherspoon's pubs in the UK, keeping the price of beer down by not spending money on such things as music licenses or live football. Listed on the London Stock Exchange, Wetherspoon plc made over £37 million in 2008, and at time of writing is showing that the booze business is good business in tough times, with sales increasing at around 5% year on year" (British Icons: Wetherspoon's, 2015).



Figure 3.11 'I want to SING Homeless woman in a Catholic church, Everton v The City of Liverpool: Inequality in Liverpool' (2009), Christian Petersen.

Everton is very much at the heart of Liverpool's history. Towering over the city, the area was once home to thousands of workers who manned the docks and heavy industry of the waterfront. In 2006, however, a report singled out Everton as the poorest ward in the UK. After reading about this, photographer Christian Petersen began documenting the inner city community, starkly highlighting in the process the huge gap between rich and poor in the 2008 European capital of culture (*Inequalities in Liverpool*, 2009).

Summary

Part 3 of this chapter has outlined the concept of 'the city' and its evolution. It has seen that cities are places of contrast. It has aligned these ideas to England's northern cities. It has identified that in northern 'renaissance' cities not all individuals or communities are empowered by regeneration and both *Art Matters: the Pool of Life* and *Miss El Salvador* illustrate this discrepancy. It has also shown that

some aspects of regeneration contradict the unique features of region identity.

Therefore, chapter 3 has set the scene or provided the background: a city of contrasts whose inhabitants possesses distinct regional expression. The way this regionalism is reflected by the MOL through their objects, words and spaces is examined in the following chapter. Chapter 4 also aims to show that the application of regionalism at the MOL is critical, significant and socially inclusive in its accommodation of performability or regional voice, consciousness and participation.

Chapter Four

“Look past the shining new towers and gleaming shopping malls to see what beats underneath”⁵⁰

Regional Narratives

Part 1

Identity, History and Place

This chapter uses object case studies to examine how the MOL reflects regionalism through their objects and words and in the spaces these objects and words occupy. In order to locate explore and decipher regional expression this chapter begins with a short journey through the *People’s Republic* a space about the “...experience of living in the city: what it means to be Liverpudlian, how people have left their mark on Liverpool and the impact and issues caused by dramatic social change over the last 200 years...” (MOL, 2011) before moving to the two case studies, *Made Up - the Liverpool Look* and the *Liverpool Map*. It then evaluates the complexity of spatial dimensions within the *People’s Republic* suggesting that the interplay between interior, exterior and symbolic spaces establishes a metaphoric stage on which regionalism can be performed by the players or regional inhabitants.

⁵⁰John Parker, *Stories from the City*, 2008 (MOL, 2011). While the MOL is a product of this shiny, gleaming new Liverpool, it is this Museum’s representation of Liverpool’s essence: the regional landscape, the people and their regional identity or ‘what beats underneath’ which is the subject of this chapter.

The *People's Republic* begins with spoken words, in "... an amusing introductory film at the entrance to the gallery featuring interviews with real Liverpoolians and aimed at giving visitors both a flavour of the unique accent and what people think about their city" (Jones, 2011). It is in this part of the Gallery, we can learn about Scouse identity: located in words and phrases (*tingy/tingy (rhymes with dinghy) - Anyone or anything whose name escapes the speaker*) (MOL, 2011), and about the dish from which Scouse culture takes its name.

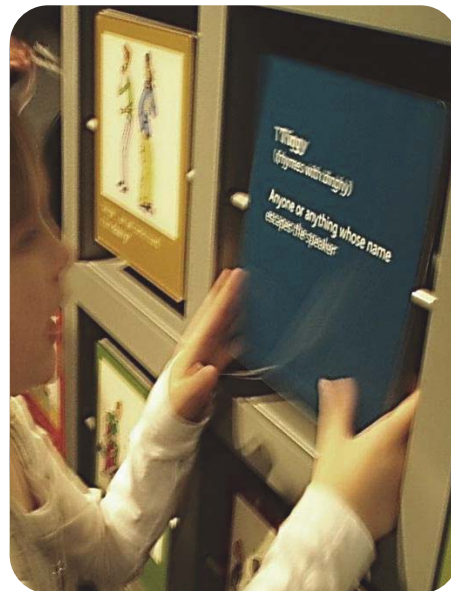


Figure 4.1 "*Tingy (rhymes with dinghy) – Anyone or anything whose name escapes the speaker*", *Accent & Expressions, the People's Republic*, MOL, 2011.

Words, in the form of quotes, from the famous and not so famous, are plentiful throughout the gallery, printed and engraved on the walls, establishing a continuity of regional voice and reminding locals of their colourful heritage while connecting visitors with local stories.

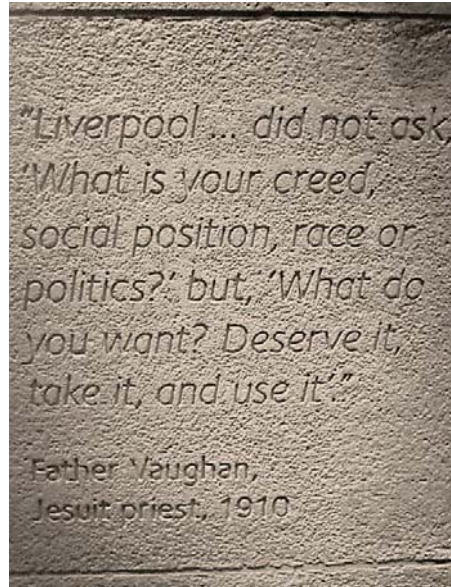


Figure 4.2 *"Liverpool...did not ask, 'What is your creed, social position, race or politics?' but, 'What do you want? Deserve it, take it, and use it'."* the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

These words often juxtapose grim realism and despair against a sentiment of hope and a sense of inclusion, figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 articulate these contrasts.

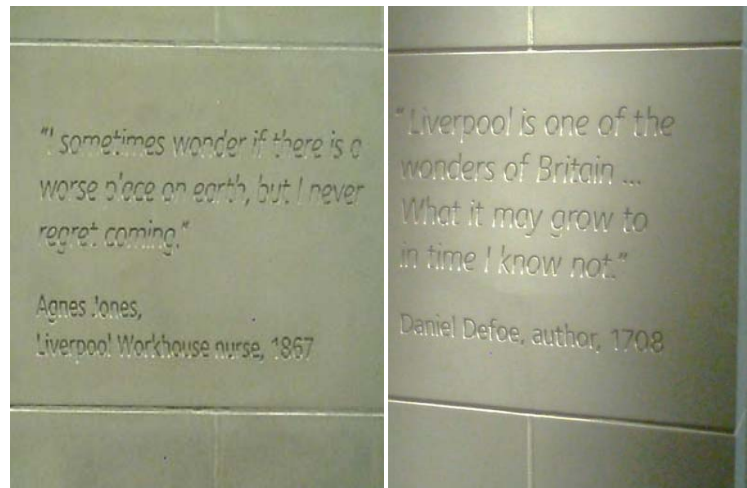


Figure 4.3 *"I sometimes wonder if there is a worse place on earth, but I never regret coming"* the People's Republic, MOL, 2011 & **Figure 4.4** *"Liverpool is one of the wonders of Britain...What it may grow to in time I know not"*, the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

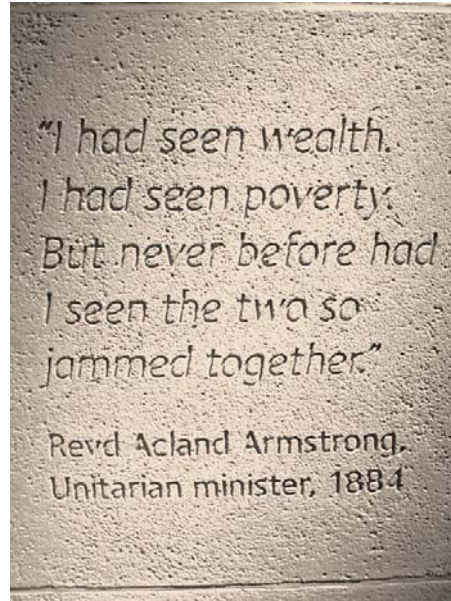


Figure 4.5 "I had seen wealth. I had seen poverty. But never before had I seen the two so jammed together." the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

Furthermore these words articulate landscapes.



Figure 4.6 'communal spirit, overcrowded, squalid rooms', 26 Court, Burlington Street, 1870, the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

For example, located in this gallery is *Gerard Gardens* a meticulously detailed model of an inner-city tenement block built in the 1930s and demolished in 1987. Many who lived at Gerard Gardens, including a significant number of

immigrant Irish and Italian families, had come from demolished slums. At the Gardens they established an integrated community, aided by “communal landings and internal playgrounds” (MOL, 2011). However, when the council demolished the flats for public works, the “once tight-knit community was broken up and relocated across Merseyside” (MOL, 2011). Words that accompany this model include a direct quote from Tony Vaughan resident 2b, 1955-1987: “When it was demolished I felt as though a piece of me had died with it” (MOL, 2011) voicing the devastating effect this destruction had on its community.



Figure 4.7 Gerard Gardens, the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

Nevertheless, on one visit I observed a mother showing her small child “Granddad’s place”, “Count two up and four along. That is his door right there”. She spoke in the present tense demonstrating that for ‘Granddad’s’ descendants this community’s history is not in the past, it is living, an integral part of their consciousness while these visitors are an

integral part of this regional history and landscape. Therefore, *Gerard Gardens*, articulates the importance of regional voice in resurrecting extinct landscapes illustrating the theory that words can recover lost places and restore them to visibility “...such verbal mapping provides orientation, confirms identity, and creates meaningfulness” (Griswald, 2008, p. 11). This interaction conveys how spaces of regionalism can facilitate performability: when Gerard Gardens was demolished it was metaphorically internalised or embodied (“a piece of me had died”) but through its resurrection by the MOL this regional connection is restored and reclaimed by visitors.

It is at the northern end of this gallery that a regional voice shouts out so loudly and so profoundly. Orchestrated in arrangements of corporeal objects and symbolic space a juncture is set, enticing the spectator to cast themselves as a player on the Liverpool’s stage. In this multi layered sphere objects, landscapes and visitors are entwined; they define Liverpool, they own Liverpool, they are Liverpool. This next part of the journey begins with an endearing and colourful cabinet of layered and labelled plastic beauties, collectively entitled *Made Up - The Liverpool Look*.⁵¹

⁵¹*Made Up - The Liverpool Look* was on display in the *People’s Republic Gallery* from 19 July 2011 to 5 October 2014. When the Gallery was being designed and exhibition space organized it was envisaging that “...at least half of that will be temporary exhibition space because there are so many stories to squeeze in that we’ll have to do it over a period of time. So there are key things we want to tell all the time, and some of which will be in temporary exhibitions, many of which we will develop working with community groups working with our community curator” Liz Stewart (National Museums Liverpool, 2008).



Figure 4.8 *Made Up – The Liverpool Look, the People’s Republic, MOL, 2011.*

Made Up - The Liverpool Look

The display *Made Up - The Liverpool Look* represents the fashion or style of the region. It is comprised of 28 dolls selected and dressed by members of the community who were asked to submit “outfits for fashion dolls, based on a particular Liverpool style, ‘style tribes’, or replicas of outfits they’ve seen on the streets of the city” (BBC Liverpool, 2011). Artists named their designs and descriptions were also submitted with their objects, demonstrating the intended message of those contributing, many of whom were school or college students.



Figure 4.9 *Made Up – The Liverpool Look, the People’s Republic, MOL, 2011.*

For example, with one submission named, ‘Laa-bie and her Essentials’, the artist states that her object represents the “...scouse girl never without her tool kit of fake tan, rollers and make up...”(MOL, 2011). Sophie Edwards, the artist of another submission, *Dolled Up*, explains that her idea was to show a specific Liverpool’s style:

I decided to use the popular top knot bun that many girls wear in and around the city. I also decided to use net fabric for the top as it is slightly see through which represents how the girls enjoy dressing up and aren’t afraid to show some flesh (2011).

On a surface level this exhibit could be viewed as plastic, fake or a bit frivolous, just a bit of fun due to the use of fashion dolls and the connotations associated with Barbie. In addition Liverpool women are also infamous for their ‘Dolled Up’ or ‘Made Up’ appearance. According to one research poll the city boasts “the highest per capita spent on beauty and grooming in the country, more than three times the

national average...There are more than 300 tanning salons within the city limits – six times more the national average” (Walker, 2012). However, a closer reading reveals layers of cultural meaning and regional significance within this display. The title of the doll *Laa-bie*, for example, is derived from a Scouse expression, “Laa” meaning mate and the way that Scousers may address one another in a friendly manner. The creator of *Laa-bie*, therefore, playfully deconstructs the Bar-bie image and superimposes a “Scouse girl” image upon the object. This is also true of *Dolled Up*. As the artist explains:

The clock and the wings on the top half of the doll are a representation of the famous Liver Building, the wings are covered in articles from the city’s newspaper the Liverpool Echo. The skirt I made from card which I shaped and coloured as vinyl records encompassing how popular music is in Liverpool and reminds people of famous bands such as the Beatles (Edwards, 2011)



Figure 4.10 *'Dolled Up'* by Sophie Edwards, 2011.

The artist firmly associates Liverpool style with myth, social history and popular culture. The garment therefore is a composite of all of these aspects of regional identity.

Even the title of the exhibit, *Made Up*, encompasses layers of meanings. At its most literal level it means a lie, fake or false and could be construed as a derogatory stab at the 'made up' appearance of Liverpudlian women. But "made up", is also a common Scouse phrase, meaning to be very happy or pleased about something. And is possibly more about the contentment one gets in a sense of belonging to this unique and distinct culture or style tribe. Within the dichotomy which is established (fake verse genuine), the identity of a region and Scouse expression is explored and validated by members of the community. In addition, by providing this opportunity it is those in the region that assert ownership of style.



Figure 4.11 *'Made Up – The Liverpool Look'*, the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

Furthermore, this display challenges the notion that the Western hub of fashion and style belongs to London, New York, Paris and Milan, by posing Liverpool as the centre of haute couture and therefore positioning the regional as geographical centre. Griswold has indicated that despite globalisation, state centralization of cultural power and international consumerism regionalism prevails because “...people refashion external cultural inputs to conform to local sensibilities. Specifically, people use the very elements of globalized, electronic culture to rediscover, invent, fashion, promote and celebrate their place-specific distinctiveness...[and] demonstrate cosmopolitanism through intense localism” (2008, p. 2-3).

Made Up - the Liverpool Look has confirmed that regionalism can be constructed in layers of meaning associated with myth, social history and popular culture. It showed that objects can be used to deconstruct pre-conceived notions, assert ownership and through the exhibition of regionalism, objects can be defined or be given meaning by the regional community.



Figure 4.12 'Made Up – The Liverpool Look', *the People's Republic*, MOL, 2011.

This display further occupies a unique space within *the People's Republic* gallery. The objects are not arranged for the convenience of the viewer. All of the dolls face forward. Their eyes firmly fixed ahead. They face the vast ceiling to floor gabled windows through which *Laa-bie* and her companions gaze upon the icons of Pier Head, the Mersey and beyond. This regional connection is further enhanced by the way the landscape is reflected upon the glass display cabinet, creating, at times, an obstruction or barrier for the viewer's gaze. It forces the spectator to come closer, look closer, share this space. As the viewer moves in to study the figures, they too, become part of this menagerie of tangible and symbolic space; a player or *performer* on this regional stage.

Regionalism and identity depend heavily on landscape: regional culture reflects its landscape while reciprocally the landscape embodies regional identity. As established in earlier chapters, regionalism is defined by boundaries however these boundaries are not fixed: they shift and therefore should not just be determined by topographical means but also by recognition of, and affiliation to, a shared sense of regional consciousness. This collective consciousness and these boundaries are composed of layers; layers of history, culture, language, folklore and experiences within a concept of regional space.

From *Made Up* take an 180° turn and the visitor is met by *the Liverpool Map* a cartographic sculpture that encapsulates a shared sense of regional identity within a complex arrangement of boundaries and layers.

The Liverpool Map

Aptly located in this gallery *The Liverpool Map*, by Inge Panneels and Jeffrey Sarmiento⁵² represents regional boundaries and complex layers both in subject matter and in the way it is constructed. It is composed of 17 fused layers of glass that articulate and encapsulate territorial shape, centuries of regional history and cultural vernacular.

⁵² Contemporary artists Inge Panneels and Jeffrey Sarmiento work predominantly with the medium of glass and are associated with the National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland. Panneels' diverse and vibrant projects are commissioned by public and private institutions. In his artist's statement, Sarmiento describes his work as motivated by "...words, images, artefacts, and the urban landscape [that] activate my curiosity, and challenge me to look deeper to uncover hidden narratives. Social history, biography (of people and objects), anecdote, and fiction colour my intentions, and I attempt to draw meanings beyond what is initially visible to construct a sense of place" (Sarmiento, 2013).

It was commissioned by the MOL to form part of a “legacy”. This legacy was to include a body of assignments facilitated by Open Culture: People’s Projects that involved, to varying extents, local community. Opportunities were established to collect the voices of the people of Liverpool regarding fundamental aspects that shaped their regional identity in 2007, the Year of Heritage (commemorating 800 years since the town’s Charter was signed by King John and 200 years since the abolition of slavery) and the 2008 Capital of Culture celebrations. It was therefore, a “...prime opportunity to investigate past emotions and future aspirations” (Davis & Shaw, 2013, p.7). Furthermore, this legacy was perceived an essential element if the Year of Heritage and Capital of Culture was to generate “sustainable rewards”.

Open culture, which was part of the '08 team, was created with the specific remit of involving people across Merseyside in culture. Not just creating it for them to attend, and then leave, but encouraging them to set up their own projects, shows and events, businesses – and helping them communicate about what was going on in general (Davis & Shaw, p. 22)

In addition, according Phil Redmond⁵³ sustainable rewards were required to create “a reminder in years to come of how people in Merseyside saw themselves, culturally, geographically and historically” (Davis & Shaw, p. 9). The *Liverpool Map* is one such reward: an interpretative tool, an artefact, through which regional history can be captured and remembered and a shared regional identity shaped because

⁵³Professor Phil Redmond is the Chair of the National Museums Liverpool and supervisor of the Liverpool Map project.

regional culture “...isn’t just about attending or creating events, it is also about artefacts and how those artefacts form part of our collective and inherited culture” (p. 9). Another such artefact was the collation of the *Liverpool Saga*, 800 lines of poetry, each line selected by submissions from the community, and integrated into layer 12 of the *Map*.

Within its layered glass, the *Liverpool Map* provides an appropriate opportunity to encapsulate the voices of the region and a shared regional consciousness. 16 layers of the *Map* are sectioned into categories: the first four layers tell the history of the region; the next four explore boundaries of the Liverpool region, layers 9-12 recognise people and layers 13-16 celebrate culture; the final 17th layer is transparent, providing the window through which this map of a region can be viewed.

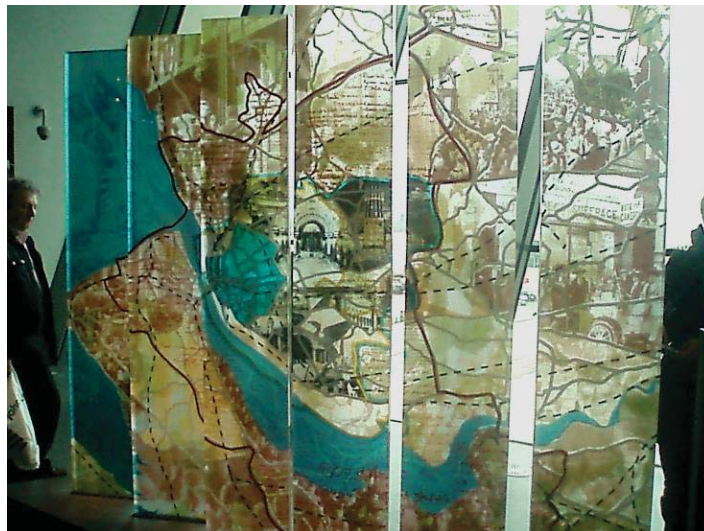


Figure 4.13 'The Liverpool Map', the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

Regional History

Layers 1 and 2

Layer 1, explores Liverpool's archaeological heritage including six Neolithic Calder Stones which evidence early human occupancy of 'Liuerpul'.⁵⁴ These monoliths, inscribed with ancient motifs formed part of a burial chamber and are alluded to by the sculpture's six columns. Layer 1 also represents this region's cultural origins, the footing or core on which this regional identity could develop. Layer 2 portrays this development in Liverpool's 'Seven Streets', the foundation of the City, laid out around 1235, which still forms the base of Liverpool's city centre. This layer also acknowledges the significance of King John's actions in 1207. For instance it was the granting of his Letters Patent that allowed Liverpool commercial independence⁵⁵ and established the region as a trading post. However, the Monarch had his own ulterior motive: designs on Ireland; and Liverpool provided "...an embarkation point for Ireland, over which he claimed sovereignty" (Davis & Shaw, p.40). This Irish connection endured and throughout the centuries it became entrenched within the region and regional culture: "After the Potato Famine of the 1840s...around two million Irish immigrants came to Liverpool. By 1851, a quarter of Liverpool's population was of Irish descent" (Royal Geographical Society, 2012, p. 12) It is an Irish influence

⁵⁴ The name "Liuerpul", meaning muddy pool appears in written documentation from around 1190AD although evidence establishes habitation circa 5,000 to 4,000 BC (Davis and Shaw).

⁵⁵ Liverpool had been subjected to Chester's authority since Roman occupation (British History Online).

from which a significant amount of contemporary Scouse culture is derived and therefore, *the Liverpool Map* demonstrates that the history of a region need not be merely past-centric but can be firmly located in a contemporary consciousness. This is because according to Keating a region is a construction, and convergence, of “history and of present day actions” (1997, p. 394). Therefore this consciousness is appropriately imbued within the foundation layers of this cultural map.

Layers 3 and 4

Layers 3 and 4 explore Liverpool’s commercial development in terms of shipping (which forged influential international relations), railway (significantly between Liverpool and Manchester) and canal building (notably the 127 mile Liverpool to Leeds Canal)⁵⁶ and technological advances ensured Liverpool’s role as a major player of the industrial revolution and as a global city. Such developments determined how and in what way the City region evolved, instigating social factors that are ingrained in its contemporary persona. Among these were geographical, social and cultural regional boundaries.

Regional boundaries

Layers 5-8 define boundaries. While utilising some traditional topographical iconography, the sculpture attempts to avoid traditional proprietary or political

⁵⁶ The MOL was built above the point on which this canal embarks on its journey from Liverpool to Leeds.

incentives that motivate cartography. Instead the boundaries of the Map are democratically defined by the people of Liverpool because what is important in demarcating a region is “...not only how the map is drawn but who is drawing it and why” (Powell, 2007, p. 5). The ‘who’ or cartographer of the Liverpool Map is the regional culture or consciousness and a multi-dimensional map, as opposed to traditional 2-dimensional representation, accommodates aspects of these cultural forces and processes that extend “...beyond the geographic, to the emotional ties that bind us and stretch the city’s physical boundaries” (Davis & Shaw, 2013, p. 47).

Layer 5

Layer 5 explores the way in which immigration affected the regions boundaries not just in terms of growth but also in terms of social conditions. For example, 18th century immigration saw the population increase from 5,000 to 80,000 and steadily climb during the 19th and early 20th centuries

As the second city of the British Empire, it attracted those looking for work either at sea or in industries connected to the port, such as sail making or ship building. During the following century, the influx continued, with many people who had intended to pass through Liverpool to the New World settling in the city, either out of choice or because they simply ran out of money...Liverpool’s population peaked in 1931, at more than 855,000 people (compared to today’s 445,000) (Davis & Shaw, 2013, pp. 48-49).

The social impact of intense population growth was predominately evident in crowded unhygienic living conditions resulting in high mortality rates.

Two or three families would share two bedrooms, a living room and a cellar in a common type of housing, known as court housing, constructed from the early 1700s to shelter the city's increasing population. A number of small houses were built around unsanitary courtyards, which held an open cess pool and a privy (Davis & Shaw, p.49).

Early attempts to relieve the situation resulted in a programme in 1860s aimed to clear the slums and relocate many of its poorest families to the first council houses. However, it was not until the 1930s that the Council expanded the boundaries of Liverpool by establishing housing estates, relocating the most deprived citizens to the outskirts of the City.

While their residents may no longer live in the city centre, or in some cases even within Liverpool City Council's designated area, many maintain a strong allegiance to Liverpool and consider being Liverpudlian as a key element of their own identity (Davis & Shaw, p.49).

This allegiance and identity is evident in the open public debates that guided the construction of Layers 7 and 8, to be discussed shortly. Allegiance to residency and nostalgia for housing arrangements tends to be a reoccurring feature of regional identity and is also evident in the discussions regarding the LCG *Living Back-to-Back* exhibit (chapter 1) and *Gerard Gardens* (earlier in this chapter). Stephen Behrendt (2008) states that this is because people are

connected to an internal landscape that informs our senses and is often associated with early experiences or feelings of security.

This idea of being intuitively rooted in a particular place – a geographical and cultural origin- is of course one distinguishing characteristic of what academic discourse usually defines as *regional*. The more apparent the evidence of this rooting is in the local and in the particular in any artefact of culture, the reasoning seems to go, the more powerfully regional are those artefacts (p. 151).

Layer 6

Layer 6 plots the architectural and sculptural icons of the region. Such sights are represented consistently throughout the museum and assert a strong regional identity both outwardly to the world and inwardly to the regional community. The architecture depicted includes religious buildings: Liverpool and Metropolitan Cathedrals, sporting and music venues: Goodison and Stanley Parks, the Cavern and the Philharmonic Hall and listed sites: the Three Graces and Albert Dock. The latter is an impressive collection of Grade 1 buildings, constructed in 1846 of brick, stone and cast iron in order to reduce fire risk. Dilapidated after closing in 1972, Albert Dock is a symbol of Liverpool's regeneration as the first phase of successful redevelopment in the region. Another symbol incorporated into this layer is the Liver bird, believed to have originated and subsequently adapted from a bird depicted on King John's seal on the Letters Patent. Its image has developed into the current form conjointly with the development of Scouse or Liverpudlian identity.

Legend has it that if the Liver Birds fly away, Liverpool will fall. What a sight that would be - hundreds of them taking off from their perches all over the city. They are on football clubs, schools, weather vanes, universities, cathedrals, rubbish bins and door knockers (Davis & Shaw, 2013, p. 51).

The Liver bird unifies the region. It is symbol of regional identity and it appears numerous times and in many forms within the MOL as an affirmation of this collective regional consciousness.

Layer 7 and 8

Layers 7 and 8 sketch the boundaries of the region. Readers of the Liverpool Daily Post⁵⁷ voted and gave their opinions on nominated locations. For example, one reader wrote “I live in Halewood in the phoney borough of Knowsley. Most (90%) of the inhabitants are Scousers. We shop, are entertained, we support football clubs...and call Liverpool our town centre” (Davis & Shaw, p. 54). Halewood being one of the satellite housing estates established in the 30s and this reader’s sentiment echoes the fact that many who relocated “maintained a strong allegiance to Liverpool...as a key element of their own identity” (Davis & Shaw, p. 49). Another reader expressed a resistance to this regional inclusion “Wirral has never embraced Merseyside as ours; we were undemocratically dumped in it by bureaucrats who didn’t realise the Mersey was a much wider boundary river than it appeared on the map...the strength of opposition

⁵⁷ Voting took place between November 2007 and February 2008. The Liverpool Post ceased publishing in 2013 after nearly 158 years of publication.

against Wirral merging with Liverpool, [is] a view shared on both sides of the Mersey” (Davis & Shaw, p.54). Such views contributed to the physical and emotional boundary lines that composed the 7th layer, therefore, demonstrating that regional voice need not collectively concur but include individual voices as an affirmation of regional identity.



Figure 4.14 'The Liverpool Map', the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.

Scousers

Layer 9-11

Layers 9-11 acknowledge Liverpool as a 'People's City' and infused in these layers of glass are aspects that are permeated in Scouse culture. Liverpool's international style, particularly as 'the New York of Europe' and Liverpool's outwardly looking, personality is represented in Layer 9. This layer contrasts Liverpool regionalism to that of other northern cities. For example, Leeds is more insular: it looks inside its boundaries for regional identity and is also very

English but of a Northern England, or more precisely a Yorkshire England, whose cultural essence is still ancient and Viking. Liverpool style and culture was contrastingly influenced in architecture, fashion and music by grand cities across the Atlantic and this inspiration was reciprocal:

Like American cities, Liverpool was built tall. When it was being constructed in 1908-11, the press described the Liver Building as a skyscraper...Its concrete frame was reinforced with steel in a style that was later used for many New York skyscrapers...it was the 'Cunard Yanks' of the 1950s who are credited for Liverpool's cultural revolution, bringing pop music and fashion from New York back home where it inspired the foundation of Merseybeat (Davis & Shaw, 2013, pp. 58-59)

Layers 10 and 11 explore social unrest and the development of academic institutions. Social unrest includes the nine-day Toxteth Riots which were sparked by a combination of racial conflict between police and local community and socio/political tensions fuelled by the excessively high unemployment rates in Toxteth. Therefore, nestled between the celebration of international style and the development of academic institutions, Layer 10 acknowledges harsh realities and histories that are part of this regional identity and collective consciousness.



Figure 4.15 'Detail of the Liverpool Map showing boundaries, St. George's Hall, Metropolitan Cathedral and lines from the Liverpool Saga', Inge Panneels & Jeffrey Sarmiento.

The Liverpool Saga: Layer 12

Inscribed on Layer 12 is the *Liverpool Saga*. Perceived as the 'community layer' the *Saga*, an 800 line poem spanning 8 centuries of Liverpool, was compiled by the community, line by line, to celebrate the City's anniversary. Covering a vast chronology of subjects, each line was then selected and hand written by a member of the community before the entire poem was eternalised within Layer 12 of the *Map* (some of these lines, rendered in red can be seen in figure 4.15).

Folklorist Kent Ryden asserts that “...while mapping can be done by cartographers and surveyors, it can also be done by words” (as cited in Griswold, 2008, p. 10). Within this *Saga* words map the region through the landscape and the communities of its inhabitants:

A city haunted by her past lies dreaming of her future.

The city has seen it all and bears silent witness.

Wondrous river,
Full of power and might
Flows past a city,
A heritage site.

The spirits of gilded dragons circle the Chinese Arch

To guard the misty streets around
As the shells of a million red firecrackers
Shower poppies to the ground.

I am your city. You are my people.

You’ve built me a synagogue,
a church with a steeple.

I’ve given you shelter and when you roam,
a river to leave me;
a welcome back home.

Nationalities lumped in a giant melting pot

drew the best ingredients
which were preciously hot.

A conundrum of cultures,
roped in one house.

And the outcome,
world famous,

a new word – that’s “Scouse.”

and words chronicle its history, some of which is shameful:

Not all our years are filled with pride and glory.
Behind the "highs" there lurks a different story.
A town condones a practice inhumane,
As evil traders seek commercial gain.

some tragic:

Jolting in my mother's clasping arms,
I sprang awake
As on the landing and down the stairs
in blinding black we flew.
Beneath the throbbing drone of bombers
seeking how to make
A crumbled hell of Smithdown Road
and a bloody human stew.

words evoke nostalgia:

Rides on the ferry when we broke up from school,
Picnics with Mum down at Otterspool.
Billy Liddell, Ron Yeats, Tommy Smith, Emlyn Hughes,
Six penneth of chips wrapped in yesterday's news.

The ships and the docks and the overhead train -
Childhood memories...

and words consider regeneration:

The glass towers are rising up
for the billionaire investors -
but for the seagulls and pigeons
it's just another place to nest in!

Cranes fill the sky, a hole in each street,
A time of transition where old and new meet;
A city transformed, but at what cost?
A new "Paradise" – or a Paradise Lost?

Ryden calls such articulation of the region with words 'mapping the invisible landscape'. He states that all "landscape is space, without significance, until history and memory have written meanings upon...Only revery - thoughts organized into words, like a poem - are needed to map the landscape and make its open spaces into a place" (as cited in Griswold, p. 10-11).

Layers 13-16

For Layers 13-16 of *the Map*, *Daily Post* readers selected "musicians, artists, sports stars and people, who've stood up and spoken out for the city" (Davis & Shaw, p.67) or in other words representing a collective regional consciousness. These Scousers have at one time or another participated on the regional continuum, establishing a shared system of meaning of place, the Liverpool region, and adding to the production of cultural regionalism. Many of these people who have contributed creatively to the production of this region are depicted in the *Wondrous Place* gallery such Billy Fury,⁵⁸ Echo and the Bunnymen, Frankie Goes to Hollywood and, of course, the Beatles (Layer 14). Also included from *Wondrous Place* are the previous mentioned Phil Redmond, Jimmy McGovern, Willy Russell, Alan Bleasdale and Arthur

⁵⁸ Billy Fury was born in Dingle, in the troubled but regionally assertive Liverpool 8 area. The gallery takes its name from a song he recorded at least three times: *Wondrous Place*.

Dooley (Layer 16). Their inclusion within the *Map* confirms that their contributions are valued as democratically selected by the regional community as expressions of regionalism and not merely a curatorial decision by the MOL.

The Liverpool Map and *Made Up - the Liverpool Look* illustrate what Powell asserts as a critical regionalist insistence on places being evidenced by cultural artefacts that convey a critical awareness of how that spot is part of the broader configurations of history, politics and culture. These artefacts, or objects, also occupy and establish spaces of regionalism in which a collective voice can be heard.

Such regional consciousness has the potential to deconstruct universal norms. For instance, *the Liverpool Map* deconstructs and challenges the Western practice and traditional purpose of cartography, global expansion and proprietary exclusion, and as a result constructs a people's map more reflective of an inclusive people's region. This process illuminates Barbara Bender's statement, reviewed in chapter 2 that our approaches to landscape "should embrace ambiguity and contradiction, eschew closure, recognize that people, things, places are always in process, and that the boundaries between them are permeable and imbricated" (2006, p. 310). *Made Up - the Liverpool Look* also deconstructs pre-conceived notions of northern women as "fake", the globalisation of "style" and global cultural homogeneity while ousting standard English language with Scouse phrases and significant meanings.

Spaces of Regionalism

Both *Made Up* and the *Liverpool Map* occupy a unique space within the *People's Republic* gallery. At this northern end the boundaries of interior, exterior and symbolic space blur and begin to melt away in an encirclement of illumination and reflection. Through a wall of glass, floor to ceiling, the light enters uninhibited awakening the objects and reflecting upon them the grandeur and illustriousness of the landscape beyond.



Figure 4.16 *'Spaces of regionalism', the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.*

Chapter 2 asked: “what is a region?” Some answered it is an “object of mystery”, an “enigmatic concept” and a “complicated category”. It is in this space that the complexities of regional place begin to unravel and it is the interplay between the space, objects and people that provide intimation. Without people this area of space represents “an empty theatre” in which “something may or may not happen: when something does happen we say it

“takes place”, and the space becomes a place” (Griswold, 2008, p. 5). Yi-Fu Tuan argues that space is merely a concept but by contrast place is “a centre of meaning constructed by experience” (1975, p. 152): a reassuring sense that selfhood and culture are interrelated (Yi-Fu Tuan as cited in Katz & Mahoney, 2008).

It is photo-documentation that is witness to this revelation because the evidence gathered shows how people take this *space* and create a regional *place*. This is because the photographic images produced in this space not only illustrated the connection between people and their surroundings but they capture “...something of the sensory richness and human inhabitation of urban environments” (Rose, 2012, p. 298) against the iconographic backdrop of this region.



Figure 4.17 ‘Spaces of Regionalism’ *the People’s Republic*, MOL, 2011.

People transform this space with the knowledge and experience they bring to it. This space becomes place

because it is animated with such experience: in this space lives mythologies, embedded with layers of community history and folklore and in this place visitors can participate as actors on the regional stage.

To know a place fully means both to understand it in an abstract way and to know it as one person knows another. At a high theoretical level, places are points in a spatial system. At the opposite extreme, they are strong visceral feelings (Tuan, 1975, 152).

Therefore, place cannot exist without people while people need place because if "...place is "a centre of meaning constructed by experience," then people need place because they need meaning. Space becomes place by accruing meaning. [Therefore], place is "...particularistic, emotion-laden, bound up with memory" (Griswold, 2008, p. 9). In this place, the Liverpool region is the centre of meaning bound up with history, memory and myth because:

Liverpool is not part of England in the way that New York is not part of America. It's more Welsh, more Irish, more Scottish, more exotically international and defiantly local, a shifty, shifting outpost of defiance and determination and scouring kindness reluctantly connected to the English mainland, more an island set in a sea of dreams and nightmares that's forever taking shape in the imagination, a mysterious place jutting out into time between the practical, stabilizing pull of history and the sweeping, shuffling force of myth (Morley, 2013, p. 393)

In this space myth is important in creating meaning because as Crowley (2012) asserts the name of Liverpool and the terms that have and are still being used for the inhabitants are 'sometimes strange'. That their origins are unknown and

obscure: “it is simply not clear...In other words, we don’t know” (p. 160). In this part of the gallery between the objects that represent and articulate the ‘stabilizing pull of history’ there are glimpses of this ‘shuffling force of myth’ as visitors are drawn to the Liver birds both interior and exterior and gaze out over their symbolic sea of ‘dreams’, ‘nightmares’ and ‘imagination’.

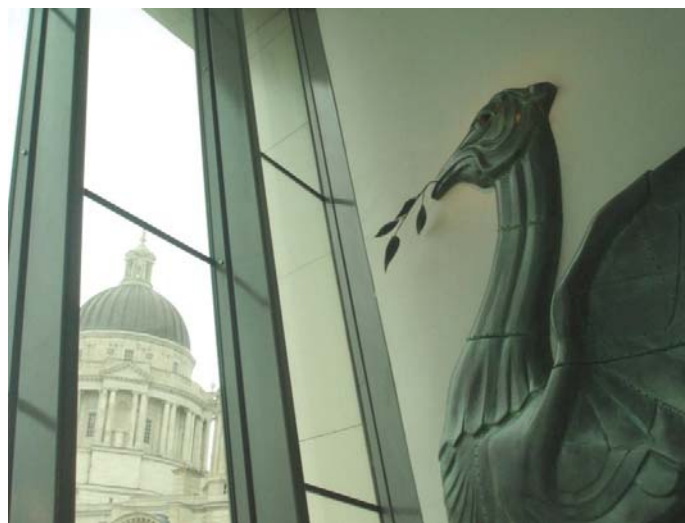


Figure 4.18 *'Spaces of Regionalism', the People's Republic, MOL, 2011.*

In addition, such a spatial system can accommodate performativity. This is because visitors can perform on this regional stage or interact with this regional setting. Such performativity takes place in an instinctive manner because site-specificity satisfies a biological drive and our basic genetic needs are satisfied through our environment

Our food is grown in it or gathered or hunted from it, water comes from it, threats to our safety come directly from it or from the creatures that reside within it, but shelter can also be found within it. We are fundamentally linked with the landscape and genetically programmed to respond to it (Furse-Roberts, 2012, p. 181).

Roberts asserts that people are genetically programmed to seek locations within landscapes that satisfy our needs. That people “...favour scenes that give the impression of good views from a sheltered spot; a location that would be beneficial for survival as it would allow concealment from predators and prey while permitting the chance to observe them” (Furse-Roberts, p. 181).



Figure 4.19 ‘Spaces of Regionalism’, the People’s Republic, MOL, 2011.

However Furse-Roberts states that the characteristics of the modern *Homo sapiens* is a “cognitive ability or intelligence” allowing us to move beyond primal survival urges and “develop complex cultures”.

The landscape of the community becomes an integral component of this culture and can gain value because of this...As well as attributing meaning to specific locations, cultures categorize types of landscape and apply meanings to these...our responses to the landscape can be influenced by our genetic make-up or come from learnt, cultural associations or, as is most likely, a combination of both (p. 181).

Performativity can be enacted on a conscious level. Earlier in this chapter Keating spoke of the region as a ‘construction,

of history and of present-day actions' that "its invention depends on the confluence of these distinct elements." He has also identified the components that can stimulate regionalism: that where "these meanings coincide in space we may speak of strong regionalism. Here political institutions can build on a distinct culture and identity, and at the same time exploit a functional rationality" (1997, p. 394).

The role of these players within this space, or against this regional landscape, differ depending on the different levels that these cultural meanings and experience are applied to. Some actors only glanced at *Made Up*, some were captivated by the *Liverpool Map*, many interacted with the landscape beyond the museum converging under the iconic Liver bird in this confluence of spatial systems and meanings.

In 2008 - for another research project - I interviewed a 'non-museum visitor' in order to compare his responses to a 'museum visitor'. This non-museum visitor enjoyed the concept of museums but found what was presented within the museum walls uninspiring.

I haven't stepped into a museum in my home country for about 15 years. Every other museum I've visited in the rest of the world, I've seen it as my obligation, as a tourist, to pay for their upkeep. The last museum/art gallery I visited there was a display of 15-17th century paintings... I think there were Pre-Raphaelites too. I recall paintings from both Italian and English painters but don't really know who they were...(D. Ashby, personal communication, 2008).

And he had never been inside his "favourite" art gallery.

My reason being that I loved sitting outside with some gelato, watching the ferries go past...I really love the outsides of museums more than the insides. Looking around, I see that all the cool/museums/galleries/historical places of note are great places to have a picnic, throw a Frisbee, meet people, etc. like a landmark for the sake of needing one. I don't particularly care what's inside. So I was kind of thinking that is the role museums should play in the community...I don't think it has to be up to the management of the museums to decide that for us. People can just go and do what they need to do. Obviously if they can gear their design towards community-friendly sites, the people will use them (D. Ashby, personal communication, 2008).

In this part of *the People's Republic* gallery, a "community-friendly site" has been established: a usable space in which 'people can just go in and do what they need to do'. In addition, the outside is always present; the MOL brings the outside in creating a space which visitors can transform into place. People are drawn to this space due to the landscapes provided which are embedded with myth and memory and its associated hieroglyphics. Here visitors have some freedom to use space as they please because it is not just one space but a menagerie of spaces, some real and some illusionary, some interior and some exterior. They can slip in and out of these spaces, drawing meaning from the objects, validation regional voice, and using the interior and exterior landscape to satisfy primal urges both biological and cultural, or in this case regional.

In Part 2 I turn to consider a 'portrait' of Liverpool. I look at how the MOL, by displaying a landscape devoid of people

and transport, crime and pollution, captures regional identity and stimulates performativity.

Part 2

Portrait of a Region

City as Region

In chapter 3 Liverpool as a regional landscape was explored. One of the fundamental characteristics defining Liverpool is its city status. La Galès established that all cities have distinct qualities and one of those qualities perceives cities as centres of innovation which in cultural terms conveys imaginations, difference, representations, ideas, symbols, arts, texts, senses, religion and aesthetics. All of these aspects have featured in the expressions of regional identity discussed so far. The next case study also embodies such characteristics in its representation of Liverpool as city.

In the galleries where my field work was centered, *Wondrous Place, the People's Republic*, and their annexation, the *Skylight Gallery*, a consistent reference to, and relationship with, exterior space - the City of Liverpool beyond the Museum's walls, is evident. This is because once inside the MOL, the exterior is always present both physically through uninterrupted views and allegorically through regional objects, their iconography and oratory. This means that the visitors never lose site of the City region and the Museum's dedication to the City is always evident. It also provides a connection between the objects, the community

and the region and for Liverpoolians enables an assertion of ownership. One such object that establishes this regional connection to the City and an assertion of ownership is *The Liverpool Cityscape* by Ben Johnson.⁵⁹ Positioned in the *Skylight Gallery* between *Wondrous Place* and *the People's Republic*, it establishes a nexus between the two galleries and enhances the relationship between the visitor and regional space.

The Liverpool Cityscape

The sublime nature of Liverpool's architectural heritage can be fully appreciated in the panoramic painting *Liverpool Cityscape*. Rendered in a hyper-realist style, its immense size (244 x 488 cm) demands the viewer's attention and, as with the *Liverpool Map* and *Made Up*, it is laden with regional iconography while each component evokes regional significance.



Figure 4.20 'Liverpool Cityscape' (2008) Ben Johnson, Skylight Gallery, MOL, 2011.

⁵⁹ Ben Johnson predominantly depicts architecture in his works and is the only contemporary painter to be honoured by the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was in public residency at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, during the Capital of Culture year.

The meticulous three year process Johnson employed to create the cityscape instils in the image a sensory quality adding complexity and intensifying the relationship between this City, the MOL and the viewer. For instance, the use of acrylic and canvas provides a textural depth and the rendering of buildings are realised with accuracy. Such precision was achieved with technically methods and because the artist walked the streets of Liverpool, talking to people and visiting each building in order to develop a sense of atmosphere of regional place:

To prepare he visited Liverpool, found the best viewpoints, studied the architecture, talked to local experts, made drawings and took over 3,000 photographs. Each featured building was 'drawn' on a computer. Combined, these drawings created an actual size 'plan' of the painting. Every drawing was analysed and broken down to create several separate stencils for each building: for the brickwork, the window frames, the glass and so on. The stencils were carefully applied to the canvas using 'notches' to position them exactly. The painting was carried out using hand-mixed acrylic paints applied with spray-guns through the stencils. The final touching-in of tiny areas of bare canvas was carried out using a fine paint brush (National Museums Liverpool, n.d, paras. 1-3)

Although the painting is devoid of people, the artist anticipated that such a process would absorb the City's "distinct atmosphere", and create layers of significance because:

This city has great depth and the depth comes from the people and the tales of the people...The whole city is full of great

architecture and not so great architecture, and it is all the by-product of the people that made Liverpool. It is the people that made Liverpool and not the buildings (BBC Liverpool, 2011)



Figure 4.21 'Liverpool Cityscape' (2008) Ben Johnson, Skylight Gallery, MOL, 2011.

Therefore this painting evokes a regional consciousness. It also alludes to the historical development of regional boundaries because the painting belongs to, and is compositionally influenced by, the historical genre of Liverpool cityscape paintings. These paintings began as topographies and developed into a type of cartography of Liverpool City nearly always using a bird's eye view which Johnson also utilises. Such a perspective encourages performability because the viewer is able to survey the landscape, as in the *People's Republic*, satisfying both biological urges and stimulating cultural regionalism. Furthermore, while the subject matter is framed by borders,

these boundaries are not fixed. Johnson moves regional places and manipulates the landscape so that iconic features can be viewed. For example, he relocates the Goodison Park and Anfield football grounds so that the portrait could be more representative of the region's sporting affiliations, the Chinese arch has been raised in order to be more culturally inclusive and a representation of the MOL is included several years before its completion in order to convey its significance, culturally and architecturally, on the Liverpool landscape. Therefore, the painting is not topographically precise but it is an accurate "regionalist' depiction.

In this space the MOL also facilitates perfromability by providing ample space for visual contemplation; it is the only object displayed on the eastern plane of this circular gallery and by encouraging visitors to voice and record their opinions about the City and its architecture: what they like and dislike about the regional landscape.

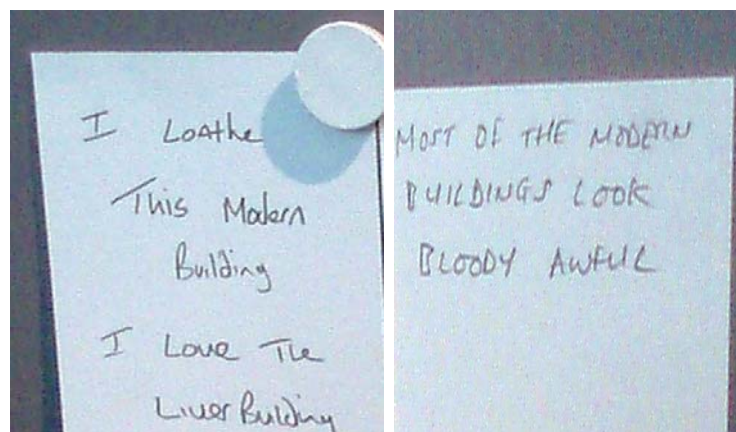


Figure 4.22 "I Loathe This Modern Building, I Love The Liver Building, Most Of The Modern Buildings Look Bloody Awful" Skylight Gallery, MOL, 2011.

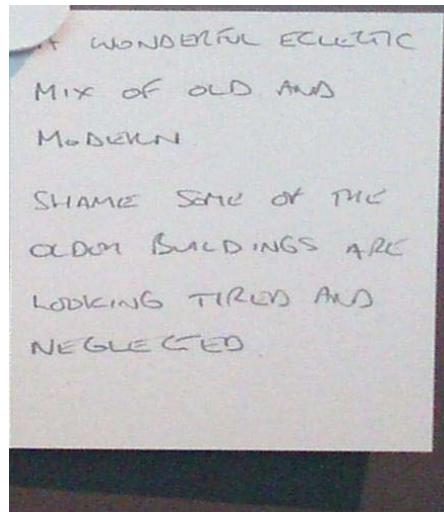


Figure 4.23 “A Wonderful Eclectic Mix Of Old And Modern, Shame Some Of The Older Buildings Are Looking Tired And Neglected”, Skylight Gallery, MOL, 2011.

Such performability highlights an assertion made in chapter two that there can be no complete portrait of a region because here this regional city is open to so many interpretations: constructed by the opinions of the viewers, visitors and inhabitants of the region.

Furthermore, the *Liverpool Cityscape* establishes a sense of regional ownership. Like the *Liverpool Map* and the *Pool of Life* it belongs to the body of work that was generated during the Year of Heritage and Capital of Culture celebrations to provide sustainable awards for the Liverpool region and a body of artefacts that captured the shared culture at that point in time. Ben Johnson also describes a sense of ownership when referring to this work which he completed publically at the Walker Gallery, Liverpool.

People that loved this city came to watch me paint not because it was a piece of art but because I was portraying their city, and that was what was so important to me...I hope it helped to break

down the barrier that so often in a museum people think things arrive in a gold frame out of an ivory tower (BBC Liverpool, 2011).



Figure 4.24 'Liverpool Cityscape' (2008) Ben Johnson, Skylight Gallery, MOL, 2011.

Through the displaying and positioning of the *Liverpool Cityscape* the MOL reflects regionalism. This is because the object is positioned in a significant place - connecting the two galleries - and asserting that its subject matter is crucial to both genres: creative expression and social history.

Summary

The object case studies in this chapter *Made Up: the Liverpool Look, the Liverpool Map and Liverpool Cityscape* have illustrated how the MOL has depicted regionalism through objects and words and in the spaces that these words and objects occupy. At the MOL depiction is more than a mere recognised association; it is a celebration, it is a validation of belonging and a sense of self. These objects, words and spaces satisfy a desire for locality, to be orientated, a biological drive and a collective necessity that

assert a collective ownership of regional history, ideas and meanings.

The following chapter discusses my findings which lead to a conclusion. It also considers the potential for further study and the application of regionalism in a broader museological context.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Analysis

This thesis set out to examine how museums and galleries can reflect regionalism in their objects and words and in the spaces (interior, exterior and symbolic) that these words and objects occupy. The objects (and words and spaces) examined in this thesis were understood in a material culture context: possessing their own agency, as metaphors of memory and history and connecting and mediating human experiences. They were also examined as metaphors of a regional identity, a collective consciousness and in their ability to facilitate performability within a regional context.

I also proposed to observe the validity of regionalism as a genre through which museums can narrate the stories and realities of their regional communities and to examine how the unique regional identities of Northern England were depicted in their museums. This thesis also aimed to show that the application of regionalism in museums is critical, significant and socially inclusive. The following discussion and analysis will outline my findings and lead to my conclusion.

In chapter 1, I described how this thesis materialised through of mixture of personal and academic observations and experience. I outlined how integral landscape and boundaries are to regional identity and how strong affiliations can be. I observed that regional identity is progressively celebrated in Northern England museums and

galleries and it is the recent popularity in representations of northern experience that deems this area of research significant and critical. My decision to conduct field work at the MOL was also discussed stating that the most decisive factor was the opportunity to collect visual material from a contemporary purpose-built museum purely dedicated to regionalism.

Chapter 1 also outlined my methods and methodology. For example, how and why a visual method, photo-documentation, was selected to collect, collate and analyse information. It was hypothesised that a visual method would capture not only the tangible context of place but the sensory relationship between human inhabitants and their regional space. Using Rose (2012) as an authority, Suchar's methods (1997, 2004, 2006) were perceived as appropriate; first to test that the documentation was not merely illustrative: that it corresponded with the research topic and aims; and second in relation to coding the evidence. Within this coding stage the photographs were systematically compared, grouped and regrouped as further codes emerge. Such a process strengthened the connection between the conceptualisation of the thesis topic and the photographic evidence.

However, it became apparent within the research process that Suchar's method was supportive only to a point and while coding was useful for the initial stage of developing information, it did not allow for depth of analysis. In analysing the photographs and understanding their

significance and meaning as illustrative tools, connotative and denotative readings proved useful as did my conceptual framework: built up predominantly from ideas of place and space and critical regionalist theory; then applied to museological contexts.

Chapter 1 also stated my intention to use object case studies as a research method. This method was selected as it is perceived as particularly useful for investigations that seek answers to 'how' and 'why' questions and to explore a particular phenomenon where contextual boundaries are not clearly demarcated. The object case studies were examined in chapter 4 in order to understand how the MOL reflects regionalism through objects and words and in the spaces that these objects and words occupy.

In chapter 2 the literature regarding regionalism was canvassed and, in the absence of museological sources, multi-disciplinary perspectives explored. It was noted that the region is not easily defined: often portrayed as equivocal, ambiguous, an 'object of mystery' and that the region is multifaceted and never complete. However, as Bender asserted, ambiguity and contradiction inform us that "places are always in process, and that the boundaries between them are permeable and imbricated" (2006, p. 310) Therefore, this research attempted to embrace the elusive and variable nature of regional landscapes and the potential those characteristics held.

Jones and McLeod distinguished between regional spaces and spaces of regionalism, the latter provides the most

potential in terms of regional performativity (regional voice, consciousness and participation). These spaces were considered functional spaces for the cultural expression of regionalism or the regional consciousness of individuals.

Cultural regionalists talked of site specificity, particularly the ways in which geographical demarcations, or the local landscape, set the stage for cultural and artistic practices as representational and symbolic assertions of regional voice. Cultural expressions of regionalism were also perceived as capable of producing an iconographic language which, according to Griswold, orientates people not just geographically but also socially. It was also stated that within this paradigm regionalism can also be vital and urgent: a forceful, self determined claim for place and space.

Critical regionalism looked to objects, or cultural artefacts, as palimpsests to evidence what is distinctive about a particular spot on both a time and place continuum. Furthermore, regionalist designs aim to reflect the local values, customs, and needs of regional inhabitants and to critically engage the current human situation (Heath, 2009).

Chapter 2 also established the distinction between place and space acknowledging that without the expression of regional culture space is similar to an empty theatre, through such expression space becomes place. Place is socially productive and socially produced through the performability of regional voice, consciousness and participation.

In the second part of chapter 2 the implications of this framework for museums and galleries was discussed and the

potential of regionalism considered. It was asserted that despite globalisation cultural regionalism is flourishing and its unique qualities suggest that regional identity should be embraced, displayed and protected by museums and galleries.

It was also suggested that the fluid and varying nature of regions provided a potential for museums to establish spaces which are not prescribed nor constrained by fixed boundaries. *The People's Republic* gallery is an example of how arrangements of space can accommodate regional voice, regional consciousness and participation. Furthermore, because of the permeable or flexible boundaries associated with the region, regionalism cannot discriminate: by its nature it is socially inclusive.

In addition, regional voice can be channelled through objects that narrate the stories of a region or a particular spot on the region: when commissioning and acquiring objects, museums should be aware of this potential.

Through regionalism museums can challenge or confront issues it can also deconstruct preconceived ideas or perceptions: regional perspective can channel such discourses. It can be socially inclusive of all aspects of the regional community and the objects, words and spaces discussed within this thesis have confirmed these assertions.

Chapter 3 outlined the social landscape of Liverpool in order to provide a background in which to better understand how the MOL reflects its regional community through objects, words and spaces. It acknowledged that Scouse is made up

of many cultures and Scouse communities have experienced intense hardship but conversely they have much to value about their culture which has traditionally been expressed lyrically in words and music.

The MOL's place in this landscape was considered. The Museum has been described as a tribute to regional history and present. It negotiates the juxtaposition between harsh realities and celebration and *Art Matters: the Pool of Life* and *Miss El Salvador* were provided as examples of such negotiation. These works also suggested the discrepancies associated with renaissance cities; that not all individuals or communities are empowered by regeneration.

This chapter also illustrated that while regeneration supports and cultivates aspects of regional culture it can also threaten regional identity and that the City of Liverpool is in fact under threat from the negative effects of its own renaissance. This issue suggested urgency, deeming the investigation of regional spaces increasingly significant and critical.

The case studies examined in chapter 4 demonstrated how the MOL reflects regionalism through their objects, words and spaces and the viability of regionalism as a genre. *Made Up - the Liverpool Look* confirmed that regionalism can be constructed with layers of meaning associated myth, social history and popular culture. It showed that objects can be used to deconstruct pre-conceived notions, assert ownership by repositioning the region as the geographical centre and demonstrated that through the exhibition of

objects the region can be defined or given meaning by the regional community.

Another case study considered in chapter 4, *The Liverpool Map*, was analysed to demonstrate how the MOL reflects regionalism. It too is composed with layers; layers of history, culture, language, folklore and experiences within a concept of regional space. Much of the content within its layers was selected, or written in terms of *the Liverpool Saga* by the regional community. This democratic process was illustrated within cartographic expression establishing an essentially regional map that extended beyond the geographical but was emotionally, historically and socially defined with iconic images, emotive words and regional boundaries.

It was established, in Chapter 4 that both *the Liverpool Map* and *Made Up – the Liverpool Look*, challenge through deconstruction. The *Map* deconstructs the tradition of Western cartography challenging the concepts of global expansion and proprietary exclusion in favour of an inclusive map that depicts a people's region. *Made Up* challenges by deconstructing dichotomies regarding perceptions of fake ('made up') verses 'real' or 'natural'. It positions Scouse style, phrases and their meanings as authentic while establishing Liverpool as a fashion capital. In both of these case studies regionalism is given meaning by the regional community who define style and boundaries. The MOL reflects regional voice by displaying these definitions.

In the *People's Republic*, the complex web of spatial elements demonstrated the potential for performability of

regional voice, consciousness and participation. Performability was identified in the way that people related to Gerard Gardens. For example, when it was demolished it was metaphorically embodied: "I felt as though a piece of me had died", but in this gallery it has been resurrected by the MOL allowing visitors to reclaim this lost connection: "Granddad's place...two up and four along." Performability was also demonstrated in the way that *Made Up - the Liverpool Look* occupied a unique space in the gallery: layers of light and reflection that entices the viewer to move closer in which they become a performer on the regional stage. This phenomenon was made evident in the photo-documentation process because the images captured not only the tangible aspects but also the sensory relationship between human inhabitants and their spaces of regionalism.

Chapter 4 confirmed that regionalism as a genre has a wide scope and depth of application through which the MOL facilitates the stories and realities of its regional community.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine 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.

The answer is that the MOL reflects the region by:

- selecting objects and words that challenge and deconstruct notions and stereotypes;

- selecting objects, words and spaces that are laden with regional iconography (symbols of myth, social history and popular culture) and local expression and therefore articulate a collective consciousness;
- selecting objects and words that evidence a particular place through the historical, social and cultural configurations which shape that place;
- selecting objects and spaces that convey an assertion of ownership: through sustainable rewards and by allowing the regional community to interpret meaning and define boundaries;
- facilitating community involvement in the creation, selection, interpretation and exhibition of objects, words and spaces;
- providing spaces of regionalism for performability of regional voice, collective consciousness and participation and by allowing visitors to use this space as they choose.

This thesis also intended to observe the scope and application of regionalism as a genre through which museums can narrate the stories and realities of their regional communities. As a genre regionalism can be utilised to facilitate these stories and realities on parallel or transversal narrative continuums: from objects, words and spaces each visitors can extract a variety of meanings depending on their background or experience.

In addition, the very nature of regionalism - as a non-fixed entity with permeable boundaries - promotes social

inclusion. This is because it cannot exclude on the basis of ethnicity, gender, political views, socio-economic backgrounds and so on, because everybody has a connection to the region: everyone's opinions are valid.

Lastly this thesis aimed to show that the application of regionalism in museums is significant because spaces of regionalism can accommodate regional voice, consciousness, participation and performability. This was demonstrated in the space at the northern end of *the People's Republic* where a menagerie of spaces exist, some illusionary, some interior, some exterior. Visitors can slip in and out of these spaces, drawing meaning from objects, validating regional voice, and using the interior and exterior landscape to make meaning and in doing so establish regional place: this too is performability. Therefore, regionalism is a genre and an application that can create a people's gallery and a people's museum.

Scope for further study

There were several avenues that could have been explored within this study. A comparative investigation between the MOL and LCM would have demonstrated the difference in regional cultures and their approaches to regional content: Leeds being a more inwardly looking region and Liverpool more outwardly. *Northern Spirit*, the creative history of Newcastle at the Laing Gallery also held potential. However, constraints such as time, resources and finances deemed that such scope was not feasible if this thesis was to be conducted with depth of analysis.

Furthermore, there are aspects of Liverpool's regional culture that have only been touched on in this thesis such as sport culture, dock workers, transport, education. This is because a holistic approach was taken to the MOL's representation of regionalism and some avenues were followed as opposed to others, or as Allen stated in relation to the region 'one cannot study everything'.

In the field of museology, regionalism offers a wealth of possibilities for further studies such as comparative research between different museums or art galleries in the same or different regions or topical research focusing solely on one area such as sport, food, music and so on. Furthermore, the topic of regionalism can also be applied internationally to any given spot at any particular time because, as previously discussed, in a globalised world the local, specific and regional are increasingly relevant, timely and crucial as an area of research.

Approaches to regionalism also require documentation in relation to museum practice: such as acquisition, exhibition, installations, curation, community participation and social inclusion so that the potential of regionalism can be understood, assessed and applied across the industry.

Museology and regionalism – Where to from here?

Regionalism is the antithesis of globalisation, but it is universal. Recently, while working on the final draft of this thesis, I took a break and switched on some daytime television. A real life drama was unfolding: a hostage

situation. Staff and patrons were being held by a gunman in an inner-city café. One television network, situated opposite the café, had managed to secure a few stills and minor camera footage before being evacuated. It was this footage that was broadcasted on continual loop for many hours on all television and internet news providers. The images were laden with visual iconography that was easily readable with or without commentary. A flag of some kind was held at the café window by two hostages, it had Arabic script, strongly suggesting an Islamic motivation. The two women who held up the sign symbolised vulnerability. Footage of CBD workers evacuating Martin's Place and the surrounding streets created dramatic tension. A lingering shot of the Opera House, in lockdown, served as an icon for Sydney and Australia, symbolising a threat to the nation itself. The Lindt logo in the café window, recognisable across the western world, alluded to a threat to western culture. This threat also affected Muslim communities: many Muslim groups felt the need to come forward and publically condemn the gunman's actions in order to suppress a backlash.

The gunman specifically selected that *space* in order to create meaning, to enforce his ideologies upon a *place*. However, it already had meaning as a commercial business area, centre of the City, home to an ANZAC cenotaph and annual dawn service and to the State Offices. Meanwhile, Sydney residents and CBD workers were quickly creating more meanings: a collective consciousness swung into action. This was in the form of social networking “#illridewithyou” in which support was offered on public

transport to Muslims who felt anxious or intimidated during and after the siege, collectively demonstrating a regional voice, articulating that a racial or religious backlash would not be tolerated. When the siege was over thousands paid tribute to the hostage victims and the siege iconography was rapidly replaced with a 'field of flowers'. The community quickly took control of their region, applying shared values and attitudes. Such action is regionalism.

This situation effectively illustrates what Powell means by critical regionalism, and it demonstrates how seemingly unrelated groups may be associated with a particular spot, a particular region at one particular time.

When I began the journey of this thesis tragic events had taken place in Christchurch and discourses around approaches to rebuilding the City region after the earthquake were being canvassed. It seemed that it should be a time to look to a collective consciousness and designs aimed at reflecting local values, customs, and needs of its regional inhabitants and to 'critically engage the current human situation' (Heath, 2009). To embellish those designs with a distinct Cantabrian style and identity and to impress upon the landscape the expressions of a region. To make meaning and to replace a landscape of destruction with a regional landscape just as the regional realists Rita Angus, Doris Lusk, Louise Henderson and W.A.Sutton had reclaimed the Canterbury landscape from standard anglicised representations in the first half of the 20th century,

overlaying that landscape with local meaning and regional identity.

For museums, regionalism provides the opportunity to gather varying perspectives on events and issues relating to a region and its people.

Regionalism can reflect contrasts and contradictions within communities, it can juxtapose individuality with similarity and it can highlight the qualities of individual expression while at the same time asserting a collective consciousness.

Regionalism in museums does not always need to rise from tragedy or as response to injustice or inequality. It can merely celebrate regional communities just for the sake of it.

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