
DISSEMINATING DESIGN:
THE POST-WAR REGIONAL IMPACT
OF THE VICTORIA & ALBERT
MUSEUM'S CIRCULATION
DEPARTMENT

JOANNA STACEY WEDDELL

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the requirements of the University of
Brighton in collaboration with the
Victoria & Albert Museum
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**Disseminating Design:
The Post-war Regional Impact of the Victoria and Albert
Museum's Circulation Department**

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Figure 1: Bill Lee and Arthur Blackburn, Circulation Department Manual Attendants, possibly late 1950s, MA/15/37, No. V143, V&A Archive, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Joanna Weddell
University of Brighton with the Victoria and Albert Museum
AHRC Part-time Collaborative Doctoral Award AH/I021450/1

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis establishes the post-war regional impact of the Victoria and Albert Museum's Circulation Department (Circ) which sent touring exhibitions to museums and art schools around the UK in the period 1947-1977, an area previously unexplored to any substantial depth. A simplistic stereotypical dyad of metropolitan authority and provincial deference is examined and evidence given for a more complex flow between Museum and regions.

The *Introduction* outlines the thesis aims and the Department's role in the dissemination of art and design. The thesis is structured around questions examining the historical significance of Circ, the display and installation of Circ's regional exhibitions, and the flow of influence between regions and museum. *Context* establishes Circ not as a straightforward continuation of Cole's Victorian mission but as historically embedded in the post-war period. The *Historical Study* outlines the Department's origins and then divides into three sections; 1947-60 under Keeper Peter Floud, 1960-75 under Keeper Hugh Wakefield, and 1975-77 until closure, also covering Circ's legacy within the Museum. Debates concerning the industrial and commodified inform an investigation of Circ's acquisitions; design displays are discussed in relation to practices of vision. The evaluation concludes that Circ's approach was tripartite, based on scholarly provenance, attention to design process and embrace of the contemporary, presented with some innovative displays.

Two chapters concerning *Impact on Regional Museums* and *Impact on Schools of Art, Designers & Industry* make an original contribution to knowledge in establishing a balanced picture of the regional impact of the Department. Circ's post-war activities are assessed using new primary research conducted at archives in Brighton, Cardiff, Liverpool, and Manchester, and interviews with former Circ staff. Circ is posited as a uniquely distanced but authoritative locus between state, design culture and industry and as historically significant in design and museology. The *Conclusion* summarises the Circulation model.

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Abbreviations

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Circ	Department of Circulation, Victoria & Albert Museum, in each chapter first given in full (Circulation), then shortened to 'Circ'
COID	Council of Industrial Design
DCA	Design Centre Awards
HMSO	Her/His Majesty's Stationery Office
ICOM	International Council of Museums
NAL	National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum
RCA	Royal College of Art
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
V&A	Victoria & Albert Museum, London
V&AA	Archive of the Victoria & Albert Museum

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This research has been undertaken as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Collaborative Doctoral Award, *Disseminating Design*, a collaboration between the Research Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Centre for Research and Development, University of Brighton, 2010-15. I am grateful for the generous supervisor support received from Professor Jonathan Woodham, University of Brighton, Professor Christopher Breward, University of Edinburgh, Ghislaine Wood, Deputy Director, Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Professor Catherine Moriarty, University of Brighton Design Archives, and Christopher Marsden, Senior Archivist and Head of Designs, Victoria and Albert Museum.

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Modern Age, curated by Breward and Wood. A 4,000 word presentation on 'The Social Implications of Circulation' was delivered to the Social History Society at the University of Leeds, 2013. A session was convened on *Design Objects and the Museum* at the Association of Art Historians 2013 conference at the University of Reading. A work-in-progress seminar of 6,000 words on 'Peter Floud and the ethos of Circulation 1947-1960' was delivered to the V&A Research Department in 2013. A summary of preliminary research was published in a 5,000 word peer-reviewed article in 2012 and in 2016 the research formed the basis of a chapter in a peer-reviewed academic publication edited by the author. Lunchtime lectures on Circulation were delivered at the V&A as part of the public programme in 2013 and 2017. Blogs have been published on the V&A website on Circ objects by Edward Bawden, Lucienne Day, Barbara Hepworth, Alec Issigonis, Rut Bryk, and Harold Cohen.

A work-in-progress seminar on *Unpacking the Metropolitan Monolith: the Victoria & Albert Museum's Circulation Department in the regions* was delivered to the V&A Research Department in September 2015. This seminar prompted a request to present to V&A staff at a roundtable in June 2016 to discuss reviving Circ. In July 2016 the V&A won the Art Fund *Museum of the Year 2016* and Director Martin Roth announced a plan to revive Circ. A further presentation was given to a roundtable attended by regional museums in September 2016. These presentations were part of the process informing the development of DesignLab Nation, supporting regional art and design education with museums and secondary schools, announced in April 2017.

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Finally, I thank my family for their practical support and positive encouragement.

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Observant visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) will have noticed that many objects bear a museum number with the prefix 'Circ'. This prefix is not a reference to some uncertainty about the object's date ('circa') but the abbreviation of a now defunct department of the Museum – the Circulation Department – in-house known simply as 'Circ'. Until government cuts in 1977 resulted in its closure, Circ fulfilled the V&A's longstanding commitment to regional art and design education, through its small and large touring exhibitions. The Department was responsible for loan exhibitions that travelled to two categories of venue – to regional museums, art galleries and public libraries, and to art schools and education colleges, disseminating art and design across the UK. Today widening regional access and cultural regeneration are high on the government agenda for national museums, while design is seen as an important tool for economic success, global competition and improvements in quality of life for all.

This thesis examines Circ in the period 1947-1977 as a means of better understanding the impact of a national museum beyond its London base. The research establishes the role played by Circ in the collection and interpretation of modern objects and in the public dissemination of design across the British Isles, an area previously unexplored to any substantial depth. This study of the achievements and limitations of the Department provides an important vehicle for examining wider issues concerning design promotion after the Second World War. The thesis considers the Department as a uniquely distanced but authoritative locus between state, design culture and industry with implications for the history, theory and practice of design and its intersection with museology.

For Carr, history has a dual function: 'To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery over the society of the present',¹ framed as a 'dialogue between the events of the past and progressively emerging future

¹ Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (London: Macmillan, [1961] 1987), p. 55. The references in this thesis follow the *Modern Humanities Research Association Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors and Editors* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, [2002] 2013).

ends'.² The V&A currently promotes regional access to its national collections through touring exhibitions, a commitment to centres at Sheffield and Dundee and a website with 14.5 million global visitors.³ This project provides a distinct regional and historical perspective on the Museum's contemporary initiatives. The research questions addressed by this thesis are:

1. What is the historical significance of the V&A Circulation Department in the collection and display of contemporary design 1947-1977?
2. What particular design narratives were promoted by the spatial dynamics and installations of the Circulation Department's touring exhibitions at different regional venues?
3. From this study of the regional impact of the Circulation Department, is there evidence for a simplistic model of the operation of influence or for a more complex circulatory flow, regenerating both museum and regions?

These three research questions are addressed in six chapters. This *Introduction* outlines the aims of the thesis and the Department's role in the dissemination of art and design. The thesis is structured around questions examining the historical significance of Circ, the display and installation of Circ's regional exhibitions, and the flow of influence between regions and museum. *Context* establishes Circ not as a straightforward continuation of Cole's Victorian mission but as historically embedded in the post-war period. The *Historical Study* outlines the Department's origins and then divides into three sections; 1947-60 under Keeper Peter Floud, 1960-75 under Keeper Hugh Wakefield, and 1975-77 until closure, also covering Circ's legacy within the Museum. Debates concerning the industrial and commodified inform an investigation of Circ's acquisitions; design displays are discussed in relation to practices of vision. The evaluation concludes that Circ's approach was tripartite, based on scholarly provenance, attention to design process and embrace of the contemporary, presented with some innovative displays.

² Hallett Carr, p. 123.

³ Kati Price, 'The V&A Website: The Inside Story', *V&A Museum*, 21 April 2016 <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/digital-media/the-new-va-website-the-inside-story>> [accessed 25 April 2016].

Two chapters concerning *Impact on Regional Museums* and *Impact on Schools of Art, Designers & Industry* make an original contribution to knowledge in establishing a balanced picture of the regional impact of the Department. Circ's post-war activities are assessed using new primary research conducted at archives in Brighton, Cardiff, Liverpool, and Manchester, and interviews with former Circ staff. Circ's project of democratisation is analysed in relation to power structures and regional displays as state-sponsored interventions. The *Conclusion* summarises the Circulation model.

Background to Disseminating Design to the Regions

Circ has been described as the 'originator' and 'prototype' of the travelling exhibition.⁴ Until closure in 1977, Circ could be considered the oldest such institution for the preparation of travelling exhibitions in the world, originating from the 19th century collections of art and design formed at the Government School of Design from 1837. The School, based originally at Somerset House then from 1852 at Marlborough House, was founded along with its regional satellites as part of the Design Reform initiative, with the aim of reforming British industrial design to compete with foreign markets. These collections circulated around the country from the Central School to regional Schools of Design and were in 1857 incorporated into the South Kensington Museum, later the V&A. The origins of the Museum are well documented⁵ but this thesis has a focus on regional activity, central to Floud's post-war vision for the Department as a continuation of the founding mission (Chapter 3).

The establishment of regional schools of art and museums began in July 1835 when a Select Committee enquired 'into the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts and principles of design among the people (especially the

⁴ Elodie Courter Osborn, rev. by Grace L. McCann Morley, 'Travelling Exhibitions', in *Museums and Monuments X: Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1963), 58-79 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002870eo.pdf>> [accessed 21 March 2012].

⁵ Louise Purbrick, 'The South Kensington Museum: The Building of the House of Henry Cole', in *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and North America*, ed. by Marcia Pointon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 69-86. *The Emergence of the Modern Museum: An Anthology of Nineteenth Century Sources*, ed. by Jonah Siegel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 85.

manufacturing population) of the country'. In 1840 Parliament granted funds for branch schools of design and William Dyce, the Superintendent of the London School (1838-43), formulated plans for 'a museum of English ornamental art'.⁶

Floud cites 1848 as the start of Circ's dissemination of design, emphasising the Department's 'improving' role:

The setting up of these schools led to a demand that they should be supplied with examples of fine design and craftsmanship which would inspire and improve their work; and in 1846 Britain's Board of Trade sent an envoy to Italy to buy a collection of beautiful objects – Renaissance bronzes, Murano glass, Venetian lace, and so on – to be used in the schools. He brought back a large collection, part of which was exhibited in the Central School of Design in London, and the remainder was circulated to the various provincial schools, beginning in 1848.⁷

Floud described 'this business of circulating exhibitions round the country' as a response to 'the low standard of British industrial design' explaining that the rationale was that:

... these Schools would do better work if the students could see fine examples of applied art such as Sevres porcelain or Venetian glass, so, in 1848 a Mr. Gruner was given £100 and sent off to Italy to buy a collection of such things.⁸

The commercial design basis of Circ's collections was emphasised in 1849 when the V&A founding director, Henry Cole, gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Schools of Design saying:

I do not think that these schools were created for aesthetic purposes, or for general educational purposes. I apprehend that the age is so essentially commercial, that it hardly looks to promoting anything of this kind except for commercial purposes.⁹

⁶ Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design* (London: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1963), pp. 52-53 (p. 87).

⁷ Peter Floud, 'Lending by Victoria and Albert Museum', *Museum News*, American Association of Museums, 26 (15 February 1949), p. 7.

⁸ Peter Floud, *Draft Script* [n.d.], V&AA MA/15/14 Circ administrative papers. Wilhelm Heinrich Ludwig Gruner, Prince Albert's advisor 1841-55; Jonathan Marsden, 'Victoria & Albert: Art & Love', *Royal Collection Trust* (23 April 2012) <[http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/sites/default/files/V%20and%20A%20Art%20and%20Love%20\(Marsden\).pdf](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/sites/default/files/V%20and%20A%20Art%20and%20Love%20(Marsden).pdf)> [accessed 16 March 2014].

⁹ Henry Cole quoted in 'South Kensington and the Science and Art Department', *Survey of London: 38: South Kensington Museums Area*, ed. by F.H.W. Sheppard (London: London County Council, 1975), pp. 74-96 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol38>> [accessed 9 April 2012].

It was also in 1849 that the art students at the London School of Design, 'demanded the establishment of a proper museum and some instruction in manufacturing processes'.¹⁰ These distinct aims are elaborated by Tim Barringer, who observes that the V&A was 'redolent of the modernity of international exhibitions, the department store, liberal economics, technical design education and utilitarian reform ideology [as well as] the more traditional curatorial and aesthetic motivations'.¹¹ The collection received a boost from the 1851 Great Exhibition when government authorised 'a sum at least of 5000/ to be expended in decorative examples, which are likely to be of use to the Schools'.¹² The useful, educational aims of these objects were made clear:

a collection of such works, if judiciously selected and systematically arranged, and illustrated with a view to their use in the Schools of Design, and especially with reference to their application to manufactures, would, it appears to my Lords, be of the greatest service in promoting the objects aimed at in the establishment of the Schools of Design.¹³

In 1852 the Museum of Manufactures opened in Marlborough House as part of the Department of Practical Art with Cole as the General Superintendent. In addition to these initiatives in art education were developments in educating the general population as in the same year a 'comprehensive' Circulating Museum was created to go to 'the larger provincial centres' in a specially constructed railway truck.¹⁴ This venture resulted in the 1,600 objects of the collection being viewed by 307,000 people over the next four years. A second version from 1860 resulted in a new collection of 900 objects being seen by 429,000 citizens.¹⁵ Whilst the Museum was framed as 'the storehouse of the nation', its regional activities were seen as 'missionary work', framing a binary opposition between centre and periphery.¹⁶

¹⁰ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, p. 221.

¹¹ Tim Barringer, 'Victorian Culture and the Museum: Before and After the White Cube', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 11.1 (2006), 133-145.

¹² 'Prospects for the Schools of Design', *The Journal of Design and Manufactures* 6, (1852), 89-90 <<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/DLDecArts.JournDesv06>> [accessed 26 April 2016].

¹³ Board of Trade letter in 'Prospects for the Schools of Design'.

¹⁴ Peter Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department, Its History and Scope* (London: V&A Museum, HMSO, [n.d.] post-1949).

¹⁵ Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department, Its History and Scope*.

¹⁶ Anthony Burton, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publications, 1999) p. 104.

The Museum was renamed the Museum of Ornamental Art in 1853 and in 1857 moved to become the South Kensington Museum, next to the School of Design, with Cole becoming the first Director from 1866.¹⁷ It was also in 1853 that the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for the Board of Trade became

desirous of encouraging the formation of local museums of art, and enabling the students of the local branch schools, who cannot visit London, to inspect such of the works of ornamental art belonging to the Museum at Marlborough House, as may be likely to have a useful influence on the special manufactures of their respective localities.¹⁸

All 'modern' objects were removed from South Kensington to Bethnal Green in 1880, a development that signalled the growth of curatorial interest in historic objects divorced from their educational value. In 1884 Cole could write of regional design education that:

The Board of Trade has sanctioned arrangements by which local schools of art may ... borrow articles from the Museum, in each year, during the period between the 15 July and 15 September, for exhibition in their own localities ... the whole country is made to participate in the advantages and prosperity of the central Museum, and its benefits are not limited to residents in the metropolis.¹⁹

In spite of this worthy focus on the regions in rhetoric, in practice the Museum was nascently metro-centric. The Arts & Crafts designer William Morris, founder of the London firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co, commented in 1887 on viewing a tapestry at South Kensington that 'properly speaking it was bought for me, since scarcely anybody will care a damn for it'.²⁰

The physical expansion of the Museum at South Kensington had an impact on Circ as, in preparation for the opening of the large Aston Webb range of buildings on Cromwell Road in 1909, there was a major museological re-organisation into craft/material categories rather than cultural or chronological. A distinct Circ

¹⁷ *Art and Design for All*, ed. by Julius Bryant (London: V&A Publications, 2012), p. 141.

¹⁸ Anna Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The Making of the Collection* (Leicester: Windward, 1980) p. 12.

¹⁹ Henry Cole, *First Report of the Department of Practical Art* (1884) p. 286, quoted in Mark Goodwin, 'Objects, Belief and Power in Mid-Victorian England: The Origins of the Victoria and Albert Museum', in *Objects of Knowledge*, ed. by Susan Pearce (London: A & C Black, 1990), pp. 9-49 (p. 24).

²⁰ William Morris quoted in Somers Cocks, p. 103.

collection was created as each V&A materials-based Department transferred part of its collection, amounting to about 10,000 objects, for loan to regional museums, separate from the collection for art schools. The Departments in 1908 were Metalwork, Sculpture, Woodwork, Textiles, Paintings, Engraving, Illustration & Design, Ceramics & Glass.²¹ Tony Bennett, notes that the:

South Kensington Museum thus marked a significant turning-point in the development of British museum policy in clearly enunciating the principles of the modern museum conceived as an instrument of public education. It provided the axis around which London's museum complex was to develop throughout the rest of the century and exerted a strong influence on the development of museums in the provincial cities and towns.²²

Bennett identifies an inter-relationship between culture and modern forms of liberal government where culture is 'a resource that might be used to regulate the field of social behaviour in endowing individuals with new capacities for self-monitoring and self-regulation'.²³ Circ was part of the Ministry of Education with a significant focus on the processes and materials of technical art and design education in the post-war period so can be read as a clear continuation of Bennett's model. The issues emerging in the Museum's early history, such as equality between South Kensington and the regions, curatorial relationships with industry and commerce, and the use of collections in education, remained constant for the post-war period.²⁴

Post-War Dissemination of Design

The belief, first articulated by 19th century architect and theorist Gottfried Semper, that 'Collections and public monuments are the true teachers of a free society' harmonised with the wider post-war political mood.²⁵ Circ's project was to continue to operate that 'fruitful system of circulating through the whole of England works of

²¹ *Regulations relating to The Victoria & Albert Museum, The Bethnal Green Branch Museum and the Museum of Practical Geology, Jermyn Street* (London: Board of Education, HMSO, 1908).

²² Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), pp. 70-72 & 81.

²³ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, pp. 20-21.

²⁴ See special issue on South Kensington Museum, *Journal of the History of Collections*, 14.1 (2002). Goodwin, pp. 9-49.

²⁵ Gottfried Semper, 'Science, Industry and Art, Part III', 1852, in *Gottfried Semper: The four elements of architecture and other writings*, trans. by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 160.

art belonging to the museum', with evidence that they aimed to follow Cole's model of being 'useful and suggestive'.²⁶ In 1951 the International Council of Museums published a limited distribution paper by Floud which illuminates his approach.²⁷ In Floud's view 'all museums can be of use to intelligent teachers' and museums are 'anxious to be of use', offering not merely the chance to 'accumulate new information' but 'an extra breadth and reality that is unattainable in the classroom'. Exhibits were to combine text and images with 'more detailed text than would be justified in a general exhibition' and photographs of teaching in progress. Floud stressed the importance of established channels of distribution without which circulating exhibitions would 'moulder in the storage vaults of the bureaucratic organisations'.²⁸

In Britain, the post-war plan was that 'the arts are to be decentralised and are to be more easily and generally enjoyed by the public, [so] the contribution which can be made by provincial galleries and museums is of great importance' suggesting a re-appraisal of the dialectic between central and local government.²⁹ Circ had to contend with both contemporary metropolitan views of 'an environmental theory of creativity' where a provincial setting suppressed design quality, and regional suspicion of 'so-called designers, who have been polluted by the foetid atmosphere of London'.³⁰ Floud discussed didactic displays in a 1952 article,³¹ showing that he did not believe that regional differences were significant:

The determining factor here is the mentality of the average visitor, and I suppose that this does not differ so very much from one museum to

²⁶ Henry Cole quoted by John Pope-Hennessy, 'Session 2, Museums Association National Conference', *Museums Journal*, 75.3 (1975) 110.

²⁷ Peter Floud, 'Commentary on a Projected International Circulating Exhibition: 'The Museum, an Educational Centre'', typescript memorandum, International Council of Museums (ICOM), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), WS/101.108, Paris, 30 October 1951 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001789/178939eb.pdf>> [accessed 14 April 2011].

²⁸ Floud, 'Commentary on a Projected International Circulating Exhibition'.

²⁹ VE Cotton, 'Foreword', *1935-1945 Some Acquisitions of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1945), p. 1. Exhibition, National Gallery, London, May 1945. Councillor VE Cotton CBE, Chair, Libraries, Museums, Arts and Music Committee, Liverpool.

³⁰ Midlands Industrial Design Association, 1951, quoted in Patrick J. Maguire, 'Industrial Design: Aesthetic Idealism and Economic Reality', in *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain*, ed. by Patrick J. Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), pp. 111-121 (p. 113).

³¹ Peter Floud, 'Changing Fashions in Museum Teaching', *Museums Journal* 52 (1952) 215-224. Paper read at Museums Association Conference, Oxford, 24 July 1952; Floud was Chair, ICOM International Subject Committee on Children's Activities in Museums.

another. It might be possible to make a distinction between the national museums and the local ones, but I even doubt that. The task is very much the same in all ...

Further complicating a simplistic centre/periphery model, Floud's staff similarly understood that Circ aimed to reach out:

equally to every local authority and every parliamentary constituency in the land. More than twice as many people were reckoned to catch its shows, for what they were worth, as visited South Kensington itself, and they made a constant trickle of grass root introductions to the collections.³²

In line with this approach to access for all was the wide range of Circ's travelling shows (access to all) which encompassed both applied and fine art, seen by Circ staff as 'the crucial mix'.³³ Regional venues received fine art and design exhibitions at a ratio of around 1:2 and both are covered to some extent in this thesis in order to reflect Circ's range and balance of activities, bearing in mind the thesis title of *Disseminating Design*. For example, in 1966/67 Circ provided museums and galleries with 86 touring exhibitions of which 61 were on design (71%), whilst for schools of art there were 21 shows of which 13 were arguably on design (62%). In 1973/74, Circ provided museums and galleries with 65 touring exhibitions of which 48 could be classified as of design (74%); for schools of art there were 23 shows of which 15 could be categorised as design (65%).³⁴ Floud characterised the loan collections as consisting not only of historic material but also 'contemporary decorative and industrial art' encompassing 'almost the whole field of decorative and applied art'.³⁵

Circ was seen by the rest of the Museum as 'a sort of hot-bed of radical thought, really, and a troublesome place' as they 'went more into the fields of design', as

³² Carol Hogben, letter to Dr Alan Borg, Director, V&A, 16 November 1999, Accession A0655, V&AA.

³³ Elizabeth Knowles (b1943) interviewed by Matthew Partington, 21 April 2010, transcript by Joanna Weddell, with thanks to Linda Sandino, V&A Oral History Project, V&AA. Elizabeth Knowles, (previously Underhill, then Bailey) Museum Assistant, Art Schools section, 1965-1977.

³⁴ *Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1966-67* (London: HMSO, 1967), NAL. *Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1973-74* (London: HMSO, 1974), NAL.

³⁵ Floud, 'Lending by Victoria and Albert Museum', p. 7.

Elizabeth Knowles, Circ Museum Assistant, 1965-77, explained.³⁶ Even Circ's shows of 'Rouault etchings and Matisse lithographs and Picasso' were not highly regarded by the main curatorial departments who 'wouldn't countenance an original print by an artist in those media as being of any worth'. Collecting photography resulted in Circ staff being 'hailed up in front of John Pope-Hennessy and asked to explain why we wanted to spend £20 buying a photograph', and when acquiring graphic design by Milton Glaser 'again John Pope-Hennessy said why on earth do you want this stuff ... what is its merit?'³⁷ The 'curatorial sphere' of the main departments 'had world class experts working on the collection but not a lot came out whereas with Circulation the whole ethos was getting it out'. Circ's objects were 'never intended to be carefully kept forever', but rather 'put together with the intention of showing to the nation what art and design could be, with the idea of improving design, industrially as well as aesthetically'.³⁸ Circ, then, may be seen to resist the dominant scholar-curator model in favour of what Suzanne MacLeod terms the 'welfare model' of access and outreach: 'one of active use where learning, the exchange of knowledge, appropriation and dialogue are valued'.³⁹ Circ was disbanded in 1977 just as this revisionist model began to gain ground.

Literature Review

This thesis will use post-colonial theory to examine the oppositional concepts of centre/periphery, metropolitan/vernacular, in relation to exhibitions that tour from an expert, authoritative, colonizing heart to the ignorant, receptive, native outpost. Post-colonial approaches have been frequently applied to ethnographic museum displays, however Barringer specifically compares the regional project of Circ with the Museum's wider imperial approach:

The early administration of the museum strikingly paralleled the methods of colonial authorities. Objects were sent to the provinces in touring exhibitions

³⁶ Knowles, interviewed by Partington.

³⁷ Knowles, interviewed by Partington. Milton Glaser acquisitions include C.25238-C.25262, now Word & Image Department.

³⁸ Knowles, interviewed by Partington.

³⁹ Suzanne MacLeod, *Museum Architecture: A New Biography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 2-3.

organised by a circulation department, and tight central control was exerted over local art education with regular inspection by officers from the centre, strategies which underscored the authority of the central institution.⁴⁰

This thesis asks whether it is relevant to use the model of colonization to explore the impact of touring exhibitions on the material culture of both the 'colonized' regions and the 'imperial' museum. The paradigm of centre and periphery may prove limited when examining the regions as autonomous power bases with their own satellites and peripheries and a complex pattern of relationships and interaction between Circ and the regions emerges. This innovative model questions assumptions about the inherent 'good' of touring exhibitions and investigates the motivation for and cultural function of touring exhibitions. The research examines the extent to which a perceived need for touring exhibitions is driven either by a colonizing desire on the part of the centre (museum/state) to have a reforming impact on the periphery (regions), by the tacit acknowledgement of the centre that the periphery is significant and cannot be ignored, or by the notional failure of 'native' regional design, following Patrick Maguire and Jonathan Woodham.⁴¹

Can Circ's post-war touring exhibitions be read as unique museological hybrids between official and popular culture that acted against social exclusion? In post-colonial theory hybridity has been seen as the 'ultimate reassertion' of the dyad and one aim will be to interrogate and expose power relations which facilitate easy categories such as centre/periphery, dominant/ subaltern, as discussed by Annie Coombes.⁴² Following Bennett's Foucauldian approach Circ may be seen as placed at the centre of modern relations between culture and government, an instrument of social governance in line with the 'new museology'.⁴³ Keeper Peter Floud's membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain (till 1956) and the art

⁴⁰ Tim Barringer, 'The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project', in *Colonialism and the Object*, ed. by Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), pp. 11-27 (p. 14). Ruth Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to Multiculturalism?', *Museum and Society*, 8.2 (2010), 63-79, notes the Museum's early foray into a 'post-colonial' show at a regional outpost: *Petals from a Lotus*, Cliffe Castle, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, October 1983-July 1984.

⁴¹ Maguire, 'Industrial Design', p. 113, details contemporary views of regional designers as unoriginal and without a sense of style in comparison to the metropolitan.

⁴² Annie E. Coombes, 'Inventing the 'Postcolonial': Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating', *New Formations* 18 (1992) 39-52.

⁴³ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p.20.

school background of members of Circ during this period argue for an inclusive social purpose rather than a crudely didactic aim to support existing hierarchies of institutional taste and authority.⁴⁴ Bennett quotes Foucault: 'To work with a government implies neither subjection nor global acceptance. One can simultaneously work and be restive'. Circ's left-wing art school staff may fit Bennett's category of 'cultural technicians' who practice and negotiate principled, policy-oriented pragmatism.⁴⁵

Barringer on museology and colonialism provides an interesting perspective on regionalism in relationship to the V&A, covering Ruskin in Sheffield, and the Jaipur Museum.⁴⁶ As a 'museum within a museum', Circ provides an example that avoids fitting neatly into either of Barringer's categories. To paraphrase, these categories are either large, impersonal, bureaucratic, systematic, liberal in its economic and political instincts, drawing attention using all the techniques of the modern media, a world in miniature, offering complete series, grand taxonomies, spectacular vistas; or small, intensely personal, radical-Tory in its politics, happy to remain obscure, and provincial, offering individual people small insights that revealed aesthetic, ethical and spiritual truths. How did modern design evolve in relation to Circ's touring exhibitions? For Barringer, 'the removal of objects from a colonial periphery to the imperial centre profoundly alters the ways in which they are understood'. This research asks whether selected specific objects toured by Circ confound and resist a colonial meta-narrative by originating from outside the metropolitan centre, complicating a simplistic model of the flow and operation of influence. Barringer argues for 'a reversal of widely held assumptions about centre and periphery' and notes the regional and colonial sources of the wealth of benefactors to metropolitan collections.⁴⁷ The thesis discusses whether the evidence for the impact of the touring collection creates a model of more circulatory flow, regenerating design culture in both the capital and the regions, complicating a straightforward imperial reading. Circ does seem to have

⁴⁴ Linda Sandino, 'Art School Trained Staff and Communists in the V&A Circulation Department, c1947-1958', in *Artists Work in Museums: Histories, Interventions, Subjectivities*, ed. by Mathilda Pye and Linda Sandino (Bath: Wunderkammer Press, 2013), pp. 83-106.

⁴⁵ Tony Bennett, 'Useful Culture', *Cultural Studies* 6.3 (1992) 395-408 <www.tandfonline.com> [accessed 25 May 2011].

⁴⁶ Tim Barringer, 'Victorian Culture and the Museum'.

⁴⁷ Tim Barringer, 'Victorian Culture and the Museum', 139.

encouraged a display approach that facilitated the acquisition of knowledge in the regions, a 'site of intellectual anarchy' rather than furthering Bennett's 'museology of paranoia', as Barringer phrases it.⁴⁸

The interdisciplinary field of visual culture relates well to the taxonomically open approach of Circ particularly as this field questions the act of seeing – though emerging in the late 1970s just as Circ folded.⁴⁹ Circ's practice and activities implicitly questioned curatorial authority through its stance within the V&A. Compared to other Departments, Circ had a more democratic hierarchy, art school staff schooled in a different way to other 'establishment' curators, a free approach to periods and materials in its acquisitions, and a pursuit of accessibility for all regions and classes, whatever their 'cultural capital' (albeit that it would not have been so phrased). Circ's embrace of popular culture, whether through David Hockney and Paolozzi prints (high pop art) or through Victorian Christmas cards (historic but low art ephemera), can be seen to operate as part of Stuart Hall's 'post-museum', representing trans-historical shifts in the popular from marginalised to fetishised. For Hall, as for Circ, the category 'popular culture' can play a formative role in social change, a negotiation between dominant and subaltern cultures, revealing power relations. Hall's re-conceptualising of museum collections and practices as 'temporary stabilisations' fits well with the openly transitory nature of the Circ show.⁵⁰ In terms of cultural positioning, following Christopher Frayling's interpretations, the visitor to a post-war Circ show can be categorised as a 'citizen' rather than the more contemporary 'audience', with the conscious loading of the former as having rights and dignities, albeit in a role subordinate to state, and the latter having a role solely as a consumer, even though with apparent choice within the 'culture industry'.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, pp. 59-88.

⁴⁹ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 2.

⁵⁰ Stuart Hall, 'Museums of Modern Art and the End of History', in *Annotations 6: Modernity and Difference*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2001) 8-23.

<http://www.iniva.org/library/archive/people/h/hall_stuart/museums_of_modern_art_and_the_end_of_history> [accessed 14 May 2010].

⁵¹ Sir Christopher Frayling, 'Slaying the Sixth Giant: the Arts and Aspiration', University of Brighton Festival of Research, 22 May 2013, used these terms to compare participation in the arts in the immediate post-war period and the 1990s. Frayling was Chair, Arts Council England 2004-9.

Michel Foucault's ideas of space as fundamental in any exercise of power are considered in relation to the specifics of selected regional exhibition venues.⁵² The symbolism of architecture, its spatial dynamic and the rituals created through installation are all powerful agents on the experience of design, following the politically engaged critique of art museums by Carol Duncan.⁵³ Doreen Massey proposes a multiplicity of independent trajectories that expose and undermine the relationship between power and knowledge and these concepts are helpful when analysing the spatial dynamics of narrative displays in the regions.⁵⁴ Suzanne MacLeod examines museological narrative as 'the physical evidence of social relations', a productive approach in transcribing representations of exhibitions encountered by museum audiences.⁵⁵

Michael Baxandall, who argued for visual literacy through the period eye, expounded on a model of viewing drawn from an analysis of displays of ethnographic objects not designed for exhibition, which, he stated, make them 'improper' viewing.⁵⁶ Baxandall's model is significant for a discussion of the display of industrial design objects, also not designed for viewing, where analysis of the setting of the display setting is important. Following this model, for touring exhibitions to effectively influence good design and its appreciation, the active viewer, or nascent designer who the objects aimed to influence, would be held to need plenty of intellectual working space between the object and the 'label' (encompassing the totality of display constructions). An analysis of touring exhibitions from a post-colonial viewpoint provides an opportunity to examine strategies of resistance and barriers to influence – important in considering the desirability and effectiveness of such undertakings in improving design.

⁵² Michel Foucault, 'Space, Power and Knowledge', in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. by Simon During (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 161-169.

⁵³ Carol Duncan, *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995).

⁵⁴ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).

⁵⁵ Suzanne MacLeod, 'This Magical Place: the Making of Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Politics of Landscape, Art and Narrative', in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. by Suzanne MacLeod, Laura Hourston Hanks, and Jonathan Hale (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 48-62.

⁵⁶ Michael Baxandall, 'Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Useful Objects', in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 33-41.

Mieke Bal, argues for cultural analysis as part of the new museology pursuing ‘an interdisciplinarity that is neither non-disciplinary, nor methodologically eclectic, nor indifferent’ and seeing the object as subject ‘participating in the construction of theoretical views’.⁵⁷ This thesis aims to return agency to the objects acquired and exhibited by Circulation and Bal is helpful here. Bal differentiates between collections with a narrative that contributes meaning and collecting for a purpose that is unconnected to meaning. Bal’s example is a personal one, a friend who collects vases not because they are useful for different sizes of flower display (functional) but to give meaning, so creating a collection. Following this paradigm, Circ’s objects, originally formed with a functional purpose – to improve the standards of design education and enable industry to compete in international markets – have become a collection with a range of narrative interpretations, mirroring the whole Museum’s evolution towards a connoisseur approach.⁵⁸ Bal’s analysis of the American Museum of Natural History looks at a nineteenth-century colonial project in its twentieth-century educational role, making a parallel with Circ’s own evolution; as Bal puts it “‘I” says to “you” what “they” are like’. Bal holds that the physical tour of the museum produces a narrative of the knowledge acquired and retained, reinforcing the importance of analysis of the spatial dynamics of specific regional venues.⁵⁹

Bal characterizes a linguistic museum ‘discourse’, where the first person or curator speaks, the second person or visitor is ‘talked to’ and ‘listens’, and the third ‘person’ or object is ‘talked about’. Bal sees the first person curator as hidden behind ‘realistic narratives’ which are truth-functional, obvious gestures of display which act to conceal or erase the agency of interpretation and deny the second person visitor the opportunity to question authority. Bal defines traditional institutional framing in order to offer an alternative Foucauldian power structure defined as ‘friendship’; in this structure the visitor and object become equal ‘second persons’ in a dialectic relation.

⁵⁷ Mieke Bal, *Double Exposure: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 11.

⁵⁸ Mieke Bal, ‘Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting’, in *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), pp. 97-115.

⁵⁹ Mieke Bal, ‘Telling, Showing, Showing Off: A Walking Tour’, in *A Mieke Bal Reader* (London: University of Chicago Press, [1992] 2006), pp. 169-204 (p. 173.).

Helene Illeris, in her examination of Danish museums, categorises viewing according to three types.⁶⁰ With the 'disciplined eye' the visitor to the traditional museum 'unconditionally' adopts the curator's own practice of viewing the object, like a pupil following the rules of high culture. With the 'aesthetic eye' the visitor to the elitist modern white cube gallery practices their own innate and individual appreciation of objects that, at least partly, enter into a free and dialectic relation with the visitor, stripped as they are of interpretation. The apparent neutrality of the white cube, however, 'permits' visitors to deny or refute the role of the 'aesthetic eye' through their lack of response to or understanding of the object. With the last category, the 'desiring eye', Illeris posits its distinctiveness as in part dependent on the separate independent space or workshop beyond the gallery, where visitors are motivated to respond to and learn from objects, re-conquering the curatorial first person role through a creative experience (thanks to an institutional frame that is structured to stimulate such a role). The desiring eye's re-positioning of the visitor can also be related to post-war conceptual art's challenge to the gallery context. Illeris recounts a growing recognition by museums since the end of the 20th century that the elitist 'disciplined' and 'aesthetic' modes of viewing fail visitors, and a consequent move away from cultural authority towards the engaged learning of the desiring eye. Fiona Candlin on handling and touch in the museum posits a hybrid space, simultaneously experienced as a disembodied, optic space and as embodied and haptic, and these concepts are relevant and helpful.⁶¹ Returning to Bal's approach to museum discourse characterised as 'friendship', this thesis examines audience relationships with Circ objects, the specifically self-fashioning function of the engagement of student designers with the museum object, a form of interaction and mode of viewing distinct to museums of design, as quantitatively assessed by Helen Charman.⁶²

⁶⁰ Helene Illeris, 'Visual Events and the Friendly Eye: Modes of Educating Vision in New Educational Settings in Danish Art Galleries', *Museum and Society*, 7.1 (2009), 16-31 <<https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/illeris.pdf>> [accessed 8 May 2012].

⁶¹ Fiona Candlin, 'Don't Touch! Hands Off! Art, Blindness and the Conservation of Expertise', *Body Society*, 10.1 (2004), 71-90 <<http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/775/>> [accessed 2 March 2017].

⁶² Helen Charman, 'Designerly Learning: Workshops for Schools at the Design Museum', *Design and Technology Education: An International Journal*, 15.3 (2010), 28-40.

The rising status, material and cultural value of design objects of the 20th century may be thought to promote a return to a connoisseur approach to curatorial authority. The appropriation of the department store vitrine for the touring exhibition may represent an attempt to aestheticise the production of commodities, or show that cultural production has itself submitted to commodification, following Paul Wood.⁶³ The background of Circ staff in department store display and the Department's preference for using external rather than in-house designers, is noted.

As discussed in Chapter 3, for Floud, the innovative, pioneer designer has a duty to address machine production,⁶⁴ just as it follows that the Museum, as an arm of 'progressive government',⁶⁵ has a duty to select and exhibit such objects. That the designer of the mass produced will be a known and named individual is one of the tenets of capitalist forms of production. Following Mark Banks,⁶⁶ the autonomous and independent designer, apparently operating beyond considerations of profit and cost, is paradoxically necessary for the production of additional value in everyday objects. In Circ shows Floud takes care to include the machine-made and commercially produced object when it is by a known designer. Contemporary industrial design is to be part of the Circ remit. From Floud's knowledge of Victorian design practice he is clear that separation of design and execution is acceptable, and fears that the dominance of designer makers will lead to a decline in standards for the mass-produced objects used in everyday life.

The model of craft as protest was ably deconstructed by Floud in his studies of Morris; Floud referred to 'the gigantic all-embracing contradiction of capitalism itself'.⁶⁷ Original creative expression and commodification for profit are not mutually exclusive. The ethical and the economic are inter-related. As Glenn Adamson has shown, craft's position as the oppositional anti-industrial 'other' was

⁶³ Paul Wood, 'Commodity', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. by Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 382-406.

⁶⁴ Peter Floud, 'The Crafts Then and Now', *The Studio*, 145.721 (1953) 126-135.

⁶⁵ Peter Floud, 'British Exhibitions of Selected Designs', *Design*, 3 (1953) 24-25.

⁶⁶ Mark Banks, 'Craft Labour and Creative Industries', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 16.3 (2010), 305-321 <<http://oro.open.ac.uk/23747/2/15C5B11A.pdf>> [accessed 22 February 2013].

⁶⁷ Peter Floud, Art Workers' Guild lecture, 18 November 1955, in *Tributes to Peter Floud: The Published Writings of Peter Floud* (Dublin: William Morris Society, 1960), pp.1-5.

itself a creation.⁶⁸ Helen Rees argues for an integrated view of design as visual culture, a synthesis of culture and commerce, in contrast to the view of design museums as paradoxes where the commonplace and everyday intrude into the sacred space of the gallery.⁶⁹ Floud can be seen to question the total autonomy of the creative designer and emphasise the need for cultural objects to be produced not just in the interest of profit and commodification but also as part of the effective incorporation of the mechanised into society. In the post-war period this thesis regards Floud and Circ as part of a state framework that negotiates with the markets of mass production for their absorption into culture.

Post-war critiques of museums and their engagement with the public illuminate contemporary attitudes to Circ from within the Museum and more widely, as with Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper's analysis and critique of cultural capital as elite practice.⁷⁰ Their 1960s surveys of European, and in particular French, regional art museums were undertaken in the period being studied for Circ and so reflect a similar historical context and attitudes, particularly in their emphasis on breaking down the inequality created by barriers of social class. Those conducting the surveys interacted with and drew upon the work of many of the organisations with which Circ staff were involved, such as the International Council of Museums and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. The thrust of the 1969 work was to analyse cultural and aesthetic traditions according to visitor profiles, variously defined as upper, conservative, cultivated, aristocratic, and bourgeois, or disadvantaged, uninformed, industrial, manual, and working class. This focus on equality of access to museums by different social classes can usefully be seen as comparable to the priority given by Circ's to equality of access for all, even though visitor numbers and class are only one measure of regional impact.

⁶⁸ Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

⁶⁹ Helen Rees, 'The Culture of Consumption: Design Museums as Educators or Tastemakers?', in *The Authority of the Consumer*, ed. by Russell Keat, Nigel Whiteley and Nicholas Abercrombie (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.143-153.

⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel with Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, trans. by Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Cambridge: Polity Press [1969] 1991).

The European surveys examined exhibitions on the full range of fine and decorative art, as covered by the V&A Museum and Circ, and are therefore particularly relevant to the dissemination of design. For example Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper⁷¹ discuss the case of simultaneous shows at Lille Museum where what they considered a more accessible 'department store' display of Danish design drew an audience of no wider social class than 'high art' exhibitions of 18th century painting and Egyptian art. Their work makes a plea for more display information to 'deconsecrate' the museum for working-class visitors but notes that a 1956 'outreach' experiment in Limoges failed to change visitor profiles. According to Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper, lower class visitors were more likely to visit their local museum and the thesis places this contemporary milieu against Circ's explicit project of conflating hierarchy, providing information for all and extending shows to locations close to regional audiences. These authors also criticise the detachment of history from technique, and the thesis connects this viewpoint to Circ's conscious and persistent engagement with both artistic tradition and methods and processes. Circ's ethos may be seen as a contrast to their criticism of 'the whole French teaching system' and the consequent promotion of consumption at the expense of production.⁷²

Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper question the level of material provided for visitors with less cultural capital, an area addressed by Circ with their explicitly more didactic information for touring shows to the regions. Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper's work has received a great deal of scholarly attention, but the way that Circ, and Floud, anticipated many of their concerns by incorporating historic, contemporary and process examples has not previously been noted. This post-war interest in the working class viewpoint is mirrored in academic history, for example EP Thompson's first 'history from below', his study of William Morris published in 1955, two years after Circ's *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* (VEDA)

⁷¹ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, *The Love of Art*, p. 89.

⁷² Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, *The Love of Art*, p. 60.

show, and featuring a designer politically sympathetic to both Thompson and Floud.⁷³

Methodology

After consideration of the time available, this thesis excludes the study of:

- Loans to Secondary Schools (discontinued post-war)
- The National Loan Collection of Lantern-slides (overtaken by digital access)
- Grant-in-Aid scheme (extant)

The Circulation Department's activities covered several spheres and the areas targeted for a study of regional impact are:

- Loans to Museums and Art Galleries
- Loans to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges

Research Question 1: Historical Significance

What is the historical significance of the V&A Circulation Department in the collection and display of art and design 1947-1977?

In order to assess the historical significance of Circ in its wider context a variety of sources were consulted. The key to a balanced and successful assessment was a thorough understanding of context, rather than a narrow focus on the activity of the Department.

A study of the Department's activity from 1947 until closure in 1977 has yet to be made; published histories of the Department fully cover its Victorian origins and history up to the immediate post-war period. Extensive primary research was undertaken in the V&A Archive at Blythe House which holds the remaining records of Circ, albeit in fragmentary form due to hasty closure. The post-war understanding of the history of the Department is covered by the then Keeper Floud in both a small book and lengthy articles, with a UNESCO article also covering the context of circulating exhibitions in Europe and America.⁷⁴ Floud's

⁷³ E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Leeds: Lawrence & Wishart, 1955). Peter Floud, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* (London: HMSO, 1952).

⁷⁴ Peter Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department*. Peter Floud, 'Lending by Victoria and Albert Museum'. Peter Floud, 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum', *Museum: Museums and Circulating Exhibitions* 3.4 (Paris: UNESCO, 1950) 296-303.

histories are germane in that they offer factual information uncovered by a skilled researcher with extended access to primary material and also indicate the priorities and interests of the Keeper as he formulated the post-war ethos of Circ. A joint 1959 publication on the operation of touring collections by Circ and the ACGB provides a good starting point for comparison of these leading services. Wakefield and White give details of the organisation of their respective touring exhibitions, valuable for the clear distinction between the values and aims of each organisation and for the indication of the wider regional museum context.⁷⁵ Circ's history is briefly reiterated in a later 1963 UNESCO manual.⁷⁶ Circ's formal activities are discussed in the Department's own summaries of the year's activities and in prospectuses issued to art schools and museums (intermittent, 1947-1977) which were accessed at the National Art Library (NAL) and the V&A Archive (V&AA). The Department's own review and printed Prospectus for each year (some biennial) give a good overview of achievement but naturally do not analyse trends, evolution or its own importance in relation to other travelling exhibitions or loans services. This detailed investigation revealed areas where the existing literature is contradicted enabling an original contribution; for example regarding Floud's attitudes to industrial design as detailed by design historian Charlotte Benton.⁷⁷ The *Museums Journal*, issued monthly, printed a summary of 'temporary' exhibitions at regional museums which covered Circ, ACGB and Arts Exhibition Bureau shows. This source enabled a comparative and quantitative survey of the geographical spread of the organisations sending out travelling shows, providing a balanced view. Monographs and surveys of the art and design of this period were examined for the omission or mention of the Department, and for the inclusion or omission of the objects acquired.

The historical significance of the Department within the Museum can partly be assessed from the inclusion of Circ objects in current displays and exhibitions. The

⁷⁵ Hugh Wakefield and Gabriel White, *Circulating Exhibitions: Handbook for Museum Curators: Part F: Temporary Activities: Section 1* (London: Museums Association, 1959).

⁷⁶ Osborn, rev. by McCann Morley, 'Travelling Exhibitions', pp. 58-79.

⁷⁷ Charlotte Benton, 'An Insult to Everything the Museum Stands for or 'Ariadne's Thread' to 'Knowledge' and 'Inspiration'? Daniel Libeskind's Extension for the V&A and Its Context Part II', *Journal of Design History*, 10. 3 (1997), 309-328. Benton refers to Floud's letter to Gordon Russell, 15 August 1957, which would seem reliable, however, Pyrex was acquired, Circ.160-1949.

opening of the Museum's new Dr Susan Weber Furniture Gallery prompted a research visit to judge the significance of Circ's collecting; this material relates to the study of the 1970 *Modern Chairs* travelling show. Oral histories, obituaries and diaries were used to draw an informed conclusion on the status of the Department as viewed from within by its own staff and as viewed from without by Keepers and curators in other Departments. New oral history interviews were undertaken with past members of Circ which provided a specific focus on the regional impact of the Department. A research trip to mid-Wales and oral history interview with the former Deputy Keeper of Circulation, Carol Hogben, resulted in him generously contributing a series of documents on the Department to support the research project. Most of these documents were not available in the V&A Archive or NAL and several of the original documents are unique (annotated exhibition catalogues, for example) and have proved valuable primary research sources for the history of the Department. The V&A Oral History Project led by Linda Sandino gives a yet wider range of voices on the loss to the regions than has yet reached the published literature. Interviews with several Circulation Department staff (Barkley, Coachworth, Elzea, Hogben, Knowles, Morris, Opie, see Chapter 3) were previously undertaken by Matthew Partington, Linda Sandino and Anthony Burton; these have only partly been released. Relevant sections of existing oral history interviews with former members of Circ were transcribed for use and passed back for the use of the organisers of the V&A Oral History Project. Obituaries of other Circ staff have also been consulted (Aslin, Bury, Floud, Morris, Wakefield) as have assessments of the contributions of these staff.⁷⁸ These oral testimonies are considered through Alessandro Portelli's work on the unique qualities and values of oral histories in relation to notions of credibility.⁷⁹ V&A Research Fellow Linda Sandino's work on the curatocracy and its public service ethos holds good for the spirit of Circ.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For example, Jennifer Hawkins Opie, 'Barbara Morris at the V&A: Notes on a Colleague, Friend and Mentor', *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, 34 (2010) 9-13.

⁷⁹ Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 63-74.

⁸⁰ Linda Sandino, 'A Curatocracy: Who and What is a V&A Curator?' in *Museums and Biographies: Stories, Objects and Identities*, ed. by Kate Hill (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 87-102.

Documentation on specific exhibitions at the V&A Archive (V&AA) was studied to gauge the degree of co-operation and interaction between Departments and individuals, taking account of current judgements that Circ operated as a separate unit. The Department's achievements in the field of contemporary acquisitions were assessed through a quantitative examination of the Acquisitions Registers which is communicated in graphic form. This has enabled a more factually grounded result than available in the current literature. The foregoing helped to establish a grounded view of the Department in its historical context whilst the full picture emerged from examination of the primary sources on exhibitions and venues in response to the following research questions which flow from the initial research enquiry above.

Research Question 2: Regional Exhibitions

What particular design narratives were promoted by spatial dynamics and installations of the Circulation Department's touring exhibitions at different regional venues?

The regional impact of the Department was previously unexplored in any depth. Touring collections of design as a Victorian initiative have received recent attention at thesis level,⁸¹ but the post-war period has yet to be examined apart from Jane Pavitt's work, albeit on a London touring collection.⁸² When considering regional exhibitions it was first necessary to define the field of impact. The Department was active across the United Kingdom and it was not feasible to comprehensively study such a wide spread of host institutions. The appropriate methodology was therefore judged to be a selective approach. Locations were selected on the following criteria:

⁸¹ Rebecca Wade, 'Pedagogic Objects: The Formation, Circulation and Exhibition of Teaching Collections in Mid-Nineteenth Century British Art and Design Education, 1837-1857' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2012) <<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/3751/>> [accessed 24 April 2014]. Sonia Ashmore, 'Owen Jones and the V&A Collections', *V&A Online Journal* 1 (2008) <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-01/owen-jones-and-the-v-and-a-collections/>> [accessed 26 May 2011].

⁸² *Object Lesson: The Camberwell Collection*, ed. by Jane Pavitt (London: London Institute, 1996) covers a post-war touring initiative, although not strictly 'regional'.

- Centres that have a UK-wide geographical spread
- Centres that have an existing and future connection to the collaborating research establishments; Brighton
- Centres that have a strong traditional connection to a particular industry or material; Manchester/cotton
- A centre that has previously been the subject of academic evaluation as a site of metropolitan influence and that was prominent in opposing the closure of Circ; Liverpool.

This methodology resulted in the selection of the following centres (alphabetical order): *Brighton, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester*. Targeted research trips explored the regional impact of the Department, covering Brighton, Liverpool, Manchester and Cardiff. These regional research trips examined Museum and College of Art libraries and archives, as well as local press coverage and any trade association records. At the V&A Archive (V&AA) the Guard books and exhibitions files (MA/28, MA/29) recording South Kensington exhibitions were examined ready for comparison with regional shows, as were the Inspection files (MA/14) on regional venues. The NAL *Museums Journal* issues were examined for a balanced view of all post-war touring shows.

Literature for regional venues was tackled on a venue-by-venue basis and indications from the initial study of Brighton confirmed that art schools (themselves often products of the Schools of Design) have celebrated anniversaries with useful publications. These publications omit discussions of travelling shows which seems to indicate a lack of notable impact by Circ, or at least that art school administrators did not think it a priority to systematically keep records of such shows.⁸³ These publications do show that lecturers at Schools of Art were part of a wide regional network of contributors to Circ exhibitions, demonstrating not only a literal circulation of influence back to the metropolitan centre but also the

⁸³ *Art and Design at Brighton 1859-2009: from Arts and Manufactures to the Creative and Cultural Industries*, ed. by Philippa Lyon and Jonathan M. Woodham (Brighton: University of Brighton, 2009). *Behind the Mosaic: One Hundred Years of Art Education*, ed. by Corinne Miller (Leeds: Leeds Museums & Galleries with Leeds College of Art & Design, 2003).

questionable validity of a straightforward binary opposition.⁸⁴ One example of this circular influence is the 1971 show *Design in Glass* which gave equal emphasis to both regional and metropolitan contributions, drawing as it did on student work in glass from London, Edinburgh and Stourbridge, colleges of art at which the RCA guest curator, Sam Herman, had either studied or taught.⁸⁵ More ephemeral but also valuable are exhibition catalogues, some more substantial than others, that emerged from regional museums and from art schools, and provide one indication of a healthy culture of shows, with or without Circ. These centres received a range of large and small Circ exhibitions at a variety of venues from city art galleries and art schools to local libraries. The V&AA Circ files contain detailed inspections of regional venues for suitability (MA/14) and allowed some comparison of locations, scale, and likely audience. Circ shows were specifically required to be held in venues with free admission to all, although the smaller art school displays were necessarily to a more restricted audience.

This section of the research resulted in case studies of specific touring exhibitions as they travelled to different regional host venues, providing some comparative analysis of the selection, location, and methods of display both between regional and the initial South Kensington showing (where this occurred). The V&AA files for individual exhibitions record in plans and photographs the final display installation at South Kensington and are also available for some regional venues. Local press cuttings were consulted for further visual and textual evidence of the impact of displays. This study also compared levels of didacticism between metropolitan and regional displays that were avowedly different in intent – for example, eschewing the need for catalogue purchase in the regions in the interest of free access and installing lecterns containing full information. Regional case studies take account of:

⁸⁴ Mary Barker taught at Brighton School of Art from 1950, contributed to Circ's *Weaving for Walls*, 1965, visited Ethel Mairet, Ditchling, also a Circ contributor. 'Mary Barker (1907-99)', *University of Brighton*, n.d. <<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/arts/alumni-and-associates/associates-and-alumni/fashion-and-textiles/barker,-mary-1907-1999>> [accessed 24 May 2016].

⁸⁵ *Design in Glass*, South Kensington, 18 May–9 June 1971, work from Edinburgh College of Art, Foley College of Art, Stourbridge, and Royal College of Art.

- Location of the museum or college of art within the city in relation to its status and cultural positioning, noting that some cities had several institutions, including libraries, that received Circulation exhibitions
- Architectural style and overall layout of the museum or college of art, considered as part of the cultural framing of the exhibition
- The exhibition display strategies, internal layout, and supporting interpretation, according to the available material whether in plan or photographic form

Within the thirty-year time-span (1947-1977), it was not judged feasible to cover comprehensively the many exhibitions shown at even selected venues and so the following major exhibitions which were shown in London and then modified to tour were selected for study using the given criteria. The selected shows are listed in chronological order.

- 1952 *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*: this major show set new and innovative standards of scholarship for the Department and has been held to have an important impact on designers and the Museum's collections, rehabilitating design of the period for UK consumers and manufacturers.
- 1955 *English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing taste* and 1960 *English Chintz*: these major shows demonstrated regional collaboration with Manchester's Cotton Board, setting new standards of scholarship (using Patent Office records) using innovative display methods (incorporating motion). These exhibitions overtly promoted 'national' contemporary design and the Museum as source of design inspiration and are held to have had a lasting impact on the Museum's collections.
- 1961-62 *Finlandia – modern finnish design*: played an important part in promoting Scandinavian style, a major strand in post-war design, and enable discussion on the interplay between retail and consumer-led acquisitions and exhibitions to give a more nuanced view of Museum impact.
- *Collingwood Coper*, 1969 and *Flockinger Herman*, 1971: controversially showed the work of living craftworkers and were a museological innovation,

merging institutional authority and commercial activity in a manner recalling the Museum's original mission. The exhibition methodology was unusual for the Museum in that it paired different materials (textile/ceramics and metal/glass) rather than following the traditional Semperian format. The explicit aim was to re-position the Museum as the equivalent of the Royal Academy of Arts for the crafts through retrospectives of major figures.

- *Modern Chairs 1918-1970*, 1970: this show was an early example of a media partnership (with the *Observer*) and so important when considering impact across the UK. Significantly *Modern Chairs* was rejected by the main Museum and displayed at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. The show was international in scope and the *Observer* coverage clearly listed suppliers and prices of chairs, enabling consumer choice. The scale of the objects presented specific difficulties when touring and were accompanied by technical comments from an RCA designer/tutor.
- *Design Review*, 1975: Circ accepted all the British Design Centre Award winners from 1962 and responded to the nationalism of this project with shows featuring international industrial design award-winners. A previous version was *Industrial Design International*, 1971. In the well-publicised 1975 show, *Design Review*, the range of objects acquired provided the opportunity to examine the interplay between curatorial authority and commercial mass-produced objects.

The research responds to the availability of primary source material for particular venues and exhibitions in order to maximise the usefulness of the study. Individual Circ exhibitions have been subject to unpublished research, such as masters dissertations by Molly Rumbelow and Maiko Toyoguchi.⁸⁶ In analysing the formation of Circ exhibitions and the motivations that brought them into being, a simple reliance on the Museum's own archive, whilst useful, is insufficient and a variety of literature was examined. To give one example, the Art Schools Prospectus for 1968-70 lists a travelling show of *Bauhaus Weaving Designs*; an

⁸⁶ Molly Rumbelow, 'The Victorian Revival' (unpublished master's dissertation, Royal College of Art, London, 2003). Maiko Toyoguchi, 'The Art of Exhibition' (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Brighton, 2009).

oral history interview with the Deputy Keeper, Carol Hogben, revealed that this was produced following the 1968 Royal Academy show *50 Years Bauhaus*. Hogben used the catalogue addresses and visited Gunta Stolzl in Switzerland to buy tapestries and designs. Hogben also bought work from Margaret Leischner, who had been Head of Weave at the Royal College of Art and collaborated with another regional link of Circ's, the Manchester Cotton Board's Colour Design and Style Centre. This complex web of contacts and collaborations across museums, industry and art education is not evident from a single source but presents a more accurate and richer picture of Circ's regional influence and impact.

Research Question 3: Directions of Influence

From this study of the regional impact of the Circulation Department, is there evidence for a simplistic model of the operation of influence or for a more complex circulatory flow, regenerating both Museum and regions?

When evaluating regional impact, the key was to distinguish references of significant interest. The initial methodology was to start assessment with a centre that enabled straightforward repeat access and where archive records are comparatively well-known, that is Brighton. It was hoped that this thorough and detailed initial regional research would provide a working model of an effective assessment of the Department's impact that could be applied, with appropriate modification, to centres further afield. Lack of surviving archives presented problems at Brighton, both at the museum and school of art, and it was necessary to respond in a flexible way as productive archives and useful contacts emerged. The main lesson was that in the absence of official formal archives the research was reliant on personal contacts for more informal levels of information. Contacts were accordingly developed to assess regional impact in Liverpool, Manchester, and Dundee; this initial work produced widely differing responses, both positive and negative. Advance planning through contact with local archivists and academics was crucial in making use of research trips to distant centres, selected as for Research Question 2. Useful feedback was gained from regional museums attending the Museums & Exhibitions Session on *Travelling Artworks* at the Association of Art Historians' Conference at the University of East Anglia, 2015.

In order to assess impact on the public in the regions it was hoped to compare attendance figures for the shows at South Kensington with those for regional venues but this quantitative measure of impact was not available as a distinct figure. For a qualitative evaluation, the Museum's own archive contained selected press coverage relating to regional reactions to specific travelling exhibitions and to the eventual closure of the Department, demonstrating regional impact. Additional research into local press coverage searched for the regional response to Circ exhibitions and particular venues and to the Department's closure. It transpired that individual venues had not kept visitor books with comments providing qualitative responses to exhibitions. The available research material was evaluated to note the range of impact. The absence of press coverage and reaction was also recorded to give as fair and objective evaluation of impact as possible.

The archive material available to assess impact on regional manufacturers was sparse. Press cuttings from trade publications aimed at manufacturers and traders across the UK were found in a variety of archives with references and reviews of Circulation Department exhibitions. The Calico Printers' Association Archive in Manchester provided useful material; the absence of such references is noted for balance.

When assessing the impact of Circ on regional designers the mechanics of design inspiration present difficulties in constructing planned outcomes of design impact as the process appears random. An existing skills base together with an openness to wider influence appear to be the pre-requisites for inspired design to occur. Barbara Morris looked at the Museum's influence on designers,⁸⁷ though without a post-war regional emphasis, and this was achieved through interviewing high-profile designers who had developed a strong relationship with curatorial staff and were well-known to them. It was hoped to send out calls for information through the alumni publications and websites of regional art schools and to hold follow-up interviews either in person or by correspondence, again noting the lack of

⁸⁷ Barbara Morris, *Inspiration for Design: The Influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publications, 1986).

response in the interests of a fair record. One problem that emerged was that alumni resent such calls in physical mail-outs and so alumni associations were reluctant to send them unless in an unobtrusive easily deleted format, such as email. This form of approach reduced the effectiveness of such calls for information and personal contacts were used. Further primary research material regarding Scottish design and designers was provided to support the development of the V&A at Dundee, in part using the unique material provided by Carol Hogben (Accession AO655, V&AA). Graphic formats have been effective when presenting the quantitative statistical evidence for the direction of influence and impact. The design and presentation of the graphs were considered in relation to their clarity.

Chapter 2 Context 1945-1977

This material is unavailable due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 2: Development of Circ prospectus: 1953, 1956, 1960, 1965-66, NAL.
Photographs: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum,
London. Original in colour.

This chapter discusses the historical context for the years 1947 to 1977 in order to better evaluate the activities of the V&A Circulation Department (Circ) in that period. This approach sees designers and their objects as inseparable from 'the politics of design' with the positioning of design organizations as part of the broad structure and discourse of society.⁸⁸ As a department set up to improve industry and so promote trade competitiveness, when it re-opened in 1947 Circ faced unprecedented conditions, very different from the political and economic landscape of 1848. Britain started the post-war period as the world's biggest debtor nation, exports having fallen by two thirds over the period of the war; production and consumption were still regulated and import controls maintained.⁸⁹ At this period it was held that the nation state 'not only had the power to deliver prosperity, security, and opportunity but that it had a responsibility to do so'.⁹⁰

At this date V&A staff were civil servants responsible to the Ministry of Education⁹¹ so can be regarded as an arm of the state. All staff signed the Official Secrets Act,

⁸⁸ Maguire and Woodham, p. xiii.

⁸⁹ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 9.

⁹⁰ Phillip Brown, AH Halsey, Hugh Lauder and Amy Stuart Wells, 'The Transformation of Education and Society: An Introduction', in *Education: Culture, Economy, Society*, ed. by AH Halsey, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown and Amy Stuart Wells (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), pp. 1-44 (p. 2).

⁹¹ Ministry of Education formed 1944, Department of Education and Science from 1964.

for example, until the Museum was devolved from Civil Service in 1983. This tradition of public service was further emphasised as staff appointments were announced in *The Times*, staff were paid on Civil Service grades and their administrative paperwork went out from the Department of Education & Science. The cover of the Circ prospectus featured the Royal Coat of Arms, being published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and marked 'Crown copyright'. The role of Circ staff as part of the machinery of state was clear, matching Sandino's neologism, the 'curatocracy'.⁹² Floud's membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain (till 1956) and the art school background of members of Circ during this period may argue for an inclusive social purpose rather than a crudely didactic aim to support existing hierarchies of institutional taste and authority. Bennett quotes Foucault: 'To work with a government implies neither subjection nor global acceptance. One can simultaneously work and be restive'. As discussed in Chapter 3, Circ's left-wing art school staff may fit Bennett's category of 'cultural technicians' who practice and negotiate principled, policy-oriented pragmatism.⁹³

Under the Labour Government from 1945, 'the pervasive intellectual framework [was] ... active state intervention'.⁹⁴ Attlee's achievements with the post-war settlement have been praised as creating an 'accepted model in this regard'.⁹⁵ Heavily in debt, UK exports and production had to be promoted and rationing and import restrictions remained in place. Acceptance of US Marshall Aid from 1948 'intensified Britain's balance-of-payments problem in trading with the affluent USA' leading to a 30% devaluation in sterling in 1949.⁹⁶ For US manufacturers there was unfounded concern that the European Recovery Plan might result in a shift in European 'consumption from imports of American goods to domestic manufacturers'.⁹⁷ The Attlee Government's drive for social justice and equality led

⁹² Sandino, 'A Curatocracy', p. 87.

⁹³ Bennett, 'Useful Culture'.

⁹⁴ Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell, 'Introduction', in *Work and Pay in 20th Century Britain*, ed. by Nicholas Crafts, Ian Gazeley, and Andrew Newell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1-10 (p. 2).

⁹⁵ JK Galbraith, *The World Economy since The Wars: A Personal View* (London: Sinclair Stevenson, 1994), p. 166.

⁹⁶ Kevin Jeffreys, *The Attlee Governments 1945-51* (Abingdon: Routledge [1992] 2013), pp. 45-46.

⁹⁷ Lucrezia Reichlin, 'The Marshall Plan Reconsidered', in *Europe's Post-war Recovery*, ed. by Barry Eichengreen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 39-67 (p. 42).

to an emphasis on widening access to education, in which Circ played a part. Reconstruction and design initiatives used state-run mechanisms and organisations, often with close links to industry across the UK, building on the efficient regional structures established during the war.

In 1944 the Board of Trade had created the Council of Industrial Design 'to promote by all practicable means the improvement of design in the products of British industry'.⁹⁸ From 1940 Churchill's coalition brought about a state that included both organised labour and employers.⁹⁹ After the war several initiatives that grew out of this wartime necessity for a close association between state and industry were still influential or even continued, for example Utility designs,¹⁰⁰ the Cotton Board (see Chapter 5),¹⁰¹ and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. Founded in 1940, the Council promoted plays and art with an emphasis on touring to the regions, and at the close of war 'there was general agreement among politicians of all parties that public subsidy should be continued'.¹⁰² The Arts Council of Great Britain was established in 1946 to build on this principle and 'the Best for the Most' was close to the ethos established by Floud in Circ.¹⁰³ During the war the Central Office of Information created thematic displays of products that were held to have influenced later exhibition standards.¹⁰⁴ These approaches were further developed in the 1946 *Britain Can Make It* exhibition, staged by the Council of Industrial Design at the V&A, visited by over one million people and promoting British goods and designs as factories moved to

⁹⁸ *The Design Council Financial Statements 1994/95*, 3, GB 1837 DES/DCA/28, Design Council Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives, Brighton.

⁹⁹ Gazeley and Newell, 'Introduction', in *Work and Pay in 20th Century Britain*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Utility Reassessed: The Role of Ethics in the Practice of Design*, ed. by Judy Attfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

¹⁰¹ Mary Schoeser, 'Good Design and Good Business: A Survey of the Changes in the British Textile Industry 1946-86', in *Did Britain Make It? British Design in Context 1946-86*, ed. by Penny Sparke (London: Design Council, 1986), pp. 71-84.

71.

¹⁰² Roy Green and Gwen Shaw, 'The Cultural and Social Setting' in *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain: Volume 9: Modern Britain*, ed. by Boris Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 2-47 (p. 26).

¹⁰³ Green and Shaw, 'The Cultural and Social Setting', p. 26.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon Russell, 'Modern Trends in Industrial Design', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 108.5048 (1960), 578-595, paper given at the Royal Society of Arts, 23 March 1960 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41368931>>.

peacetime production.¹⁰⁵ In 1948 Bevan¹⁰⁶ promoted the Local Government Act, with Section 132 empowering local authorities to spend a 6d rate on music and art in order to promote culture for all in the regions. The Board of Trade supported the Crafts Centre of Great Britain which opened in 1948 in Hay Hill, Mayfair, governed by five different craft societies to promote the development of craft in the regions. Education for the young consumers of the future was also delivered across the UK by BBC radio school broadcasts, such as the 1949/50 *Looking at Things* specifically targeting visual appreciation,¹⁰⁷ and schemes such as the Society for Education Through Art's *Pictures for Schools*, first held at the V&A in 1947.¹⁰⁸ Reconstruction was the task facing most European nations; circulating collections were increasingly used to achieve this goal.¹⁰⁹ By 1950 several countries had established travelling exhibitions 'designed for small provincial towns, remote villages or industrial centres, cut off from the main streams of intellectual and cultural life'.¹¹⁰ A wider understanding of art would ensure complete freedom for artistic creativity 'which every democratic government has a duty to guarantee'¹¹¹ and followed Article 27, 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights: 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'.¹¹²

In Britain, the level of consumer demand for products was tied to re-building following bomb damage, with around 800,000 new council homes constructed between 1945 and 1946.¹¹³ Labour's election poster was 'Let's Build the Houses -

¹⁰⁵ Maguire and Woodham. *Did Britain Make It? British Design in Context 1946-86*, ed. by Penny Sparke (London: Design Council, 1986).

¹⁰⁶ Aneurin (Nye) Bevan, Labour politician, then Minister for Health.

¹⁰⁷ *BBC Broadcasts to Schools: Looking at Things* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1949-1950).

¹⁰⁸ Natalie Bradbury, *Pictures for Schools: Art, Education and Reconstruction in Post-War Britain*, PhD 2013-date, University of Central Lancashire <<http://picturesforschools.wordpress.com/about/>> [accessed 2 February 2014].

¹⁰⁹ Grace L. McCann Morley, 'Introduction', *Museum: Museums and Circulating Exhibitions*, III.4 (1950) 261-266 (Paris: UNESCO). Giulio Carlo Argan, 'Circulating Educational Exhibitions in Italian Museums', *Museum: Museums and Circulating Exhibitions*, III.4 (1950), 286-291 (Paris: UNESCO).

¹¹⁰ Kazimierz Michalowski, 'Circulating Exhibitions in the Museums of Poland', *Museum: Museums and Circulating Exhibitions*, III.4 (1950), 275-282 (p. 279) (Paris: UNESCO).

¹¹¹ Argan, p. 289. Author translation.

¹¹² 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights', *United Nations* <<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>> [accessed 24 March 2016].

¹¹³ Jeffreys, p. 22.

Quick! Vote Labour'.¹¹⁴ In contrast to the home front myth of conduct 'characterized by universal sacrifice, egalitarianism, and common purpose'¹¹⁵ continuing post-war, Britons were hungry for the 'New Jerusalem' – and its new products.¹¹⁶ A taste of this new world was provided by the Festival of Britain in 1951,¹¹⁷ an event that was experienced not only on the South Bank but across the UK through 55 main events, music and drama performances, and exhibitions, held at around 37 festival sites and on the Festival ship *Campania*.¹¹⁸

Churchill's 1951 victory meant that 'decontrol proceeded steadily only from the early 1950s onwards, that is after the Conservative government – committed to a speedy ending of wartime controls – had been elected'.¹¹⁹ Gordon Russell's Utility Furniture Advisory Committee had aimed to produce sound, agreeable and economic designs; the scheme ended in 1952.¹²⁰ Referring to purchase tax, trade rules and uncertainty around Utility regulations, in 1953 the professors of the Royal College of Art felt that such restrictions on designers 'experimenting as freely as they would wish' were problems 'likely to disappear'.¹²¹ The landscape for promotion of manufacturing had changed by the 'mid-1950s when all controls had come to an end ... the post-war consumer boom was well under way'¹²² in an 'essentially market-based' structure.¹²³ As late as 1960, however, the restrictions on British manufacturers supplying their home market were held to have limited the development of certain industries, for example the 15-year ban on decorated

¹¹⁴ Labour Party poster, 1945, Art. IWM PST 8227, Imperial War Museum Collection.

¹¹⁵ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Vernon Bogdanor, 'Britain in the 20th Century: The Attempt to Construct a Socialist Commonwealth, 1945-1951', *Museum of London Lecture*, 15 November 2011, Gresham College.

¹¹⁷ 'New Homes Rise from London's Ruins', 1951 Festival of Britain poster, Lansbury Estate, WORK 25/234E1, National Archives.

¹¹⁸ Becky E. Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 236/237. Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, eds, *A Tonic for the Nation* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976). Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and its People* (London: IB Tauris, 2012).

¹¹⁹ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 9.

¹²⁰ Suzanne Reimer and Phillip Pinch, 'Geographies of the British Government's Wartime Utility Furniture Scheme 1940–1945', *Journal of Historical Geography* 39 (2013), 99–112.

¹²¹ John Russell, 'Present-Minded Professors', *The Sunday Times*, 19 July 1953, p. 6.

¹²² Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 9.

¹²³ Maguire and Woodham, p. xiii.

china.¹²⁴ The ‘well-known trends in aggregate consumer spending’¹²⁵ demonstrate improved living standards as expenditure on consumer durables, as opposed to necessities such as food, increased across the 20th century as a whole. An increasingly democratic and less formal structure to society was reflected in design; as in 1955 when Mary Quant opened *Bazaar* on the King’s Road in London, selling ready-to-wear clothes to prosperous, young customers. The mid-1950s saw wider innovations in the nature of the relationship between museums, art and the commercial world, such as those pioneered at New York’s Museum of Modern Art.¹²⁶ The 1956 *This is Tomorrow* exhibition ‘on the routes design will take in the future,’¹²⁷ ‘successfully cut across the usual barriers of high-brow and low-brow taste,’¹²⁸ and pointed out that ‘artists have in most cases much experience outside the narrow world of easel painting – many are designers and typographers, contractors, teachers’.¹²⁹ For Rees, the new museological approach represents a decisive shift in the hierarchy of the genres;¹³⁰ these developments did not permeate the V&A South Kensington, but were embraced by Circ’s unique ethos, as will be demonstrated.

Circ’s activities were matched by comparable initiatives such as the Inner London Education Authority *Experiment in Design Appreciation* from 1951, touring objects of ‘good design’ to London secondary schools,¹³¹ and the UK wide *Pictures for Schools*.¹³² The Council of Industrial Design was active in schools through its *Design Folios* showing everyday objects, starting with *Teapots* in 1948; 2,108

¹²⁴ Russell, ‘Modern Trends in Industrial Design’.

¹²⁵ Ian Gazeley, Rose Holmes, Andrew Newell, Kevin Reynolds, Hector Rufrancos and Rebecca Searle, ‘Inequality among Working Households in Europe, 1890-1960’, European Historical Economics Society Conference, 2015 <http://www.ehes.org/ehes2015/papers/Newelletal_pisa.pdf> [accessed 1 December 2015].

¹²⁶ In 1955 Gene Moore exhibited the art of Sari Dienes, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and others in the windows of Bonwit Teller department store, New York. In 1956 textiles by Jack Lenor Larsen using Sari Dienes ‘sidewalk rubbings’ were exhibited at the Cooper Hewitt Museum and in 1957 Alfred Barr acquired three Jasper Johns works for the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

¹²⁷ Lawrence Alloway, Information Committee, Press Release, *This is Tomorrow*, 1956, re-exhibited Whitechapel Art Gallery, author visit, 23 February 2011.

¹²⁸ Lawrence Alloway, Progress Report, *This is Tomorrow*, 1956, re-exhibited Whitechapel Art Gallery, author visit, 23 February 2011.

¹²⁹ Lawrence Alloway, Information Committee, Press Release, *This is Tomorrow*, 1956, re-exhibited Whitechapel Art Gallery, author visit, 23 February 2011.

¹³⁰ Rees, pp. 146/7.

¹³¹ Pavitt, *Object Lesson*.

¹³² Bradbury, ‘Pictures for Schools’.

schools subscribed by 1952.¹³³ In 1956 the Council's *The Design Centre* opened in the Haymarket, London, followed the next year by the start of awards for British design. Expectations of access to 'good' design were rising; between 1952 and 1956 the Retail Price Index added consumer items such as an electric fire, washing machine, a black and white television set and included motor vehicle purchase.¹³⁴ In 1957 Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, made his 'never had it so good' speech, highlighting the prosperity of the time although the message was a warning about future inflation asking: 'Is it too good to last?'¹³⁵ There was also criticism of changing consumer attitudes with Bevan commenting in 1959: 'this so-called affluent society is an ugly society still. It is a vulgar society. It is a meretricious society. It is a society in which priorities have gone all wrong'.¹³⁶ This at a date when eating outside the home was still considered a luxury.¹³⁷

Access to culture remained a feature for government policy globally, signalled by the 1959 publication of the UNESCO Preliminary Report *The Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone*, but such policies were evolving.¹³⁸ The Arts Council announced that 'the Best for the Most' principle was leading to widespread mediocrity in regional arts and to promote excellence would be adapted to 'Few but roses', arguably an elitist approach, marking a change in attitudes to the regions.¹³⁹ There was criticism from the regions of an increasingly dominant metropolitan stranglehold on cultural life in the arts in general, if not specifically in design. *The Nation's Art Treasures* conference, Sheffield, 1958, was

¹³³ Michael Farr, *Design in British Industry: A Mid-Century Survey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 214. V&A E.1224-1974 is *Wallpaper for the Small Home*, Design Folio Book K.

¹³⁴ Jim O'Donoghue, Carol McDonnell and Martin Placek, 'Consumer price inflation 1947–2004', *Office for National Statistics: Economic Trends*, 626 (2006), 38-53 <www.ons.gov.uk> [accessed 30 May 2016].

¹³⁵ Harold Macmillan, quoted in Dennis Kavanagh and Peter Morris, *Consensus Politics from Attlee to Thatcher* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 1989), p. 40.

¹³⁶ Nye Bevan, Labour Party Conference, 1959, quoted in Vernon Bogdanor, '1974: The Crisis of Old Labour', in *New Labour, Old Labour: The Blair, Wilson and Callaghan Governments*, ed. by Anthony Seldon and Kevin Hickson (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 14.

¹³⁷ It was not until 1968 that 'meals out' entered the Retail Price Index; O'Donoghue, McDonnell and Placek.

¹³⁸ *UNESCO Preliminary Report: The Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone* (Paris: UNESCO, 1959)

<<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001274/127494EB.pdf>> [accessed 5 May 2017].

¹³⁹ Green and Shaw, p. 29.

organised by provincial museums in protest at the allocation of treasures from Chatsworth House to museums and galleries in London.¹⁴⁰

Education attained 'unprecedented economic importance as a source of technological innovation,' as AH Halsey and Jean Floud, widow of Circ's Keeper, wrote in 1961.¹⁴¹ Circ can be placed amongst the educational organisations which grew 'to perform their new role of providing the human capital, as it came to be called in the mid-1950s, for the expanding middle-class occupations in industry'.¹⁴² In 1945 Sir William Crawford had sent a questionnaire to 30 foreign embassies on design factors affecting export competitiveness. Despite UK production having increased by 40% since 1945, by 1960 there was criticism as Britain's position as an industrial producer was threatened by other countries. France had doubled production, Germany and Italy had increased production by 2.5, and Japan had seen production quadruple in the same period, although these figures should be considered in the light of bomb damage and reconstruction.¹⁴³

Politically, joining the European Economic Community was seen as the way forward in 1961 with Macmillan noting the contrast between 'the opportunity of the mass market ... created for European industrialists, and the spur that this has given them to competitiveness and efficiency' and restrictive practices in British manufacturing.¹⁴⁴ Criticism of the standards for consumer products and COID quality thresholds came from the Molony Report in 1962, which recommended the setting up of national and local Consumer Councils.¹⁴⁵ It was in 1962 that Circ began to accession Design Centre Award winners and Circ's later shows of industrial design award winners can be seen in this context of national sensitivity

¹⁴⁰ MacLeod, *Museum Architecture*, p. 150.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Brown, Halsey, Lauder, and Stuart Wells, p. 4.

¹⁴² Brown, Halsey, Lauder, and Stuart Wells, p. 5.

¹⁴³ Vernon Bogdanor, 'Britain in the 20th Century: The Collapse of the Postwar Settlement 1964–1979', *Museum of London Lecture*, 13 March 2012, Gresham College <<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/britain-in-the-20th-century-the-collapse-of-the-postwar-settlement-1964-1979>> [accessed 3 January 2016].

¹⁴⁴ Harold Macmillan, 'EEC', *HC Deb. 2 August 1961, Vol 645: C1489* <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/aug/02/european-economic-community>> [accessed 5 January 2016].

¹⁴⁵ J.T. Molony, *Report of the Committee on Consumer Protection*, Cmd 1781, Board of Trade (London: HMSO, 1962) <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C3159677>> [accessed 30 May 2016].

to the 'cold shower of competition',¹⁴⁶ particularly after Britain joined the European Economic Community in January 1973.

Reviews of art and design education such as the Coldstream Report, 1960, and Robbins Report, 1963, recommended the growth of further and higher education, including the expansion of many of the art school institutions served by Circ, through the introduction of what was seen as 'academic' content.¹⁴⁷ Regional museums were also under review. 1963 saw the publication of the *Rosse Report*, which highlighted the underfunding of regional museums and recommended the establishment of Area Museum Councils, although this only resulted in a small increase in central government grants. The Report also recommended funding a circulating service from the Science Museum as national museums should increase touring exhibitions to enhance existing poor provision in the provinces.¹⁴⁸ Labour won the 1964 election; Wilson's 1963 Party Conference speech set out his goals:

We are redefining and we are restating our socialism in terms of the scientific revolution.... The Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of this revolution will be no place for restrictive practices or outdated methods on either side of industry.¹⁴⁹

Wilson created the new post of Minister for the Arts, appointing Jennie Lee, a strong supporter of the arts who championed increases in ACGB budgets and spending in the regions.¹⁵⁰ The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act had the effect of confirming cultural provision as a credible activity for local government. In

¹⁴⁶ Neil Rollings, 'Britain and Europe' in *20th Century Britain: Economic, Cultural and Social Change*, ed. by Francesca Carnevali and Julie-Marie Strange (Abingdon: Routledge, [1994] 2014), pp. 339-353 (p. 341).

¹⁴⁷ Lord Robbins, *Higher Education Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins* (London: HMSO, 1963).

¹⁴⁸ Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries: The Rosse Report* (London: HMSO, 1963). Adrian Babbidge, 'Forty Years On', in *Cultural Trends* 14.1.53 (2005), 3-66. Helen Wilkinson, 'Negotiating Change: Curatorial Practice in Museums 1960-2001' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2014), p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ Harold Wilson, Labour Party Conference, Scarborough, 1 October 1963, quoted in Matthias M. Mathijs, *Ideas and Economic Crisis in Britain from Attlee to Blair* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 74.

¹⁵⁰ Lawrence Black, 'Not only a source of expenditure but a source of income: The Creative Industries and Cultural Politics in Britain from the 1960s to Cool Britannia', in *Cultural Industries: The British Experience in International Perspective*, ed. by Christiane Eisenberg, Rita Gerlach and Christian Handke (Berlin: Humboldt University Berlin, 2006), pp. 119-143.

1965 Labour published the White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps*. While overtly concerned with the arts, these policies aligned with Circ's aims in that they promoted access for all, with a clear focus on education and the aim of reversing the withdrawal from the regions, when 66% of Arts Council funding was directed to London.¹⁵¹ The Paper criticised provincial museums for their backward and moribund attitudes and was not backed by regional funding increases but did encourage the development of Area Museum Councils.¹⁵² From the mid-1960s increases in regional arts spending led to 'a bonanza of exhilarating expansion and excitement'.¹⁵³ Although the dominant literature is on arts provision, many of the shows toured by Circ and the Arts Council may be classified as design. As Black writes:

By post-imperial analogy, the power of the metropole was diminishing. Yet in other ways metropolitan standards were extended. Labour was a convinced advocate of traditional elite culture, liberal and inclusive in purpose. It regarded it as civilizing, uplifting and a barrier to commercial mass culture.¹⁵⁴

The late sixties saw a growing dominance of the principle of accessibility over out-moded traditional (bourgeois) cultural and aesthetic standards; the democratisation of culture was to be replaced by cultural democracy, or 'never mind the quality, feel the width'.¹⁵⁵ This 'grass roots up' approach to participatory cultural practices in the regions can be seen to parallel the making of new histories 'from below'.¹⁵⁶ In this context, Circ's project of making excellence in art and design accessible to all could be seen as imperialist and part of 'the great artistic deception of the twentieth century'.¹⁵⁷ Education was seen as the key driver of art and design appreciation, particularly following Redcliffe-Maud's Gulbenkian Report in 1976. Circ's merger with the V&A's Education Department reflected that 'within

¹⁵¹ Peter Stark, Christopher Gordon and David Powell, 'Rebalancing our Cultural Capital: A Contribution to the Debate on National Policy for Arts and Culture in England', 2013 <<http://www.gpsculture.co.uk/rocc.php>> [accessed 14 April 2014].

¹⁵² Wilkinson, p. 60.

¹⁵³ Roy Strong, 'Museums Association Annual Conference Session Paper: Art (Fine and Decorative)', *Museums Journal*, 75.3 (1975) vi-viii.

¹⁵⁴ Black, 'Not only a source of expenditure', p. 131.

¹⁵⁵ Green and Shaw, p. 29.

¹⁵⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin [1963] 2013).

¹⁵⁷ Su Braden, *Artists and People*, (Abingdon & London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) quoted by Green and Shaw, p. 29.

a few years most arts organisations had developed educational programmes linked to their work'.¹⁵⁸ Improvements in standards of design appreciation were also attributed to education more broadly, that is to the growth of both print and technological media, such as television.¹⁵⁹

In 1970 the Conservatives were elected under Heath and faced rising inflation and increasing industrial unrest, as mechanization changed the nature of the workforce. The Museums Association published *A Museum Service for the Nation*, 1971, recommending larger regional museums acting as a supporting hub for smaller museums, recognising that provision remained uneven.¹⁶⁰ Local government re-organisation following the Bains Report, 1972, had the unintended effect of side-lining regional museums.¹⁶¹ The Wright Report of 1973¹⁶² proposed more formal channels of funding and communication between central government and regional museums as well as changes to the relationship between provincial and national museums, but the Report was not implemented¹⁶³ in part due to the 1973 oil crisis leading to political and economic instability. Dilnot identifies 1973 as a distinct 'shift in the historical paradigm': 'the beginning of all those developments that mark the end of the European "social-democratic" century ... and the onset of a new "global" world'.¹⁶⁴ The crisis can be seen as an important stimulus for changing outlooks in design thinking.

Heath's downfall followed the miners' crisis and the January 1974 introduction of a three-day week for industry to conserve electricity, and represented the end of consensus on 'Who Governs'. In February 1974 the general election ended in a hung Parliament under Wilson, marking 'a watershed between the triumph of the

¹⁵⁸ Green and Shaw, p. 29/30.

¹⁵⁹ Russell, 'Modern Trends in Industrial Design'.

¹⁶⁰ Babbidge, 23.

¹⁶¹ M.A. Bains (Chair), *The New Local Authorities: Management and Structure* (London: HMSO, 1972).

¹⁶² Department of Education and Science, *Provincial Museums & Galleries: A Report of a Committee Appointed by the Paymaster General*, C.W. Wright, Chair (London: HMSO, 1973).

¹⁶³ Babbidge, 23.

¹⁶⁴ Clive Dilnot, 'Letter 8', *On Design History*, Associazione Italiana degli Storici del Design (Italian Society of Design Historians), 19 March 2013 <<http://www.aisdesign.org/aisd/on-design-history#anchor1331>> [accessed 11 June 2015].

post-War settlement and its ending'.¹⁶⁵ The 1970s saw a period of high inflation with prices over the period rising by 261%, and inflation peaking at 24.2% in 1975, a picture mirrored in the rest of the industrialised world.¹⁶⁶ Raging inflation injured industry as did the high level of industrial disputes. In 1976 the Design Council was incorporated by Royal Charter for 'the advancement of British industry by the improvement of the design of its products',¹⁶⁷ arguably moving away from a post-war emphasis on design's social goals towards a focus on industrial development. Against this interpretation, 1976 also saw the international *Design for Need* symposium at the Royal College of Art, with the subtitle 'the social contribution of design' which influenced many leading designers and thinkers.¹⁶⁸

By September 1976, Britain was forced to apply to the International Monetary Fund for a loan, with the Fund team arriving in London on 1st November 1976. The Fund granted a £2.3 billion loan on condition of public spending cuts of £1 billion, agreed by Cabinet in December. Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education, imposed cuts on the Science Museum and V&A as part of wider civil service measures. On 1st April 1977 the V&A Circulation Department, known as Regional Services after amalgamation with the Education Department, was officially closed. Not all funding for travelling exhibitions was to suffer and in April 1977 Mrs. Shirley Williams announced 'The [Arts] council's grant for recurrent expenses has been increased from £36 million last year to £41.2 million for 1977–78—an increase of 14.4 per cent.' showing how quickly the political and financial tide had turned.¹⁶⁹ By October 1977 the Bank of England base rate fell to 5% as the crisis seemed to subside. There was a recovery in the balance of payments and a realisation that public sector borrowing had been miscalculated; increased

¹⁶⁵ Bogdanor, 'Britain in the 20th Century: The Collapse of the Postwar Settlement 1964–1979'.

¹⁶⁶ O'Donoghue, McDonnell and Placek.

¹⁶⁷ Incorporated 19 May 1976, quoted in *The Design Council Financial Statements 1994/95*, p. 3, GB 1837 DES/DCA/28, Design Council Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives, Brighton.

¹⁶⁸ *Design for Need: the Social Contribution of Design: An Anthology of Papers presented to the Symposium at the Royal College of Art, London, April 1976*, ed. by Julian Bicknell and Liz McQuiston (Oxford: Pergamon Press for the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, 1977).

¹⁶⁹ Shirley Williams, 'Arts Council Grants', HC Deb, 19 April 1977, Vol 930: C20-120.

expenditure was announced, but too late for Circ.¹⁷⁰ There were wider consequences:

... on present policies we shall be living within our means by late 1977 or early 1978. Meanwhile the British people are enduring 1 ½ million unemployed, a loss of potential production on an enormous scale, and an actual fall in their real standard of living.¹⁷¹

To conclude this discussion of historical context, in 1947 when the Department re-opened under Floud, the regional impact of Circ's dissemination of design across the UK was affected by very different and austere conditions to those that prevailed in 1848 on its foundation. In addition, the period from 1947 to 1977 saw further changes. In the immediate post-war period, Circ's role was to contribute to the wider national task of driving improvements to production and promoting exports to improve the balance of payments, in a state-controlled society which focused on regional development and engagement with citizens and industry. Under the Welfare State, reconstruction was a national duty and education a newly important goal, dispensed from the top down to the bottom of society.

Speaking in 1949 during the so-called 'golden age' of 1945 to 1965¹⁷² Bevan could already feel that 'Our people have achieved material prosperity in excess of their moral stature'.¹⁷³ Prosperity was emphasised by Macmillan's message in 1957¹⁷⁴ while Wilson hoped to forge a new technological Britain in 1964,¹⁷⁵ hopes that were not realised even with the cold shower of European competition after 1973.¹⁷⁶ As state intervention was reduced, arts policy changed from the 'best for most', to 'few but roses', and on to 'never mind the quality feel the width'.

¹⁷⁰ *Operational Selection Policy OSP9: Fiscal Policy 1971-1979* (2005), p.14
<<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/osp9.pdf>> [accessed 6 January 2016].

¹⁷¹ Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 'Economic Strategy – The IMF', 29 November 1976, Cabinet Papers CP(76)118, National Archives
<<http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-193-cp-76-118-8.pdf>> [accessed 6 January 2016].

¹⁷² Gazeley and Newell, p. 2.

¹⁷³ Bevan, 1949 Labour Party Conference, quoted by Jeremy Nuttall, *Psychological Socialism: The Labour Party and Qualities of Mind and Character: 1931 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 56.

¹⁷⁴ Macmillan quoted in Kavanagh and Morris, p. 40.

¹⁷⁵ Wilson quoted in Mathijs, p. 74.

¹⁷⁶ Rollings, p. 341.

Education in art and design would rise from the bottom up, moving on from the *Civilisation* of Kenneth Clarke in 1969 to John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* in 1972, from couture to ready-to-wear.

By the end of period, those who visited Circ's shows in museums or schools of art were more prosperous, healthier, better housed and better travelled, whether to London or abroad. There were no restrictions on what they could buy in shops, and the manufacturers of those products successfully traded in a transnational competitive marketplace – Dilnot's globalised world. The regional population was better educated with opportunities to hear a variety of voices and opinions in order to self-educate, accessing radio, television, film, colour magazines, universities and the Open University. But though London might be swinging,¹⁷⁷ there were unwelcome changes in the provinces.

For Conservative politicians such as Keith Joseph, a decline in moral and community values was linked to the acquisition of objects: '... it was not long ago that we thought utopia was within reach ... We talk about neighbourhoods and all too often we have no neighbours. We go on about the home when we only have dwelling places containing television sets'.¹⁷⁸ Such perceived materialism is relative; black and white television sets were added to the Retail Price Index basket in 1956 but colour television was not considered a basic necessity until added to the basket 1987.¹⁷⁹ The growth in individualism in wider post-war society has been linked to the decline of civic cohesion and social obligation.¹⁸⁰ In contrast, economists such as Galbraith saw a wealth of objects as a positive force for national cohesion: 'more fortunate people have something to lose'.¹⁸¹ Divisions between the metropolitan and the provincial, between industry and management and between citizen and state, remained. As political re-structuring sidelined regional museums in the local government hierarchy, Area Museum Councils were

¹⁷⁷ Piri Halasz, 'Great Britain: You Can Walk Across It On The Grass', *Time Magazine*, 15 April 1966, pp. 32-41.

¹⁷⁸ Keith Joseph, Conservative politician, speech, Luton, 3 October 1974 quoted in Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 261/262.

¹⁷⁹ O'Donoghue, McDonnell and Placek.

¹⁸⁰ Bogdanor, 'Britain in the 20th Century: The Collapse of the Postwar Settlement 1964–1979'.

¹⁸¹ Galbraith, *The World Economy since The Wars*, p. 260.

seen as a solution - a regional problem for local people, not a national responsibility.

The political landscape of 1976 had turned against centralised control of the regions, and against forms of state intervention in support of industry. Unlike Marshall Aid in 1948, the International Monetary Fund loans of 1976 came with conditions that restricted the public sector and size of the civil service. As early as 1964, by default Circ was judged as ineffective at tackling poor design and design taste when the House of Lords debated the encouragement of original industrial design for over four hours without once mentioning the Department's work.¹⁸² Following Redcliffe-Maud's Gulbenkian Report in 1976, education was seen as the key driver of art and design appreciation. At the V&A, Circ's merger with Education reflected that 'within a few years most arts organisations had developed educational programmes linked to their work'.¹⁸³ The prevailing view of the V&A Museum as unconcerned with contemporary design may have concealed Circ's achievements so that it was not judged separately on its own merits, marginalised like those it served. Circ's closure followed Wakefield's retirement, with no strong (metropolitan) voice to advocate for the Department on the wider political stage.

¹⁸² Although Viscount Eccles suggested: 'there should be a really fine exhibition of British design, perhaps held at the Victoria and Albert Museum ... This would be of great encouragement to our designers and very good for our export trade'. Viscount Eccles, 'Industrial Design', HL Deb, 17 June 1964 Vol 258:C1183-1267 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1964/jun/17/industrial-design>> [accessed 9 February 2016].

¹⁸³Green and Shaw, p. 29/30.

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Chapter 3 Historical Study:

The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department 1947-77

Introduction

This chapter gives a history of the activities of the V&A's Circulation Department (Circ) in the post-war period from 1947 until closure in 1977 to contribute to an informed understanding of the historical significance of the Department in the collection and display of design 1947-1977. The structure is broadly chronological, covering the Circ post-war ethos initially under Keeper Peter Floud, 1947-60, and then under Keeper Hugh Wakefield, 1960-75. The Department's acquisitions, display methods, attitudes to exhibiting craft and industrial design, variety of travelling shows and venues are summarised. The chapter closes with changes to the structure of the Department after 1975, the decision to axe Circ following Government cuts in 1977 and an evaluation of Circ's impact on the V&A.

Exhibiting Design 1947-60: Keeper Peter Floud

The V&A Director from 1945 to 1955 was Leigh Ashton.¹⁸⁴ When Circ re-opened at the start of 1947 Ashton appointed a new Keeper, Peter Floud.¹⁸⁵ As Floud's *Times* obituary noted: 'In building up the Department of Circulation after the war he had almost to begin anew, transforming the character of the department and bringing it in closer touch with the needs of the post-war world'.¹⁸⁶ By 1950 the Department's holdings amounted to over 25,000 objects and today the current total of 'Circ' objects is over 32,000.¹⁸⁷ Circ's collection did 'not in any way represent a collection of "throw-outs", discarded as being unworthy of exhibition at

¹⁸⁴ Sir Leigh Ashton worked at the Museum from 1922 in several different Departments. Circ's activity during WWII was limited largely to long-term loans to regional museums. Keeper of Circ since 1924, R.P. Bedford, formerly Keeper of the Department of Architecture and Sculpture retired in 1946 and the Deputy Keeper, C.M. ('Monty'/Montague Karl Richthofen) Weekley, became Officer-in-Charge of Bethnal Green Museum. 'Ashton [Arthur] Leigh [Bolland], Sir', *Dictionary of Art Historians* [n.d.] <<https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/ashtonl.htm>> [accessed 17 August 2015].

¹⁸⁵ Peter Castle Floud (1911-1960, CBE, 1954) appointed Keeper of Circulation, Ministry of Education, 'News In Brief', *The Times*, 9 January 1947, p. 2 <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/times-digital-archive/times-digital-archive-17852006.aspx>> [accessed 12 January 2012].

¹⁸⁶ 'Peter Floud Obituary', *The Times*, 25 January 1960 <http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/periods_styles/features/history/staff_obituaries/circulation/floud/index.html> [accessed 12 December 2010].

¹⁸⁷ Circ prefixed objects totalled 32,493, V&A CMS, 17 August 2011.

South Kensington, or even of second-class examples of lesser monetary value', as Floud was keen to emphasize in 1950.¹⁸⁸

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Figure 3: Staff of the Circulation Department, October 1954, [27 staff, 13 women], V&A Image Ref 2011EN0210, MA/32/314, V&AA © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Back row (l-r): Unknown, John Lowry, Estelle Avner, Betty Jackson/Jotcham, Shirley Bury, Hazel Cox/e, Nathalie Rothstein, Janet Tidmarsh, unknown, Arthur Tait-Blackburn

Middle row (l-r): Edward/Ted Lovelock, Mr Lowry/unknown, Janet Macnold/McNab, J Walker, N King, Elizabeth Aslin, Jim Strand, unknown, Ursula Townley/Hampson, Mr Darbyshire

Front row (l-r): Ann George, Barbara Morris, Hugh Wakefield, Peter Floud, Carol Hogben, Ray Smith, Renée Marcousé (also Education Department)

Floud was a dynamic and visionary Keeper from 1947 to 1960, developing a strong ethos of public service in the exhibitions programme and innovations in both display and acquisitions. Floud came from an establishment background¹⁸⁹; after public school, ¹⁹⁰ Oxford, where he joined the Communist Party of Great

¹⁸⁸ Peter Floud, 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum', 299.

¹⁸⁹ Floud's father was a high ranking civil servant, appointed British High Commissioner to Canada.

¹⁹⁰ Floud attended Gresham's School in Norfolk. Benjamin Britten, also at Gresham's, composed a 'Portrait' of Floud, 1930. 'Peter Floud Obituary', *Old Greshamian Newsletter*, February 1960, with thanks to Liz Larby, Archivist, Gresham's School.

Britain, and the London School of Economics,¹⁹¹ Floud had started at the V&A as Assistant Keeper in Circ in 1935.¹⁹² After wartime secondment¹⁹³ and with his knowledge of the shortcomings of the pre-war system, Floud made changes, introducing shorter loans and a range of exhibitions that responded to the very different needs of the host institutions. Floud's scholarly understanding of British industrial design was linked to his role as an arm of the civil service in the Department of Education under the Attlee government.¹⁹⁴ Floud explained: 'Britain not only led the world's industrial revolution: she has a unique record of selective exhibitions of industrial designs' and such regular exhibition programmes should be 'regarded by enlightened opinion as an essential part of progressive government'.¹⁹⁵

Floud pursued this aim of 'progressive government' through travelling exhibitions of both traditional 'high' art and commercially available products, sent out to the regions from the metropolitan centre of Albertopolis.¹⁹⁶ In Floud's view 'all museums can be of use to intelligent teachers' and museums are 'anxious to be of use',¹⁹⁷ echoing Henry Cole's dictum, 'a schoolroom for everyone'. Circ occupied a position outside the main museum hierarchy, with staff having a left-wing bias, some being members of the Communist Party of Great Britain,¹⁹⁸ and art school graduates rather than, as with Circ's senior staff, Oxbridge graduates.¹⁹⁹ As one

¹⁹¹ Floud took a First in PPE at Wadham College, Oxford, 'University News', *The Times*, 28 July 1933, p. 16. <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/times-digital-archive/times-digital-archive-17852006.aspx>> [accessed 12 January 2012].

¹⁹² Our Civil Service Correspondent, 'Promotions In The Civil Service', *The Times*, 15 April 1935, p. 8 <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/times-digital-archive/times-digital-archive-17852006.aspx>> [accessed 12 January 2012]. Floud's first publication was *Louis Favre and the Development of Colour Lithography* (The Hague: Editions Mouton, 1938).

¹⁹³ Floud's wartime secondments were: 1939–1944 Principal, London Regional Headquarters, Ministry of Home Security; United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Administration, 1944–6 Balkan and Middle East Missions, Cairo and Teheran; 1946–7 Chief, Mission, Albania.

¹⁹⁴ Sandino, 'A Curatocracy'.

¹⁹⁵ Floud, 'British exhibitions of selected designs'.

¹⁹⁶ Albertopolis, a cultural and educational quarter, South Kensington, London, developed following the Great Exhibition of 1851, at the instigation of Prince Albert.

¹⁹⁷ Floud, 'Commentary on a Projected International Circulating Exhibition'.

¹⁹⁸ Bury, Morris and Floud are known, Sandino, 'Art School Trained Staff and Communists'.

¹⁹⁹ Hugh Wakefield (1915–84) King Edward's School, Birmingham; Trinity College, Cambridge; war service, Royal Artillery; Assistant Keeper, 1948, Keeper, 1960. Carol Hogben (1925–2016) St Paul's School, London; Magdalene College, Cambridge, (Classics Part I, English Part II); Assistant Keeper in charge of art school loans in 1950, Deputy Keeper, 1960, Acting Keeper 1975, Deputy Keeper, Department of Education and Regional Services promoted to Keeper II 1976, Library 1977. Elizabeth Aslin (1923–89) Research Assistant, 1947, Slade School of Art. Barbara Morris

long-serving member of the Department, Barbara Morris, explained, Floud treated everyone as equals and emphasized ‘that we were there to help and educate the public’ rather than ‘pursuing curatorial interests for the sake of it’.²⁰⁰

Unlike the main Museum departments which fostered a connoisseur approach specialising in particular materials, Circ’s collection crossed boundaries and had a specifically outward-facing bias. Circ exhibitions were mainly composed of objects from its own departmental collections but, subject to negotiation, also used works from other V&A departments who could be more, or less, helpful, as 1968 correspondence shows. Hogben wrote that the Keeper of Sculpture ‘agreed to extend alabasters loan’, the Keeper of Metalwork ‘will be pleased to help with Japanese armour’ but the Keeper of Ceramics ‘is reluctant to withdraw a whole exhibition of maiolica from his galleries, and referred to the fine quality of Circ holdings. He would be happy to lend a few pieces for an extended tour, reluctant to let us have any particular prizes even for a brief tour’.²⁰¹ In the event *Italian Renaissance Maiolica* contained 44 objects, with only five from Circ’s own collection. Other Museum departments had an unofficial ‘fifty year rule’ against purchasing recent objects; Circ continued the founding mission to collect contemporary design as an educational resource for manufacturers, designers and the public. Early acquisitions were dominated by easily transported two-dimensional material, such as contemporary prints and textiles.²⁰² Even at the start of the post-war period, Floud could write that ‘the Circulation Department’s contemporary collections are now much more extensive than those of the main Museum’.²⁰³

(1918-2009), temporary cataloguer/Research Assistant, 1947, Slade School of Art. Shirley Bury (1925-99) Research Assistant, 1948, Fine Art, Reading.

²⁰⁰ Morris, interviewed by Sandino.

²⁰¹ Carol Hogben to Barbara Morris, File Note, 24 May 1968, Betty Elzea collection, with thanks to Linda Sandino. Refers to Terence Hodgkinson, Keeper of Sculpture; Basil Robinson, Keeper of Metalwork; Robert J Charleston, Keeper of Ceramics and Glass.

²⁰² For example, CIRC.51-1947: Paul Signac, *Village on a River Bank [The Port, St Tropez]*, Coloured lithograph, 6,500 francs, £13 10s 10d, purchased by Floud from RG Michel, 17 Quai St Michel, Paris; Purchase Form, 23 Sept. 1947, Acquisitions Entry, 3 Oct. 1947. V&A Museum Circulation Collections Register of Acquisitions No. 14, MA/6/14, V&AA.

²⁰³ Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department*, p. 3.

In the three years following Circ's re-opening in 1947 Floud quickly constructed larger exhibitions that toured in standard travelling showcases and offered provincial galleries a comprehensive, high quality survey show, for example on *Gothic Art* or *Islamic Art*. Circ displays not only physically broke away from the notion of an elitist, self-contained museum but also cut across the established materials-based V&A organisational structure. What is notable about these exhibitions is the variety of original material employed to represent each subject in a manner associated with a modern approach to 'material culture'. In considering the diverse needs of regional venues, Floud and his team produced both shows that were limited to two-dimensional material that could be hung and those containing only three-dimensional material for galleries with limited wall space. There was also a post-war trend for the more important Circ exhibitions to be shown at South Kensington 'before being sent to the provinces'.²⁰⁴

<p style="text-align: center;">1950 Peter Floud, Keeper 30 staff</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1959 Peter Floud, Keeper 19 staff</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2 Assistant Keepers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5 Research Assistants 2 Museum Assistants 6 Clerical Staff</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3 Labourers 1 Carpenter 1 Polisher 2 Painters 1 General craftsman 1 Photographer 1 Mounter 1 Printer</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 Packers (general museum pool)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1 Assistant Keeper 1 Executive Officer 2 Research Assistants 4 Museum Assistants 2 Clerical Officers 1 Typist 2 Craftsmen</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 Packers 2 Drivers</p>

Table showing numbers of Circ Staff under Floud.
NB no consistency in type of recording so direct comparison is difficult, however, scale of Circ and practical nature of activity is clear.

²⁰⁴ Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department*, p. 5.

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Figure 4: The Circulation Department, North Court, February 1956, before first floor galleries were constructed, Picture Ref P189 V&AA © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Figure 5: *Victoria & Albert Museum Brief Guide* (London: HMSO, [1970] 1973); Circ Offices, top right, Room 38A, Temporary Exhibitions, and Restaurant adjoining © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Original in colour.

Floud died suddenly of a brain tumour at the start of 1960 and the obituaries give an indication of his achievements. Writing in *Design*, James Noel White explained that Floud's work as a historian informed his contemporary collecting:

Peter Floud was that rare kind of scholar who was able to apply to the material culture of his own day his vast store of knowledge and his ability to discriminate. Britain has great need of such people and his death at the age of 48 is a loss we can ill afford. He will be missed not only in the museum world in which he was an outstanding influence, but also in the textile industry where his researches were of real value in enhancing the reputation of the industry. Mr Floud was responsible for a substantial re-assessment of William Morris, firstly, by isolating and re-examining the work which genuinely came from his hand, and secondly, by drawing a clear distinction between what Morris preached and what he practised as an industrial designer.²⁰⁵

Helen Kapp gave an emotional obituary, significant given her role as a regional museum director, writing:

Peter Floud's death is an irretrievable loss. Probably it was he who contributed most to the general good in the museum world and to the public, by his re-organization after the war of the Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum, by which the whole of Great Britain has benefited. His integrity and scholarliness was matched by his human understanding, immaculate taste and professionalism. He will remain in all our memories as a kindly and approachable colleague, helpful, knowledgeable and full of humour.²⁰⁶

Post-War Ethos

As previously outlined, most objects Circ loaned came from its own departmental collections and covered the post-classical decorative arts of Europe, the decorative and fine arts of the East, post-classical sculpture, British water-colours, and the graphic arts. Circ also selected from the Museum collections, including important objects such as a Thomas Toft plate (1711-1882) and Girtin's *Warkworth Hermitage* (1745-1878). Circ was divided into services for Museums and for Art Schools; this thesis does not cover Slide Loans, Secondary School loans or Grant-in-Aid purchases, which also fell within Circ's remit.

²⁰⁵ James Noel White, 'Peter Floud Obituary', *Design*, 136 (1960), 63/64.

²⁰⁶ Helen Kapp, 'Obituary, Peter C. Floud, CBE FMA', *Museums Journal*, 12 (1960), 295. Helen Kapp, Director, Wakefield City Art Gallery, 1951-61.

The underlying principle of the Department's circulating exhibitions was that they should be free of access and shown in institutions that were open to the public without charge. Equality of access was promoted by the charging structure where a standard transport fee applied irrespective of the borrower's location in the UK, and through the Department's willingness to consider loans to a variety of institutions, provided these were secure.²⁰⁷ Exhibition design further supported this aim through full labels and descriptive notes, often mounted on a lectern, obviating the need to purchase explanatory catalogues. Whilst catalogues were available for a limited number of shows (just six out of 61 in 1959, for example) these were modestly priced, and provincial institutions were supported in producing their own catalogues as the Department provided detailed text.²⁰⁸ A proposal to introduce catalogues from 1955 was cautious with the prospectus stating:

All of the objects in the exhibitions will continue to be labelled, but each of the catalogues will contain further information on the objects as well as an introduction which will replace the normal descriptive note. We shall be glad to have the comments of borrowers on the usefulness of the catalogues.²⁰⁹

From 1969 Circ produced distinctive tall, thin, folded leaflets but it was not until 1972 that Circ produced a printed catalogue for every exhibition. For most shows these leaflets were effectively free as there was no requirement to pay the nominal price for the 'fold-over twopenny catalogues', even if these were now considered 'essential to the full appreciation of the material offered'; regional museums were only encouraged to display a collecting box 'to discourage the wholesale removal of the catalogues by some viewers'. Payment was only required for the 'lengthy illustrated catalogues for special exhibitions'.²¹⁰

So what was distinct about the touring exhibitions sent out by Circ and what can they tell us about the ethos of the Department? One of the early exhibitions

²⁰⁷ Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, pp. 7-17.

²⁰⁸ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954), p. 2.

²⁰⁹ Peter Floud, 'Foreword', *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO 1955), p. 1.

²¹⁰ Hugh Wakefield, 'Foreword', *National Museum Loan Service, Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, Exhibitions 1973-74: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1972), p. 1.

created by Circ under Floud was to celebrate *150 Years of Lithography*, covering both the art and the design of this medium. To quote from the prospectus:

This exhibition has been made up from material assembled for the exhibition shown in the Victoria and Albert Museum to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the invention of lithography. It is a self-contained survey of the art from its invention to the present day, and includes technical exhibits illustrating the process of lithography. Many rare early prints, and examples of the finest work of Toulouse-Lautrec, Cezanne, Renoir, etc., as well as examples of contemporary English and French work are included.²¹¹

There were fifty frames and three technical exhibits, including a collapsible revolving display case. Here the Department sent out a combination of scholarly, historic objects, (which it emphasizes are 'rare early prints'), an illustration of the technique of production,²¹² and, all the better to shape 'good taste', up-to-date examples of contemporary printing from both home and abroad.²¹³ In practice then, Circ can be seen to negotiate between art and industry, society and the market, in the dissemination of design to the regions and its ethos can be seen to comprise three elements:

- Scholarship – for unique, provenanced, aesthetic objects
- Material and process – supporting students, industry, export and commerce
- The contemporary – shaping the 'good' taste of the ideal citizen as an arm of progressive government

²¹¹ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954), p. 3.

²¹² This approach is distinct from the aestheticized commodities outlined by Rees, p. 146.

²¹³ V&A galleries that exclude the contemporary have received criticism, Mark O'Neill, 'Museums, Professionalism and Democracy', *Cultural Trends*, 17.4 (2008), 289-307 (p. 302).

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Figure 6: Charles Mozley, 150 Years of Lithography, Poster, 1948, first, second, third and fourth printings stages of auto-lithograph, C.17459, V&A (promotional poster and exhibit). Photographs: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Original in colour.

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Figure 7: 150 Years of Lithography, technical exhibit in revolving display, Bolton Art Gallery, September 1950, MA/19/4 Photographs of exhibitions from 1956-63 in England and Scotland, V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Floud wrote in 1950 that Circ travelling exhibitions were 'supplied with much fuller and more didactic labels than would normally accompany a Victoria and Albert exhibition'.²¹⁴ This statement may be seen to demonstrate Circ's unique role continuing Cole's founding aim:

everything will be seen and be made as intelligible as possible by descriptive labels. Other collections may attract the learned to explore them, but these will be arranged so clearly that they may woo the ignorant to examine them. This museum will be like a book with its pages always open, and not shut.²¹⁵

Examples of 'fuller and more didactic' Circ labels remain on progressive proofs of a linocut process set by one of its great exponents, Edward Bawden (1903-1989) (C.18679 -C.18682). Bawden's much-reproduced linocut *Autumn* (E.713-1950) was commissioned by the Museum using the Giles Bequest 'for the encouragement of relief-printing in colour'.²¹⁶ The Circ set consists of four progressive proofs using three separate blocks, ten different colours and print, re-print and stipple technique to create the final effect.²¹⁷ This set to demonstrate the linocut process for *Autumn* (a 'demonstration set') went into Circ in August 1951 and toured to UK art schools to inspire students; it still has the typed label sequence stuck onto grey mounting board. These original labels can be described as factual and detailed, the text clearly describing the process with a focus on technique to inform the practice of the art student, accompanied by the legend '*Lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum*'. Circ's emphasis on the stages of production resists the fetishisation of objects as commodities, foregrounding creativity rather than signs of the 'power of capital and state'.²¹⁸ Circ's demonstration sets can be seen as a continuation of 19th century Mechanics

²¹⁴ Floud, 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum', 299.

²¹⁵ Henry Cole, *First Report of the Department of Practical Art* (1884) 291-293, quoted by Goodwin, p. 31.

²¹⁶ The Giles Fund bequeathed by artists Ada Shrimpton and William Giles. The series of original prints on the seasons (Prints and Drawings) were shown in *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition*, South Kensington, 1954, then Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow.

²¹⁷ Bawden generously gave Circ the lino block for *Autumn*: CIRC.106B-1958.

²¹⁸ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p. 81.

Institutes for working class adults, where exhibitions presented opportunities for improvement through technical education.²¹⁹

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Figure 8: Edward Bawden, *Autumn*, 1950, Linocut, CIRC.106B-1958. Label: (a) Block 2 (covering the upper section of the print only), printed in dark grey and light green. (b) Block 3 (covering the lower section of the print only), printed in dark grey, light green, red and moss green. C.18680. Photographs: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Original in colour.

Bawden's linocut was one of the loans to art schools and teachers' training colleges which were re-established after the war starting in 1948²²⁰ although, as the Museum's own archive is incomplete, the first post-war Circ prospectus dates

²¹⁹ Toshio Kusamitsu, 'Great Exhibitions before 1851', *History Workshop Journal*, 9.1 (1980), 70-89 (p. 78). Bruce Robertson, 'The South Kensington Museum in Context', *Museum and Society*, 2.1 (March 2004), 1-14.

²²⁰ 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], p.2, MA/17/1/1, V&AA.

from the academic year 1951-52.²²¹ By this date the Department was circulating collections to some 270 institutions, providing a service tailored to the specific needs of art schools, for example by sending out a questionnaire asking for feedback in autumn 1950.²²² The 1951-52 prospectus made available 125 different categories of 'sets'. Such sets were usually 18 frames of either original material, photographs, facsimile or collotype reproductions. The majority of sets were valued for insurance purposes at about £80, though there were more expensive sets of enamels and jewellery valued at up to £620, a consideration for colleges as they paid the insurance even though the loan exhibition was free of charge.²²³

Post-war sets were created for particular art school departments to teach technical processes and historical development for specialist mediums, for example *The History of Wood-engraving and Wood-Cutting* and *The Process of Wood-engraving and Wood-cutting*, brought up to date by *Contemporary Wood-engravings and Wood-cuts*. Sets of frames are still of interest today as they were the result of the Department's collaboration with well-known practitioners, such as *The Technique of Book-Binding*, designed to illustrate correct technique by Douglas Cockerell. John Minton is represented through the set *Colour Line-Block* of artist-separated line-block illustrations in progressive colour-proofs.²²⁴ A set of 'tabby-weaving' was commissioned by Circ 'to illustrate the variety of textures and effects obtainable in a single simple weave', from 'a leading individual weaver'.²²⁵ This didactic example was by Marianne Straub, to which examples by Peter Collingwood were later added. Some contemporary loans to art schools could be

²²¹ Circulation Department exhibitions and loan collection prospectuses, MA/17/1, V&AA. Some additional prospectuses are available at the NAL.

²²² 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA.

²²³ 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA. Set 93 Enamels £620 and Set 193 Jewellery £590.

²²⁴ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: School Loans 1959-1960* (London: HMSO, 1959), MA/17/1/5, V&AA. John Minton, tutor in Illustration at the Central School of Art, and shortly in Painting at the Royal College of Art.

²²⁵ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: School Loans 1962-1963*, (London: HMSO, 1962), MA/17/1/6, V&AA. The identity of the weaver/s is given as '50 pieces, Marianne Straub, Peter Collingwood', *National Museum Loan Service: School Loans 1966-68: Loans available to Art Schools and Colleges of Education: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department*, (London: HMSO, 1966), MA/17/7, V&AA.

handled; contemporary textiles were supplied hanging and can be seen being studied by Royal College of Art students in photographs.²²⁶

These sets follow the original Government Schools of Design approach where commercial work produced in London was sent out around the country. First shown in an educational setting – the art school gallery or studio – rather than a strictly museological one, these demonstration sets encouraged an interactive mode of viewing, which may be seen as distinct to museums of design such as the V&A. Following Illeris and the concept of the ‘friendly eye’,²²⁷ these stages in object production reveal the process of making, implicitly based on a mutual interest in technique with an equality of relationship between curator and viewer. What is unveiled here is that which enables individual creativity, not kept hidden as a sealed, arcane mystery, but presented as a gift of skill, through an unpicking, an analysis. These objects are not presented for passive aesthetic appreciation or consumption, however admirable their visual qualities, but as openings in a cultural conversation that preserves autonomous subjectivity. This is a discourse that expects, even creates, an arena for a reply to curatorial authority, in the form of the manufacture of further objects in the cultural chain, denying final agency to museum interpretation.²²⁸ As MacLeod writes: ‘Any sense of an overarching narrative is also negated by the continual questioning of the finished object and, by implication, any kind of objectified experience’. In addition, the temporary nature of the displays reveal ‘the human effort and artifice involved’ and this works ‘to challenge any suggestion of stasis or permanence’ in relation to curatorial authority.²²⁹

In contrast, some framed sets had a structured didactic purpose such as *The Decorative Arts in England* designed as a series of six running in chronological order from 1675 to 1825 to be shown for a term at a time in sequence, so educating students in applied art and architecture for each period over the course of six terms or two academic years. *Non-European Decorative Arts* were also

²²⁶ Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department, Its History and Scope*, insert after p. 4.

²²⁷ Illeris, ‘Visual Events and the Friendly Eye’.

²²⁸ Bal, ‘Telling, Showing, Showing Off’, p. 173.

²²⁹ MacLeod, ‘This Magical Place’, p. 56.

covered though with a lower proportion of original material. There were also fine art facsimile reproductions of traditional old masters, as for *Holbein* drawings, on a theme as for *Figure Studies*, covering national schools such as *Flemish Drawings*, or selected to illustrate contrasting styles, like *Classical and Romantic*.

The art school sets were international in scope, for example *Contemporary Illustrated Children's Books* included English, French, Swiss, Danish, Polish, Czech, and Russian examples. In this immediate post-war period the Department offered regional art schools unusual and hard to obtain original contemporary material such as foreign posters 'rarely seen by the general public' in *Contemporary Posters* and 'export only' fabrics 'not seen on the home market' in *Contemporary Miscellaneous Textiles*.²³⁰ There were inherent difficulties in framing or transporting certain objects, so that ceramic tiles are present as originals, whilst sculpture was necessarily photographed. Commercial design was not neglected, for example in 1951 *Commercial Packaging* showed a varied selection of mainly foreign contemporary package design.²³¹ The targeted audiences may be seen to relate to the divisions of teaching departments in art schools and also to the departments of the Museum.²³² The order and division of the categories of schools sets changed over the post-war period but the hierarchy of listing continued to emphasise two-dimensional fine art material over design.²³³

The prospectus listed the most popular sets so that schools of art could order strategically and stand a better chance of receiving sets they wanted, revealing

²³⁰ 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA.

²³¹ 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA.

²³² 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA.

Sections are: The Decorative Arts in England; Non-European Decorative Arts; Drawings, watercolours, etc; Engravings, etchings, lithographs, etc; Illuminated Manuscripts; Printing and Typography; Book-production; Book Illustrations; Commercial Printing; Colour Process Sets; Calligraphy; Furniture and Interior Decoration; Textiles; Ceramics; Sculpture; Metalwork; Miscellaneous.

²³³ *Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges 1953-1954* (London: HMSO, 1953) MA/17/1/2, V&AA. The order is: Drawings; Watercolours; Graphic Art; Books, Lettering, Printing; Printing and Typography; Book-Production; Textiles; Sculpture, Ceramics; Decorative Arts etc; Metalwork, Costume and Miscellaneous.

patterns of demand. In 1956-57 the most popular sets were *Teaching of Embroidery* and *Wax Resist-Dyed and Printed Cottons*. Other sets which also received more than 20 requests included fine art such as *Da Vinci*, as well as modern graphic material such as *Contemporary Greeting Cards*. A similarly varied mix received more than 10 requests, for example both *Raphael* and *Commercial Packaging*.²³⁴ By the mid-1950s Circ was providing a service to schools of art on an impressive scale. In the academic year 1955-56 Circ toured its collections to about 300 schools of art across the UK with about 170 different subjects covered in 510 framed sets. The pool of framed sets available totalled 11,250 with that of unframed material being 20,000, including duplicate sets of popular material. A staggering 1,200 framed exhibits were staged with an additional 6,000 showings of unframed mounts. In addition, Circ had shown some 61 different exhibitions to 136 museums and galleries, a total of 300 showings.²³⁵ While Circ was not required to subscribe to modern performance indicators, this level of demand would seem to indicate a substantial 'pathway to impact'. The role played by Circ shows in the dissemination of design is illuminated by the 1964 show *English Transfer-Printed Pottery* (illustrated Fig. 11). This show contained historic examples of transfer-printed English pottery from 1756 until the mid-nineteenth century, exhibited together with original designs and paper-impressions, illustrating sources and the use of parallel design motifs in other applied arts, enabling the understanding and practice of design.²³⁶

Acquisitions

Circ staff were more concerned with acquiring contemporary work than the other Departments of the 'parent' museum, aiming to collect the best British and international work in the field of the applied and graphic arts. As Wakefield noted in 1959, Circ acted 'as the growth-point of the Museum', ranking 'as the national

²³⁴ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: School Loans 1956-57* (London: HMSO, 1956) p. 4, MA/17/1/3, V&AA.

²³⁵ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: School Loans 1956-57* (London: HMSO 1956) p. 3, MA/17/1/3, V&AA.

²³⁶ *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1965-66: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1964) p. 16, MA/17/1/3, V&AA.

collections of the present and of the past hundred years'.²³⁷ Charlotte Benton sees Circ as 'the one department that consistently collected post-1850 objects' that did 'much to promote an image of the V&A as a lively and outward looking institution in the regions'.²³⁸ Benton explains that 'For much of the present century the V&A ignored its original remit to collect contemporary work' as:

Until the mid-1970s few of the 'static' departments (with the notable exception of the Department of Prints and Drawings) saw it as part of their brief to collect objects less than one hundred years old. It thus fell largely to the (now defunct) Circulation Department, whose collections were necessarily exhibited elsewhere, to acquire more recent work.²³⁹

Floud was indeed prepared to consider Victorian and later material for exhibition that would have been rejected as 'unsuitable for permanent retention in the Museum collections', a policy supported by Ashton.²⁴⁰ Circ's collecting policy was deliberately in advance of the market, enabling them to acquire objects at 'nominal' prices, for example in 1951 '2 important Pugin domestic chairs for £2-10 each'.²⁴¹ Floud considered collecting the work of living designers problematic at the start of the 1950s as 'invidious distinctions' inevitably caused 'some ill-feeling', even if this did not prevent Circ from acquiring such material.²⁴² In addition to concern about showing preference to particular designers and firms, either causing offence or giving commercial advantage, there was the possibility of arbitrary personal curatorial taste, the ideal being to eliminate anachronisms and build a classic and enduring collection.²⁴³ Contemporary textiles became a strength of the Department and early acquisitions were a mixture of gift and purchase²⁴⁴ sometimes even from the same manufacturer at the same time.²⁴⁵ This emphasis on two-dimensional material reflected the ease with which such

²³⁷ Wakefield and White, p. 7-17.

²³⁸ Benton, 'An Insult to Everything the Museum Stands for,' 309-328.

²³⁹ Charlotte Benton, 'Frank Lloyd Wright: The Kauffmann Office', *Journal of Design History*, 9.3 (1996), 224-227 (pp. 226/227).

²⁴⁰ Peter Floud, Memorandum to Leigh Ashton, 27 October 1951, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1949-1953, Part 1, MA/28/85/1, V&AA.

²⁴¹ Peter Floud, Minute Sheet to Leigh Ashton, 31 August 1951, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1949-1953, Part 1, MA/28/85/1, V&AA.

²⁴² Peter Floud, Minute Sheet to Leigh Ashton, 31 August 1951, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1949-1953, Part 1, MA/28/85/1, V&AA.

²⁴³ Trenchard Cox, 'Introduction', *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of English Chintz: English Printed Furnishing Fabrics from their Origins until the Present Day* (London: HMSO, 1960), p. 1.

²⁴⁴ CIRC.209-1947 gift of Heal's Wholesale & Export Ltd; CIRC.71-1947, 9s 8d from Helios Ltd.

²⁴⁵ CIRC.93 to 98-1948, four purchases and two gifts, Tibor Reich for Tibor Ltd.

material could be transported to disseminate contemporary international design to a wide audience, largely starved of such stimulus during the war years.²⁴⁶

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Figure 9: 'A small exhibition showing examples of good modern design in pottery, glass and textiles, from the loan collection of the Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington.' 18 August 1948. Ref 22226101H, collection: Betty Elzea, with thanks to Linda Sandino. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Many V&A *Festival of Britain* objects were not collected as examples of contemporary design in 1951 but were acquired later in 1968 as a gift from the COID. At the time of the Festival, Circ staff were engaged in researching the major exhibition that became *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, shown at South Kensington in 1952 and central to the revival of interest in Victorian design. This show was originally proposed as a survey of British design from 1851 to 1951 to coincide with events on the South Bank but the exhibition was curtailed in breadth and postponed till 1952, mainly due to the wealth of earlier material uncovered by the department's original research. This partly explains why the Festival designs were not acquired by the Department, as do Floud's concerns that in the projected V&A 1951 survey the quality of the post-1914 objects would

²⁴⁶ Not all Circ acquisitions travelled, CIRC.758-1969, Strand Palace Hotel Foyer.

be a 'visual anti-climax'.²⁴⁷ As others have noted, in spite of a commitment to the modern, Circ's acquisitions of contemporary material were not universally bold in taste.²⁴⁸

Circ's policy to purchase contemporary design responded to 'an overwhelming bias of demand'²⁴⁹ for loan exhibitions of contemporary work from large colleges of art. The art college principals required exhibitions of new material to make an impact as works needed an appeal that was 'strictly of the moment', necessitating a 'ruthless turnover of material'.²⁵⁰ Contemporary works donated to the Museum by artists and designers could be sent straight out to disseminate contemporary design to students and the public. The speed with which such work was listed in the prospectus and sent out to art schools is impressive.²⁵¹ For example, *Design Review* travelled to Teeside College of Art, Middlesbrough in 1973-74 and contained Richard Sapper's 1971 *Tizio* lamp for Artemide.²⁵²

Circ was able to purchase contemporary material that would have been controversial in other Departments without going through the full formal procedure for approval in part due to the low monetary value of such objects that could therefore be purchased out of petty cash.²⁵³ Circ used other funds available to them to support contemporary design directly, for example through the Giles Bequest Fund and competition, which became part of an exhibition that toured

²⁴⁷ Peter Floud, Memorandum to Leigh Ashton, 27 October 1951, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949-1953*, Part 1, MA/28/85/1, V&AA.

²⁴⁸ *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, ed. by Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson (London: V&A Publications, 1997), p. 380.

²⁴⁹ Carol Hogben, 'Report on School Loans Conference, V&A, 20 June 1967', *Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1966-67* (London: HMSO, 1967), Appendix, p. 32-37.

²⁵⁰ Mr Meredith Hawes, Hon Secretary, Association of Art Institutions, Principal, Birmingham College of Art, in Carol Hogben, 'Report on School Loans Conference, V&A, 20 June 1967', *Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1966-67* (London: HMSO, 1967), Appendix, p. 36.

²⁵¹ CIRC.517-1972 to CIRC.561-1972, Eduardo Paolozzi, *Bunk!* Prints published 1972 toured to Dundee, Luton and Wolverhampton 1973-4, *Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1973-74* (London: HMSO 1974), p. 5.

²⁵² *Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1973-74* (London: HMSO, 1974), p. 16. CIRC.505-1973, Catalogue No. 14.

²⁵³ Rumbelow, p. 47.

nationally and internationally.²⁵⁴ Work acquired directly from Circ visits to art schools and student shows could be free, gifted by students pleased to be selected by the Museum's staff.²⁵⁵ In search of contemporary acquisitions, Circ staff would travel abroad to directly source the latest and best of foreign design. Morris recounted her own buying trips to Finland and Betty Elzea's buying trips to Italy and Czechoslovakia, whilst Hogben used family holidays, for example, to buy Bauhaus textiles from Gunta Stölzl in Switzerland.²⁵⁶ Contemporary material could still be problematic, particularly when Circ commissioned contemporary artists and makers to produce objects for touring collections. Circ, like other Museum departments, sought to maintain complete freedom of taste and choice in its acquisitions. Circ rejected any suggestion that it 'should need to refer elsewhere for proper discrimination' or should compromise 'taste and direction' when commissioning high quality designs in a contemporary idiom that would appeal to teachers and students, as with Harold Cohen's *Over All* tapestry, 1967.²⁵⁷

Some 'of the moment' exhibitions of contemporary design of a 'more experimental nature' originally formed as special exhibitions for the Schools Loan Service under the direction of Carol Hogben, Deputy Keeper of Circ were also shown later at regional museums, for example *Pop Graphics*.²⁵⁸ These transfers to museum loans could include contemporary material whose value was implicitly affirmed by its acquisition by Circ, displayed with works still owned by art dealers and potentially available to purchase. Effectively curating a selling exhibition was a radical development for the V&A.²⁵⁹ Circ exhibitions also promoted emerging British design talent across the UK by exhibiting the work of students from regional

²⁵⁴ *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition* 1954-55, toured to Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, then to European capitals, MA/18/1/2, V&AA. Acquired: E.386-1956, E.387.1956, E.388-1956.

²⁵⁵ CIRC.189-1974 from Brighton Polytechnic School of Art and Design for *The Fabric of Pop*. Baker and Richardson, p. 385.

²⁵⁶ Barbara Morris (1918-2009) interviewed by Linda Sandino, 26 January 2009, V&A Oral History Project, V&AA, with thanks to Linda Sandino. Carol Hogben (1925-2016) telephone conversation with Joanna Weddell, 1 February 2013.

²⁵⁷ CIRC.536-1967. Probably Hugh Wakefield, undated note to the Director, MA/15/17, V&AA.

²⁵⁸ *Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1966-67* (London: HMSO, 1967), p. 5/6. *Victoria & Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1972-73* (London: HMSO, 1973), p. 5.

²⁵⁹ *Dom Sylvester Houedard: Visual Poetries: A Victoria & Albert Museum Loan Exhibition*, 1970 contained 50 works, nine were the property of the Lisson Gallery, MA/18/3/6, V&AA.

centres of excellence, with the open aim of encouraging particular industries, such as *design in glass*, 1969/70. Here Edinburgh College of Art, Stourbridge College of Art, and the Royal College of Art, London, were given near equal amounts of exhibition space, celebrating their achievements equally.²⁶⁰ By 1971, it was

good to know that British, and indeed international, craftsmen and designers now have a pretty generous “patron”. For around 1,000 “contemporary objects,” anything from an award-winning telephone to a Pop festival poster, are bought and collected by the Circulation Department each year.²⁶¹

The Museum’s internal political landscape can be characterised by V&A Director Sir John Pope-Hennessy’s reluctance to accession 20th century objects; for example, in the early 1970s rejecting Bauhaus furniture on grounds of ‘quality’ and questioning the value of Selfridge’s Edgar Brandt bronze lifts. Pope-Hennessy’s note to the Keeper of Metalwork indicates the level of antipathy to the modern.²⁶² In the hierarchy of the Museum, exhibiting ‘garish stuff’ is acceptable for the regions, but not for South Kensington, nothing that is modern and anonymous can be accessioned, and is to be treated with disdain.²⁶³

One perception of Circ is that during Floud’s tenure collecting was dominated by 19th century objects, as suggested by the 1952 *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* show, and that under Wakefield acquisitions emphasised the contemporary, particularly fine craft. The graphics in Fig. 10 below give ‘snapshots’ of collecting at ten-year intervals, albeit one that simply quantifies acquisitions rather than noting rarity, quality or even cost. In 1955 Floud was Keeper, in 1965 Circ was under Wakefield, and in 1975 still under Wakefield but, after Director Roy Strong’s arrival, facing a change in attitudes to contemporary collecting. From this exercise it is clear that, in terms of numbers of acquisitions, the mid-1950s saw the largest proportion of total Circ acquisitions devoted to contemporary objects, whilst the mid-1960s were the period of greatest expansion

²⁶⁰ *Design in Glass: An Exhibition of Student Work from Three British Art Colleges 1969-70*, MA/18/3/2, V&AA. Morris, *Inspiration for Design*, p. 172.

²⁶¹ Victoria Reilly, ‘V&A Tribute to a Living Artist’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 24 January 1971, MA/13/73, V&AA.

²⁶² Sir John Pope-Hennessy, quoted in Somers Cocks, *The Victoria & Albert Museum*, p. 91.

²⁶³ Edgar Brandt’s lift panels are currently (2017) on display: Twentieth Century, Room 74.

in 19th century collecting. In the mid-1970s the Department's purchases were dominated by objects from the first half of the 20th century, perhaps making up earlier deficiencies and reflecting renewed interest in this period for shows such as *The Thirties*, *Keith Murray* and *Art Deco*. These findings support Tanya Harrod's assessment of Circ's importance as a 'public patron' of 20th century craft as 'while few regional museums purchased craft consistently in the 1950s and 1960s, the Circulation Department built up strong holdings'.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, 1999), p. 250.

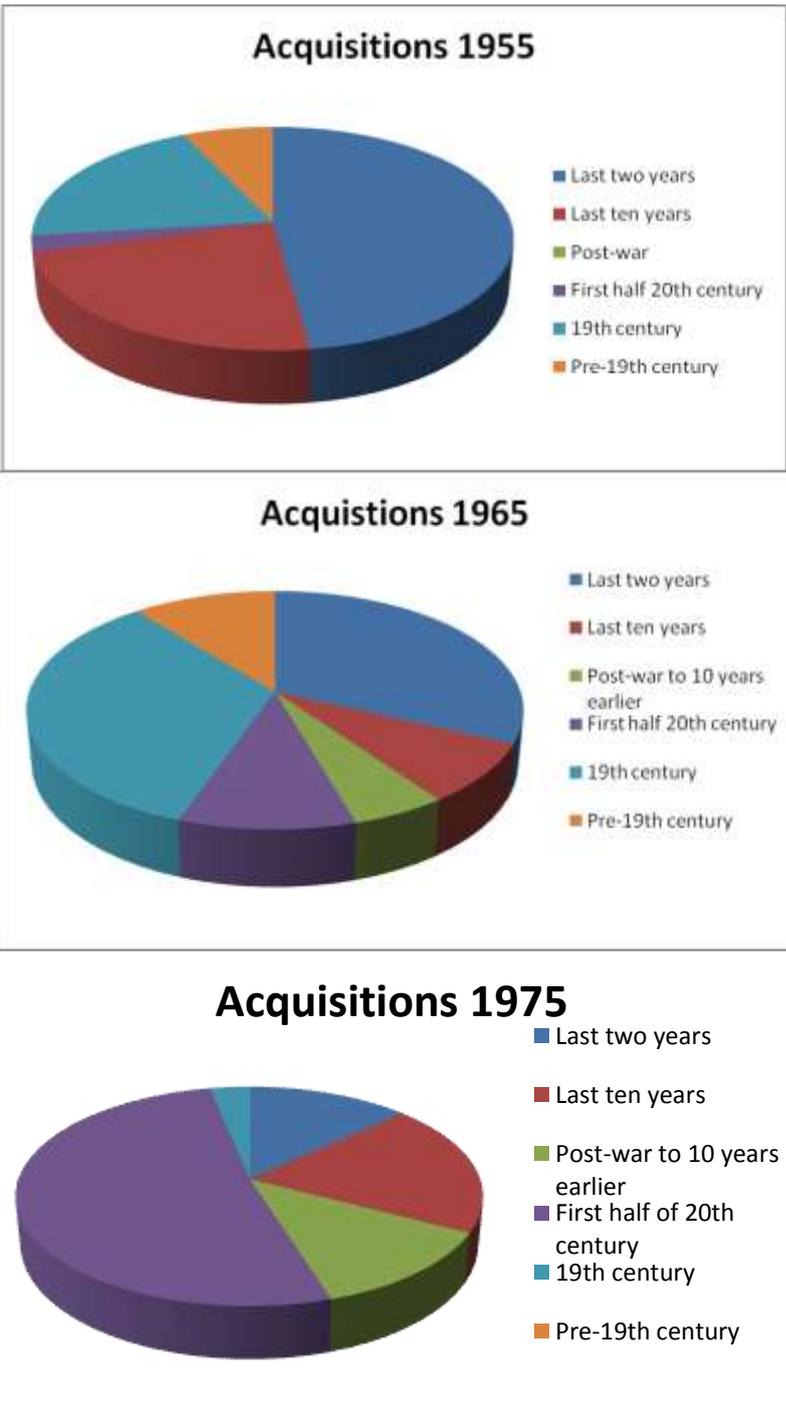


Figure 50: Circulation Department Acquisitions: 1955, 1965, 1975. Graphic by the Author. Original in colour. Note: Collecting is divided into works made two years before acquisition, and works made eight years before that; blue and red segments should be read together to see total 'contemporary' acquisitions. The graphics take no account of object value or rarity, only quantity and proportions.

Date	Number of Objects Acquired in 1955
1953-55	220
1947-52	105
1900-46	11
1800-1899	92
pre-1799	32
<i>Total</i>	<i>460</i>

Date	Number of Objects Acquired in 1965
1963-65	214
1955-1962	55
1947-54	36
1900-46	67
1800-1899	226
pre-1799	73
<i>Total</i>	<i>671</i>

Date	Number of Objects Acquired in 1975
1973-75	98
1965-1972	148
1947-64	93
1900-46	388
1800-1899	24
pre-1799	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>751</i>

Supporting detail for Figure 10.

Display and Interpretation

In 1951 a joint meeting of experts on museums and education emphasized the need to extend the educational influence of museums across the whole population. The Meeting agreed that museums should aim to connect exhibitions with everyday contemporary life, adapt opening hours to improve accessibility for all, promote free admission, and make exhibition labels didactic so that costly catalogues were unnecessary.²⁶⁵ This last point was one pursued by Floud in Circ displays. Floud makes it clear that ‘The labelling of the exhibitions tends to be

²⁶⁵ Grace L. McCann Morley, Report of the Rapporteur, Joint UNESCO and ICOM Meeting of Experts on Museums and Education, 13 February 1952, Paragraph 5
<<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127198eb.pdf>> [accessed 29 August 2013].

rather fuller than in the Victoria and Albert Museum itself, and in some cases the whole method of presentation is frankly didactic'.²⁶⁶

From early in 1947 Circ produced self-contained travelling exhibitions for loan to regional museums and art galleries that were accompanied by posters and press handouts for publicity, descriptive notes mounted on a lectern, and individual object labels. At this stage only a minority of Circ's shows were accompanied by additional illustrated booklets and introductory leaflets although catalogue information was provided for those galleries wishing to issue their own booklets.²⁶⁷ Circ made it clear that travelling shows were designed as complete entities and that museum venues did not need to add their own material, and indeed should not without prior consultation.²⁶⁸ Much later, in 1972, the decision was taken to produce two-penny fold-over catalogues for all new shows, as well as more expensive ones for larger exhibitions, considered 'essential to the full appreciation' of the shows.²⁶⁹

The travelling shows were organised into five categories according to display method so that galleries could immediately select the type of exhibition most suited to capacities of their own venue. In descending scale these categories were: larger special exhibitions with continuous warding, medium and small size shows requiring floor and wall space, only floor space, only wall space, and single-cases.²⁷⁰ In the early 1950s some exhibitions were assembled where the enclosed freestanding showcases were given a decorative backboard in order to stand against a wall. An exhibition of three showcases of *Victorian Pottery* drawn from *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* and valued at £870, for example, used manufacturers' illustrations of their wares in a repeated pattern as a backdrop to

²⁶⁶ Floud, *V&A Museum Circulation Department*, p. 5.

²⁶⁷ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1954* (London: HMSO, 1953), p. 2, MA/17/2/5, V&AA.

²⁶⁸ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1954* (London: HMSO, 1953), p. 1, MA/17/2/5, V&AA.

²⁶⁹ Hugh Wakefield, 'Foreword', *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1973-74, Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1972), MA/17, V&AA.

²⁷⁰ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1955: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954), p. 1, MA/17/3/1, V&AA.

the ceramics.²⁷¹ Similar enlargements of transfer patterns were being used in 1964 when the modernised open display case for C22 *English Transfer-Printed Pottery* was illustrated in the 1965-66 Prospectus.²⁷²

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Figure 11: Left, Mid-Victorian Pottery 1860-80 case from C.14 *Victorian Pottery*, left Estelle Anver, right Elizabeth Aslin, MA/19/11, M143, C14, V&AA © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Right, C22 *English Transfer-Printed Pottery*, Exhibitions 1965-66: *Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1964) 16, NAL. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

In the early 1950s Circ began to experiment with open display units of a similar size to the older enclosed floor cases that could be placed in the middle of a gallery or against a wall. This novel display method accompanied the more innovative design exhibitions of contemporary tableware, new to the public as it was for export or imported from abroad and, crucially, was of low monetary value.²⁷³ Floud re-organised the display categories in 1954, introducing larger and more valuable exhibitions displayed either wholly or partly on new display units and accompanied by catalogues. The smaller exhibitions remained divided into

²⁷¹ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1954* (London: HMSO, 1953), p. 7, MA/17/2/5, V&AA.

²⁷² *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1965-66: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1964), p. 16, MA/17/1/3, V&AA.

²⁷³ C.12 *Tablewares of Today*, *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1952* (London: HMSO, 1951), p. 10, MA/17/2/3, V&AA.

those requiring wall and floor space, those needing only floor space and those needing only wall space.²⁷⁴

In 1955 Floud announced in the annual prospectus that catalogues were to be issued for selected smaller exhibitions and invited feedback on the new approach. The innovation cannot have been met with uniform enthusiasm as Floud stressed that individual objects would continue to be fully labelled with catalogues merely providing more detailed information.²⁷⁵ The introduction of catalogues remained problematic as the 1956 prospectus noted that sales had been 'irregular' and asked galleries to display the catalogues more prominently using new advertising display boards.²⁷⁶ In contrast, Arts Council touring shows generally required catalogues, albeit supplied at cost or at a small profit, as 'a fully informative text with illustrations is regarded as essential to the enjoyment of the exhibitions'.²⁷⁷

Despite the preference of galleries for fully labelled exhibitions that did not require a catalogue for interpretation, the fifties saw Circ continuing to develop new display methods. In 1952 a collaboration with the Rural Industries Bureau²⁷⁸ created a travelling show of some 90 objects of *Hand-made Furniture* produced by rural craftsman, some to designs by the Bureau.²⁷⁹ The show consisted of three 'room-set' displays backed by V-shaped stands with pottery, baskets and rugs arranged on and next to the furniture in a domestic style. Table-lamps were provided to light the displays and the Bureau produced its own catalogue at nominal cost. With these 'contemporary objects' for 'placing on and with the furniture'²⁸⁰ the paradigm invoked is rather the 'bazaar or emporium, with new products arriving and departing all the time', linking it to the department store

²⁷⁴ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1955: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954), p. 1, MA/17/3/1, V&AA.

²⁷⁵ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 1, MA/17/3/2, V&AA.

²⁷⁶ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 1, MA/17/3/3, V&AA.

²⁷⁷ Wakefield and White, pp. 18-23.

²⁷⁸ The Rural Industries Bureau promoted rural industry, gave technical advice and supported craft workshops, 1921-1968 under the Ministry of Agriculture's Development Commission, now Natural England. The Crafts Council is now the national craft development agency.

²⁷⁹ Discussed in Chapter 4, Displays and Installations.

²⁸⁰ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1952* (London: HMSO, 1951), p. 12, MA/17/2/3, V&AA.

rather than the typologically normative art museum – ‘an educational force that deployed material collections’ as Robertson phrases it.²⁸¹

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Figure 12: F2 *Hand-made Furniture*, with the Rural Industries Bureau, V&A Museum, May 1956, MA/19/4 Photographs of exhibitions from 1956-63 in England and Scotland, V&AA. Photographs: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Circ staff promoted further innovations in display. In 1955 the Museum staged a memorial exhibition to the stage and costume designer Sophie Fedorovitch as a prelude to a travelling show (next stop, Birmingham). Simon Fleet, Fedorovitch’s

²⁸¹ Robertson, 9.

heir on her sudden death in 1953, donated her drawings and designs to the Museum and helped to design the show. Hogben, who curated the show with Fleet, had helped Richard Buckle with research for the innovative 1954 *Diaghilev* show at Forbes House and some of these display approaches were mirrored in the South Kensington exhibition, for example the draped ceilings (Fig. 13).²⁸² Kenneth Clark described the *Fedorovitch* as the ‘best laid-out exhibition I’ve ever seen’ even though the music and perfume that were notable features of the larger *Diaghilev* show were absent. ‘I don’t think the Ministry would like it, if the museum spent money appealing to all five senses’ was one quote. However, the combination of sketches, gowns, stage set models, stage lanterns and the designer’s own furniture was judged an evocative success and ‘a model of its kind’.²⁸³

²⁸² *The Victoria and Albert Museum: A Bibliography and Exhibition Chronology 1852–1996*, ed. by Elizabeth James (London: V&A Publications, 1998), VX.1955.007 *Sophie Fedorovitch, 1893-1953: A Memorial Exhibition*, 8/9 December–5 February 1956. Jane Pritchard, ‘The Faun Gets Around: Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes’, *V&A Museum*, 9 November 2010 <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/b/blog/diaghilev-and-ballets-russes/faun-gets-around>> [accessed 25 March 2011]

²⁸³ ‘On The Spot’, p. 1597-8; Clive Barnes, ‘Fedorovitch Memorial Exhibition’, *Dance and Dancers*, p. 12, Accession A0655, V&AA.

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Figure 13: Top, *Diaghilev*, 1954, Forbes House, Jane Pritchard, 'The Faun Gets Around: Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballet Russes', *V&A Museum*, 9 November 2010 <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/b/blog/diaghilev-and-ballets-russes/faun-gets-around>> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Below, *Sophie Fedorovitch*, V&A 1955, Accession A0655, V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Circ created displays in the South Kensington Restaurant, next to its own offices, and from 1954 began showing contemporary furnishing fabrics and wallpapers selected by the Department directly from foreign manufacturers. These shows

were surveys of 'the most significant work' of foreign designers, much of which had not been seen in Britain before, and which were then circulated to museums and art galleries, with the V&A imprimatur.²⁸⁴ The display was flexible with regional curators able to show loose fabrics hanging against walls or screens in long lengths hung from wires and rods; labels were sewn on at eye level and the use of spotlights encouraged.²⁸⁵ Continuing this more tactile approach, in 1956 Circ exhibited the first of a planned series of contemporary ceramics - 'the most interesting of the industrial wares which have been recently designed in a modern spirit' - again in the Restaurant at South Kensington for later regional circulation.²⁸⁶ Ceramics were displayed on open display units rather than locked cases, bringing them close to a department store display.

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Figure 14: 'Open-display unit designed by the Victoria and Albert Museum', Plate XXVII, *Museums Journal*, January 1957, facing 244. Photograph: Joanna Weddell
© courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

²⁸⁴ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 16, MA/17/3/2, V&AA.

²⁸⁵ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955) p. 16, MA/17/3/2, V&AA. T13 *Contemporary American Furnishing Fabrics*, T14 *Contemporary German Furnishing Fabrics*, T15 *Contemporary Scandinavian Furnishing Fabrics*, T16 *Contemporary Italian, Swiss and French Furnishing Fabrics*, each valued at £300.

²⁸⁶ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956) pp. 1-4, MA/17/3/3, V&AA. C15 *Modern Tablewares, from Germany, Holland and Italy*; C16 *Modern Scandinavian Tablewares*.

As Candlin says, more usually, 'Handling is one area where the right of the individual to learn from and enjoy public collections is in tension with the duty of the museum to care for its objects in perpetuity.'²⁸⁷ For this show, however, the expectation was that visitors would touch and handle the objects, in spite of the caveat that the shows would 'need careful supervision', and these innovations were discussed in an article by Wakefield.²⁸⁸ Wakefield discussed the experimental nature of these open displays that had prompted the acquisition of 'easily replaceable' tableware.²⁸⁹ New displays had been specially designed in-house by Elizabeth Aslin²⁹⁰ with a wooden table base covered in black felt with black painted legs folding in underneath for transport. The base supported black enamelled iron grids with clear Perspex shelves, the grid squares alternately backed by perforated boards; an alternative was a simple perforated backing board. The backing boards were for hanging flat objects and painted in five bright colours to contrast with the paler china. In an approach adopted from American museums, objects were secured with adhesive tapes both to prevent accidents and to deter theft, although it was recognised that this was not a 'satisfactory deterrent to pilfering'.²⁹¹

The Restaurant displays at South Kensington had been used as a trial and 'Many people showed a great desire to touch the pottery, and this was not entirely discouraged'.²⁹² For Circ, encouraging touch as a means to knowledge did 'make good pedagogical sense' because Circ did 'hope to encourage both learning generally and those visitors who would be repelled by scholarly approaches'. Crucial here is how Circ staff positioned themselves in relation to their audience, and how they characterised them – as active, entitled citizens, not as a threat to 'the preservation of objects and to other visitors' proper enjoyment'. These contemporary objects were not then 'unique and therefore irreplaceable', but even

²⁸⁷ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', 3.

²⁸⁸ Hugh Wakefield, 'Open Display', *Museums Journal*, (1957), 243.

²⁸⁹ Richard Ginori, *Donatella*, CIRC.146&A-1960, Richard Ginori, *Ulpia*, CIRC.150&A-1960, Milan. Edmond Bellefroid, *Wilma*, coffee pot, 1953, CIRC.155&A-1960, Maastricht.

²⁹⁰ Elizabeth Aslin (1923-1989), Research Assistant, Circ, 1947, Assistant Keeper, Bethnal Green Museum, 1964-68, Assistant Director, V&A, 1968-74, Keeper, Bethnal Green Museum, 1974-81.

²⁹¹ Wakefield, 'Open Display', 243.

²⁹² Wakefield, 'Open Display', 243.

with this caveat it does not seem that there is a 'politics of pollution at play', as Candlin phrases it.²⁹³ These ceramic objects are already released beyond the total control of Circ staff, and some level of wear and tear or damage is expected (hence the insurance charges), so the path is already opened to touch. That objects are of high quality, not second-rate duplicates, is nevertheless essential to Circ ethos.

The advantage of an open display in drawing public attention and interest was felt to outweigh the disadvantages, even though few regional museums would be able to provide continuous supervision. Here both the nature of the objects and the method of display create 'an exhibition which introduces, exceptionally, the atmosphere of the department store, the poor man's museum'.²⁹⁴ As in Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, these

objects which could have been supplied to the public by a large department store, its location and even the publicity which preceded it made it a cultural event and it was therefore more directly addressed to a cultivated public. The mere fact that they should be consecrated by their presentation in a consecrated place is sufficient in itself profoundly to change the meaning (and more precisely the level of supply) of works which would be more accessible if exhibited in a familiar place.²⁹⁵

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Figure 15: Richard Ginori, *Donatella*, CIRC.146&A-1960, and *Ulpia*, CIRC.150&A-1960, Milan, Room 140, V&A, on display 26 April 2017. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Original in colour.

²⁹³ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', 11.

²⁹⁴ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 50.

²⁹⁵ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 90.

In spite of the reluctance of the main Museum to exhibit contemporary objects, Circ may have 'assumed that a museum will have a more diverse public, the greater the diversity of the works it exhibits', in pursuit of access for all, though Bourdieu and Darbel found no such causal effect.²⁹⁶ Circ's display and motive appear similar to the Museum of Modern Art's popular *Useful Objects* shows that toured in the United States, promoting 'good' design choices to the consumer.²⁹⁷ Similar initiatives include the Walker Art Center's *Everyday Art Gallery*, perhaps more overtly didactic,²⁹⁸ and in the UK, COID 'good' design exhibitions staged in department stores.

The rising status, material and cultural value of design objects in the 20th century may be thought to promote a return to a connoisseur approach to curatorial authority. The appropriation of the department store display for the touring exhibition may represent an attempt to aestheticise the production of commodities, or show that cultural production has itself submitted to commodification.²⁹⁹ The ability to act as a distanced but authoritative locus for a meeting between (low) industrial and (high art) craft design may be seen as a distinctive feature of Circ's contemporary displays, allowing them to elide categorisation as a straightforward agent of commodification or aestheticisation. Hewison's discussion of the 1980s V&A and its 'mutant' progeny, the Design Museum is relevant here.³⁰⁰ The background of some Circ staff in department store display³⁰¹ and the Department's preference for using external rather than in-house designers, should be noted. In the mid-1960s Circ instituted a 'deliberate policy to use 'outside' designers for a proportion of the exhibitions' with the prominent industrial designer Robert Wetmore preparing displays of an important new loan of Sumerian Art from the

²⁹⁶ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 86.

²⁹⁷ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 160-190.

²⁹⁸ Arthur J Pulos, *The American Design Adventure 1940-75* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1988), pp. 68-77, 'Show and Tell' covers Museum of Modern Art, Walker and comparable United States shows. 'Everyday Art Gallery', *Minnesota by Design*, Walker Art Center [n.d.] <<http://www.walkerart.org/minnesotabydesign/objects/everyday-art-gallery>> [accessed 28 May 2016].

²⁹⁹ Wood, 'Commodity'.

³⁰⁰ Robert Hewison, 'Commerce and Culture', in *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*, ed. by John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 162-177.

³⁰¹ David Coachworth (b1937) worked in a department store for two years, joining Circ in 1963.

British Museum.³⁰² In 1971 Ivor Heal joined Circ staff, later specialising in graphic design and exhibition design.

In contrast to displays close to the everyday experience of shopping there were overtly didactic exhibitions that outlined evolution, for example of the *English Chair* from the 17th century to the present day. Eight low screens were covered in stripes to back and frame groups of chairs arranged in chronological order, slightly raised from the ground and set on strips of carpet. Low lecterns in the front gave historical information, rather than the prices or delivery times that might have featured in a store display, and also functioned to block access, all strategies to emphasise that the objects were not for trial or for use.³⁰³

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Figure 16: Armchair, 1580-1620, oak, 88.9cm high, W.32-1931 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. *The English Chair F3, Exhibitions 1965-66: Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1964), p. 11.
Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

³⁰² *Victoria and Albert Museum Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1965-66* (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 5. Robert Wetmore, 'Designing for Museums', *Society of Industrial Artists Journal*, 136 (1964), 5.

³⁰³ *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria and Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1966-67, Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1965), p. 11, MA/17, V&AA.

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Figure 17: F3 *The English Chair*, restaurant corridor, V&A, MA/19/4 Photographs of exhibitions from 1956-63 in England and Scotland, V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The 1960s saw Circ continuing to use new display methods where funds allowed and the lower value of objects permitted. In 1962 Circ's Museums section toured an exhibition of contemporary glass, *Glass Today*, in five cases with internal lighting to enhance the effect. In the same year a show of French posters by Toulouse-Lautrec and Steinlen, *Posters of the 'Nineties*, was displayed unframed with a protective Perspex sheet.³⁰⁴ Circ also used innovative methods of display for costume to suit the demands of travelling shows; in 1965 an exhibition of Edwardian costume used life-size illustrations from contemporary prints on boards onto which costumes were sewn.³⁰⁵

Circ exhibitions were seen as a model, as explained in the Museums Association's *Handbook for Museum Curators*. Circ offered shows 'in which all the planning has been carried out and which contain excellent material ready for show. In these exhibitions the objects or pictures have been brought together and related to one another, the labels have been printed, the cases prepared and all that is left to do

³⁰⁴ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1963-64: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 3, MA/17/4/5, V&AA.

³⁰⁵ *National Museum Loan Service, Circulation Department, Victoria and Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1965-66: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1964), p. 9, *Edwardian Elegance*, MA/17, V&AA.

is to clear a suitable gallery and comply with certain administrative instructions'.³⁰⁶ When Circ closed in 1977 one of the criticisms levelled at the loans service was that the completeness and self-sufficiency of Circ displays encouraged a heavy reliance on V&A expertise by regional museums and galleries.³⁰⁷ One reaction to closure was that it would 'cut off the provinces from a source of educational and artistic material which we have now come to count on very greatly indeed'.³⁰⁸

Exhibiting Design: Craft and Industry

Floud's plans for exhibitions and his published writings provide insights into his approach to disseminating design and exhibiting mass-produced industrial and hand-crafted objects – the 'art versus industry' dilemma, still current today.³⁰⁹ There seem to have been tensions and oppositions between Art and Industry, with 'industrial design' a particularly contested term.

Floud was a pioneering scholar of Victorian and Edwardian design but his view of designers such as William Morris was clear-eyed.³¹⁰ In 1954 Floud used the democratic medium of radio to broadcast his conclusions that, contrary to Arts and Crafts principles, Morris & Co. did not produce 'individual craftwork, but rather what one can call serial hand-production on a factory basis, which makes full use of the division of labour and differs very little in its moral and social implications from straight-forward machine-production'.³¹¹ Floud's concern for 'moral and social implications' prompts an assessment of Circ's attitude to unique craft objects and mass-produced industrial designs. Circ's acceptance of the commercial may have more in common with the earlier Coleian aims of the circulating collections where

³⁰⁶ David E. Owen, 'Introduction', in Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, p. 3.

³⁰⁷ Norman Rosenthal, 'Circulation', *The Spectator*, 12 February 1977, MA/19/13, V&AA.

³⁰⁸ John Barwick, Director, Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery quoted in 'A Disaster For Doncaster', n.d., MA/19/13, V&AA.

³⁰⁹ *Art versus Industry? New Perspectives on Visual and Industrial Cultures in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Kate Nichols, Rebecca Wade and Gabriel Williams (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

³¹⁰ For Pevsner, Floud's scholarship 'revolutionised Morrisology', Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), p. 677.

³¹¹ Peter Floud, 'William Morris as an Artist: a New View', *The Listener*, 7 October 1954, pp. 562-564; broadcast on Third Programme, 19 September 1954; Peter Floud, 'The Inconsistencies of William Morris', *The Listener*, 14 October 1954, pp. 615-617; broadcast on Third Programme 25 September 1954.

opposition between the commercial and aesthetic, a conflict between industry and scholarly endeavour, had yet to harden in the Museum.

Under Floud's leadership we see a Departmental understanding of the 'moral and social implications' of different kinds of production (craft and industrial), backed by a Keeper with a commitment to social justice (despite, or at this date one might say because of, his background)³¹² working within a state milieu favouring the promotion of good modern design across the nation, as discussed in Chapter 4. Floud argued a distinction between the decorative aesthetic object and industrial commercial design. In 1957 COID proposed that their own award-winning contemporary designs were acquired by the V&A.³¹³ Floud stated that:

we never have been and are not now a museum of industrial design . . . [the Museum] has always in fact been a museum of the decorative arts and never acquired objects which could be regarded as the nineteenth-century precursors of the twentieth-century concept of industrial design.³¹⁴

Floud expressed reservations about the type of objects that would be appropriate and planned to 'limit our acceptance to objects which could be regarded as forming part of the normal equipment of a living room', rejecting the idea of displaying 'washing machines in the same building as, for example Renaissance sculpture'.³¹⁵ As Rees notes, however, 'Both statues and kettles have found a place in the exhibitions of an industrial age'.³¹⁶ Here Floud defined acceptable design objects by their use not by their method of production; he continued '... we should certainly not normally have acquired ... pyrex ovenware or ... melmex

³¹² Gresham's ethos features in 'Benjamin Britten: Peace and Conflict', *Capriol Films*, n.d., (2013) <<http://www.capriolfilms.co.uk/capriol-film/benjamin-britten-peace-and-conflict/>> [accessed 28 June 2016]

³¹³ Design Centre Awards, see Simon Ford and John Davis, 'The Annual Award Scheme', *Design Council Slide Collection: An Online Guide to the Resource*, Visual Arts Data Service, n.d. <<http://www.vads.ac.uk/learning/dcsc/award.html>> [accessed 26 April 2016].

³¹⁴ Peter Floud to Gordon Russell, 31 May and 15 August 1957, MA/1/D981/2, V&AA, quoted in FN 94, Benton, 'An Insult to Everything the Museum Stands for'.

³¹⁵ Floud to Russell, 1957, quoted in Benton, 'An Insult to Everything the Museum Stands for'. Lily Crowther, *Award Winning British Design* (London: V&A Publications, 2012) pp. 11-13. This was not a new debate, 'Arts Manufacture Exhibition, at the Society of Arts' Rooms, Adelphi', *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal: Scientific and Railway Gazette*, XI (1848) 101: 'we want a Felix Summerly for the kitchen as well as the drawing-room' <<https://archive.org/stream/civilengineeran05unkngoog#page/n132/mode/2up>> [accessed 1 March 2016]

³¹⁶ Rees, p. 143.

tableware.’ [stating] ... ‘the majority of articles in Design [Magazine] now involve a range of expertise quite outside the orbit even of those of us here who cover the contemporary decorative arts’.³¹⁷

In contrast to this apparent rejection of utilitarian industrial design as part of the Museum’s canon, Circ had in fact acquired a ‘pyrex ovenware’ casserole in 1949, by the simple expedient of walking across the road to Harrods and spending five shillings and sixpence.³¹⁸ Earlier, in 1948, Circ had toured ‘A small exhibition showing examples of good modern design in pottery, glass and textiles’, mass produced objects for the domestic interior again recalling MOMA’s \$10/\$25 *Useful Objects* exhibitions (with Pyrex shown from 1942).³¹⁹ In spite of Floud’s reaction when faced with the COID winners in 1957, in a 1949 article for an American audience, Floud had acknowledged that ‘the loan collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum include large collections of contemporary decorative and industrial art’, even while avoiding the term ‘industrial design’.³²⁰

Circ exhibited some British industrial objects that were produced solely for export, as restrictions precluded their sale in the United Kingdom. For example *Tablewares of Today*, 1952, which would be ‘new to the public since most of the best British wares are for ‘export only’ and most of the foreign wares cannot normally be imported into this country.’³²¹ COID contributed to this initiative as Circ

³¹⁷ Peter Floud to Gordon Russell, 31 May and 15 August 1957, MA/1/D981/2, V&AA, quoted in FN 94, Benton, ‘An Insult to Everything the Museum Stands for’.

³¹⁸ CIRC.160&A-1949. The Retail Price Index basket 1952-56 included ‘glass ovenware’, O’Donoghue, McDonnell and Placek.

³¹⁹ ‘A small exhibition showing examples of good modern design in pottery, glass and textiles from the loan collection of the Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington.’ 18 August 1948. Ref 22226101H, collection Betty Elzea. MOMA showed Pyrex in *Useful Objects in Wartime*, 1942, Catalogue No. 65, and in *American Art of the Twentieth Century*, 1955, Catalogue No. 304. ‘Press Release’, *Press Archives*, MOMA, 1942
<http://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/843/releases/MOMA_1942_0085_1942-11-30_421130-78.pdf?2010> [accessed 21 July 2014]. ‘Press Release’, *Press Archives*, MOMA, 1955

<http://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/1905/releases/MOMA_1955_0020.pdf?2010> [accessed 21 July 2014]. Staniszewski, pp.160-190.

³²⁰ Floud, ‘Lending by Victoria and Albert Museum’, 7.

³²¹ *Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1952* (London: HMSO, 1951), MA/17/2/3, V&AA.

acquired some of these ceramics from the COID show, *Scandinavia at Table*, shown at the Museum in 1951.³²²

These travelling shows of mass-produced objects toured to museums, galleries and public libraries to influence and educate the consumer, promoting British products and consumption. In 1956 the Department exhibited the first of a series of contemporary exhibitions described as 'industrial wares which have been recently designed in a modern spirit', only shown at South Kensington in the Restaurant not the main galleries, for later regional circulation.³²³ The series also included national surveys of fabrics and wallpaper bringing international design to art school students and citizens across the United Kingdom as rationing and import restrictions were lifted. These contemporary touring collection displays may be seen to act as a distanced but authoritative locus for a meeting between commercial industry and decorative design, the commodified and the aesthetic.³²⁴

Floud and his team undertook extensive research into Victorian and Edwardian design, a field at that time ignored by other V&A departments, establishing a reputation for innovative and thorough scholarship brought to fruition in the 1952 *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*.³²⁵ Over 24,000 people attended the exhibition at South Kensington³²⁶ which then travelled around the United Kingdom in various forms, for example *Victorian Pottery*, 1954.³²⁷ The original scheme was to cover the period from 1851 to 1951 and Floud proposed that: 'The Exhibition would not, of course, be limited to hand-made objects, but would also include machine-made textiles, commercially-produced ceramics, etc. These latter would,

³²² For example William Knutzen, CIRC.57-1952, CIRC.58-1952.

³²³ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 1, MA/17/3/3, V&AA.

³²⁴ Wood, 'Commodity', p. 382.

³²⁵ Peter Floud, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* (London: HMSO, 1952). James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1952.005*, 23/24 October 1952–18 January 1953. *Victoria and Albert Museum: Review of the Years 1974-1978*, ed. by Anthony P. Burton, p. 54: 'Until about 1965 the [Woodwork] Department did not collect post-Regency nineteenth-century furniture; this was left to the Department of Circulation'.

³²⁶ Peter Floud, letter to MW Hawes, Principal, Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts, 24 January 1953, MA/28/85/1, V&AA [24,174 visitors].

³²⁷ *Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1954* (London: HMSO, 1953), MA/17/2/5, V&AA.

however, only be included if they were the work of known designers'.³²⁸ To establish secure provenance, Floud used contemporary press reports and doggedly followed up the descendants of those who had bought or commissioned work from significant design pioneers, successfully persuading many to loan or gift objects to the Museum.³²⁹ In an internal memorandum Floud describes other scholarly efforts in the field including Pevsner's as 'very superficial', explicitly rejecting a 'modish display of bric-a-brac' and contrasting Circ's 'scientific and objective approach to the period' with the 'fashionable dilettantism' of others such as Grigson and Betjeman.³³⁰

Floud's original scheme further illuminates his attitude to contemporary commercial design. Floud hoped that:

The Final section of the Exhibition [up to 1951] would include a certain number of articles usually regarded as examples of 'Industrial Design', but only in so far as these fall within the field normally covered by this Museum. (e.g. it would include one of Ambrose Heal's early tubular-steel chairs, and Well [sic] Coates' early wireless-cabinet, because these are both examples of furniture, but kitchen-equipment, electric-irons, etc., would be excluded).³³¹

There would be no attempt to include 'the routine everyday productions of the period' but rather objects that were 'in advance of popular taste' and of 'some solid merit as the work of serious designers'.³³² In this context industrial design is acceptable when defined by its use and design source rather than by method of production. Here the Circ ethos seems open to mass-produced design objects, as long as they are by a significant pioneering designer and not for the kitchen,

³²⁸ Typescript signed P.C.F [Peter Castle Floud], 10 March 1950, MA/28/85/1, Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949-1953, Part 1, V&AA.

³²⁹ Peter Floud, letter to The Rt. Hon Lord Carrington, 19 February 1952, regarding William Burges furniture for the Marquess of Lincolnshire at Gayhurst, 1859-66, MA/28/85/1 Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949-1953, Part 1, V&AA.

³³⁰ Peter Floud, memorandum to Leigh Ashton, 19 January 1952, MA/28/85/1 Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949-1953, Part 1, V&AA.

³³¹ Typescript signed P.C.F [Peter Castle Floud], 10 March 1950, MA/28/85/1 Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949-1953, Part 1, V&AA.

³³² 'PF' (Peter Floud), *Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts: Small Picture Book No. 34* (London: HMSO, 1952) pp. 3/4.

arguably a narrow definition of design. In the event, most objects in the exhibition were unique, luxury, craft objects, and decidedly not industrial design.³³³

It can be seen that there is some evidence of Circ maintaining the tradition of Cole's 'commercial purposes' and pursuing 'educational and aesthetic purposes' through both historic scholarship and the exhibition of contemporary design objects. In the catalogue Floud noted Morris's 'crusade against the debased standards of mid-Victorian mass-production' which Morris attributed to 'the influence of machine-manufacture and the disappearance of ... hand-craftsmanship'. Further Morris' doctrine was that 'true design must be based on an understanding of technical processes'.³³⁴ However Floud was clearly concerned about the state of contemporary industrial design and on the occasion of the anniversary of *The Studio* took the opportunity of comparing Arts and Crafts doctrine in 1893 and 1953. Floud explicitly separated design from production, with no bias towards the handmade over the machine, or towards art rather than industry, writing that:

... the main pivot of current Arts and Crafts doctrine, and indeed the main criterion normally employed today in defining craft-work – namely the identity of designer and craftsman – received little attention in 1893. The founders of the [Arts and Crafts Exhibition] Society ... never executed their own designs, but invariably turned them over to commercial firms ... or to professional craftsmen or women .../ present-day Arts and Crafts doctrine, by emphasizing individualistic and subjective criteria, and especially by insisting on the identity of designer and executants, defines the crafts much more narrowly than did the accepted theory of 1893. It would be valuable if the movement took the opportunity ... to consider the extent, if any, to which the present difficult – and indeed discouraging – position of so many of the crafts is connected with this change.³³⁵

Floud articulates his view that a neglect of the 'craft' of design for machine production leads to a decline in the quality of objects and that 'known designers' should pay attention to this issue in the cause of a professional and commercial approach. The distinction for him is between 'furniture born at the bench' or the

³³³ CIRC.857-1956, Catalogue No. 8, William Burges, Decanter; Floud, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*.

³³⁴ Floud, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, p. 38 & p. 115.

³³⁵ Floud, 'The Crafts Then and Now', p. 127 and p. 134.

machine-made born 'at the drawing board'.³³⁶ In 1892 Walter Crane had described craft as 'a protest against the domination of our modern commercial and industrial system of production for profit' under a 'commercial democracy', a rejection of 'the production of the greatest saleable quantity for the greatest purchasing number, without regard to quality or durability'.³³⁷ Conceptualising craft as part of a rejection of capitalist values is problematic as Floud pointed out in Morris's promotion of socialist values whilst organising Morris & Co. Floud is critical of the attractions of the idealised craft-worker as designer/maker and concerned by the implications of this insistence on individuality.

Circ's attitude to craft and to mass-produced industrial design under Floud is further articulated in the 1956 travelling show of *Hand-made Furniture* arranged by Circ with the Rural Industries Bureau (Fig. 12). As well as unique craft objects, the displays showed new modern materials (a fibre-glass chair) and factory-production (stoneware). The catalogue introduction by Cosmo Clark, demonstrated an appreciation of the historic context for the 'moral and social implications' of production together with an openness to the use of factory or serial production and new methods in pursuit of well-designed objects. In this circulating exhibition 'neither the high rate of production ... nor the new materials used ... debar [objects] from the category of well-designed hand-made articles'.³³⁸

To conclude, for Circ's ethos in relation to contemporary design, Floud took care to include the 'machine-made' and 'commercially produced' object when it was by a 'known designer'. Contemporary industrial design was part of the Circ remit, although limited to objects used 'upstairs' rather than 'downstairs', perhaps reinforcing traditional hierarchies in the arts and society. From Floud's scholarly knowledge of Victorian design practice, he was clear that separation of design and

³³⁶ R.C.H. Briggs, 'Tributes to Peter Floud', *William Morris Society: Fifth Annual Report* (London: William Morris Society, 1960), pp. 1-5 refers to article in *House and Garden*, January 1953.

³³⁷ Walter Crane, *The Claims of Decorative Art* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1892), pp. 64-7 <http://archive.org/stream/claimsofdecorati00cran/claimsofdecorati00cran_djvu.txt> [accessed 24 June 2013].

³³⁸ Cosmo Clark (Director, Rural Industries Bureau 1942-63), 'Introduction', *Hand-made Furniture: From the Permanent Collection of the Rural Industries Bureau: An Exhibition Arranged by the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 1956, MA/18/1/5, V&AA. C103 Armchair. Shell in glass fibre, Aidron Duckworth (with Kandya Ltd, Hayes, Middlesex).

execution is acceptable and feared that the dominance of designer makers would lead to a decline in standards for mass-produced objects (used by the ordinary citizen). The output of 'firms', factories and workshops has an equal place to that of the individual 'arts-craftsman'; technical experimentation to produce the 'cheap, simple, utilitarian' object is encouraged. For Floud, the innovative pioneering designer had a duty to address machine production and new materials, just as it followed that Circ, as an arm of 'progressive government', had a duty to select and exhibit such objects.

That the designer of the mass-produced object will be a 'known' and named individual is one of the tenets of modern forms of production. The autonomous and independent designer, apparently operating beyond considerations of profit and cost, is paradoxically necessary for the production of additional value in everyday objects. The model of craft as protest was ably deconstructed by Floud in his studies of Morris - he refers to 'the gigantic all-embracing contradiction of capitalism itself'.³³⁹ Original creative expression and commodification for profit are not mutually exclusive. The ethical and the economic are inter-related, as craft's position as the oppositional anti-industrial 'other' was itself a creation.³⁴⁰ For Dilnot the task of design history is 'recovering design in its capabilities as an agency potentially exceeding its (limited) industrial-capitalist roles', arguably achieved here by Floud.³⁴¹

In the post-war period Circ can be regarded as part of a state framework that negotiates with the markets of mass production for their absorption into culture. Floud can be seen to question the total autonomy of the creative designer and to emphasise the need for cultural objects to be produced not just in the interest of profit and commodification but also as part of the effective incorporation of the mechanised into society. Following Bennett, Circ may be seen as placed at the centre of modern relations between culture and government, where Floud's project was both ethical production and economic growth; an instrument of social

³³⁹ Peter Floud, Art Workers' Guild talk, 18 November 1955, quoted in Briggs.

³⁴⁰ Adamson.

³⁴¹ Dilnot.

governance in line with the new museology. Whilst the Museum's exhibition and acquisition policies continue to evolve,³⁴² Floud's ethos is significant in that it has defined the larger part of the V&A's holdings of post-war design. From 1960 under Wakefield and through the energy of Hogben, the Department continued to acquire and tour contemporary design during an age not dissimilar to Cole's 'so essentially commercial'. The definition of industrial design expanded to include the kitchen equipment rejected by Floud, but Circ's aims for 'progressive government' held good.³⁴³ Circ's post-war state-sponsored ethos can therefore be seen to occupy a unique position in museology.

Exhibiting Design 1960-1975: Keeper Hugh Wakefield

English Chintz: English Printed Furnishing Fabrics from their Origins until the Present Day, 1960, was the first major show staged by Circ at South Kensington under Wakefield's Keepership, but may be regarded as Floud's last exhibition, organised by Barbara Morris (see Chapter 5). The first large-scale exhibition of contemporary design under Wakefield was *Finlandia – modern finnish design*, 1961, which had already been shown in Amsterdam and Stuttgart.³⁴⁴ The exhibition built on interest in previous Circ shows of Scandinavian design displayed at South Kensington and touring,³⁴⁵ and specifically on a 1958 show of contemporary and historic *Finnish Rugs*, prompted by an initial Circ display of a single contemporary Finnish rug in 1956.³⁴⁶ The 1958 show of ryijy rugs was organised by H.O. Gummerus, Director of the Finnish Society of Crafts &

³⁴² Rose Etherington, 'V&A Acquires Katy Perry False Eyelashes as Part of New 'Rapid Response Collecting' Strategy', *Dezeen*, 18 December 2013 <<http://www.dezeen.com/2013/12/18/rapid-response-collecting-victoria-and-albert-museum-kieran-long/>> [accessed 22 June 2015]

³⁴³ Gordon Russell, 'Modern Trends in Industrial Design: Part I of II', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 108. 5048 (1960), 565-577, paper given at RSA, 9 December 1959 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41368930>>. In 1959 Russell holds that 'only out of a general high level of machine production can we expect hand workmanship to flourish once more'.

³⁴⁴ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1961.010 Finlandia: Modern Finnish Design*. Kevin Davies, 'A Geographical Notion Turned into an Artistic Reality: Promoting Finland and Selling Finnish Design in Post-War Britain c. 1953-1965', *Journal of Design History*, 15.2 (2002), 101-116.

³⁴⁵ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1956.004 Contemporary Scandinavian furnishing fabrics and wallpapers*, VX.1957.001 *Modern Scandinavian tablewares*. Jennifer Hawkins Opie, *Scandinavia: Ceramics and Glass in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989).

³⁴⁶ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1958.003 Finnish Rugs*. CIRC.1-1956, Kirsti Ilvessalo, *Palo Karki* (Woodpecker) rug, 1954.

Design³⁴⁷ with the exhibition design by Finnish designer, Lisa Johansson-Pape,³⁴⁸ regarded as 'spectacular' with rugs hung from the balcony of Room 45.³⁴⁹ Whilst Circ can take credit for the initial display, it is arguable to what extent the Department is responding to the enthusiasm and taste of visitors already educated in Scandinavian design, rather than driving it forward. The Arabia ware exhibited in *Finlandia* had been sold by Liberty's, for example, and other London stockists of Scandinavian design included Heal's and Woollands.³⁵⁰ Jonathan Brown's research showed that three Brighton stores, John Bowles, Scandecor and the Scandinavian Room, were retailing Scandinavian furnishings as early as 1951.³⁵¹

While *Finlandia* built on the earlier Circ shows of Finnish craft and design and established contacts, Gummerus had already organised the design and content of *Finlandia*, though Wakefield contributed the catalogue introduction that framed the exhibition for the British audience. Morris also made buying trips to Finland, visiting friends and museums there; many of the *Finlandia* objects were donated to the V&A at the close of the show while some were purchased, for example CIRC.758-1966. Against the argument that only Circ promoted modern design in the V&A was *Three Centuries of Swedish Pottery*, 1959. This show covered historic and contemporary Swedish ceramics and credits Robert J. Charleston, Ceramics Department, even if the contemporary material was accessioned to Circ (CIRC.265-1959).³⁵² The designer, Timo Sarpaneva, created open, retail-style displays with the Finnish organisers agreeing to replace any objects damaged by

³⁴⁷ Herman Olof Gummerus, managing director, Finnish Society of Crafts and Design 1952-75.

³⁴⁸ *Finnish Rugs* (London: HMSO, 1958), p. 2.

³⁴⁹ Carol Hogben (1925-2016) interviewed by Matthew Partington, 3&4 March 2010, V&A Oral History Project, V&AA, with thanks to Linda Sandino.

³⁵⁰ *Liberty's 1875-1975: An Exhibition to Mark the Firm's Centenary* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 115. Lesley Jackson, 'Anglo-Danish Design Exchange 1900-1970', in *Britain and Denmark: Political, Economic and Cultural Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. by Jørgen Sevaldsen (Aarhus: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003), pp. 407-430 (p. 417).

³⁵¹ Jonathan Brown, 'The supply channels, promotion and retailing of modern Scandinavian furniture and furnishings in seven provincial British locations, 1945-1975' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Brighton, 2012).

³⁵² Morris interviewed by Sandino. Hawkins Opie, *Scandinavia*. Diana Pollock, 'Sweden: Pots and Potters', *The Sunday Times*, 19 April 1959.

visitors.³⁵³ *Finlandia* played an important part in promoting Scandinavian style, both through the design of the exhibition, with the Museum's 'Victoriana concealed behind walls of muslin', and directly because many of the objects were available, 'on sale in British shops'.³⁵⁴ In addition the show formed part of the soft diplomacy of the Cold War; as reported in *The Times*, Sir David Eccles, Minister of Education, referred to freedom and independence in his speech at the opening.³⁵⁵ Finnish objects were fed into touring exhibitions, disseminating Finnish design more widely around the UK.³⁵⁶ Morris noted *Finlandia*'s influence on the glass of James Powell & Sons of Whitefriars, Dartington and Caithness, on ceramics by Wedgwood, Denby, Hornsea Pottery, and Govanocroft in Scotland and on cast-iron ware by Robin Welch.³⁵⁷

Wakefield's catalogue introduction to *Finlandia* continued the debate about craft and industry, noting that 'the Finns do not make any significant distinction between craftwork and the products of industry'. Wakefield distinguished a Finnish approach where even 'factory products ... express almost to the point of eccentricity the personality of their designer', whilst 'in Britain we find it difficult to contemplate an exhibition of our own work which would combine studio pottery with the table services of Staffordshire'.³⁵⁸ This approach to craft and industry seems to build on Floud's views about the importance of the 'known designer' actively participating in mass-production and was echoed by other commentators at this time, such as Russell. Lord Eccles noted 'It is considered to be a great

³⁵³ Hogben interviewed by Partington, 2010. Burton, *Vision and Accident*, p. 212, cites *Finlandia* as 'the first exhibition staged by the V&A (aside from Britain Can Make It) to have been through-designed by a professional designer, Timo Sarpaneva'. An earlier contender for this accolade may be *Danish Art Treasures Through the Ages*, 1948, organised with the Danish Government and Kaare Klint architect; contemporary furniture and crafts were included. Jørgen Sevaldsen, 'Trade Fairs and Cultural Promotion c.1930-70: Visualising Anglo-Danish Relations', *Britain and Denmark: Political, Economic and Cultural Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. by Jørgen Sevaldsen (Aarhus: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003), pp. 73-108 (p. 89).

³⁵⁴ 'Colourful Display from Finland', *The Times*, 17 November 1961.

³⁵⁵ Finnish neutrality was threatened by the 1961 Note Crisis, questioning the 1948 Finnish-Soviet *Friendship, Co-operation & Mutual Assistance Treaty*.

³⁵⁶ For example, *Glass Today, The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1963-64: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London, HMSO, 1962) p. 17, MA/17/4/5, V&AA.

³⁵⁷ Morris, *Inspiration for Design*, pp. 198-200.

³⁵⁸ Hugh Wakefield, 'Introduction', *Finlandia: Modern Finnish Design* (London: HMSO, 1961).

honour in Finland to be a designer employed by or working in the Arabia Works'.³⁵⁹

Wakefield's focus on contemporary design led to the formal accessioning of most of COID's Design Centre Award winners from 1962, acquisitions debatably avoided, or resisted, by Floud and Cox in 1957. There was contemporary political impetus from Lord Eccles who thought: 'there should be a really fine exhibition of British design, perhaps held at the Victoria and Albert Museum? This would be of great encouragement to our designers and very good for our export trade.'³⁶⁰ Floud's resistance to allowing 'kitchen-equipment' to be part of the Museum's collection was put aside, 'thanks largely to Wakefield's determination', and the new Circ 'collecting strategy was in fact remarkably catholic', leading to a larger proportion of industrial design objects.³⁶¹ In 1963 the V&A Advisory Council discussed moving Circ to Bethnal Green Museum, in the event, Aslin was promoted to Assistant Keeper in charge of Bethnal Green in 1964, disseminating design to London's East End.³⁶² In 1966, while Circ's earlier research bore fruit in the main Museum with the opening of the Victorian Primary Galleries, Bethnal Green opened Circ's equivalent for 20th century design, *Half a Century of Modern Design 1900-50*, albeit beyond the heart of the metropolis.³⁶³ A clear move towards acquiring 'objects both of decorative art and industrial design' was signalled by a new touring exhibition of *Modern Industrial Design* offered to schools of art.³⁶⁴ The growing importance attached to industrial design was

³⁵⁹ Russell, 'Modern Trends in Industrial Design: Part I of II'. Eccles, 'Industrial Design'.

³⁶⁰ Eccles, 'Industrial Design'.

³⁶¹ Crowther, p. 12.

³⁶² Advisory Council Minutes No. 139, 1963, MA/46/5-7, V&AA. With thanks to Susie Harries for this reference.

³⁶³ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, VX.1966.BGM.001, *Half A Century of Modern Design 1900-1950*.

³⁶⁴ *National Museum Loan Service: School Loans 1966-68: Loans available to Art Schools and Colleges of Education: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1966), MA/17/7, V&AA, p. 3.

signalled by the Federation of British Industry's Feilden Report,³⁶⁵ Ken Baynes' *Industrial Design and the Community*,³⁶⁶ and wider public opinion.³⁶⁷

Earlier, in 1964, in response to criticism of 'the absence in London of any museum exhibiting twentieth-century design and architecture', Wakefield explained that the proposed 'new gallery at Bethnal Green will therefore carry the story from 1900 to the present day and will represent in effect the Victoria and Albert Museum's primary gallery of modern design'.³⁶⁸ One significant change in approach was that 'instead of continuing the distinction between British and Continental work the new gallery must represent the development of modern design as a wholly international theme', an approach for the 20th century onward that is still the case at the V&A today. This ideological position concerning the internationalism of modern design may also have been a pragmatic one, as Circ lacked examples of contemporary design from the 1900s to 1930s. Wakefield appealed for examples by 'formative artists', particularly of furniture, flagging up the absence of contemporary collecting in the main Museum as Circ's acquisitions necessarily focused on easily transported objects. The exhibition's time limit of 1950 prompted commentators to note that the V&A still needed 'time, and money, to carry on Prince Albert's intentions of bringing England up-to-date'.³⁶⁹

In *Collingwood Coper*, 1969, and *Flockinger Herman*, 1971, Circ showed the work of living designer makers, merging institutional authority and commercial activity in a manner that perhaps recalls the Museum's original mission.³⁷⁰ The methodology was unusual for the V&A in that it paired different materials (textile/ceramics and

³⁶⁵ Geoffrey B.R. Feilden, *Industrial and Engineering Design: Report of a Working Party of the Federation of British Industries* (London: Federation of British Industries, 1965) <<http://rsbm.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/roybiogmem/suppl/2009/04/24/51.0.135.DC1/rsbm20050009.pdf>> [accessed 4 July 2016]. John E. Blake, 'An FBI Report Shows the Way', *Design*, 196 (1965), 27.

³⁶⁶ Ken Baynes, *Industrial Design & the Community* (London: Lund Humphries, 1967).

³⁶⁷ Eccles, 'Industrial Design'.

³⁶⁸ Hugh Wakefield, 'Letter to the Editor', *Design*, 18 September 1964, MA/15/17, V&AA, refers to Ken and Kate Baynes, *Design*, 189.

³⁶⁹ Bryan Robertson, 'Sir Ambrose Heal's Desk', *The Spectator*, 18 November 1966, p. 18 <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/18th-november-1966/18/he-bethnal-green-museum-is-an-elegantly-i-glass-ro>> [accessed 29 October 2015].

³⁷⁰ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1969.001 Collingwood Coper, VX.1971.003 Flockinger Herman*.

metal/glass) rather than following the traditional Semperian format.³⁷¹ The explicit aim was to re-position the Museum as the equivalent of the Royal Academy of Arts by offering ‘outstanding craftsmen the same opportunity for exhibiting their work that is enjoyed by successful painters or sculptors’.³⁷² The picture-book catalogue format for both shows gives emphasis to this ambition. There is a full page photograph of each maker facing a brief biography, list of exhibitions and works in public collections, with an ‘artist’ statement – a museologically innovative approach in line with notions of artistic genius and individuality, rather than the lower status of the anonymous artisan. Another reason for such an inter-disciplinary combination, however, was that Wakefield was cleverly circumventing the Museum’s unofficial ‘rule against one-man exhibitions’.³⁷³ Wakefield had originally wanted to curate solo crafts shows in emulation of the Arts Council shows for artists.

The *Collingwood Coper* textiles and ceramics exhibited had all been created in 1968 and although some were acquired by Circ, some were for sale, with the show touring widely during 1969.³⁷⁴ The Museum would not allow the works to be openly sold as this was seen as giving official approval and validation to commercial enterprise; the compromise was a list of works and contact details for the gallery dealers.³⁷⁵ In spite of the Museum’s qualms about acting as a retail outlet, work by Collingwood had already been exhibited and toured by Circ as far back as 1950 in a selling exhibition organised by the Rural Industries Bureau, as well as more recently with the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers in 1965.³⁷⁶ *Collingwood Coper* was not an exception as other Circ shows contained works for sale, blurring the line between the Museum and commercial galleries. For

³⁷¹ *British Design from 1948: Innovation in the Modern Age*, ed. by Christopher Breward and Ghislaine Wood (London: V&A Publications, 2012) p. 24.

³⁷² John Pope-Hennessy, ‘Foreword’, *Collingwood Coper* (London: HMSO, 1969).

³⁷³ Morris interviewed by Sandino.

³⁷⁴ *Collingwood Coper* (London: HMSO, 1969): V&A Museum, 29 January–2 March 1969; Art Gallery, Southampton, 12 April–2 May 1969; City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, 29 May–22 June 1969; City Art Gallery, Manchester, 15 July–10 August 1969.

³⁷⁵ Hogben interviewed by Partington, 2010. David Coachworth (b.1937) interviewed by Matthew Partington, 27 July 2010, V&A Oral History Project, V&AA, with thanks to Linda Sandino.

³⁷⁶ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1950.003 Handmade Furniture, VX.1965.002 Weaving for Walls*. Coper and Collingwood both in Henry Rothschild, *Engelse Ceramiek* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1953) <<http://library.stedelijk.nl/detail.aspx>> [accessed 16 August 2016].

example, *Dom Sylvester* had nine out of 40 items on loan from the Lisson Gallery, so available to purchase.³⁷⁷

Given the Museum's precautions against being thought to have given preference to an individual, this was little recognised by the media, with *Flockinger Herman* described as a 'solo show' for Flockinger, with work clearly promoted as 'available for sale'.³⁷⁸ The Museum's civil service mentality may now seem quaint in the light of current efforts to woo corporate sponsors for blockbuster exhibitions. Circ showed a pragmatic and willing acceptance of the commercial that has much in common with the earlier aims of the circulating collections.³⁷⁹ Rees argues for an integrated view of design as visual culture, a synthesis of culture and commerce, in contrast to the view of design museums as paradoxes where the commonplace and everyday intrude into the sacred space of the gallery.³⁸⁰ In this light *Collingwood Coper* and *Flockinger Herman* may be read as a natural development rather than museological innovation. Works from both exhibitions were fed into the touring programme;³⁸¹ *Collingwood Coper* in particular was a seminal show.³⁸²

In 1970 Hogben curated *Modern Chairs 1918-1970*, in part prompted by the lack of larger objects for the Bethnal Green 1966 displays, and also a seminal Circ

³⁷⁷ *Dom Sylvester Houédard: Visual Poetries*, catalogue, MA/18/3/6, V&AA.

³⁷⁸ Drusilla Beyfus, 'You Can See the Mist Gathering', *Telegraph Colour Supplement*, 19 February 1971, MA/13/73, V&AA. Helen Quin, 'Gerda's little gems', *The Guardian*, 28 January 1971, gives four addresses for buying work, MA/13/73, V&AA.

³⁷⁹ Major R. Murdoch Smith R.E., *Persian Art. South Kensington Museum Art Handbook* (London: Chapman & Hall for the Committee of Council on Education [1876] 1883) p. 12 & p. 313, similar representations of museum objects (p. 12) and Lasenby Liberty & Co.'s 'cheap and artistic porcelains for house decoration' (p. 313).

³⁸⁰ Rees, p. 143.

³⁸¹ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX1972.011 International Ceramics* (Coper), VX.1976.017 *Six Studio Potters* (Coper). *Five Craftsmen*, 1971 (Coper, Flockinger, Herman), *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1970-72: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1970) p. 3.

³⁸² Emmanuel Cooper (1938-2012) interviewed by Matthew Partington, 29 January 2001, © University of the West of England, Bristol and V&A Museum, 2010.

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/ceramics/Videos:%20Ceramics/points_of_view/transcripts/coco/> [accessed 8 September 2010]. 'Peter Collingwood - Hans Coper', *Galerie Besson*, Galerie Besson, London, 2009. <<http://www.galeriebesson.co.uk/collingwoodcoper.html>> [accessed 1 July 2010].

show.³⁸³ The exhibition was displayed at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, its 'first treatment of industrial art',³⁸⁴ as the proposal was rejected by the main Museum.³⁸⁵ *Modern Chairs* was an early example of a media partnership with *The Observer* which had a circulation of almost one million copies; a clear attraction for commercial furniture companies was that the magazine would 'devote a special number to the exhibition, fully illustrated and with detailed credits ... [to] achieve wide national publicity'.³⁸⁶ Hogben directly approached manufacturers and retailers, generating a standard form for catalogue information, demonstrating a close commercial collaboration.³⁸⁷ The show was international in scope and the *Observer* coverage clearly listed suppliers and prices of chairs, enabling consumer choice.³⁸⁸ Rees' critical comments are in line with the V&A orthodoxy in 1970:

Designer- or manufacturer-led displays may be informative, but they are unlikely to speak with an independent voice. The labels 'As seen in ...' or 'Selected for the permanent collection of ...' add cultural prestige to an object which always acts in the interests of the manufacturer rather than the museum.³⁸⁹

The exhibition included reproductions which were 'recently produced to the strict specification of particular classic designs of an earlier date, by such masters as Aalto, Breuer, Corbusier, Klint, Mies Van Der Rohe, Rietveld and Mart Stam'.³⁹⁰ The inclusion of works by Breuer and Mies Van Der Rohe counters criticism of Circ as being more comfortable with 'the softer modernism of Scandinavia' rather than 'the 'hard' modernism of Germany'.³⁹¹ The Museum has since replaced some

³⁸³ Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska (Chance Projects), 'Modern Chairs', Whitechapel Art Gallery Centenary Exhibition, 21 March-20 May 2001, *Whitechapel Art Gallery, London* <<http://www.chanceprojects.com/node/103>> [accessed 10 August 2010].

³⁸⁴ Carol Hogben, 'International Exhibition of Modern Chairs, London, July, 1970', V&A open letter to commercial furniture companies, Accession A0655, V&AA.

³⁸⁵ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1970.XXX.001*. The show followed *Les Assises du Siege Contemporain*, 2 May 1968, Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, with examples of CIRC.214-1970 and CIRC.435-1970.

³⁸⁶ Hogben, 'International Exhibition of Modern Chairs'.

³⁸⁷ 'Modern Chairs Catalogue Information Required' form, completed for Ernest Race, 'to be completed and returned not later than May 14th 1970 to Carol Hogben,' Accession A0655, V&AA.

³⁸⁸ Carol Hogben, 'Sitting Pretty: 50 Years of Chair Design', *Observer Magazine*, 19 July 1970, pp. 24-32, '1968: 'Contour' chair designed by an Englishman, David Colwell. The shell seat is skeleton moulded acrylic sheet, the frame of steel rod. £15 10s: Anderson Manson, 105 Fulham Rd, SW3.'

³⁸⁹ Rees, p. 152.

³⁹⁰ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1970-72: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1970), MA/17/7, V&AA.

³⁹¹ Burton, *Vision and Accident*, pp. 212-213.

of these reproductions with what were considered authentically original examples.³⁹² In contrast, Circ's priority was to promote good designs available to the consumer, but a modest budget also played a part. Press information drew clear and unashamed links between simultaneous displays of modern chairs 'staged by contributing retailers'.³⁹³

Hogben's accompanying essay emphasised structural concepts and principles and the exploitation of different materials.³⁹⁴ The exhibition was organised in sections according to use in chronological order to show evolution in design; the primary aim of exhibition was to show functional objects and their design development.³⁹⁵ The 120 exhibits selected were largely from the post-war period with most chairs dating from the 1960s and just one from the year of the exhibition, with Italian and Danish designs predominating.³⁹⁶ The show was reduced from 120 items at the Whitechapel Art Gallery to 'a more manageable' version for touring of between 24 and 30 chairs.³⁹⁷ The touring show was accompanied by technical comments from David Pye, Professor of Furniture Design at the Royal College of Art, valuable for design students. Despite being excluded from South Kensington, *Modern Chairs* was a popular and critical success, eventually meeting the approval of the Director.³⁹⁸

³⁹² CIRC.367-1970 replaced by W.9-1989. Hogben sees the painted version displayed against black walls as more true to Rietveld's vision than the original natural beech; Carol Hogben, *Modern Chairs: A Victoria and Albert Museum Travelling Exhibition* (London: HMSO, 1971).

³⁹³ Aram Designs, Harrods, Heals, Liberty's, Maples, Ryman Conran Interiors and Oscar Woollens. 'Press Conference and Photocall, Victoria & Albert Museum', Whitechapel Art Gallery, 9 April 1970, Accession A0655, V&AA.

³⁹⁴ Hogben, *Modern Chairs*.

³⁹⁵ Classics 1918-1938; Dining chairs 1944-1970; Stacking chairs 1938-1970; Occasional chairs 1945-1970; Easy chairs 1945-70.

³⁹⁶ 25 chairs were pre-1945, leaving 95 from the post-war period, one by Hans Wegner from 1970, with 30 Italian and 20 Danish designs.

³⁹⁷ Hugh Wakefield, 'Foreword', *Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1972/73: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1971). In 1971 *Modern Chairs* toured to Bristol, Stratford, Kingston upon Hull, Leeds; Sheffield; and in 1972/3 to Oxford, Bradford, and Aberdeen. *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Loan Collections 1968-70: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1967), MA/17/1/7, V&AA, lists 'some two dozen chairs'. *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1970-72: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1969), MA/17/7, V&AA, lists 'some thirty chairs'.

³⁹⁸ Sir John Pope-Hennessy, handwritten note to Carol Hogben, 13 August 1970, Accession A0655, V&AA.

The Circ ethos could happily accommodate dynamic objects and formats which emerged in the late sixties and early seventies and aimed to disrupt the order and hierarchies of the traditional museum – even if such material was not accepted in South Kensington. Circ’s conceptual art exhibition, *Art as Idea*, 1970, was unusual in being guest-curated by Charles Harrison and included both British and international artists.³⁹⁹ The show’s incarnation at the experimental exhibition space of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, *When Attitudes Become Form*, and a previous showing in Bern in 1969, have received wide academic attention and been re-created (Prada Foundation, Venice, 2013).⁴⁰⁰ As a balance, the Arts Council also toured a version of this exhibition. In staging this touring show, which despite its revolutionary aims arguably fell within the traditional fine art genre, Circ responded to the demand by regional art colleges for contemporary material. Hogben defined ‘contemporary’ objects as those produced in the last five years, explaining:

In broad pattern, almost half our material is historic, (pre-1890), but draws less than a third of the demand. One third is modern (1890-1960) and draws one third of demand. One fifth is contemporary (1964-69), but draws more than a third of all requests.⁴⁰¹

As referred to above, Design Centre Award winners were donated to the Museum, not overtly but implicitly as part of a nationalist agenda promoting British technological progress, though under Floud there was no immediate project to display these objects.⁴⁰² Whilst the Circ emphasis tended to be on easily transported material, with the decision to accept DCA objects, larger industrial designs were accessioned. Selections of DCA objects were circulated as part of the art schools programme, often with design drawings and blueprints so that students could see the process of design undertaken by successful designers

³⁹⁹ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1970-72: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1969), MA/17/7, V&AA.

⁴⁰⁰ ‘For Charles Harrison: When Attitudes Became Form’, *Karsten Schubert Gallery, London*, 2011 <<http://www.karstenschubert.com/exhibitions/28/>> [accessed 8 August 2014].

⁴⁰¹ ‘New Exhibitions, Loan Collections and Studio Loans in course of preparation, for which the material may be inspected by Advisory Panel on December 3’, 20 November 1970, Accession A0655, V&AA: *Art As Idea* is listed as the most popular exhibition in 1970 with 12 requests by colleges of art. ‘Loans to Further Education Establishments: 1970-72’, 1970, Item 3, Character of Demand, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁴⁰² *Victoria and Albert Museum: Review of the Years 1974-1978*, ed. by Burton, pp. 42-3.

such as Kenneth Grange. From 1966 Circ sent out exhibitions of mass-produced design, for example *Modern Industrial Design*, as well as shows explaining the design process of well-known designers, such as *Product Design*.⁴⁰³ In addition to the DCA objects, Circ toured an annual show of the Designers and Art Directors' Association award-winners, taking influential commercial design to art colleges.⁴⁰⁴

Following this development, Hogben proposed to circulate examples of imported industrial design to provide UK art schools with an international overview of design developments and a balance to the British designs. Hogben responded to the nationalism of the DCA winners by extending the collections to show the modernism of the 20th century as international. *Industrial Design International*, 1971, specifically excluded British goods and imported award-winning mass-produced consumer items, including some that Floud might have excluded on the grounds of use, even though by named designers.⁴⁰⁵ Hogben had to contend with official disapproval in purchasing 'foreign' goods that competed with British products; as part of the Department of Education & Science, Circ was seen as a government department giving commercial advantage. Criticism was countered by touring only those objects that had also won a design award in their own country, for example the Beogram 1202 turntable by Jacob Jensen for Bang & Olufsen which won an award from the Danish Society of Industrial Design in 1969.⁴⁰⁶ The impetus to collect international design came from Hogben as something that 'ought' to be done; acquisitions were justified as the objects were comparable to DCA winners, having also been vetted by juries.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ *National Museum Loan Service: School Loans 1966-68: Loans available to Art Schools and Colleges of Education*, Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 3.

⁴⁰⁴ *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Loan Collections 1968-70: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1967), p. 2, MA/17/1/7, V&AA. Wally Olins 'The Industrial Designer in Britain 1946-82', in *Did Britain Make It? British Design in Context 1946-86*, ed. by Penny Sparke (London: Design Council, 1986), pp. 59-70 (p. 62).

⁴⁰⁵ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1970-72: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1970), p. 4, MA/17/7, V&AA.

⁴⁰⁶ CIRC.6-1974 in *Design Review. National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1975-77: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 7, MA/17/1, V&AA.

⁴⁰⁷ Hogben interviewed by Partington, 2010.

In the well-publicised *Design Review*, 1975, first shown at South Kensington and later travelling, Hogben intended 'to provide an opportunity for the student to appraise visual design intentions in a wide variety of product categories', acquiring 'mass-produced consumer items of modest size'. The show again 'specifically excluded' British objects and 'most of the examples have been directly imported by the Museum for the occasion from seven different countries overseas' having 'received a major jury-selected award at national level for distinguished design'.⁴⁰⁸ In part Hogben aimed to create a show of low value, easily-replaceable objects for colleges of art as Wakefield was concerned about the security of such exhibitions where no warding staff were on duty.⁴⁰⁹

The London showing, however, placed *Design Review* on a wider stage. Hogben wrote an article in *The Observer* which, given the Museum's concern about commercial advantage, was provocatively titled 'Buy Your Museum Pieces Now'.⁴¹⁰ Hogben connected 'one of the world's greatest museums of fine and applied arts' to its historic mission 'to work simultaneously on the minds of the professional designer, the industrial owner, his artisan work force and the consuming public'. In this light, Hogben noted that 'anyone who wanted to could purchase, take home and have the pleasure of using a recently-made, acknowledged museum piece'. Significantly, the article illustrations are captioned using jury commendations, rather than direct curatorial validation. Hogben explained that historic V&A 'secular treasures' belonged to a 'social elite' who did not visit kitchens or own bathrooms, claiming that today's 'design-award winning consumer products' demanded 'the most refined levels of creative thought and industrial production' providing 'an index of contemporary attitudes'.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1975-77: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 6/7, MA/17/1, V&AA. James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: VX.1975.008 Design Review: An International Anthology of Design Award-Winning Consumer Products*.

⁴⁰⁹ Carol Hogben, telephone conversation with Joanna Weddell, 10 January 2012.

⁴¹⁰ Hogben, 'Buy Your Museum Pieces Now', *Observer Magazine*, 23 March 1975, pp. 40-43.

⁴¹¹ Hogben, 'Buy Your Museum Pieces Now'.

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Figure 18: Detail, *Design Review*, Arne Jacobsen, *Cylinda Line*, 1967, opposite Program Kandya kitchen advertisement in Carol Hogben, 'Buy Your Museum Pieces Now', *Observer Magazine*, 23 March 1975, pp. 40-43. Original in colour.

Jacobsen's *Cylinda Line* was illustrated facing a kitchen advertisement using these objects as props, making a direct connection between the commercial and the Museum.⁴¹² In contrast to the more populist *Observer*, an article on *Design Review* in an 'art' magazine showed Dieter Rams products published near an advertisement for a Man Ray limited edition, shop-bought ready-made, giving a possible reading of both as aestheticised commodities, whether in editorial or advertisement.⁴¹³ The blurring of hierarchical divisions between design and art during this period is underlined by works such as Richard Hamilton's *Toaster*, 1967, again showing a Dieter Rams product for Braun, conceived with an approach at once ironic and laudatory. Hamilton, who taught design at Newcastle 1953-66 at a time when Circ was sending shows there, used the approbation of the design museum in the text which, as in contemporary advertising, was an

⁴¹² Hogben, 'Buy Your Museum Pieces Now', pp. 41/42, CIRC.717-1968, Arne Jacobsen, *Cylinda Line*, 1967, and Program Kandya kitchen advertisement.

⁴¹³ Dieter Rams, hand-mixer for Braun, 1960 (p. 9), Man Ray's shop-bought iron 'signed and numbered' (back cover) in Toni del Renzio, 'Utopia on the Never Never', *Art & Artists*, May 1975, pp. 4-11.

integral part of *Toaster*, part-parody of the fetishisation of domestic objects and part-homage to Ram's work.⁴¹⁴

Hamilton's work comments on the social context in which curators exhibit and interpret design, reflecting what some have seen as a shift from industry to art, from engineering to styling.⁴¹⁵ Rather than adopting a class-based, anti-industrial approach, shows such as *Design Review* could be read as egalitarian and commerce-friendly, curated 'with the purpose of setting historical perspectives and standards' for industry, promoting 'a return to greater simplicity' and a 'sober, modest taste'.⁴¹⁶ Circ staff saw their approach as linked to the creative output of art colleges rather than to connoisseurship, giving them a very different way of looking at art and design from the museum curator perspective. Whilst *Design Review* may be read as either embedded in, or distant from, systems of commodity production, for the Gwent Cave Rescue Team the main concern was the 'field performance' of the mountain-rescue stretcher featured.⁴¹⁷

'The Museum of Design' and Change at the V&A

Circ was well known for its ability to tour exhibitions of populist contemporary material to a range of venues across the country and was viewed as 'an alternative museum, a museum broken up into small, coherent units, and constantly on the road'⁴¹⁸ and described as 'one of the real splendours of the V & A'.⁴¹⁹ The Department's focus on contemporary acquisitions was seen as showing 'great imagination and foresight, forming a museum within a museum'.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁴ Richard Hamilton, *Toaster*, 1967, Tate, Ref P04253, text runs: 'among the most attractive objects for everyday use exhibited at the New York Museum of Modern Art.' *Design Review*, Case 3 contained Braun AG products, though not a toaster.

⁴¹⁵ Ruth Adams, 'Exhibiting Design: Art versus Industry?', *Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal*, 1.2 (2007), 17-26
<<https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/48996145/ExhibitingDesignArtversusIndustry.pdf>> [accessed 4 July 2016].

⁴¹⁶ Hogben, 'Buy Your Museum Pieces Now', p. 40.

⁴¹⁷ Gwent Cave Rescue Team, letter to *Observer Magazine*, 4 April 1975, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁴¹⁸ Marina Vaizey, 'National Loan Service', *Arts Review*, 29 January 1972, MA/19/13, V&AA.

⁴¹⁹ Rosenthal, 'Circulation'.

⁴²⁰ Rosenthal, 'Circulation'.

Notwithstanding Circ's efforts to display modern design from 1966, prompted by 'Tory parsimony' in proposing the ending of free entry to national museums, in 1972 the *Architectural Review* ran a long article on design in museums, calling for 'the establishment of a national Museum of Design'.⁴²¹ The anonymous article, written by Hogben, proposed a Government commission for a new National Museum of Design.⁴²² The article explained that the V&A, whilst large and marvellous, 'has unfortunately decayed from its original purposes', contrasting the Victorians' 'almost ravenous acquisition of contemporary work' and gifts from 'the various manufacturers'. In the 19th century, V&A contemporary objects were destined 'for the inspiration of the living designer' rather than as 'a vehicle for specialist art-historians', whereas in 1972 'the design student who matters most to the country economically ... at present gets almost nothing'. Under current practice, the article continued, V&A objects in the primary galleries were limited to before 1900 and in the 'so-called' study collections to before 1830, a situation that was 'not merely absurd' but 'a deeply serious misrepresentation'.⁴²³

Hogben's article denounced the V&A as a 'total vacuum' for the 'present-day designer, or the student, or the plain day-coach-tripper', with only 'sporadic modern special exhibitions' and 'gaps in the kinds of design which are admitted' which excluded plastics and kitchen equipment. Design Centre shows were considered to be 'already giving us the substance of a going museum', even if 'without historical perspective', and should be accessioned by the new national museum.⁴²⁴ Hogben proposed a committee between V&A and Science Museum to co-ordinate acquisitions such as washing machines and 'hi-fi' equipment between the two institutions. Innovatively, the article recommended that the new museum be run by a consortium of museums, organisations such as COID, working with commercial manufacturers to show temporary exhibitions at Somerset House, as

⁴²¹ H. de C. Hastings, 'Frontispiece', *Architectural Review*, CL1.902, 4 (1972), 198, responded to *Future Policy for Museums and Galleries*, Cmnd 4676 (1971). Heath introduced museum admission charges on 2 January 1974 with V&A admission 10 pence, free on Thursdays. After the February 1974 general election, the hung Parliament under Wilson reinstated free museum entry.

⁴²² Carol Hogben, 'Wanted: A Living Design Museum', *Architectural Review*, CLI.902, 4 (1972), 199-202.

⁴²³ Hogben, 'Wanted: A Living Design Museum'.

⁴²⁴ Hogben, 'Wanted: A Living Design Museum'.

in 1853. Regional needs would be met by travelling exhibitions and complemented by museum monographs using examples drawn from collections across the UK on say, motor-bicycles.

Hogben's article reflected his detailed understanding of the limitations of the V&A in relation to its founding mission, limitations arguably addressed subsequently by the Boilerhouse, and its later renaissance as London's Design Museum. Earlier, in 1972, *Design* magazine had commented that 'we do not have a gallery of modern design ... because of the insular and fossilised attitudes which persist around our museums and galleries'.⁴²⁵ When Pope-Hennessy retired and the decision was taken to appoint Roy Strong as Director in 1974, some changes at the Museum seemed inevitable. Strong appeared likely to promote an approach sympathetic to Circ.⁴²⁶

By September 1974, however, due to limited staff for transport distribution, 30% of Circ's three-dimensional shows had been withdrawn, and from 1974 30% of two-dimensional shows were also withdrawn, reducing the number of exhibitions from 70 to 48 for 1975/76.⁴²⁷ Strong was critical of the position where successive V&A Directors had allowed the main Departments to avoid modern acquisitions. The new director considered that Circ had expanded to become a 'Department of Contemporary Art' which he saw as 'a development totally post World War II' and 'to the detriment of the Museum', leading to 'attacks on the V.&A. for failing to be a Museum of Modern Design'.⁴²⁸ Strong made the acquisition of contemporary

⁴²⁵ Corin Hughes-Stanton, 'Museums and How to Make the Most of Them', *Design* 278 (1972), 25-29 <<http://vads.ac.uk/diad/article.php?year=1972&title=278&article=d.278.23>> [accessed 30 Oct. 17 2015].

⁴²⁶ Director, National Portrait Gallery from 1967, Strong 'swept away' outdated gallery customs, mixing portraits with period objects loaned by the V&A; Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997) pp. 84-85. Strong also followed Circ's lead in exhibiting photography; Funnell, 'Display at the National Portrait Gallery' *Art History*, 30.4 (2007), 590-610.

⁴²⁷ Hugh Wakefield, 'Foreword', *Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1975/76: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1974) MA/17, V&AA.

⁴²⁸ Roy Strong, letter to Charles Avery, V&A Branch of First Division Association (FDA, civil service union), 8 July 1975, Accession A0655, V&AA.

objects a new focus across the Museum as ‘all the curatorial departments were provided with a special fund to purchase objects made only after 1920’.⁴²⁹

In addition, Strong had a government brief to ‘establish an entirely new service for the regions by sweeping away the old Department of Circulation and creating something dynamic and new’, funded by the new Ministry of Arts, under Margaret Thatcher as Secretary of State for Education & Science.⁴³⁰ This brief seems to have been formulated before Strong’s open letter of April 1975 asking regional museums and art colleges for their ‘frankest views’ on how Circ should be ‘anticipating the needs of the last quarter of this century’.⁴³¹ Strong disliked what he saw as Circ’s fossilised, static exhibition designs with limited contextual interpretation for provincial viewers.⁴³² Strong stated that exhibitions in the regions required ‘information, audio-visuals, a response to art within a sociological context, lectures, slides, tapes, a vivid interest in elucidation at all levels of apprehension and participation within society, and an ability to place the art of the past in the environmental conditions of the present’ – with the implicit assumption that Circ did not provide these services.⁴³³ This echoed wider calls for improved communication and interpretation in museum displays generally.⁴³⁴

In July 1975, at the Museums Association conference, the annual gathering of regional museum representatives, Strong announced the merger of Circ with the V&A Education Department to form the Department of Education and Regional Services. Strong framed his decision to merge departments as a response to regional demands and criticism, though not all were convinced by the authenticity of this argument.⁴³⁵ The ‘attacks on the V.&A. for failing to be a Museum of

⁴²⁹ Roy Strong, ‘The Victoria and Albert Museum – 1978’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 120.902 (1978), 272-276.

⁴³⁰ Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries*, p. 138. In 1971 there was some political intent to expand; Hugh Wakefield, Memorandum, on the possibility of Circ providing a service designed for public libraries, August 1971, MA/15/17, V&AA [following a DES meeting 14 May 1971, ministerial suggestion to Library Councils]. This appears to have come to nothing, perhaps because Circ already served public libraries.

⁴³¹ Strong, ‘Museums Association Annual Conference Session Paper’.

⁴³² Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries*, pp. 148-149, 20 September 1975.

⁴³³ Strong, letter to Charles Avery.

⁴³⁴ Wilkinson, pp. 184/185 and p. 220.

⁴³⁵ Natalie Rothstein (NR), Secretary, V&A First Division Association, memorandum to Mr Ellis, [General Secretary] 15 July 1975, Accession A0655, V&AA, notes that Wakefield submitted his

Modern Design'⁴³⁶ may have been the prompt for change, rather than a desire to be more useful to the regions. Strong began his lecture calling the V&A's regional service 'a very good one', but continued with critical comments from users who, according to Strong, wanted 'thematic shows' in line with 'the aim of contemporary education' and rejected 'the isolation of fine art devoid of context'.⁴³⁷ Subscribers had a 'strong desire' for more informative catalogues as they needed 'help in order to learn' and were 'critical of the dullness and lack of imagination in presentation'. Strong re-framed Circ as not 'an acquiring department in the curatorial sense, but as the educational and servicing arm of the Museum extended to the rest of the country', reassuring his audience that the 'change of name symbolizes a shift and a reassertion of intent'. Strong believed the merged department would promote a 'multi-disciplinary approach, the historical and cultural background to artefacts, [and] the use of supporting multi-media matter', implying this was not currently the case.⁴³⁸

Strong's criticisms are not fully supported by the evidence. Circ staff wanted to produce larger catalogues, like those of the ticket-entry Arts Council shows, but funding was not available, although as an option regional museums were provided with information sufficient to publish their own. The 'access for all' approach was adapted after 1972 to accommodate a two-penny catalogue for every new Circ show.⁴³⁹ Circ did already send out shows with context; as one example, *Italian Renaissance Maiolica* was accompanied by text from Piccolpasso's treatise on ceramic production and contemporary maps. Strong felt that 'People are crying out for art and information, often on a broader, less literate level than a century ago'⁴⁴⁰ suggesting that he regarded the regional audience of 1874 as better educated

report on a merger, 19 June 1975, with Strong writing to the unions that day, suggesting lack of consultation. 'Circulation' memorandum 10 July 1975, unsigned, Accession A0655, V&AA: 'There is no answer in either letter [from Strong, 8 July 1975] to our request for information about the quantity and quality of the answers from the provincial institutions'.

⁴³⁶ Strong, letter to Charles Avery.

⁴³⁷ Strong, 'Museums Association Annual Conference Session Paper'.

⁴³⁸ Strong, 'Museums Association Annual Conference Session Paper'. Contemporary views of design museum presentation follow this line, for Rees, design 'museums must use a variety of interpretative media to dig beneath the surface of the finished product. The purpose should be not only to explain the process and technology of design, but to investigate its economic, social and cultural conditions'. Rees, p. 152.

⁴³⁹ To compare, by 1976 the Habitat catalogue was 112 colour pages, price 30 pence.

⁴⁴⁰ Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries*, pp. 148-149.

than a late 20th century one. As discussed in the next chapter, however, Circ's ideal provincial audience can be framed as an active, engaged citizen, addressed on terms of equality.

Circ's display innovations in display were discussed in detail earlier, however, presentation was necessarily limited by standard fittings and cases that were easily re-constructed in the gallery and could be re-used (the 1909 cases continued in use until 1959).⁴⁴¹ Regional exhibition spaces were varied and often did not have security, UV protection or electrical connections; only some could support multi-media projections and recordings. Circ was the only V&A department to regularly attend the Museums Association conference, demonstrating their close engagement with their subscribers, holding regular conferences to consult colleges of art and monitoring the popularity of exhibitions to respond to demand. It is notable that at the 1975 conference Pope-Hennessy, then Director of the British Museum, stated that he 'felt the greatest admiration for the flair and dedication shown by Hugh Wakefield and his staff' and Circ's 'efficiency' continuing:

I imagine there is no one in this room who does not owe something to their work. Under their control the Circulation Department developed into a kind of regional liaison group, and if there is now a more general understanding of regional problems in national museums, and of national problems in the regions, that is due to the work of this Department.⁴⁴²

In contrast, Strong's criticisms would seem to indicate less understanding of the variety of audiences and venues addressed by Circ exhibitions. Privately Strong protested that he aimed to popularise through 'educational' interpretation and that criticising this as spoon-feeding did not take account of the audience: 'SPOON-FEEDING, when 90% of the population still think Botticelli is a brand of Chianti!'.⁴⁴³ This communicates Strong's attitude to 'all levels of apprehension and participation within society'.⁴⁴⁴ Strong reserved just three sentences at the end of his long conference speech for the retirement of Circ's last Keeper, Wakefield, a

⁴⁴¹ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1959: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO 1958), MA/17/4/1, V&AA, p. 1.

⁴⁴² Pope-Hennessy, 'Session 2, Museums Association National Conference'.

⁴⁴³ Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries*, pp. 148/149, 20 September 1975.

⁴⁴⁴ Strong, letter to Charles Avery.

rhetorical device that muted any unfavourable reaction from regional museum representatives. Amongst V&A staff, Strong's speech was seen as containing 'gratuitous insults' to Circ's reputation.⁴⁴⁵ The Keeper of Education, Madeleine Mainstone, became Keeper of the Department of Education and Regional Services, with Hogben as Keeper II, and Morris as Assistant Keeper.

Towards Closure

Writing in the 1976 prospectus, Mainstone hoped for 'closer co-operation' between regional curators and the V&A so that, 'despite the general shortage of money and staff', exhibitions would incorporate 'ideas brought to it by colleagues from institutions outside London'.⁴⁴⁶ Mainstone may be seen to propose sharing curatorial authority and responsibility, explaining that 'Ideas can flow back and forth'. Mainstone called on the regions to:

write to us about the ways they themselves have used the exhibitions, in the past, letting us know how visitors and students have received the exhibitions and suggesting ways and means by which we could improve the displays and the supporting material⁴⁴⁷

Here Mainstone in some measure ignored the established practicalities of drawing on existing collections, particularly that which was easily transported. As Strong had changed official policy, Circ's role in driving forward the Museum's holdings of contemporary material and closing gaps in post-1920 acquisitions was clearly no longer a priority when formulating new exhibitions.

As discussed in Chapter 2, under financial pressure from the International Monetary Fund, the Labour government made cuts to the civil service, including the Department of Education and Science, responsible for the V&A and Science Museums.⁴⁴⁸ The cuts were based on a miscalculation of public sector borrowing,

⁴⁴⁵ Rothstein.

⁴⁴⁶ Madeleine Mainstone, 'Foreword', *Travelling Exhibitions 1977-78: Department of Education and Regional Services, Victoria & Albert Museum* (London: HMSO, 1976), p.3, MA/17, V&AA.

⁴⁴⁷ Mainstone. Developments in complex understanding of objects in Anthony Burton, 'British Decorative and Fine Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum before the British Galleries', in *Creating the British Galleries at the V&A: A Study in Museology*, ed. by Christopher Wilk and Nick Humphrey (London: V&A Publications, 2004), pp. 19-28.

⁴⁴⁸ 'Victoria & Albert and Science Museums', HC Deb, 6 September 1976, Vol 916:C1112 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1976/aug/06/victoria-and-albert-and-science-museums#S5CV0916P2_19760806_CWA_369> [accessed 12 February 2015].

but this was not realised until later, in October 1977.⁴⁴⁹ At the Science Museum cuts were implemented as a 10% cut across all departments but at the V&A Strong had other plans. On 2 November 1976 Strong announced Circ's closure to V&A staff in the grand setting of the Raphael Cartoon Court. Strong's avowed rationale for cutting an entire department was that he had no choice, but it was clear to contemporary commentators that this was a political move by a right-wing civil servant designed to embarrass and thwart a Labour government that supported devolution.⁴⁵⁰ The BBC *Tonight* programme interviewed Strong about his decision to 'axe a whole department'. In the interview Strong developed a narrative in which he had no choice and had reluctantly decided to close Circ, himself repeating the harsh criticism made of his actions. Strong defended his decision saying:

I know it is all very well to turn round and say 'Metropolitan elitist pig cutting off art from the milling population from Aberdeen to Plymouth', that's a very easy charge to make, but I really would defy anybody in the situation in which I have been placed to come to any other decision.⁴⁵¹

When interviewed again in 2015 Strong could openly blame the 'socialist government' saying his approach was 'we will shut the Regional Services where your voters are, so there', perhaps a clearer statement of his politics and attitude.⁴⁵² As Portelli says, 'Oral testimony, in fact, is never the same twice'.⁴⁵³ This time the interviewer encouraged Strong to situate the narrative of his experience in the more distant historical context of economic hardship and general arts cuts in the late 1970s, enabling Strong to be more open in his recounting of

⁴⁴⁹ *Operational Selection Policy*, p. 14. The political and financial tide turned quickly and not all exhibition funding suffered, Williams, 'Arts Council Grants', 'The [Arts] council's grant for recurrent expenses has been increased from £36 million last year to £41.2 million for 1977–78—an increase of 14.4 per cent'.

⁴⁵⁰ 'Where to Economize on the Arts', press cutting [n.d.], Accession A0655, V&AA. Refers to Strong hoping 'to take advantage of this governmental habit of mind' by proposing 'a programme of economy measures which fall most heavily on the service that Labour orthodoxy holds most dear'. The writer hoped that Shirley Williams would 'discount the tendentious way it has been presented as well as the conventional Labour presumption that anything with a regional tang must take automatic precedence'.

⁴⁵¹ Roy Strong, *When Lucy met Roy: Sir Roy Strong at 80*, presented by Lucy Worsley (BBC, 23 August 2015), with clip of *Tonight* (BBC, 1977), author transcript <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b067fm60/when-lucy-met-roy-sir-roy-strong-at-80>> [accessed 25 August 2015].

⁴⁵² Strong, *When Lucy met Roy*.

⁴⁵³ Portelli, p. 71.

the event. It is arguable whether Strong genuinely hoped that Labour's support for the regions would result in the over-ruling of his proposal to impose government cuts solely on Circ.⁴⁵⁴ In an internal memorandum Strong referred to the 'task of serving the regions' as 'extraneous to the main functions of the Museum'.⁴⁵⁵ Certainly Circ staff believed that the 'semi-rumour' was 'something he put out so that we would forgive him ... which we never would, of course'.⁴⁵⁶ As has been demonstrated, Circ was politically left-wing in ethos and staffed largely by those with art school backgrounds, so it is possible that personalities played a part in Strong's decision.

Further, Strong's choice reflects the fact that cutting 10% department by department was a more challenging management task requiring the respect, loyalty and co-operation of senior staff. Strong already had poor, even antagonistic, relationships with his Keepers and in this light 'divide and rule' was easier.⁴⁵⁷ All Keepers agreed with the Director's proposals at a meeting held the day following the announcement.⁴⁵⁸ Strong's approach was effective at this point, distancing Circ staff from the support of other departments:

We were shattered ... we couldn't believe that he would do something like that because we saw ourselves as performing the core function of the original V&A ... we saw ourselves in a very creative, strong, healthy relationship with the curatorial departments and it was like they had created a rift, ... an axe had fallen between us and the rest of the museum. And I ... think the curatorial departments were as shocked as we were but relieved that they weren't going to have to make the cuts. I suppose the senior

⁴⁵⁴ The saving was not large in relation to total V&A budget. 'Victoria & Albert Museum', HC Deb, 4 April 1977, Vol 929 C367W367W

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1977/apr/04/victoria-and-albert-museum#S5CV0929P0_19770404_CWA_302> [accessed 30 July 2013]. 'The total approved estimate for the expenditure of the Victoria and Albert Museum in the financial year 1976–77 was £4,363,000. The cost of the Regional Services Department in that year was estimated to be £250,000'. Babbidge, p. 11, shows that between 1960 (Rosse Report, 1963) and 2000, V&A funding grew x 52.

⁴⁵⁵ Roy Strong, 'Reductions in Staff' memorandum, n.d., before April 1977, Accession A0655, V&AA, also refers to 'my decisions'.

⁴⁵⁶ Knowles interviewed by Partington, Track 3 of 4.

⁴⁵⁷ Strong, *When Lucy met Roy*: 'I know during that period four heads of department met once a month in the basement of the Daquise restaurant as to how they could smash me'.

⁴⁵⁸ Minutes of the Keeper's [sic] Meeting, 3 November 1976, Accession A0655, V&AA. Aslin, Hogben and Mainstone disagreed, also present Ayers, Beckwith, Blair, Brommelle, Burgess, Irwin, Kauffmann, King, Lightbown, Mallet, Physick, Schouvaloff, Squire, and Thornton; chair, Strong.

keepers must have lobbied him and I suppose it must have been quite scary for him to think about re-arranging their fiefdoms at all ...⁴⁵⁹

To complicate this view of Strong's prime role in Circ's demise, Knowles was also asked how Circ was viewed in the V&A and had responded: 'everybody thought Circ was a sort of hot-bed of radical thought, really, and a troublesome place'.⁴⁶⁰ This inconsistency gives weight to Portelli's statement that 'Oral historical sources are *narrative* sources' that 'reveal the narrators' emotions, their participation in the story, and the way the story affected them'.⁴⁶¹ When requested to define Circ's role within the Museum, Knowles emphasised Circ's distinct difference from other departments, its unique and contrasting approach. When recounting the sequence of events leading to closure, the dominant tone is to recall the strong emotions of shock and regret felt at the time, so that divisions are flattened. As Portelli writes, 'Oral sources are credible but with a *different* credibility'; here the apparently diverging account is nevertheless psychologically consistent as 'historical, poetical, and legendary narratives often become inextricably mixed up'.⁴⁶²

It is a sad irony for the Victorian vision of 'access for all' that, after 130 years of governance by those of the patrician class, the director who closed Circ was a grammar school boy from north London. Strong may be seen as a product of the Attlee government's post-war project but he was upwardly mobile, detached from his own early experiences, and had a museum career in London. Strong's pronouncements about the importance of creating popular exhibitions are perhaps not as useful as his actions to assess his view; Strong's curatorial ambitions focused on those with cultural capital. For Strong, philanthropic paternalism did not extend to the regions; the closure of Circ was less a logical decision than an ideological one.

In December 1976 David Hockney, whose own work was collected and toured by Circ, presented a petition signed by artists, art critics, college principals and historians to Labour's Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education and

⁴⁵⁹ Knowles interviewed by Partington, Track 3 of 4.

⁴⁶⁰ Knowles interviewed by Partington, Track 1 of 4.

⁴⁶¹ Portelli, p. 66, p. 65.

⁴⁶² Portelli, p. 68, p. 66.

Science, protesting against the Department's closure.⁴⁶³ These high-profile petitioners pointed out that Circ's closure 'would irretrievably deprive the nation of ready access to a significant part of its art collections' and 'deprive the whole country of a standard-setting and cost-effective service which continues to fulfil the vision of the original founders of the V&A'.⁴⁶⁴ Regional venues for travelling exhibitions felt that the closure would 'cut off the provinces from a source of educational and artistic material which we have now come to count on very greatly indeed'.⁴⁶⁵

In January 1977 Hogben proposed a cost-cutting strategy, preserving the service by limiting free Circ exhibitions to England, devolving to the rest of the UK, but this was not taken up by Strong.⁴⁶⁶ Protests from those affected in the regions (see the next two chapters) did not result in a reprieve, and Strong did not re-consider. The proposal provoked a vociferous backlash from regional voters, galvanising politicians around the country, and was widely debated⁴⁶⁷ but closure was confirmed on 10th February 1977.⁴⁶⁸ On 1st April 1977 closure came into effect and staff were re-allocated or left for other museums.⁴⁶⁹ In July 1977 Circ's closure was discussed at a Conference on Travelling Exhibitions held in Leicester, and

⁴⁶³ Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education and Science, 1976–79, Labour MP for Hertford and Stevenage, 1974–79.

⁴⁶⁴ Our Arts Reporter, 'Artists Oppose V & A Cut', *The Times*, 16 December 1976, p. 8, MA/19/13.

⁴⁶⁵ 'A Disaster For Doncaster', [n.d.] MA/19/13, quotes John Barwick, Director, Doncaster Museum.

⁴⁶⁶ Carol Hogben, In Confidence, Miss Rothstein: Regional Service Department, memorandum, 21 January 1977, Accession A0655, V&AA; 20% of demand was from Scotland, 10% from Wales.

⁴⁶⁷ 'Victoria & Albert Museum Regional', HC Deb, 7 December 1976, Vol 922: C211-2211 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1976/dec/07/victoria-and-albert-museum-regional#S5CV0922P0_19761207_HOC_28> [accessed 30 July 2013]. 'Museums and Libraries', HC Deb, 1 February 1977, Vol 925: C100-1W100W <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1977/feb/01/museums-and-libraries#S5CV0925P0_19770201_CWA_112> [accessed 30 July 2013], lists nine parliamentary questions, and representations from 50 Hon. Members, 18 local authorities, 50 local authority institutions and organisations and 50 others.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Victoria & Albert Museum', HC Deb, 10 February 1977, Vol 925: C755-6W <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1977/feb/10/victoria-and-albert-museum#S5CV0925P0_19770210_CWA_110> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁴⁶⁹ Carol Hogben to NAL; Barbara Morris, Deputy Keeper, Ceramics; Mark Haworth-Booth to Prints and Drawings, then Senior Curator, Photographs; Harold Barkley, Assistant Keeper, Prints & Drawings; David Coachworth, Deputy Keeper, Museum Services. Elizabeth Bailey to Tate, Prints and Drawings.

described by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries as ‘a deplorable action’.⁴⁷⁰

In mitigation, the financial cuts also forced the Museum to close every Friday and there were staff reductions in other departments – Department of Education and Regional Services jobs totalled only 23 out of 78 that were cut.⁴⁷¹ Services to regional museums such as Grant-in-Aid administration and long term loans continued, and there was some hope of contributing to a new government agency that would co-ordinate regional loans.⁴⁷² The Museum also proposed to ‘continue its long tradition of placing at the disposal of regional museums and galleries its expertise in every field of activity within the sphere of the fine and decorative arts’.⁴⁷³ Significant in its timing as an indicator of developing political attitudes, the Museum was to fund-raise via The Associates of the V&A Ltd. Strong admitted that the Museum had ‘sustained the most catastrophic blow in its history’, and essayed that it would ‘take at least a decade to recover from the repercussions’.⁴⁷⁴

Evaluation of Impact on the V&A Museum

Circ objects span a variety of styles, mediums and functions, from a Lucie Rie bowl to Kenneth Grange’s *Chefette*, which is its own tribute to the energy of Circ staff and their significance in the history of collecting by the V&A.⁴⁷⁵ Circ’s last recorded purchase was a Misha Black 1938 wireless design for Ekco for £40⁴⁷⁶ whilst the final accession was a Design Centre Award winner, an automatic helm system for tiller-steered yachts by Derek Fawcett.⁴⁷⁷ The very last recipient of a Circ exhibition should have been the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle which would have returned *Minton* to South Kensington on 12 November 1977. The

⁴⁷⁰ ‘Summary Report of Discussions at the Conference on Travelling Exhibitions, Leicester, 20 and 21 July 1977’, Appendix F, in *Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries: 10th Report 1973-77* (London: HMSO, 1977), pp. 130-134. ‘Access to Collections’, in *Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries 10th Report*, pp. 26-27; the Commission was not consulted before Circ’s closure.

⁴⁷¹ Strong, ‘Reductions in Staff’.

⁴⁷² ‘Victoria & Albert Museum’, HC Deb, 4 April 1977.

⁴⁷³ Roy Strong, In Confidence: The Victoria & Albert Museum and the Regions, memorandum 77/896 [n.d.], loose leaf within MA/30 Central Inventory 1977, V&AA.

⁴⁷⁴ Strong, In Confidence, memorandum.

⁴⁷⁵ CIRC.126–1959 and CIRC.731-F–1968.

⁴⁷⁶ CIRC.47-1977, MA/6/74 Acquisitions Register, V&AA.

⁴⁷⁷ CIRC.124, A&B-1977, DCA 1976, approved 21.11.1977, MA/6/74 Acquisitions Register, V&AA.

Minton show never travelled, however, due to closure.⁴⁷⁸ A Victorian initiative to drive forward good British design had ended.

Some Circ staff were moved to posts elsewhere in the Museum; Hogben, Deputy Keeper, moved to the Library; Morris, Assistant Keeper, became Deputy Keeper in Ceramics; Mark Haworth-Booth moved to Prints & Drawings, then becoming Senior Curator of Photographs; Harold Barkley became Assistant Keeper, Prints & Drawings. Strong was advised to counter criticism from the regions at the 'dispersal of a team that has taken pioneer interest in modern decorative arts' by referring to the team being 'disseminated rather than dispersed'.⁴⁷⁹ Some staff left and moved to other institutions, spreading the Circ ethos more widely, for example Elizabeth Bailey moved to Prints & Drawings, Tate Gallery, and Margot Coatts moved to the Crafts Council.

There was some discussion about establishing a new national agency to co-ordinate English regional loans, but 'the idea of this Museum continuing to "serve" the regions is dead', as it was phrased with some finality in an internal memorandum. A distinction was drawn between 'co-operation', which did continue with individual regional loans provided free of charge, and a 'service' specifically and purely for provincial venues which was proposed as 'fully charged at cost'.⁴⁸⁰ The remaining Keepers 'complained of increasing pressure on their staff made by the high rate of requests for loans to exhibitions both in the United Kingdom and abroad' and so these were to 'be kept to a minimum'.⁴⁸¹

The dispersal of Circ's collection was overseen by Geoffrey Opie, Jennifer Hawkins Opie, and Charles Newton who also rescued Circ papers. Circ's collection was absorbed, very gradually, into the other Departments, creating a

⁴⁷⁸ 7–12 November 1977, Minton: Barnard Castle to VAM, MA/15/7 Transport Schedules, V&AA. *Minton* travelling show prepared but not sent out; Jennifer Hawkins Opie (b.1944) interviewed by Joanna Weddell (with David Coachworth and Geoffrey Opie), 4 July 2012, V&A Research Department.

⁴⁷⁹ Standing Commission Conference, June 1977, unsigned memorandum to the Director, 18 March 1977, Item 10, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁴⁸⁰ Standing Commission Conference, June 1977.

⁴⁸¹ Strong, 'Reductions in Staff', Item 6, Loans from the Museum.

heavy workload for them; Somers Cocks described Strong ‘forcing the collections of the Circulation department to be distributed among the relevant departments for exhibition to the public’.⁴⁸² Craig Clunas recalled the Asia Department was still accessioning Circ objects in 1979 when he joined the Museum.⁴⁸³ Some elements of Circ’s collection continue to occupy a somewhat anomalous position, for example some 9,000 objects of mostly low-value prints and drawings ephemera (‘C’ numbers) acquired by Circ post-war are not technically accessioned into the V&A’s Collection.⁴⁸⁴

The Keepers took up the role of ‘strengthening the Museum’s representation of twentieth-century design’ as Peter Thornton wrote in a special V&A issue of *The Burlington Magazine* that closely followed the upheaval.⁴⁸⁵ To emphasise this commitment the Museum also created a temporary exhibition, *Objects – The V&A Collects 1974-78*, the period that spanned the closure of Circ, in order to give a ‘preview’ of the projected Twentieth Century Gallery, which opened five years later as *British Art and Design 1900-1960*.⁴⁸⁶ As Crowther explains, the crucial importance of Circ in acquiring contemporary design ‘is demonstrated by what happened when the department closed in 1977: only 5% of the [DCA] winners were acquired in the following decade’.⁴⁸⁷

Circ’s focus on contemporary acquisitions in the service of design education placed it in a peripheral role compared to the Museum’s other departments. In 1980 it was considered that the Ceramics Department had ‘always been more receptive than some to nineteenth-century and contemporary design’ whilst acknowledging that in ‘the last ten years [1970-80] more and more contemporary

⁴⁸² Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, p. 91.

⁴⁸³ Craig Clunas, conversation with Joanna Weddell, AAH Annual Conference, University of East Anglia, April 2015.

⁴⁸⁴ For example C.18679-C.18682 Edward Bawden linocut demonstration set, Circ Box 101, Prints & Drawings. Joanna Weddell, ‘Edward Bawden: Master of Linocut’, *V&A Museum*, 13 December 2013 <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/tales-archives/edward-bawden-master-linocut>> [accessed 17 May 2016]

⁴⁸⁵ Peter Thornton, ‘Furniture Studies – The National Role’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 120.902 (1978), 277-284.

⁴⁸⁶ Anna Somers Cocks, ‘The V&A Collects – 1974-78’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 120.902 (1978), i-lxxxiv. *British Art and Design 1900-1960* gallery opened on 23 November 1983.

⁴⁸⁷ Crowther, p. 13.

ceramics and glass have been bought'.⁴⁸⁸ At this point after Circ's closure, Ceramics staff 'regularly visit graduation shows at the Royal College of Art, the galleries which specialise in modern design, and the shops of commercial firms'. The Department had 'benefited from the many sage purchases of modern work made by the Circulation department'.⁴⁸⁹ The Keeper of Ceramics 1976-89 was John Mallet and after 'the demise of the museum's Circulation Department (which had previously been responsible for most contemporary collecting), he actively developed the museum's pre-eminent collection of British studio ceramics'.⁴⁹⁰

From the 1930s, following an agreement with Tate, the Sculpture and Metalwork Departments did not collect 19th or 20th century sculpture and so during 'the next forty years the only department to buy contemporary works was Circulation, and a very representative collection was made'.⁴⁹¹ In 1983 Strong agreed to transfer Circ's modern sculpture to Tate, ending the V&A's acquisitions of contemporary work in this field.⁴⁹² In the Furniture Department, 20th century design entered 'by the usual 'back-door' of the Circulation Department', despite suggestions that a 'change of heart towards modern design was already beginning to be felt' in 1974 when Strong arrived. Keeper Peter Thornton was 'already an admirer of much modern work' and had 'been bringing the collections up to date as fast as possible', emphasising how backward curatorial taste had been.⁴⁹³

From his nebulous position in the Library, Hogben continued to 'advise the other departments on possible acquisitions within the modern field'.⁴⁹⁴ In 1977, at the instigation of Hogben, a Contemporary Art Archives Committee was set up with members from Departments across the Museum, to consider an archive of material on modern design from commercial firms, an example of continuing

⁴⁸⁸ Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, p. 59.

⁴⁸⁹ Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, p. 59.

⁴⁹⁰ *The Annual Report of the National Art Collections Fund: 2004 Review* (London: National Art Collections Fund, 2004) p. 141, John Mallet Gift.

⁴⁹¹ Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, p. 75.

⁴⁹² National Heritage Act 1983: V&A transferred twentieth-century sculpture to Tate, retaining the national collection of pre-1900 sculpture; Tate holds the national collection of post-1900 sculpture.

⁴⁹³ Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, p. 91.

⁴⁹⁴ Roy Strong, memorandum to Carol Hogben, 17 April 1980, Accession A0655, V&AA.

engagement with industry.⁴⁹⁵ The Committee was in part responding to the demand for information from 'new educational institutions with staff who are comparatively young' (polytechnics) where 'the accent in these studies is at present strongly on 20th century design rather than that of earlier periods' for courses in Design History. The aim was to 'help the Museum to meet its obligation to students of design in modern times, a field which is by no means the preserve solely of the historian but which needs to be surveyed by designers and other people actively engaged in creating for the future'.⁴⁹⁶ Hogben also became V&A Liaison Officer with the Design Council, one aim being the acquisition of the Council's archive and contemporary commercial archives.⁴⁹⁷

The Committee issued a *Contemporary Archives Bulletin* to V&A staff to promote the study of 20th century objects and this circulated details of contemporary material acquired in different departments across the Museum. Even at this late date of 1977, very few objects were post-war, with 'contemporary' meaning 1920s or 30s, confirming the Education Department statement that they 'generally find it awkward to include the 20th century in their teaching programme since there is so little material on public view'.⁴⁹⁸ The *Bulletin* also listed exhibitions of contemporary material both within the Museum and elsewhere. Relevant lectures and conferences and special interest societies were publicised 'of interest to those who have not yet come to hear of them', indicating the limited awareness of contemporary design in the Museum.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁵ Minutes of the Keepers' Meeting, 2 February 1977, Accession A0655, V&AA, Item 3, Contemporary Archives – Decorative Arts. Minutes of the Keepers' Meeting, 1 June 1977, Accession A0655, V&AA, Item 4, Contemporary Archive Committee members: Mrs Bury, Metalwork, Mr Archer, Ceramics, Mr Thornton, (Chair), Furniture & Woodwork, Miss Whalley, Library, Miss Lambert, Prints & Drawings, Mrs Mendes, Textiles, and Mr Hogben.

⁴⁹⁶ Report on the Acquisition of Contemporary Archives by the Museum, Contemporary Art Archives Committee, V&A Museum, to the Director, November 1977, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁴⁹⁷ Minutes of the Keepers' Meeting, 1 June 1977, Item 5, V&A and the Design Council. The Design Council Archive passed to the University of Brighton in 1994.

⁴⁹⁸ *V&A Museum: Contemporary Archives Bulletin 1*, 1 October 1977, ed. by Peter Thornton and Leela Meinertas, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁴⁹⁹ Thornton and Meinertas. Ceramics lists nine 20th century acquisitions, only one of which was post-1945. Exhibitions included *Voysey*, Brighton Museum and *Eileen Gray*, MOMA; societies included the Decorative Arts Society, Association of Art Historians, and Design History Society.

Collecting modern design remained problematic at the Museum. The Design History Society launched its first Newsletter in March 1978 with an article by Dorothy Reynolds asking 'Do we need a Museum of Modern Design?' Reynolds referred to the 'much-lamented closure' of Circ, and to the split of responsibilities for exhibiting design between the V&A, Science Museum and Design Centre, calling for 'greater direct contact with industry'.⁵⁰⁰ Hogben, who was a committee member of the Society, joined the V&A Twentieth Century Steering Committee from July 1978, aiming to issue 'demarcation guidelines' for collecting industrial design; DCA winners placed under the 'Not to be collected' category were to be offered to the Science Museum. The guidelines reject washing up equipment, cookers, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and kitchen equipment but accept household appliances (kettles, toasters, mixers) and cooking utensils, food vessels, containers. Hogben suggested the 'distinction be made between capital and consumer designs' with the V&A only accepting the latter.⁵⁰¹ A Twentieth Century Primary Gallery was proposed for Rooms 62-64, with Hogben involved in the planning ready for installation in 1981.⁵⁰² The Gallery was framed as 'inevitably ... "global" [abandoning] ... the old "British" as against "Continental" split adopted in 1945'.⁵⁰³ This was an urgent task with Reynold's criticising:

How long will it take to make the 20th century collections available once more? Museum spokesmen refuse to put a date on the opening of the proposed 20th century gallery. .../ we do not yet have a national design collection⁵⁰⁴

Objects – The V&A Collects 1974-78 trumpeted that

the museum has decided emphatically to buy not only modern crafts ... but also typewriters, pocket calculators, televisions, as well as commercially available furniture, pottery, textiles and so on, which are regarded as being of outstanding merit or exceptionally influential.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰ Dorothy Reynolds, 'Do We Need a Museum of Modern Design?', *The Design History Society Newsletter* 1, March 1978, pp. 8/9.

⁵⁰¹ Twentieth Century Steering Committee: Notes of a Meeting held 6 July 1978, Accession A0655, V&AA. Contemporary Art Archives Committee, visit to Science Museum Library, 20.10.1977, Accession A0655, V&AA. The Science Museum *Domestic Appliances* gallery opened in 1973.

⁵⁰² Roy Strong, letter to Carol Hogben, 16 February 1978, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁵⁰³ Roy Strong, letter to Carol Hogben, 19 December 1977, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁵⁰⁴ Reynolds.

⁵⁰⁵ Somers Cocks, 'Objects – The V&A Collects 1974-78'.

Nevertheless, it is notable that of those illustrated objects, four out of six are Design Centre Award winners rather than direct acquisitions by Keepers.

On the opening of the Gallery of *British Art and Design 1900-1960* Strong considered that 'It may strike the public as ironic or moronic that it has taken the V&A until 1983 to update its presentation of British art beyond the year 1900'. Strong nevertheless felt that he had engineered 'a monumental shift in the thrust of the Museum's collecting policy' and was critical of Circ's previous 20th century acquisitions as 'thin and unbalanced'.⁵⁰⁶

After closure as an established fact, there was some re-assessment of Circ's contribution. It is striking that in 1980 Somers Cocks could describe 19th century objects as being sent 'into the obscurity of the Circulation department'.⁵⁰⁷ In 1982 the Rayner Scrutiny on devolving the V&A and Science Museums from direct government control prompted further debate on a new touring exhibitions agency.⁵⁰⁸ The Museums & Galleries Commission set up a working party to consider provincial touring exhibitions. At this stage Strong noted that 'Of course, the touring department was popular with the regional museums – it saved them work. But since we closed it, there's been a lot of creativity in the provinces'.⁵⁰⁹ The Chair went further and stated that 'It is wrong for a service for provincial museums to be the responsibility of a metropolitan museum' as 'the provinces naturally are a lower priority'.⁵¹⁰ The Secretary of the Museums Association who had been vocal in opposing Circ's closure, now felt that the 'V&A programme had become stale' and hoped that the Commission's proposal would be developed.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁶ Roy Strong, 'Foreword', in *British Art and Design*, ed. by Garth Hall and Andrew Hiskens (London: V&A Publications, 1983), p. v, opened 23 November 1983.

⁵⁰⁷ Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, p. 31.

⁵⁰⁸ 'Museums (Rayner Report)', HC Deb, 27 May 1982, Vol 24: C360-1W

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1982/may/27/museums-rayner-report> [accessed 27 December 2015]. F.G. Burrett, *Rayner Scrutiny of the Departmental Museums: Science Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: HMSO, 1982), one of Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher's initiatives to reform the civil service. In 1982 the V&A devolved from Government, becoming a trustee museum.

⁵⁰⁹ Roy Strong quoted in Leslie Geddes-Brown, 'Museums Get New Master', *The Sunday Times*, 15 August 1982.

⁵¹⁰ Chair of Museums and Galleries Commission, Sir Arthur Drew quoted in Geddes-Brown.

⁵¹¹ Secretary of Museums Association, Miss Brenda Capstick quoted in Geddes-Brown.

As a further contribution, Circ expertise supported what can be described as 'legacy shows' for example the major exhibition *Thirties* at the Hayward with the Arts Council (1979-80): 'the first occasion it has taken a co-partner in putting on a show in its own ground'.⁵¹² Hogben's 'crucial' contribution was acknowledged by both the Arts Council and within the Museum.⁵¹³ The Hayward exhibition can be said to have built on Circ's earlier travelling show, *The Thirties* and on *The Thirties: Progressive Design in Ceramics, Glass, Textiles and Wallpapers*, shown at Bethan Green Museum in 1975 and at South Kensington in 1976.⁵¹⁴ Hogben continued Circ's diligent approach to scholarship, drawing up a standard form for commercial firms as an *Industrial Arts Survey 1920-1940* in order to establish secure provenance.⁵¹⁵ Hogben also negotiated the eventual gift to the Museum from the Edward James Foundation of the surviving original elements of the Paul Nash-designed black glass bathroom for Tilly Losch.⁵¹⁶

The Museum's policy towards exhibiting contemporary design took a new turn when Terence Conran's Foundation opened the Boilerhouse Project in the Museum's basement in 1981-86. Contemporary craft received support from shows such as the Crafts Council's *The Maker's Eye* (1982).⁵¹⁷ Strong introduced voluntary admission charges in 1985, the same year that the Touring Exhibitions Group,⁵¹⁸ was set up in response to Circ's closure; Strong left the Museum at the end of 1986. By this date, several V&A Keepers were members of Design Council

⁵¹² *Thirties: An Exhibition of British Art and Design Before the War*, Hayward Gallery, 24 October 1979-20 January 1980, Arts Council/V&A, exhibition organiser, Marianne Hollis, Arts Council.

⁵¹³ Andrew Dempsey, Assistant Director ACGB, letter to Carol Hogben, 16 November 1979, Accession A0655, V&AA. Roy Strong, handwritten note to Carol Hogben, 6 November 1979, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁵¹⁴ *V&A Museum, Circulation Department: National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1974-76: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1974), pp. 1/2, MA/17, V&AA. James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, VX.1975.BGM.002 *The thirties: progressive design in ceramics, glass, textiles and wallpapers*; VX.1976.007 *The thirties: progressive design in ceramics, glass, textiles and wallpapers*.

⁵¹⁵ Carol Hogben, *Industrial Arts Survey: 1920-40*, memorandum to the Director, 18 October 1976, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁵¹⁶ W.12:1-90-1981. Carol Hogben, letter to M. Heyman Esq F.R.I.C.S., The Edward James Foundation, 24 January 1980, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁵¹⁷ *The Maker's Eye: An Exhibition to Celebrate 10 Years of the Crafts Council* (London: Crafts Council, 1981); 13 January-28 March 1982, Crafts Council Gallery, London.

⁵¹⁸ 'About', *Touring Exhibitions Group*, T.E.G. [n.d.] <<http://www.teg.org.uk/index.php?id=2>> [accessed 5 July 2016].

Selection Panels, indicating some measure of engagement in contemporary commercial design.⁵¹⁹ In 1989 the Design Museum was opened by Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in new premises at Butlers Wharf, perhaps positioned as the Museum of Modern Design called for by Hogben in 1972.⁵²⁰

In 1999 V&A Director, Dr Alan Borg, responded to a letter from Hogben which suggested re-opening Circ. Borg referred to developing regional links with Sheffield, Sunderland and Bideford and to the Regional Officer for the Purchase Fund having 'a wide network of contacts'.⁵²¹ Borg summarised the now altered dynamic of the millennial museum landscape:

the relationship between national and regional museums has changed rather dramatically and, even if we had funding to do so, I do not think reviving the Circulation Department would be welcomed ... Increasing regional power and independence means that non-national museums want to be seen as 'equal' organisations and would regard a new circulation department as demonstrating a sort of cultural imperialism by the V&A. Regional museums want to act as partners, creating their own exhibitions, drawing on national collections, but not depending on them. ...the view that the big museums in London cannot simply try and tell the smaller fry in the regions what is good for them is strongly held.⁵²²

To the V&A's credit, current Department for Culture, Media and Sport performance indicators of regional engagement – the terminology may have changed since Henry Cole's day but the intent remains – show the Museum as considerably in advance of comparable London museums with loans to 254 venues around the UK in 2009/10.⁵²³ Collecting contemporary design has returned to a central position in the Museum's work, whilst long term relationships with the regions continue to be developed at Sheffield and Dundee.

⁵¹⁹ *Design Council Annual Report 1986/87* (London: Design Council, 1987), p. 38. Members of Selection Panels 1986/87, *Ceramics, Glass and Tableware*, 21 members including John Mallet, and Jennifer Opie, V&A. *Textiles*, 16 members including Valerie Mendes, V&A.

⁵²⁰ Thatcher, 5 July 1989. Hogben, 'Wanted: A Living Design Museum'.

⁵²¹ Dr Alan Borg, letter to Carol Hogben, 24 November 1999, Accession A0655, V&AA.

⁵²² Borg.

⁵²³ 'Sponsored Museums Performance Indicators 2010/11', *Research and Analysis*, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 10 November 2011

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/71230/Sponsored_Museums_Performance_Indicators_2010-2011.csv/preview> [accessed 12 December 2011].

Today the vehement reaction to Circ's closure is not the only evidence of the Department's achievements. The historical significance of the Department within the Museum can partly be assessed from the inclusion of Circulation objects in current displays and exhibitions. The high proportion of Circ objects selected for *British Design 1948-2012* can be considered as having had a reciprocal relationship with British design, travelling so widely across the UK as they did. The Dr Susan Weber Furniture Gallery, opened in 2012 containing 11 objects from Circ's Modern Chairs (1970), with two more Circ objects in addition, demonstrating the strength of Circ's collecting in the contemporary field.⁵²⁴ The 'Art and Design for All' dictum celebrated by the 2011/12 Bonn Exhibition⁵²⁵ and the current government agenda on regional engagement show the enduring value of the egalitarian ethos of the Department.

Floud aimed to use the preparation of *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* to acquire objects to fill a perceived 'gap' between the end of the main collections and the beginning of the Circ contemporary collections (from about 1850 to 1920) – a gap which he believed would become 'increasingly difficult and expensive' to fill.⁵²⁶ One of the main functions of the show was to enable the Museum to acquire exhibits through gift and purchase from manufacturers and the descendants of designers and patrons.⁵²⁷ Floud's aim to prompt outright gifts and inexpensive acquisitions was amply fulfilled, with some important objects being acquired both immediately following the exhibition and in later years.⁵²⁸ The exhibition also aimed to draw attention to prominent designers of the era who had been forgotten,

⁵²⁴ Rooms 133-135 visited 11 December 2012; *Modern Chairs* catalogue numbers 2, 5, 26, 31, 56, 63, 69, 71, 80, 92, and 117 were exhibited with CIRC.120-1971 and CIRC.79B-1975.

⁵²⁵ *Art and Design for All*, 18 November 2011-15 April 2012, Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik, Bonn.

⁵²⁶ Peter Floud to Leigh Ashton, Note, 8 October 1949, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1949-1953, Part 1, MA/28/85/1, V&AA.

⁵²⁷ P.C.F. (Peter Floud), Plan for 1851-1951 Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Point 6, 10 March 1950, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1949-1953, Part 1, MA/28/85/1, V&AA.

⁵²⁸ CIRC.857.1956, Cat. No. 8, loan, Mrs A.M.H. Westland. CIRC.258-1958, Cat. No. 18, loan, Elizabeth, Lady Kilbracken. W.6-1953, Cat. No. 23, loan, Mrs J. Bottard. CIRC.130-1958, Cat. No. 24, loan, Glasgow School of Art. M.31-2005, Cat. No. 29, loan, Miss Jean Stewart. Floud, *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts: Small Picture Book*.

such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh whose works were barely represented in the Museum's collection at that date.⁵²⁹

To conclude this chapter, the Keeperships of Floud, 1947-60, and Wakefield, 1960-1976, provide a broad-brush division in the post-war history of Circ. In spite of Wakefield continuing Floud's public service ethos, certain over-arching changes can be seen to occur through this extended period of time and can be summarised as reflecting different aspects of William Morris (a seminal figure for the Museum then as now). The period 1947-60 may be connected to Morris as socialist, concerned with equality of opportunity for all, and 1960-76 to Morris as a capitalist, upholding the dignity of individual workers in producing hand-made luxury objects that workers could not afford (both aspects articulated by Floud). Floud established Circ's academic credibility with major scholarly exhibitions, whilst Wakefield built on this with shows of contemporary industrial design. Floud was concerned to promote public taste in 'good' design, exhibiting inexpensive mass-produced objects, whilst Wakefield expanded this initiative to promote expensive contemporary craft. Curatorial attitudes to the contemporary broadened to include the acquisition of industrial design and mass produced objects, even when destined below stairs, for the kitchen.

Interpretation, in the form of catalogues and labels, was initially more detailed and factual than elsewhere in the Museum, but came to be seen as more limited, perhaps due to cost restrictions. Under Floud, Circ interpretation offered object-led, factual, 'truth', intrinsic to the object, on a 19th century museum model, whilst under Wakefield interpretation developed a more concept-led, contextual approach, extrinsic to the object, based on a 20th century educational model.⁵³⁰ The first interpretive model can either be read as aiming to address an active, enquiring citizen, or as didactic towards a regional audience, whilst the second model may be seen to have deferred to regional needs, or to have assumed a

⁵²⁹ Baker and Richardson, p. 431. Out of 31 Mackintosh objects in the V&A, 16 are Circ. Following *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*: T.43-1953, CIRC. 856.1 & 2-1956, CIRC.128:1, 2-1958, CIRC.129-1958, CIRC.130:1, 2-1958. Mackintosh was not collected by other departments until the 1968 centenary exhibition when Prints and Drawings were given three works on paper.

⁵³⁰ Charles Saumarez Smith, 'The Philosophy of Museum Display: the Continuing Debate', *The V&A Album 5* (London: De Montfort Publishing/V&A, 1986), pp. 30-38 (p. 37).

position of patronising authority. Initially at least, Circ can be seen to have aimed for an impersonal, objective, unchanging and minimal intervention between the viewer and object, later offering a more personal, contingent and opinion-based framework. The paradigms are of the museum as either vessel of static preservation or a crucible for active promotion, with corresponding interpretation that is direct and to the point, as opposed to 'directing' a particular point of view. The curatorial persona of the anonymous civil servant, moved towards that of the star curator, promoting the primary importance of individual vision over that of the apparent objectivity of a state institution.

Chapter 4 Impact on Regional Museums 1947-77

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Figure 69: Max Beerbohm, *Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith receives a deputation from a Northern Town that is meditating a Museum*, pencil and watercolour, 15.875 x 12.5in, E.1381-1924, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Original in colour.

Introduction

When starting to examine the impact of the Circulation Department (Circ) on regional museums it is appropriate to remember that, to a degree, the question of the desirability and utility of touring exhibitions had been established in Henry Cole's day and that performance indicators and impact statements are more modern constructions. While there was some dialogue with regional museums concerning shows that were 'incredibly popular', Circ curators did not have a focus on the impact of their work; one comment was 'I don't know that we ever asked for a sort of regular feedback on what had happened as a result of the show going there'. The Department was 'doing exhibitions on subjects we were interested in and the sense was that other people would be interested in it too'.⁵³¹

⁵³¹ David Coachworth (b.1937) interviewed by Joanna Weddell (with Jennifer Hawkins Opie and Geoffrey Opie), 4 July 2012, V&A Research Department. Popularity was monitored, 'Loans to Further Education Establishments: 1970-72', 1970, Item 3, Character of Demand, Accession A0655, V&AA.

The intended impact of the post-war activities of Circ in relation to museums may be summarised as to provide for regional museums and galleries travelling loan exhibitions of art and design that were inclusive, egalitarian, free and accessible to all, with clear labels and no need to buy tickets or catalogues, to both educate the citizen and improve consumer taste. In tandem with this principal aim came the need to develop display and interpretation with the aim of increasing access, so improving museological practice. As before, for Floud, such regular exhibition programmes should be 'regarded by enlightened opinion as an essential part of progressive government'.⁵³² Circ pursued Cole's dictum of a 'schoolroom for everyone' by exhibiting in a range of venues as well as museums, so at Manchester, as well as the City Art Gallery, Circ showed at the Central Library,⁵³³ whilst at Liverpool travelling shows went to 12 city institutions.⁵³⁴ The impact of these exhibitions is assessed through the Department's own records, detailed display guidance provided to art galleries, visitor records, curator interviews and national and regional press coverage. The research had to draw on this existing material, rather than the complex measures of impact evaluation practiced today.

⁵³² Floud, 'British Exhibitions of Selected Designs', 24-25.

⁵³³ May 1950, Manchester Central Library, *The Art of the Book-Jacket*. Record of visit by Peter Floud, Manchester – Central Library, 10 February 1950, MA/14/152, Manchester Art Gallery, Museums & Public Library, V&AA.

⁵³⁴ Walker Art Gallery, Sudley Art Gallery and Museum, Liverpool College of Art, Liverpool College of Crafts and Catering, Liverpool Kirkby Field College of Education, Liverpool Mabel Fletcher Technical College, Liverpool St Katherine's College, Liverpool University School of Architecture, Liverpool Christ's College, Liverpool IM Marsh College of Physical Education, Liverpool Polytechnic Faculty of Art and Design. *Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1964-65* (London: HMSO, 1965), NAL.



Figure 20: Location of Circ Touring Exhibitions based on *Museums Journal*, August 1949. Figure by author. Original in colour.

Quantitative Analysis

One measure of the impact of the Department's activities on the citizen in the post-war period is given by quantitative analysis of the number of Circ travelling shows sent to regional museums, the different sources of temporary exhibitions and the number of visitors. This data is drawn from archives in Cardiff, Liverpool and Manchester as well as the nationally-distributed *Museums Journal*; the range of sources of temporary exhibitions used by regional art galleries and museums aims to give a balanced view of Circ's impact.

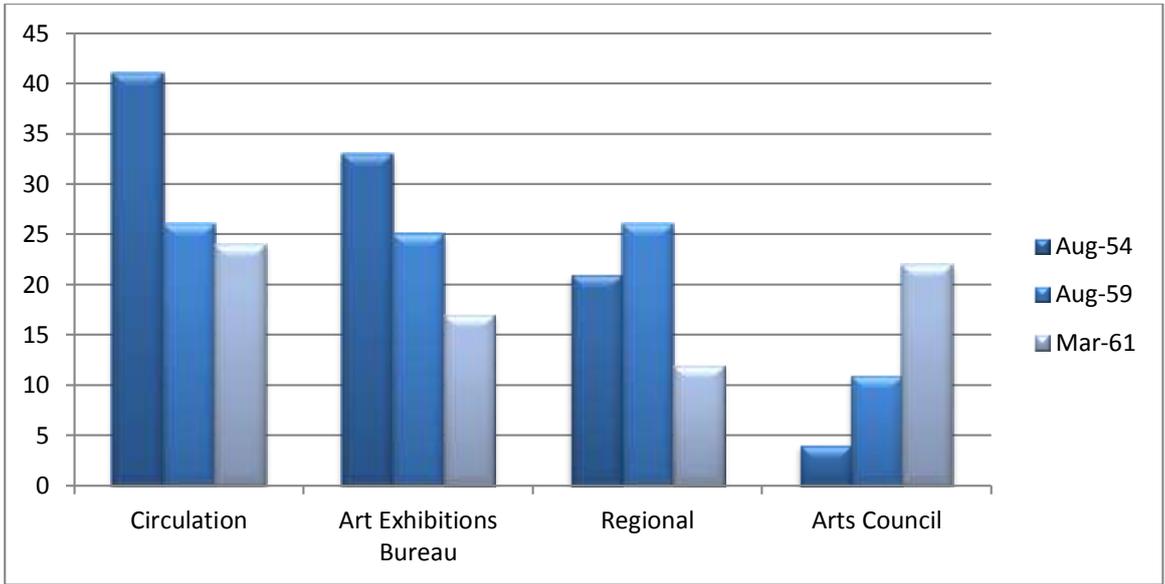


Figure 21: Sources of Temporary Exhibitions in the Regions: *Museums Journal*, August 1954, August 1959, March 1961. Figure by author. Original in colour.

In the post-war period museums and galleries showed a wide range of temporary exhibitions from a variety of sources and the *Museums Journal* listings give an overview of the circulating shows available, with the proviso that not all venues may have chosen to contribute to that publication. On the evidence of these listings, in the mid-1950s Circ and Art Exhibitions Bureau travelling shows provided important variety for regional museum visitors though their dominance lessened by the start of the sixties. The Arts Council became more significant in organising temporary displays.

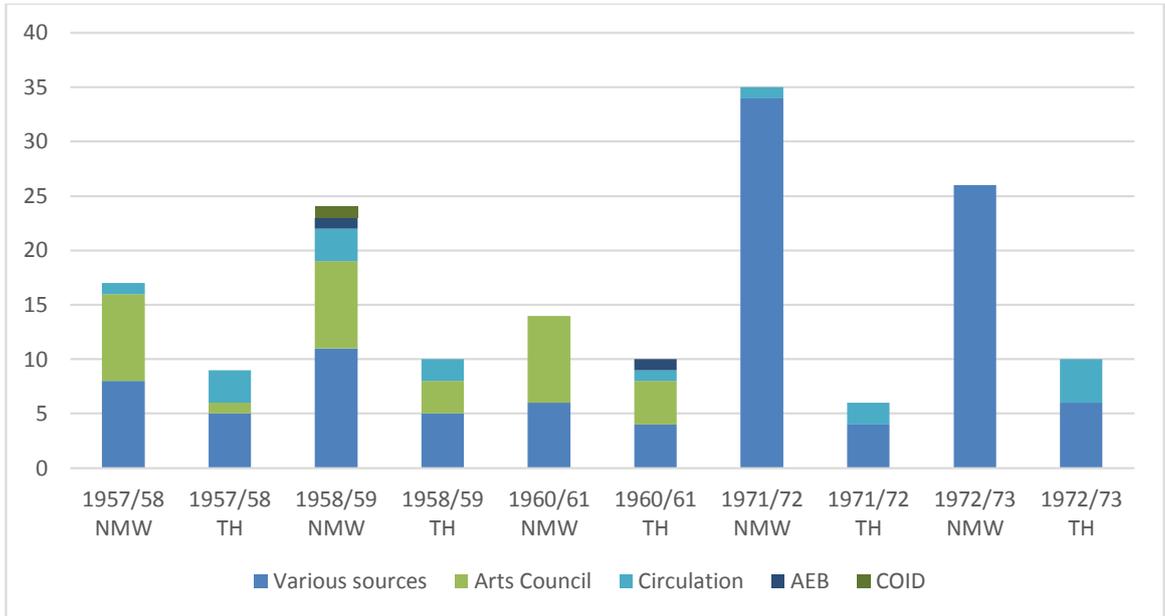


Figure 22: Number of Temporary Exhibitions by Source: National Museum of Wales, Cardiff and Turner House, Penarth: Annual Reports 1957-61 & 1971-73, National Museum Wales Archive. Figure by author. Original in colour.

Circ travelling shows visited what was then the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff and the gallery at Turner House, Penarth. From this evidence it would seem National Museum Wales generated temporary exhibitions from a wide variety of non-metropolitan sources and that Circ played an increasingly small part in the main city exhibition programme, although Turner House continued as a consistent customer for Circ shows.

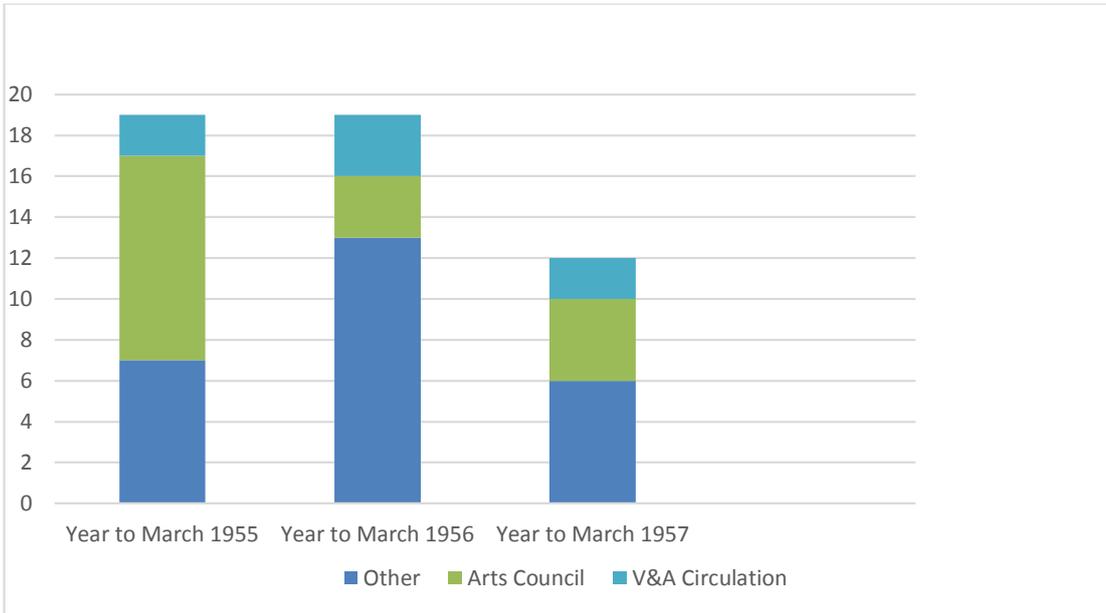


Figure 23: Number of Temporary Exhibitions by Source: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, *Liverpool Public Libraries: Museum and Art Gallery Reports*, pp. 105-107 (1955-57), Walker Art Gallery Archive. Figure by author. Original in colour.

At the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, during the mid-1950s temporary exhibitions were sourced from a variety of sources with regular, but not dominant, contributions by the Arts Council and Circ; the Gallery was not reliant on Circ.

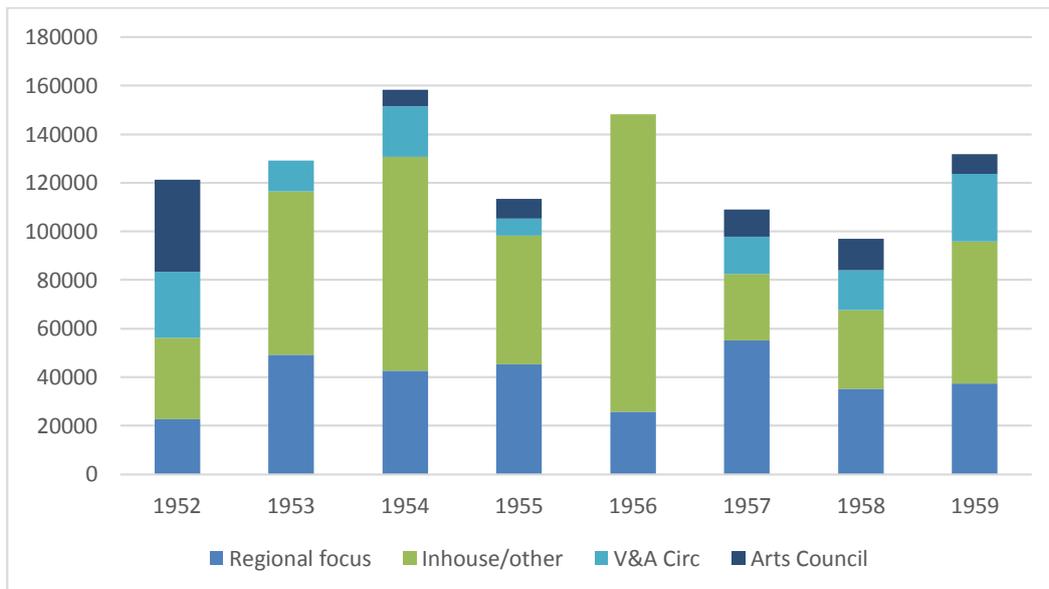


Figure 24: Manchester City Art Gallery, Visitors to Temporary Exhibitions by Source 1952-59: *Annual Reports of the Art Galleries Committee* (1952-59), Manchester Art Gallery Archive. Original in colour.

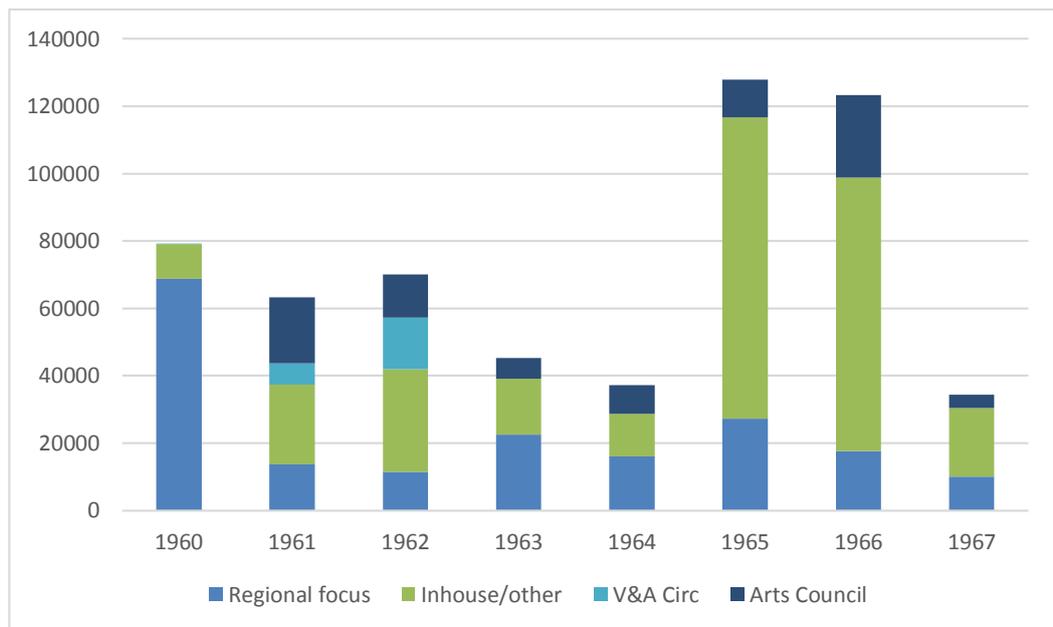


Figure 25: Manchester City Art Gallery: Visitors to Temporary Exhibitions by source 1960-67: *Annual Reports of the Art Galleries Committee 1960-67*, Manchester Art Gallery Archive. Figure by author. Original in colour.

At Manchester City Art Gallery visitor figures for temporary exhibitions have been analysed in relation to the source of those shows whether Circ, Arts Council or generated by the Gallery from other sources or in house, or by the Gallery with a clear regional element. The great majority of visitors came to see the permanent collection or temporary exhibitions either created by Manchester curators or arranged by them through a variety of sources, for example, foreign embassies or professional organisations such as the Royal Institute of British Architects or Contemporary Art Society. During the 1960s this pattern changed with no Circ shows in the main city art gallery after 1962. As a caveat, when analysing the data for the sources of the temporary exhibition programme, the decision to name particular categories is not without bias. Here the aim was to examine the balance between two metropolitan sources of travelling shows in this period (Circ and Arts Council), and shows that involve regional societies, artists or art movements (a source of civic pride) and shows organised independently by the Gallery, from the permanent collection or outside organisations. The stacking of the chart is not without bias but by putting the regional emphasis at the bottom hopes to suggest

that this is the foundation of all the gallery achieves, with travelling shows as the icing on the cake, rather than in some way 'beneath' the metropolitan imports.

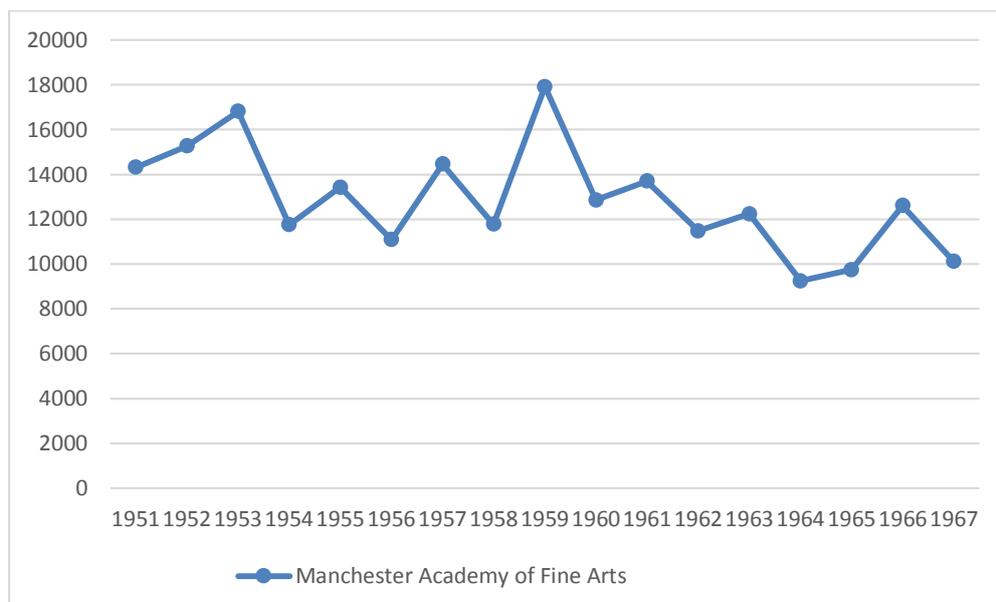


Figure 26: Manchester Academy of Fine Arts Annual Show: Visitor Figures 1951-67. Figure by author. Original in colour.

Visitor Figures

The attendance figures for the annual jury-selected, selling exhibitions of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts provide a good comparison to Arts Council and Circ travelling exhibitions as a contemporary art show with local interest. The figures range from a high of 17,911 visitors in the centenary year of 1959, when the display included work by prominent Academicians from the past, to a low of 9,251 in 1964, giving a respectable average overall of 12,873 visitors during the period 1951-67. These kinds of exhibitions were alternated between different regional groups being viewed as an 'additional stimulus to local art' and a 'privilege' by Manchester Art Gallery, in a stereotype of cultural gatekeeping.⁵³⁵ Circ's offering, *Modern British Stage Design*, was successful and, although by no means attracting the highest number of visitors in 1953, 'proved a great attraction

⁵³⁵ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1952* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1952), p. 6, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, refers to the Manchester Group, Manchester Graphic Club, Manchester Society of Modern Painters, Regional College of Art Staff Association.

at the time of the year when the autumn season of theatre-going was in full swing'.⁵³⁶

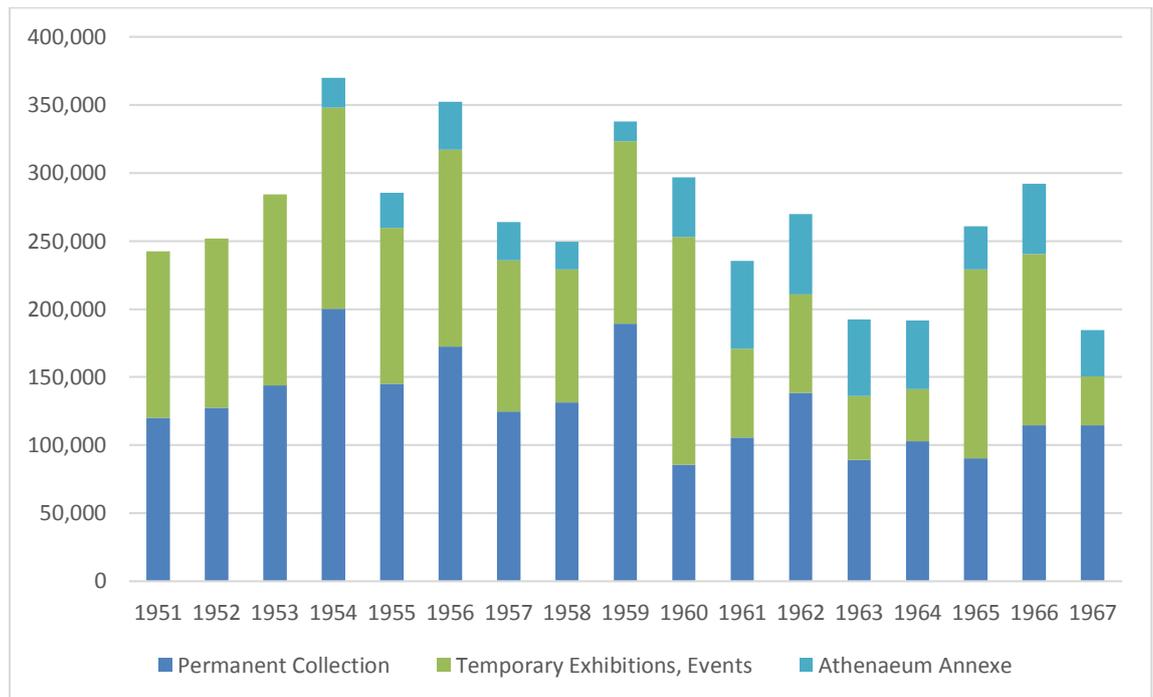


Figure 27: Manchester City Art Gallery Visitor Figures 1951-67, *Annual Reports of the Art Galleries Committee (1951-67)*, Manchester Art Gallery Archive. Figure by author. Original in colour.

The Manchester Art Gallery was hampered in staging temporary exhibitions by the lack of space in the Mosely Street gallery as the permanent collection had to be closed and put in store both during the preparation and exhibition of temporary shows. As the 1959 *Annual Report* explained, the permanent collection was hung chronologically ‘in order to accommodate temporary exhibitions, however, the complete sequence was rarely unbroken’.⁵³⁷ The consequence of this situation was that a rise in visitors to temporary shows was offset by a decline in visitors to the main collections.

⁵³⁶ 12,656 visitors compared to *16th century Portraits of Famous Early Elizabethans* with 24,061. *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1953* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1953), p. 7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁵³⁷ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1959* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1959), p. 9, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

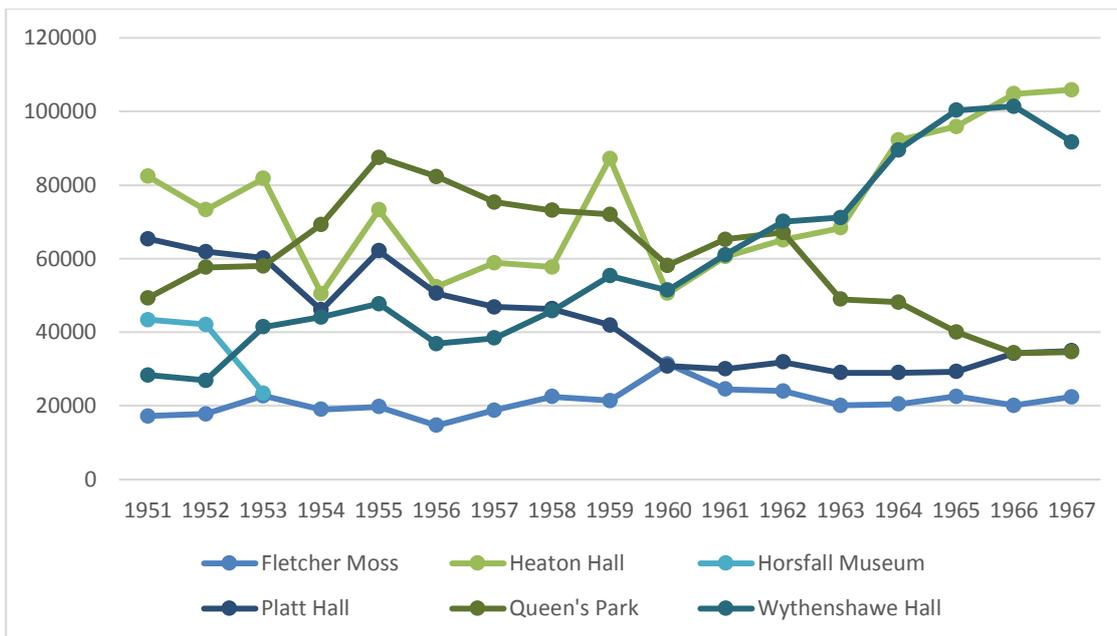


Figure 28: Manchester Branch Museums, Visitor Figures 1951-67. Figure by author. Original in colour.

Circ toured a wide range of shows to other galleries in the Manchester area, for example in 1960 showing *Contemporary French Prints* and *2,000 Years of Silk* at the Whitworth Art Gallery and in 1964 *The English Chair* at Heaton Hall.⁵³⁸ During this period Manchester City Art Gallery used the branch museums to display works that could not be accommodated in the Mosley Street building. Platt Hall's visitor numbers were reasonably constant in the seven years from 1961-67 and may be seen as a version of a 'control' as there were no Circ shows there at this time. Heaton Hall's visitor numbers rose over this period, whilst Wythenshawe Hall's visitors also rose. It seems that the improvement matches the introduction (or at least the listing) of Circ exhibitions but this may be coincidental rather than causal. The year that Wythenshawe Hall did not have a Circ show, 1967, the venue experienced a drop of some 10,000 visitors which would seem to argue for positive impact. Queen's Park Art Gallery, Harpurhey, showed a range of Circ shows, *Modern European Tableware* was the 1958 offering⁵³⁹ whilst in 1961

⁵³⁸ 'Temporary Exhibitions', *The Museums Journal*, 60.4 (1960), 108. 'Temporary Exhibitions', *The Museums Journal*, 60.9 (1960), 243. *Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1964-65* (London: HMSO, 1965).

⁵³⁹ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1958), p. 7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

Shakespeare – Dressing the Part ‘varied the interest of the display for visitors’ with ‘the work of a number of leading designers for the stage ... produced in this country in the past ten years’.⁵⁴⁰

The Annual Report of the National Museum of Wales lists visitor figures monthly but not against specific exhibitions so it is not possible to draw a conclusion about the level of possible impact on visitor numbers. These Annual Reports illustrate in-house exhibitions but exclude V&A shows, perhaps suggesting that these were seen as peripheral to the central work of the institution.⁵⁴¹

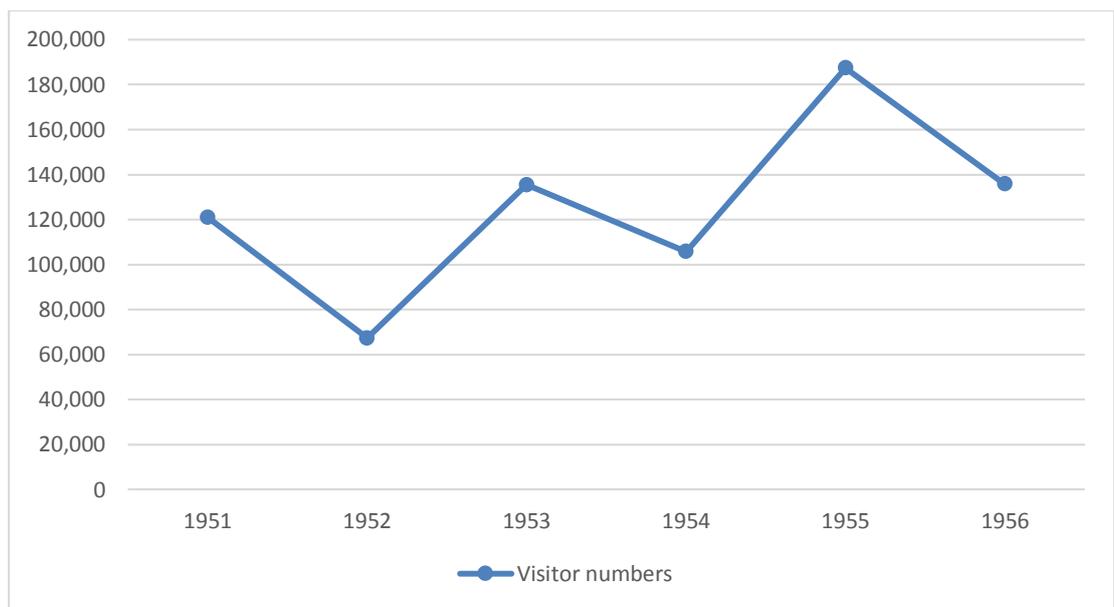


Figure 29: Walker Art Gallery Attendance 1951-56: *Liverpool Public Libraries, Museum and Art Gallery Reports 101-110 (1951-60)*, Walker Art Gallery Archive. Figure by author. Original in colour.

In 1967 Walker Art Gallery Director Tom Hume claimed to ‘have the highest provincial museum attendance figures’⁵⁴² and, in spite of the concerns of an earlier Director, Hugh Scrutton, about the indifference of Liverpoolians,⁵⁴³ figures in the

⁵⁴⁰ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1961* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1961) p. 12, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁵⁴¹ Primary research at Cardiff was restricted as this author cannot read the Welsh language.

⁵⁴² Tom Hume, *Liverpool Echo*, 21 February 1967, quoted in John Millard, *Liverpool’s Museum: The First 150 Years* (Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2010) p. 78
<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/history/WML_150_years.pdf> [accessed 5 June 2015].

⁵⁴³ Hugh Scrutton, ‘Why Do Liverpool People Neglect Their Superb Art Gallery?’, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 1 May 1958, *General Press Cuttings* FAA0325, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

1950s are also strong for 'a Gallery which spoke of and looked to a national art scene whilst at the same time maintaining a local image of frugality and civic service'.⁵⁴⁴ Figures for Circ's shows are not available so it is not possible to give a specific estimate of impact at the Walker Art Gallery.

Stereotypes

In 1945 Liverpool's bomb-damaged Walker Art Gallery held an exhibition at London's National Gallery. The catalogue foreword made explicit reference to post-war initiatives to decentralise: 'If the arts are to be decentralised and are to be more easily and generally enjoyed by the public, the contribution which can be made by provincial galleries and museums is of great importance'.⁵⁴⁵ However, this section of the thesis discusses Circ's regional impact through an examination of the directions of influence between the metropolitan and provincial, between the centre and the periphery (Research Question 3). There is some evidence for the simplistic oppositional binary of the sophisticated 'imperial' museum treating the regions as barbarous 'colonies'. This thesis questions a stereotype of travelling exhibitions that toured from an active expert, authoritative, colonizing heart to supposedly ignorant, passively receptive regions. Foucault states that power structures cannot in themselves have positive effects on social problems; what is required is complex exchanges between 'liberating intentions' and 'the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom'. A range of sources present a complex web of contacts and collaborations and a richer, if still problematic, picture of Circ's regional influence and impact – what Foucault terms reciprocal relations.⁵⁴⁶

Stereotypical hierarchies between metropolitan and provincial museums emerge through comments such as that of one former member of Circ about loan exhibitions of Etruscan and Sumerian art where 'you had the strong feeling that nobody in Wigan was going to come and see it anyway because it because it was too academic for them'. This is balanced by comments that reveal further

⁵⁴⁴ MacLeod, *Museum Architecture*, p. 144.

⁵⁴⁵ Cotton, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁶ Foucault, pp. 161-169.

hierarchies among metropolitan museums as returning these objects to the British Museum 'was not much fun because they were pretty snooty in those days'.⁵⁴⁷ To give a flavour of the perceived challenges in promoting 'good' taste in the regions, a Design Centre exhibition was held by the Council of Industrial Design at the Bluecoat Chamber in Liverpool in 1960. *The Burlington Magazine*, a bastion of conservatism and traditional art history, gloriously stated: 'Exhibitions of a similar nature should be organized in every large town in the Midlands. It will take time to sweep away old prejudices, but good design will triumph in the end'.⁵⁴⁸ These 'old prejudices' persisted: 'There are still some people, I am afraid, in the industrial North who frankly think that design is "sissy". The idea that in the North they make things and that everything south of Leicester is overheads dies hard.'⁵⁴⁹

There is some evidence of provincial resistance to metropolitan taste, at least by regional critics if not curators. In 1976 the National Museum of Wales showed the Circ show *The Fabric of Pop* described as 'exploring the influence of pop art on contemporary commercial textiles and fashion design during the past 12 years'.⁵⁵⁰ Local press reviews commented that 'Hamburgers and soup cans on shirts, and lunar rockets on furnishing fabrics are just some of the bizarre effects of pop culture which are now accepted as normal by most semi-detached suburbanians'.⁵⁵¹ The *South Wales Echo* thought that in 'this strange collection of pop art, and you'll have to look twice at some' because 'A Barber's display of hair-styles is not the sort of thing to form part of your furniture. Or is it?' This piece was illustrated with a young assistant from the Museum, perhaps showing the kind of visitor the Cardiff exhibition hoped to attract.⁵⁵² At Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Director John Morley's innovative exhibitions operated on a national level, although this was not

⁵⁴⁷ Coachworth, interviewed by Weddell. *Etruscan Art*, British Museum loan; *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1966-67: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1965), MA/17, V&AA.

⁵⁴⁸ Benedict Nicolson, 'Editorial: Design in Industry', *The Burlington Magazine*, 389.611 (1960) 343.

⁵⁴⁹ Lord Mancroft, 'Industrial Design', HL Deb, 17 June 1964, Vol 258 CC1183-267 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1964/jun/17/industrial-design>> [accessed 9 February 2016].

⁵⁵⁰ *The Fabric of Pop*, 31 January-7 March 1976, *Bulletin of the National Museum of Wales*, 22 (1976), Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁵⁵¹ *Western Mail*, 2 February 1976, press cutting, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁵⁵² *South Wales Echo*, 2 February 1976, press cutting, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

appreciated by local councillors; in a stereotype of regional narrow-mindedness, 'One councillor took the view that local history material such as trade union banners would make more appropriate displays than the director's Surrealist pictures and Art Nouveau baubles'.⁵⁵³

To balance this and present a more nuanced picture, Hugh Scrutton was Director of the Walker Art Gallery 1952-70, covering most of the period under study. Scrutton had been director of a London gallery, the Whitechapel, 1947-52, and had a similar background to senior Circ staff (public school, Charterhouse, History at Cambridge).⁵⁵⁴ Scrutton's London contacts kept him in touch with developments there. For MacLeod, however, 'Scrutton never reconciled himself to being in Liverpool and being away from London and his work between 1952 and 1970 was informed by this disconnection from the art world, ensuring that all his energy was directed towards bridging that gulf'.⁵⁵⁵ From this evidence then, stereotypical relationships between a cultivated metropolitan elite and the ignorant provinces cannot be expected at Liverpool on the basis of either the museum staff or collections. Indeed 'Scrutton sought to emulate Tate and shape a 'modern' and 'national' space for art informed by high quality acquisitions, a high profile focus on conservation and collection care, art historical scholarship and academic publishing'.⁵⁵⁶ However, 'combined with post-war financial stringency, the result was a Gallery disconnected from its social setting and often perceived as tired, dusty and out of touch'.⁵⁵⁷ Scrutton's sense of regional disadvantage was articulated in a 1958 Liverpool Daily Post article 'Why do Liverpool people neglect their superb art gallery?'. Scrutton complained about unenthusiastic citizens, with less than 200,000 out of a population of a million visiting each year.⁵⁵⁸ In 1959 Quentin Bell reported:

⁵⁵³ 'Obituary: John Morley', *Telegraph*, 19 May 2001
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1330783/John-Morley.html> [accessed 29 August 2015]. Local councillor, Andy Durr, lectured on local history at Brighton School of Art and was the driving force behind the Fishing Museum, campaigning for Labour History initiatives such as the Working Class Movement Library, Salford and People's History Library, Manchester; with thanks to Professor Woodham.

⁵⁵⁴ For Circ staff backgrounds see Chapter 3, Exhibiting Design 1947-60: Keeper Peter Floud.

⁵⁵⁵ MacLeod, *Museum Architecture*, p. 144.

⁵⁵⁶ MacLeod, *Museum Architecture*, p. 144.

⁵⁵⁷ MacLeod, *Museum Architecture*, p. 10.

⁵⁵⁸ Scrutton.

it is true that most of the inhabitants of this island live outside London and London has far more than its fair share of the aesthetic treats. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that even the greatest of our municipal collections are disregarded and forgotten by the nation as a whole.⁵⁵⁹

In 1954 Circ organised the *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition* which, after display at South Kensington, travelled to the city art galleries of Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow in the spring of 1955, then visiting a number of European cities and America.⁵⁶⁰ The show comprised loans from 25 different countries, selected by Circ to assure a 'uniform standard', and aimed to 'provide unexpected evidence of the vitality of the colour woodcut, and its counterpart the colour linocut'.⁵⁶¹ Circ's structure generated the reciprocal exchanges required of practices by Foucault, as the operation of power enabled a self-creating agent.⁵⁶² Norman Clifford Jaques showed *Woodland Path* which, whilst not a typically Mancunian scene, can be closely linked to the city. Jaques was born in Manchester and, having trained at Manchester College of Art and Technology 1937- 42, at this time was Senior Lecturer in Art & Design, at Manchester College of Art later Polytechnic (1950-82) later becoming President of Manchester Academy of Fine Art (1984-89).

In the single example of Jaques' print we can see how a work created by a Manchester-born and trained artist is selected and validated by a committee of London connoisseurs and returns to Manchester as an 'authentic' object (further examples are discussed in Chapter 5). This demonstrates Massey's complication of 'the postcolonial moment' by 'the multiplicity of trajectories' which undermine a simplistic 'power/knowledge relation'. In this specific example, whilst Manchester may have had its 'own internally generated authenticities', its boundaries were not

⁵⁵⁹ Quentin Bell, 'Forgotten Galleries - I: Liverpool', *The Listener*, 23 April 1959, p. 726.

⁵⁶⁰ James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum*, VX.1954.005 *International Colour Woodcuts*, 17/18 November 1954-16 January 1955. *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 19, 'the Department's International Colour Woodcut Exhibition now touring in America', MA/17/3/3, V&AA.

⁵⁶¹ *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition* (London: HMSO, 1954), (no page numbers), MA/18/1/2, V&AA.

⁵⁶² Foucault, pp. 161-169.

'impermeable'. This object trajectory questions received categories and 'authenticities', as 'a product of interrelations – connections and disconnection – and their (combinatory) effects', characterising the regional as interconnected and dynamic.⁵⁶³ Here, rather than a straightforward movement outward from centre to periphery we see a circular pattern of regeneration – a mutually inter-dependent cycle of design renewal rather than direction by a metropolitan elite. This state-sanctioned and funded structure fashions a different model to replace the concept of the 'metropolitan monolith'.⁵⁶⁴ The aim of the exhibition was to demonstrate 'the vitality of the colour woodcut, and its counterpart the colour linocut' in order to halt the media's 'unmerited decline in popularity over the last generation'. Floud, the public-school and Oxford-educated civil servant, selected the approved prints:

As the status of the colour woodcut varies so greatly from country to country, it was felt that a uniform standard could only be assured if the selection, both of the artists to be invited and of the individual prints, was made at the Museum, rather than by national committees.⁵⁶⁵

As well as a flow of objects, there was an interchange of staff between the V&A and regional museums. John Morley was Director of Brighton Museum and Art Gallery from 1968-85 then moving to the V&A as Keeper of Furniture and Interior Decoration, 1985-89. In addition Betty Elzea, having joined Circ in 1956 as Research Assistant, moved on to Brighton in 1971 as Exhibition Organiser. Elzea had studied at Chelsea School of Art when she visited Circ's major 1952 Victorian and Decorative Arts exhibition at the V&A. Elzea knew John Morley from the annual Museums Association conference and he encouraged her to apply for the post as she felt that without a degree she had reached a glass ceiling at the V&A. Promotion at Brighton allowed Elzea to research and curate the 1974 exhibition on Frederick Sandys, a more art-historical show than the usual populist exhibitions linked to the Brighton Festival, with loans from Birmingham, Manchester and the Tate.⁵⁶⁶ Elzea valued the 'tremendous opportunity' given to her by John Morley; the *British in India* exhibition of 1973 was in part prompted by Elzea's Anglo-Indian

⁵⁶³ Massey, pp. 64-67.

⁵⁶⁴ Hugh Adams, Department. of Modern Arts, Southampton College of Technology, 'The Museum as a Metro-monolith', n.d., press cutting, MA/19/13, V&AA.

⁵⁶⁵ *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition* (London: HMSO, 1954), (no page numbers). Foreword credits Peter Floud.

⁵⁶⁶ *Frederick Sandys, 1829-1904*, 7 May–14 July 1974, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.

background. Through Elzea's link to Circ, both the V&A and Brighton Museum acquired Edgar Brandt Art Deco lift panels from Selfridges.⁵⁶⁷

The Provinces and London: Priority and Validation

There are further issues to problematize and complicate the regional impact and influence of Circ in relation to the priority given to the first showing of exhibitions in London and the persistent validation of regional shows by association with the metropolitan centre, and the imperial museum in Albertopolis. Walker Art Gallery had an extensive programme of temporary exhibitions in the post-war period. In 1958 Scrutton explained the motivation for this 'constant stream of exhibitions of high quality', writing 'I realise that people go to see an exhibition (like a play) for its novelty' even though 'very few loan Exhibitions can compare for quality with what we have always on our walls'. In Scrutton's view however it was difficult to attract good temporary shows to Liverpool as 'in common with other provincial towns – we have not yet succeeded in asserting our claims strongly enough'.⁵⁶⁸

In 1958-9 the Walker Art Gallery held a popular exhibition, *Le Corbusier, Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Tapestries*; this had first been shown in Zurich in the summer of 1957 but Liverpool was its first UK showing. It was necessary to rely on the financial support of the Arts Council, but the Le Corbusier Exhibition (Liverpool) Committee, in association with the Liverpool Corporation, Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee, also received contributions from various local arts and trades societies, with the catalogue featuring trade advertising. Londoners waited for the Building Centre version in February 1959, reversing the trend for the regions to take second place.⁵⁶⁹

Le Corbusier attracted 17,200 visitors in six and a half weeks and in his annual report Scrutton was happy to note that it 'made a great impact on many architects and students – so much so that its influence on British architecture may prove of

⁵⁶⁷ Betty Elzea (b.1927), interviewed by Linda Sandino, 9 April 2009, V&A Oral History Project, V&AA.

⁵⁶⁸ Scrutton.

⁵⁶⁹ *Le Corbusier: Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Tapestries*, ed. by Theo Crosby (Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery, 1958), Liverpool, 10 December 1958–17 January 1959, Building Centre, London, 3 February – 6 March 1959; advertising pp. 89-120.

some importance'.⁵⁷⁰ This popularity drew notice in the national press with *The Daily Telegraph* writing that 'In the 16 days it has been open more than 4,000 people have visited the exhibition of the architecture and art of Le Corbusier in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool'.⁵⁷¹ The local press commented that the show made a £363 profit with Councillor W.R. Maylor saying 'The results exceeded even our wildest dreams'.⁵⁷² This success built on an earlier Arts Council architectural travelling show *Ten Years of British Architecture 1945-55*. The press coverage specifically referred to regional sensibilities in that the 'director of the Walker Art Gallery and his staff are to be congratulated on the skilful layout, and on obtaining the exhibition immediately after its London showing. In this respect, at least, Liverpool is not backward'.⁵⁷³

In 1961 Manchester City Art Gallery showed temporary exhibitions from both the Arts Council and Circ. Circ's *Mural Art Today* had 6,226 visitors, followed by the Arts Council's *Rex Whistler 1905-1944* with 5,728, and *P Wilson Steer 1860-1942* with 5,476 visitors; all three shows were exhibited for about three weeks. The Manchester City Art Gallery's *Annual Report* emphasises that London showings took priority; *P Wilson Steer* 'first shown at the Tate Gallery, London, ... afterwards circulated in the provinces'; *Rex Whistler* 'Before touring several provincial centres ... was displayed in London at the Victoria and Albert Museum'; *Mural Art Today* was 'a travelling version available to municipal Galleries after the London showing'.⁵⁷⁴ A first showing in London, it would seem, conferred prestige whilst at the same time inferring that regional galleries literally came second and required metropolitan validation.

⁵⁷⁰ Hugh Scrutton quoted in Edward Morris and Timothy Stevens, *The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool 1873-2000* (Bristol: Sansom & Co, 2013), p. 203.

⁵⁷¹ 'Art Exhibition', *Daily Telegraph*, 31 December 1958, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive.

⁵⁷² 'Le Corbusier Exhibition Success in Liverpool', *Liverpool Echo*, 18 April 1959, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁵⁷³ John Summerson, *Ten Years of British Architecture 1945-55* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1956). Architectural Correspondent, 'Post-War Trends in Architecture, Exhibition in Liverpool', *Daily Post*, 22 March 1956, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁵⁷⁴ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1961* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1961), p. 6, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

The Circ prospectus *Travelling Exhibitions 1971-72*, advertised 'a major policy decision to make available for museums and galleries outside London a significant part of the national treasures normally shown in the galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum'. The usual practice for Circ was to travel its own Departmental collections which covered a wide variety of periods and materials, separate from the other V&A materials-based Departments. Following the established post-war ethos of Circ in its promotion of access for all, this development was seen as 'an extension of the service rather than as a change of direction'.⁵⁷⁵ In the autumn of 1970 the National Museum of Wales held a private view for Circ's major photography show *Cartier-Bresson*, first shown in South Kensington in 1969, neatly illustrating the impact of one of the earliest products of the new policy.⁵⁷⁶

There were occasions, however, when commentators held that regional museums improved on V&A exhibitions, for example, in 1947 *Enterprise Scotland*, 'Based on the general idea of the Britain Can Make it. [sic] Exhibition' was to 'profit by experience gained in London'.⁵⁷⁷ *Enterprise Scotland* was held at the Scottish National Museum, Edinburgh and organised by the Council of Industrial Design and its Scottish Committee. Part of the 1947 Edinburgh Festival, this exhibition was to have 'far more facilities for rest than in the Victoria and Albert Museum, better lighting and better information services for both foreign buyers and British visitors'.⁵⁷⁸

The range of Circ shows also presents a less clear-cut picture of London as a centre of avant-garde taste, when the force of power is not demonstrated as a top down process, as the material conflicts with a reading of a simplistic process. In 1972/73 Turner House, Penarth showed ten exhibitions of which four were from Circ, *Pop Graphics*, *Dom Sylvester Houedard*, *David Hockney: Grimm's Fairy*

⁵⁷⁵ Hugh Wakefield, 'Foreword', *Travelling Exhibitions 1971-72: Circulation Department, Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: HMSO, 1970), p. 1.

⁵⁷⁶ Private view invitation card, 24 October 1970, *Cartier Bresson*, 24 October-15 November 1970; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff. James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*; VX.1969.004, *Photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson*, 18/19 March-27 April 1969.

⁵⁷⁷ Mary Delane, 'Women and Life: Enterprise Scotland, 1947', *The Sunday Times*, 1 June 1947, p. 7.

⁵⁷⁸ Delane, also 'Decorations in Princes Street itself will be weather-proof'.

Tales, and *German Posters*.⁵⁷⁹ Whilst clearly in demand by regional museums, these four exhibitions of contemporary or 'ephemeral' material would have been outside the interest of the V&A's other departments at that date. Arguably this suggests elitism on the part of the main museum, as opposed to the populist and more taxonomically open approach of Circ, and that a taste for the contemporary was more prevalent in Cardiff, albeit at a branch museum, rather than within the metropolitan institution. The content of these Circ shows can be read as questioning curatorial authority and as furthering the pursuit of access to cultural capital for the regions as an agent of social change.

Archives and Records

Local newspaper archives and museum and gallery press cuttings books were examined for a qualitative indication of Circ's impact on public taste in the regions as part of the state-sponsored programme of improving the citizen's design choices and the findings presented a mixed picture. The local press records in the Brighton Local History Centre at the Royal Pavilion were examined for the period 1947-77. The *Brighton Herald* and *Brighton Gazette* published local listings for Theatre, Films, TV and Music with only a few brief listings for local exhibitions. The local exhibitions selected tended to be those of local art associations, commercial galleries and trade shows.⁵⁸⁰ The absence of Circ listings may reflect a lack of impact but perhaps also the lack of a dedicated publicity team in regional galleries at this period, though Circ did send out posters and press releases with each major show. The local press did list some Circ shows, for example in August 1973 the exhibition of *Italian Renaissance Maiolica*, though listed more simply as *Pottery*, a term more generally understood, but these shows are simply listed and not reviewed or featured.

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery showed a range of the major Circ shows, for example in 1959 the galleries displayed successive exhibitions on the *History of Bookbinding*, *William Morris* and *British Studio Pottery* but attendance figures and

⁵⁷⁹ *Annual Report: National Museum of Wales 1972-1973* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1973), p. 118; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁵⁸⁰ *Brighton Herald*, 19 February 1965, p. 4, Brighton Art Gallery's *Sussex Artists Exhibition*; p. 19 features 32nd *Southern Counties Home Life Exhibition* of kitchen equipment, gadgets and furniture.

press reviews have not been archived. In 1964-5 Circ loaned a show of *Contemporary British Prints* to Hangleton Library and Rottingdean Grange, and a major exhibition of *Regency Dress* to the Museum; none of these exhibitions feature in the Museum archives or local press. The exhibition from this period that is recorded by the Museum archive is *Art Nouveau: the Collection of Martin Battersby* which was shown 27 July–5 September 1964, created in-house under the Director, Clifford Musgrave. Battersby's loans and bequest were significant in shaping the design collection at Brighton, whereas Circ shows would seem to have had little long term impact, from the evidence of the archives. Again, there are no records of visitor attendance figures for shows like the December 1972 Christmas exhibition at Brighton on loan from the V&A, *Season's Greetings: An Exhibition of British Biscuit Tins*.

It would seem from the extensive local press coverage that Circ shows were significant and popular in Cardiff as these are favourably reviewed and well-illustrated, in contrast to the near absence of such reviews in the local press at Brighton. In 1959 the *Western Mail* reviewed a Circ show of 'curious and fascinating' musical instruments displayed at the National Museum of Wales, commenting appreciatively on a display of 'such imagination and effect that the setting would provide material for a painter of the old Flemish school'.⁵⁸¹ The *Western Mail* favourably reviewed the Circ exhibition of *Wedgwood* in January 1960 at Turner House, illustrated with the reproduction of the Portland Vase and given the positive heading 'Splendid Wedgwood in Welsh display'.⁵⁸²

The Walker Art Gallery showed a variety of Circ travelling exhibitions on fine art (*Durer and his Contemporaries*, British Museum etchings, 1955; *Early English Watercolours* 1956; *Daumier Lithographs* 1956), on contemporary art (*Contemporary French Prints*, 1955; *Twentieth Century Sculpture*, 1956) and on decorative art (*The Italian Renaissance*, 1956; *Wall-papers* 1956; *Illustrated*

⁵⁸¹ 'Silent Now', *Western Mail*, 4 September 1959, Press Cuttings, Department of Art Files, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

⁵⁸² Geoffrey Watkins, 'Splendid Wedgwood in Welsh Display', *Western Mail*, 18 January 1960, Press Cuttings, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

Children's Books 1960; *History of Lithography* 1961).⁵⁸³ Temporary shows from the National Gallery, British Museum, Whitechapel Art Gallery and Goethe Institute were also displayed and the history of the Walker Art Gallery gives greater emphasis to these than to Circ shows, suggesting they were of greater importance. The Walker's own online timeline also omits any mention of Circ.⁵⁸⁴ The Gallery has kept extensive records of press cuttings covering both self-generated and loan exhibitions, however, there are no records of Circ press coverage which leads to the conclusion that these were not popular or thought significant.⁵⁸⁵ However, for Morris and Stevens, Circ's contribution to the Walker provided 'works of art 'of the highest educational value' rather than 'merely attractive objects'' with some exhibitions of 'exceptional importance', notably *Italian Renaissance Bronzes* in 1970.⁵⁸⁶

Manchester Art Gallery Archive holds albums of press cuttings from the 1950s-1970s, but there are no articles that refer to the Circ exhibitions and there are no visitors' books from the period. The archive also holds bound volumes of exhibition catalogues but only a single Circ catalogue has been retained, *Embroidery Today – 62 Group of the Embroiderers Guild* shown in 1970 at the branch museum, Fletcher Moss.

Documentation: Relationships and Interaction

In spite of mixed levels of retention for catalogues, visitor figures and press cuttings, regional museums do hold extensive documentation for some Circ exhibitions which gives an insight into the nature of relationships and interaction between the Department and the provinces. The documentation provides a way of

⁵⁸³ Sources: *Museums Journal* listings; MA/15/7 Transport Schedules, MA/15/5, The Year's Work, V&AA.

⁵⁸⁴ 'Expansion and Growth of the Walker Art Gallery', *About the Gallery: History*, Walker Art Gallery n.d. <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/about/history/1931-2002.aspx>> [accessed 1 June 2015].

⁵⁸⁵ Ian Hargraves, 'The Men Behind Our City: Presenting Art to Liverpool', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 8 May 1968 (profile of Mr Hugh Scrutton), Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool, no mention of Circ or Arts Council shows, though temporary exhibitions on Van Gogh and John Moore's are mentioned. Complete exhibition listing without sources at 'History of the Walker Art Gallery', *About the Gallery: History*, Walker Art Gallery n.d. <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/about/history/walker-temporary-exhibitions--complete-listing-.pdf>> [accessed 1 June 2015].

⁵⁸⁶ Morris and Stevens, p. 203.

assessing the extent to which Circ exerted didactic authority, or sought to raise museological standards, and to which regional players exercised their own autonomous agency. The prospectus records changes in the system made in response to feedback from museums and also invites feedback, for example on the introduction of catalogues for some exhibitions in 1956: 'We shall be glad to have the comments of borrowers on the usefulness of the catalogues'.⁵⁸⁷ In 1960 a questionnaire was sent to current borrowers and in response the prospectus was changed to cover both financial and calendar years to 'enable borrowers to know the approximate cost of travelling exhibitions booked to them for the whole of the financial year before they put forward their own estimates' and to help 'those who produce seasonal programmes to be able to settle on one occasion their bookings for the whole of the winter season'.⁵⁸⁸ As mentioned, Circ staff did attend the Museums Association annual conference to keep in touch with regional museums but they were the only V&A staff there as the main departments felt that this was 'beneath' them, according to Barbara Morris.⁵⁸⁹ As an indication of the tenor of the relationships, for the Director of Wakefield City Art Gallery, the Keeper, Peter Floud, was 'a kindly and approachable colleague, helpful, knowledgeable and full of humour', making his sudden death in 1960 'an irretrievable loss'.⁵⁹⁰

Extensive Circ documentation survives for some shows,⁵⁹¹ giving details both of the carefully planned structure established for V&A loans and the level of control – and support – provided by the national museum. Labels gave factual information on artist, sitter, formal description, date, medium, size, acquisition number. The supporting documentation at this date has a distinct in-house style, headed with a bold lower case, Bauhaus-style, graphic set on a strong coloured band. The 'checking list' (yellow heading) was given with a list of every item and its V&A acquisition number and instructions to check that all items were received in good

⁵⁸⁷ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p.1, MA/17/3/2, V&AA.

⁵⁸⁸ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1961-62: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1960), p. 3, MA/17/4/3, V&AA.

⁵⁸⁹ Morris interviewed by Sandino, Track 3.

⁵⁹⁰ Kapp, 295.

⁵⁹¹ *Elizabethan Portraits*, 25 October-16 November 1975, Turner House, Penarth, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

condition, to be signed and returned to the Department with a duplicate record for the host museum. 'handling instructions' (rust-red heading) gave recommendations for repairs to damaged glass, using waterproof self-adhesive tape: 'John Gosheron 'Black Seal' is recommended'. Similarly specific instructions are given for cleaning Perspex: 'I.C.I. Perspex Polish No. 3'.

The 'light precautions' sheet (sunny yellow) makes it clear that the show is 'SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE DESTRUCTIVE ACTION OF LIGHT'. The assumption seems to be that regional museums might not be aware of this problem, clarifying that 'Net curtains and frosted or opaque glass do not give protection'. The sheet also didactically refers to a pamphlet on installing ultra-violet filters 'which has already been sent to you'.⁵⁹² In 1975, for example, the City Art Centre, Edinburgh 'had to install all sorts of environmental controls well ahead of receiving' a show of old musical instruments, according to a former Keeper.⁵⁹³ Whilst the tone adopted is one of authority it should also be remembered that Circ took upon itself to display in a very broad range of venues and this egalitarian commitment necessitated an active role in order to protect and preserve V&A objects, acting to promote good practice.⁵⁹⁴ Regional museums could have an ironic response to Circ's encouragement to improve conservation measures, with one Midlands curator writing back to say 'We never have natural light in this town'.⁵⁹⁵

The 'hand list' (khaki) states somewhat firmly that 'The order in which these prints are listed is the correct hanging order for the exhibition and should be adhered to', suggesting that regional museums did not always follow this instruction. 'press information' (sic) is headed by a regal dark purple and judging from the *Penarth Times* was used near-verbatim by at least some regional newspapers.⁵⁹⁶ This documentation provides some evidence for a stereotype of metropolitan authority

⁵⁹²All references from *Elizabethan Portraits*, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁵⁹³ Elizabeth Cumming, email to Joanna Weddell, 16 January 2013, regarding Circ at Dundee and Edinburgh.

⁵⁹⁴ With thanks to Paul Williamson, V&A Director of Collections, for comments, 8 September 2015.

⁵⁹⁵ Coachworth, interviewed by Weddell.

⁵⁹⁶ 'Elizabethan Portraits at Turner House', *Penarth Times*, n.d., Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

but other exhibition records paint a richer if problematic picture of the nature of the relationship between Circ (also styled as the National Museums Loans Service) and its client regional museums.

Opening on 13 November 1971, just in time for the Christmas holidays, Circ's *Winnie-the-Pooh* exhibition was popular with visitors and prompted the Walker Art Gallery to request extra copies of the poster for sale in the gallery shop after they were 'deluged with requests'. Fifty Circ posters were sent at 40 pence each as 'a special case'.⁵⁹⁷ The Walker has kept the documentation records and checklists sent by Circ and this is useful as a reference of what was sent out to promote the efficient running of touring shows, clearly illustrating the convenience of these pre-packed exhibitions.

The Circ folder with its bold Bauhaus-style graphic contained all the necessary accompanying documentation including detailed handling instructions, checking list and hand list. The instructions are firm and didactic, for example: 'It is essential that proper security arrangements be provided during both the installation and the dismantling of the exhibition' and regarding lighting 'Flex supplied with each fitting should on no account be shortened'. Gallery staff were required to sign the checking list stating: 'I, being the officer responsible, have today received on loan, and in good condition, the objects enumerated hereon. I undertake to preserve them from injury and to despatch them to the next destination'.⁵⁹⁸

The original pencil drawings and other material were lent to the V&A by Shepard 'with the generous intention of ultimately bequeathing them to the Museum'; Mrs Norah Shepard gave much of this material in 1973. Just prior to exhibition, at Shepard's request, Circ wrote to forbid use of the drawings and prints by students or visitors for sketching, drawing or photographing, or in television broadcasts,

⁵⁹⁷ Richard Francis, Assistant Keeper of British Art, Walker Art Gallery, letter to Barbara Morris, 23 November 1971, *Winnie the Pooh*, Correspondence Files, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool. Exhibited 13 November 1971–23 January 1972.

⁵⁹⁸ Circ Handling Instructions, Checking List, *Winnie the Pooh*, Correspondence Files, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

reproduction or publication.⁵⁹⁹ To make this restriction clear, the Circ Handlist notes: PLEASE NOTE THAT THE COPYING AND PHOTOGRAPHING OF ALL LOAN ITEMS IN THE EXHIBITION IS FORBIDDEN. This is in contrast to the standard guidance for shows containing Circ material: 'Permission may be freely given for visitors to the exhibition to photograph any of the objects for private purposes'.⁶⁰⁰ This demonstrates the importance of Circ holding its own collections in order that travelling art and design shows could be studied by artists and designers.

In the autumn of 1972 Manchester Art Gallery showed Circ's *Martin Ware* for which documentation survives in the Archive giving an indication of the level of support provided and control exercised by the Department. The printed 'handling instructions' (brick red heading) have an additional pinned note in capitals:

IMPORTANT PLEASE NOTE THAT THE LABOUR REQUESTED MUST BE SUPPLIED TO ENABLE LOADING AND UNLOADING OF EXHIBITIONS INTO AND OUT OF YOUR PREMISES. V& A MUSEUM OFFICERS ONLY EXPECTED TO PACK/UNPACK AND TO SET UP 3.D. EXHIBITIONS. SEE HANDLING INSTRUCTION LEAFLET.

This didactic message (shouting in modern text-speak) certainly suggests a position of control and command in Circ's relationship with regional museums, but could also be seen as expressing frustration at unprepared or inefficient venues. By this date catalogues at 2 ½ pence each were for sale and regional museums could take 25% of this income. The 'handlist' (khaki heading) gives the label information provided and this is straightforward, as for the Circ label for Case 1 exhibit: 'Jug, salt-glazed stoneware. Dated and inscribed: 2 74 R. W. Martin, Fulham 3769-1901'. The 'checking list' (yellow heading) gives all objects in the order in which they are displayed, case by case; for *Martin Ware* this was 56 pieces in five display cases with fittings and 15 frames of photographs and text. Circ provided full press exhibition information together with press photographs to be used in publicity for what it described as 'the first 'Studio Potters' of the modern

⁵⁹⁹ Barbara Morris, letter to T. Stevens, Director, Walker Art Gallery, 27 October 1971, Winnie the Pooh, Correspondence Files, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁶⁰⁰ Circ Handling Instructions, Winnie the Pooh, Correspondence Files, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

English school', 'one of the most inspired ceramic ventures of the nineteenth century'.⁶⁰¹

The older forms provide a contrast with the standard sheets used later. In 1959 the documents take the form of headed paper from the Ministry of Education with the royal coat of arms in the style of a personalised letter. Guidance on collections management includes the gentle: 'May I remind you that these exhibits are extremely susceptible to fading and every precaution should be taken to protect them from strong light'. As previously described, the striking graphic Bauhaus-style coloured forms used by 1975 are more contemporary, the technical advice is more detailed and the tone more commanding: 'THIS EXHIBITION IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE DESTRUCTIVE ACTION OF LIGHT'.⁶⁰² These standard documents can be read as demonstrating changes in the relationship between the national service and regional venues, in the personalities within Circ, in the nature of civil service expectations, and in styles of graphic design. In both kinds of documents a degree of institutional power and control is seen to be imposed from above by Circ's disciplinary system but this exercise of power is uncertain and fluid as 'there always remain the possibilities of resistance'.⁶⁰³ Documentation presents constrained social practice as desirable as the goal is to preserve objects from the depredations of particular, present publics in the interest of future audiences.

Displays and Installations

This section addresses the particular narratives promoted by the installations of Circ's exhibitions at different regional museums and galleries and their relationship to different spaces (Research Question 2). Did the relationship between different spaces and individual displays have an impact and if so, in what ways? Did the narrative message of an exhibit become entangled and altered in different spaces that required different display strategies? This section aims to compare forms of

⁶⁰¹ *Martin Ware*, Circ Press Information, [n.d.], Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester. Exhibited 30 September-19 November 1972.

⁶⁰² See Hugh Wakefield, 'Foreword', *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1974-75: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1973) p. 3: 'they can only be shown in galleries from which all natural light is excluded and in which the artificial light reaching the objects does not exceed 15 lumens'.

⁶⁰³ Foucault, pp. 161-169.

display in the regions and to interrogate the approach of Doreen Massey. Massey aims to reveal operational spatialities and enable multiple trajectories; she sees space as open, opposed to that which is fixed and immobile. In promoting an approach of 'recognition and respect in situations of mutual implication' Massey hopes, in a political act, to create 'an imaginative space of engagement'. This section attempts to recognise trajectories 'with some degree of autonomy' which are 'not simply alignable into one linear story'. Does an examination of the evidence of Circ shows present 'potentially dissonant (or concordant) narratives'? This process is important as new configurations set off 'new social processes' that constitute new identities that resist the linear narrative of modernity.⁶⁰⁴

The display and installation of Circ exhibitions developed through the period and aimed to promote access and improve museological practice. In 1950, Circ shows were 'specially prepared for the typical small general museum which needs non-specialist exhibitions, appealing to a completely uninformed public.' As previously noted, such exhibitions were 'supplied with much fuller and more didactic labels than would normally accompany a Victoria and Albert exhibition'.⁶⁰⁵ Arguably such explicit aims could be seen as patronising to provincial galleries but, given an understanding of the egalitarian aims of the Department, this approach may be seen as pragmatic in promoting access for all. An interview with three former members of Circ produced a debate around the nature of labels and interpretation in the period after Floud's death in 1960 that merits analysis for insights into Circ's particular approach. David Coachworth, Jennifer Hawkins Opie and Geoffrey Opie were interviewed.

While oral history is a productive method, it is necessary to interrogate the credibility of what is said, and the way in which a narrative engages both memory and myth. The subjectivity of oral history further requires the interpretation with attention to the specific qualities of the spoken word. In this case, as an interviewer I presented myself as part of the institution, a member of the Research Department interviewing in that academic museum setting, tasked with a specific project: to establish the regional impact of Circ. As Portelli writes: 'Researchers

⁶⁰⁴ Massey, pp. 64-70.

⁶⁰⁵ Floud, 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum', 299.

often introduce specific distortions: informants tell them what they believe they want to be told'.⁶⁰⁶ These three former members of Circ were mid-career when Circ closed and all three continued at the V&A, becoming successful and prominent figures at the Museum. Under these conditions, it is reasonable to assume that the interviewees, still in contact with many colleagues at the Museum, would be predisposed to confirm the value of Circ and present a positive picture of the Department.

Discussions began to circle around Circ's display approach and methods some 37 minutes into the interview, however, at one hour and 20 minutes into the interview Opie stopped the flow of discussion by leaning forward, with a change of tone and pace, to interrogate: 'What are we saying?'. In contrast to recounting a closed narrative of past events, this section of the interview saw the trio in open-ended debate; Coachworth responded in disagreement, again a break in the to-and-fro of speech: 'No, I think we're saying ...'. The group were clarifying and attempting to summarise their *present* position in relation to the past, but looking back with the knowledge of those changes in display disciplines that were to come. One interpretation of this change in the rhythm of speech is that it indicates that for all three interviewees, despite retirement, museums remain significant in cultural life, a key driver in self-education, so this issue had an emotional content, not simply a factual one. As Portelli says pauses in speech 'accentuate the emotional content' of a narrative, just as velocity of speech conveys meaning and emphasis and 'this can only be perceived by listening, not by reading'. In this way oral histories can 'reveal the narrators' emotions, their participation in the story, and the way the story affected them' so it is important not to 'flatten the emotional content of speech down to the supposed equanimity and objectivity of the written document'.⁶⁰⁷

For Coachworth, 'more didactic labels' was 'a comment on what the labels were like in the main museum in those days which were pretty minimal'.⁶⁰⁸ Coachworth

⁶⁰⁶ Portelli, p. 70.

⁶⁰⁷ Portelli, pp. 65-66.

⁶⁰⁸ Coachworth, interviewed by Weddell. David Coachworth, V&A Museum Assistant, 1963, Research Assistant, 1965, Deputy Keeper, Museum Services, 1975-1989.

felt that Circ labels 'did maybe expand a little' but there was not much difference between a Circ label and one for South Kensington as the travelling shows were displayed in London first, 'so it was really just treated like a London exhibition'. The debate continued with Coachworth stating that in display labels 'we were trying to tell the truth', 'sending out facts on things, so that any museum or student could look at it'. The question of 'slanting' or 'angling' (interpretation) was 'talking down to people on the whole' whereas with a more factual approach the audience could 'use it or not as the case may be'. This view of Circ's displays suggests a degree of active self-education by the citizen, as well as equality between regions and centre, 'the partiality of the narrator' nevertheless gives us insight and clarity regarding Circ's methods.⁶⁰⁹ This approach was in part because from a personal point of view for Coachworth 'that's how education worked for me' but in addition this was what 'museums ought to do' and what 'Circ was doing, was whatever they were handling, whatever subject whether it was modern or historical'.⁶¹⁰

The question of the duty of a national museum to the regions ('what it ought to do') was explained by Jennifer Hawkins Opie:

we all remembered also that everything in this museum is the national collection so it is owned by the nation and that it was our business to make sure that the rest of the country not only knew about it but could get to see it and that we shouldn't expect everybody to come down to London because ... there was the point that not everybody could afford to come to London to see them so it was our job to make sure that they got to see what the nation had bought or acquired in one way or another ...⁶¹¹

Geoffrey Opie questioned the conclusion of this debate, asking whether in outlining Circ's approach to the regions they had defined it as 'saying that London, the V&A, decided that this is what the regions should have, rather than the regions demanding it of London so therefore their view was not as important as ours'.⁶¹²

Coachworth clarified his view that Circ's installation approach was 'what you do with it is up to you' as it was 'not for us to dictate' 'the way we think you ought to

⁶⁰⁹ Portelli, p. 73.

⁶¹⁰ Coachworth, interviewed by Weddell.

⁶¹¹ Hawkins Opie, interviewed by Weddell. Jennifer Hawkins Opie, V&A, Circ/Bethnal Green 1970.

⁶¹² Geoffrey Opie (b.1939), interviewed by Joanna Weddell (with David Coachworth and Jennifer Hawkins Opie), 4 July 2012, V&A Research Department. Geoffrey Opie, V&A, Slide Library/Circ 1969, Circ 1974.

look at it'. For Opie, however, this was the historic 'Henry Cole way of doing it', when this was 'the whole remit of the museum - we supply facts about objects to the nation'. As Portelli notes, 'memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings' and in this oral history we can see in progress that the 'changes wrought by memory ... reveal the narrators' effort to make sense of the past and to give a form to their lives, and set the interview and the narrative in their historical context'.⁶¹³

While for Opie and Hawkins Opie interpretation, or the 'education angle', was to be encouraged today in part because of funding models and constraints, Coachworth was nostalgic for the older approach stating 'I still think like that'. For Coachworth, Circ's aim was to encourage the viewer towards independent conclusions: 'Think about how you could adapt this or think about how this concept means something to you'.⁶¹⁴ Here we can see alternative approaches to museum display and interpretation. While narrative can be seen as 'a means of creating empathetic links between the subjects and audiences of museum displays' it is 'fundamentally a human construct, necessitating a process of exclusion and editing'.⁶¹⁵ Narrative has also 'come to be associated, negatively, with 'top-down', macro histories; linear interpretive frameworks which present a dominant version of history, silencing the experiences and values of others in the process' – a view Coachworth appeared to share.⁶¹⁶

It is perhaps arguable to what extent Circ's display installations were straightforwardly factual or simply truthful – difficult concepts to pin down at the best of times – rather than narrative or interpretive (presupposing stories about objects are not truth functional). An oral history may be 'the product of both the narrator and the researcher',⁶¹⁷ however, this debate highlights an ambivalence or

⁶¹³ Portelli, p. 69.

⁶¹⁴ Coachworth, interviewed by Weddell.

⁶¹⁵ Laura Hourston Hanks, Jonathan Hale and Suzanne MacLeod, 'Introduction: Museum Making: The Place of Narrative', in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. by Suzanne MacLeod, Laura Hourston Hanks and Jonathan Hale (Routledge: Abingdon, 2012), pp. xix-xxiii (p. xxii).

⁶¹⁶ Hourston Hanks, Hale and MacLeod, p. xx.

⁶¹⁷ Portelli, p. 71

caution in the Circ approach to didacticism and suggests that the intended ideal provincial audience for travelling exhibitions was an active, engaged citizen addressed on terms of equality. This assessment was supported in a separate conversation, when Margot Coatts explained that she learnt from Elizabeth Aslin that Circ staff were historians of the decorative arts - 'we were documenting things, we weren't speculating' – and recalled Aslin as saying: 'we deal with sideboards not fantasy'.⁶¹⁸ This chimes with Massey's re-imagining of unregulated public space as 'potentially creative crucibles for the democratic sphere' that enables 'a heterogeneous urban population to work out for itself who really is going to have the right to be there' and so scrutinises 'the play of the social relations which construct them'.⁶¹⁹

Photographs of different installations of Circ's *A2 Two Centuries of English Chintz* as displayed in regional venues in the 1950s provide an opportunity to compare the shifting dynamics of varying layouts performed for different audiences. Hourston Hanks, Hale and MacLeod offer a description of museum making as 'the attempt to create what might be called 'narrative environments'; experiences which integrate objects and spaces'.⁶²⁰ Narrative may also be seen as 'open to creativity' 'engaging the 'reader' in a creative dialogue' that 'is almost deliberately provocative and engaging' in its 'artificial layer of order on the chaos of random reality'.⁶²¹ There is a 'sometimes wide discrepancy between the narratives projected by the museum and those constructed by the visitor'.⁶²² As further discussed in Chapter 5, this exhibition was the reduced version of a collaboration between Circ and Manchester's trade organisation, the Cotton Board, *English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste*, first displayed in Manchester in 1955 at their centre for research and export, the Colour Design and Style Centre (1940-1972).

⁶¹⁸ Margot Coatts conversation with Joanna Weddell, 18 December 2014, Seaford, East Sussex. Margot Coatts, Circ Museum Assistant, 1970-1975. Compare G. Brown Goode, *Principles of Museum Administration* (York: Coultas and Volans, 1895), p. 40: 'An efficient educational Museum may be described as a collection of instructive labels, each illustrated by a well-selected specimen'.

⁶¹⁹ Massey, pp. 152/153.

⁶²⁰ Hourston Hanks, Hale and MacLeod, p. xix.

⁶²¹ Hourston Hanks, Hale, and MacLeod, p. xxiii.

⁶²² Suzanne MacLeod, Laura Hourston Hanks & Jonathan Hale, *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2012), p. 1.

The show comprised 150 fabrics displayed on specially designed units and screens together with original designs and printing blocks to demonstrate techniques and processes. Galleries taking this exhibition needed both floor and wall space equivalent to 1,200ftsq as well as ‘the most exacting precautions against strong light’.⁶²³ The general sense of crisis and anxiety in a British textile industry facing international competition in the mid-1950s is discussed further in Chapter 5. For Barbara Morris, the 1955 exhibition ‘played a vital part in revitalizing the British textile industry’ and she recounts that the show was ‘very closely studied by the industry, its designers, students and general public’.⁶²⁴ Whilst it is difficult to substantiate Morris’s claim of the revitalization of British textiles, there was extensive coverage in industry publications of the 1960 version of the show, *English Chintz: English Printed Furnishing Fabrics from their Origins until the Present Day*, suggesting that it was indeed studied closely.⁶²⁵ Two articles, in a general interest magazine, *House & Garden*, and in an export publication, *The Ambassador*, both confirm Morris’s view that the show was important for industry, designers and the public.⁶²⁶ In addition, four fabrics were directly created as a result of the exhibition by Hull Traders, Edinburgh Weavers and Heal & Son.⁶²⁷

⁶²³ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), MA/17/3/1, V&AA.

⁶²⁴ Morris, *Inspiration for Design*, p. 116.

⁶²⁵ ‘What’s Weaving?’, *The Furniture Record*, n.d.; *Drapers’ Record*, 30 April 1960; ‘English Chintz,’ *Dyer*, 17 June 1960; ‘Old and New, Two Important Fabrics Exhibitions’, *The Cabinet Maker and Complete House Furnisher*, 20 May 1960; ‘Printed Cotton Furnishings, Encouraging the Retailer to Stock Better Fabrics’, *Textile Mercury and Argus, Manchester*, 24 June 1960; ‘Soft Furnishing News: New Chintz Tradition in British Cottons: Early Design Influence’, *The Furniture Record*, 3 June 1960; ‘Cotton Board Chintzes to Tour South Africa: Australian Store to Stage Exhibition in September’, *Household Textiles & Soft Furnishings*, p. 3, 1960; press cuttings for English Chintz 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA.

⁶²⁶ ‘A New Chintz Tradition?’, *House & Garden*, June 1960; ‘The New Chintz Tradition’, *The Ambassador*, pp. 103-114; press cuttings for English Chintz 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA.

⁶²⁷ *Loan Exhibition of English Chintz* (London: HMSO, 1960) p. 73; Cat. No.s 506-509; CIRC.316-1960, T.320:1-1999, CIRC.317-1960, CIRC.90-1961.

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Figure 30: *Two Centuries of English Chintz*, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, July 1956, MA/19/4 V&AA. Photographs: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

This section aims to examine ‘the productive relations between the politics of making museums, built forms, our perception of them and the uses to which they are put’ as ‘the physical evidence of social relations’.⁶²⁸ The photographic records of the show at the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, (architects Cooke & Davies, 1927) in July 1956 show the display stands made of thin black metal with labelled historic textiles mounted on panels standing flat against the plain light walls of the austere classical purpose-built gallery with broad coving and cornice to the arched roof-light. There is a marked contrast between the restrained inter-war classicism of the architecture, with its broad mouldings to skirtings and door frames, and the more contemporary, even spindly display stands, specially designed for this show and reminiscent of Ernest Race’s 1951 Festival designs.⁶²⁹ Further double-sided display frames, including Morris & Co textiles, are placed at angles in the main space of the gallery giving some flexibility to the flow of visitors. Further photographs show the same frames freestanding with loose lengths of pleated contemporary fabrics available for handling, including Lucienne Day’s 1951 *Calyx* for Heal & Son Ltd (CIRC.190-1954), with labels placed at the base of the unit on boards.

The narrative of these loose, open displays seem informal in comparison to the spaces of their architectural setting and their flexibility is underlined as they were moved around for the different photographic views. No exhibition material is fixed to the walls which remain pristine, and so the display reads as a discrete and temporary intervention in the space. There is a bright even top-light, plain wooden floor, although the centre of the gallery is obstructed by panelled heating ventilators which contain ranks of architect-designed wooden chairs. No visitors are shown in the generously scaled space and the whole impression is of clean lines and spacious simplicity where there is nothing to distract the segregated eye from the clarity of the narrative display.

⁶²⁸ MacLeod, ‘This Magical Place’, p. 49.

⁶²⁹ Ernest Race, *Antelope Bench*, 1950, steel rod, plywood, W.35-2010, V&A.

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Figure 31: *Two Centuries of English Chintz*, Harrogate Library & Art Gallery, September 1958, MA/19/4 V&AA. Photographs: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Circ's negotiation with the multiplicity of spaces and possibilities for a range of narratives is shown as in 1951 the Circ prospectus was re-titled to reflect the range of venues served and to include 'Public Museums, Art Galleries and Public

Libraries'.⁶³⁰ Harrogate Library & Art Gallery was an early Carnegie Library with consequent free admission, designed in 1904 by Henry Hare in a heavily Edwardian Baroque style. Photographs taken of *English Chintz* in September 1958 show the purpose-built top-lit galleries added to the first floor in 1930 to combine spaces dedicated to education and culture. The framed panels that were mounted in stands at Hull are here seen hanging fixed to the walls of the small scale narrow gallery to give more floor space, demonstrating the pragmatic adaptability of the display narrative. The metal frames with mounted historic textiles and loose hanging fabrics project into the gallery space at right angles, considerably narrowing the circulating route for visitors, but also maximising the amount of material which was viewed on both sides. A plain wooden floor, a light wall with self-stripe wallpaper and even lighting from above give a simple, clean backdrop framed by a broad skirting panel and darker band above a picture rail moulding. With top-lighting, the enclosed space directs a focused gaze towards the sequential unfolding of the narrative display.

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Figure 32: *Two Centuries of English Chintz*, Harrogate Library & Art Gallery, September 1958, MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Duncan Grant, fabric for Cunard, 1936, Allan Walton Textiles, CIRC.410-1954. © The Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Original in colour.

⁶³⁰ 'Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions available for Loan to Public Museums, Art Galleries and Public Libraries 1951', [10 pages, typed, June 1950], MA/17/2/2, V&AA.

The exhibition is shown with visitors studying the textiles, perhaps posed by the photographer as they appear in each shot. This depiction is a significant variation on shows usually recorded in V&A photographs as depopulated (modernist) space, more as informative documents that negate experience, empty of the messiness of social process. Here, two young female visitors are shown handling fabrics, touching the cloth to examine the texture and weight, associating haptic knowledge in a gender stereotype. The scene also recalls the museological paradigm of the department store, although in addition individual selection is implicit in this model. The women stand next to the framed mounts of 'Section VI 1905-51' showing the chronological structure of the displays – the 'facts about objects' approach. Circ does not demonstrate 'institutional resistance to touch' but can be seen to develop 'haptic experience as a source of knowledge and pleasure in its own right'. This could also be seen as 'a way of negotiating and containing damage'⁶³¹ as Candlin says, because the older Victorian and Georgian fabrics are displayed in frames, however, both the 1930s Duncan Grant fabric and the contemporary Lucienne Day example are available for handling.⁶³² As several loose fabrics are positioned together, comparison and contrast are enabled and encouraged, situating the development of judgement as a function of the display.

As Candlin notes: 'Fine touch, for example, enables us to feel what is not always accessible to sight; the quality of fabric ... is usually better judged with the finger tips and hands than with the eyes.' Circ shows are hybrids, positioned as both 'disembodied and optic space' as well as 'embodied and haptic'; Circ staff understood their objects through handling, and expected visitors to do the same.⁶³³ For Betty Elzea 'It was so wonderful to be handling works of art all the time, being able to examine them and look at them closely and learn what they were.' This was not solely a curatorial privilege as Elizabeth Knowles explained that the Circ collection 'was never intended to be carefully kept forever, it was intended to be used in exhibitions and that was what Circulation did'.⁶³⁴ In

⁶³¹ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', 2.

⁶³² Lucienne Day, *Calyx*, 1951, Heal & Son, CIRC.190-1954. Duncan Grant, fabric for Cunard, 1936, Allan Walton Textiles, CIRC.410-1954.

⁶³³ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', 5,

⁶³⁴ Elzea interviewed by Sandino. Knowles interviewed by Partington.

interpreting these oral testimonies, subjectivity is relevant as both come from Circ staff with an art school education; this personal narrative may be reflected in their enthusiasm for haptic techniques as a way of understanding objects and for an egalitarian ethos that negated the usual curatorial hierarchy of touch. As Portelli notes, the advantage of oral history is that this 'much closer personal involvement' reveals 'unknown aspects of known events'.⁶³⁵

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Figure 33: *Two Centuries of English Chintz*, Leicester, MA/19/4 V&AA.
Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Photographs of *Two Centuries of English Chintz* at Leicester's New Walk Museum & Art Gallery picture the thin metal rods of the display frames in an impressive double-height space with paired classical columns and openwork balcony. The classical building was designed as a school in 1836 (architect Joseph Hansom) and converted to a museum in 1849. At this date the central space on the main entrance axis is acting as a temporary exhibition gallery providing variety and a changing attraction for regular visitors to the museum, in a location that all visitors will experience. The white painted gallery is spacious due to its height and to

⁶³⁵ Portelli, pp. 67-68.

views opening into side galleries, even though the floor space is not large. Natural light is provided from above. The viewpoint of the photograph is from above, down the central staircase with free-standing panels of historic textiles placed at angles, providing bays for visitors to study the textiles. Movement along the central nave-like axis of the gallery is blocked by further display panels placed square on to the circulation route, including one of loose hanging fabrics for handling, inviting engagement. The walls of the gallery are still hung with traditional framed oil paintings, rather than being dedicated solely to Circ's travelling show, demonstrating that 'sense of the tension between political and institutional narratives and the messy realities of life; between sometimes oppressive, totalizing narratives and the multiplicity of identities which make up societies'.⁶³⁶ Following Massey, accidental spatial 'arrangement-in-relation-to-each-other' reveals autonomous trajectories'.⁶³⁷ Despite this strained hierarchy the whole provides an elegant, authoritative museum setting where the calm grandeur of the pale, classical vessel provides a framing space that enhances rather than alters the display narrative.

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Figure 34: *Two Centuries of English Chintz*, Batley Library & Art Gallery, MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁶³⁶ MacLeod, Hourston Hanks and Hale, p. 1.

⁶³⁷ Massey, p. 111.

Undated photographs of the installation of *Two Centuries of English Chintz* on display at Batley Library & Art Gallery show the first floor rooms used for exhibitions with distinctive Edwardian stained glass sash windows (1907, local architect AW Hanstock). Modern fluorescent tubes hang from the framed and coffered ceiling and strong side lighting streams from the large windows, perhaps not conforming to Circ's instruction to take precautions with light levels. Light reflects from the clear sheets used to cover and protect some of the mounted historic textiles. The lower part of the windows on one wall has been boarded over to provide useful hanging space and what appear to be rows of heating pipes run intrusively along the walls. A painting not part of the exhibition has been left displayed and gives a muddled air to the display, indicating the complexity of hierarchies in this multi-purpose space. As Massey says, the openness of 'intertwined openended trajectories' 'results from the co-existence of structures' that can combine 'heterogeneous and incompatible terms'.⁶³⁸ The modernity of the thin black metal stands provide a contrast with the solid Edwardian building. The exhibition is seems cramped with only double-sided free standing frames visible, projecting into the central area at a variety of angles. A Circ lectern can be seen in the foreground, part of the strategy to ensure that there was free access to all exhibitions with no need to purchase a catalogue and free admission to venues, such as this Carnegie Library. The covers of the picture book, a 'pictorial summary', and full exhibition catalogue accompanying this major show are on the lectern.⁶³⁹ One female visitor holds a paper sheet or catalogue as she studies the fabrics. The crowded space seems to impinge on the narrative of the display and reads less as a dedicated ritual space, the gallery, and more as an institutional room within a moral framework of improvement, the library, adapted for exhibitions, demonstrating Circ's 'access for all' approach in practice.

⁶³⁸ Massey, p. 113.

⁶³⁹ *Catalogue of an Exhibition of English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste* (London: HMSO, 1955) price three shillings, cover by Roger Nicholson adapting David Richards, furnishing fabric, 1785, CIRC.117-1960. *English Chintz: Small Picture Book No. 22* (London: HMSO, 1955) price two shillings, cover by Roger Nicholson.

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Figure 35: *Two Centuries of English Chintz*, Burnley Library, around 1956-58, MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

A Circ travelling show can be said to represent Massey's 'sphere of dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined)'.⁶⁴⁰ The last photograph discussed here from this series is a closely framed shot of the Lady Mayoress of Burnley⁶⁴¹ in a staged gesture pointing to a mounted example of an historic textile. While little can be seen of the staging of this exhibition at Burnley Library, the presence of local dignitaries opening the exhibition gives an indication of the importance of fabrics in this Lancashire mill town. The photographic comparisons give some indication of the different spatial conditions to which Circ narrative display strategies had to adapt and the wide variety of local institutions that installed Circ exhibitions, from grander, classical, purpose-built top-lit galleries with plain uninterrupted surfaces to focus the gaze to spaces that are adapted and multi-purpose, also functioning as circulation routes or as an adjunct to libraries, and with views out and views in to the consequently un-consecrated space. Circ's touring exhibitions can be seen to change in each space, with the variety of wall mounted and free-standing displays providing a flexible and adaptable layout and multiple narratives.

⁶⁴⁰ Massey, p. 107.

⁶⁴¹ Ada Proctor (1956-57) or Margaret Ann Battle (1957-58), 'Past Mayors', *About the Council: The Mayor*, Burnley Council, n.d. <<http://www.burnley.gov.uk/about-council/mayor/past-mayors>> [accessed 4 August 2015].

The architectural settings speak of the initiative and vigour of local institutions acting for the public good, whether funded by those with local associations or wider charitable aims. The 1927 Ferens Art Gallery, Hull was funded by Thomas Robinson Ferens, a self-made industrialist and politician. Leicester's New Walk Gallery, although built as a school was converted to a natural history museum in 1849 by Leicester Corporation at the instigation of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society. The 1906 Harrogate Library and 1907 Batley Library & Art Gallery were funded by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie's charitable trust. The experience of the local presents a familiar setting or frame, one with an already acknowledged and established purpose, albeit staged for a new encounter. On the photographic evidence, these public spaces can be said to be re-configured by the arrival of Circ travelling shows to generate 'new social processes' that resist a simplistic linear narrative.⁶⁴² If, as Massey says, spaces for political and social change are created by relations, connections and trajectories, then Circ's shows which connected regional centres (and London) with each other and with a variety of objects, each of which originated from regional or international centres, then the arrival of a Circ show at a regional gallery can be said to have created a possibility for citizens to enact change, to reconstitute identities. The Department's circulatory pathways practiced routes that were in flux and, as socially constructed, were never complete, continually re-constructing space. Similarly for MacLeod, Hourston Hanks and Hale it is 'through bodies in space and through use that narrative, space and identity are activated' whilst cultural spaces are needed 'as routes to identity formation'.⁶⁴³

Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper note that the 'disadvantaged classes' are most likely to visit their 'home town museum' – just such as were served by Circ.⁶⁴⁴ Working-class visitors 'are particularly out of their depth in museums which deliberately address themselves to the cultivated public' and by contrast 'arrows, notices, guidebooks ... proclaim, simply by existing, the right to be uninformed, the right to be there and uninformed, and the right of uninformed people to be

⁶⁴² Massey, pp. 69/70.

⁶⁴³ MacLeod, Hourston Hanks and Hale, p. 1.

⁶⁴⁴ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 23.

there'.⁶⁴⁵ The presence of the Circ lectern offering information can be seen as a tool to promote social equality, an 'effort made to provide the means of learning and understanding, an implicit recognition of the right not to understand and to demand to understand'.⁶⁴⁶ As with the figure posed in the setting of Batley Library, 'buying a guidebook or catalogue presupposes a whole attitude to the work of art ... they only ever initiate those who are already initiated'.⁶⁴⁷

The 1969 text suggests that the numbers of visitors from across all social classes is key to establishing the impact of a successful museum that serves all citizens equally, although the surveys also covered social and educational characteristics, attitudes and preferences. This contemporary emphasis on class of visitor is paralleled in artist Hans Haacke's surveys of museum visitors, from the Harold Wise Gallery in 1969 to the infamous cancelled Guggenheim questionnaire in 1971.⁶⁴⁸ As discussed in Chapter 1, widening access had been an aim of the Museum since Henry Cole's time, with its focus on the manufacturing population, and remained constant for Circ in this period. Assessing the class of visitor numbers is one way to measure impact, but it is a traditional method of analysis that has advantages in being quantifiable, as shown by the durability of audience surveys such as *Taking Part* run since 2005.⁶⁴⁹ As Travers and Glaister note in their recent survey, however, impact may take many other less tangible forms. Productive links to the creative industries 'are not immediately obvious to any traditional analysis of a gallery or museum' and 'it is impossible to measure the value added by such output'.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁵ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 49.

⁶⁴⁶ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, pp. 93/94.

⁶⁴⁷ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 62.

⁶⁴⁸ Hans Haacke, 'Lessons Learned', *Tate Papers 12* (London: Tate, 2009)

<<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/12/lessons-learned>> [accessed 8 August 2014].

⁶⁴⁹ 'Taking Part 2015/16', *National Statistics*, Department for Culture Media and Sport, UK

Government, 27 January 2016. *Taking Part* survey is the key evidence source, providing reliable national estimates of engagement with arts, heritage, museums, archives and libraries.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486269/Regional_Taking_Part_Dashboard_2015-16_Q2.pdf> [accessed 20 March 2016].

⁶⁵⁰ Tony Travers and Stephen Glaister, *Valuing Museums: Impact and Innovation among National Museums* (London: National Museum Directors' Conference, 2004), p. 30

<http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/valuing_museums.pdf> [accessed 10 July 2017].

The combination of historic, mounted textiles and loose hanging contemporary fabrics provided by *Two Centuries of English Chintz* gives a hybrid model of the traditional museum with 'the atmosphere of the department store, the poor man's museum'. The women confidently handling fabric at Harrogate demonstrate that boundaries have been blurred between the sacred and the profane: 'untouchable – touchable; noise – contemplative silence; swift and haphazard exploration – slow and orderly procession; involved appreciation of venal works – pure appreciation of 'priceless' works'.⁶⁵¹ Bourdieu and Darbel write about 'working-class' visitors who 'venture', or perhaps adventure, into museums where they are 'out of place' and 'disoriented', but the range of venues into which Circ sent exhibitions such as the Carnegie libraries gave not just the 'pure possibility' but the 'real possibility' of barely deliberate encounters.⁶⁵² As Massey writes 'the potential surprise of space' creates 'the accidental neighbour; the encounter with the unforeseen'.⁶⁵³

Shingley Art Gallery, a classical stone building, was designed by Arthur Stockwell and opened in Gateshead in 1917, following the bequest of the art collections of local solicitor, Joseph Shingley. Figure 36 shows two Circ shows of British and international contemporary domestic design displayed in the largest, central gallery space on the main entrance axis: *Hand-made Furniture* and *Contemporary Scandinavian Furnishing Fabrics*.⁶⁵⁴ The wooden door-cases have carved Ionic pilasters and the polished parquet flooring is surrounded by a strip of Greek key mosaic. The town coat of arms hangs centrally and the plain, light painted walls are evenly top-lit from a flat roof-light. As discussed in Chapter 3, the open nature of these displays recalls the department store, with objects only divided from visitors by ropes, and the object descriptions on propped cards much like price lists in a commercial setting. The 'fairly lofty gallery' walls specified by Circ are covered by the loose hanging folds of the contemporary Scandinavian fabrics, inviting examination as in a department store drapers and lecterns are positioned

⁶⁵¹ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 50.

⁶⁵² Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 37.

⁶⁵³ Massey, p. 112.

⁶⁵⁴ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1955: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954) p. 4, MA/17/3/1, V&AA. *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955) p. 14, MA/17/3/2 V&AA.

at the entrance, as if offering sales information. In contrast to this reading of the spatial narrative, the coat of arms signifies the civic purpose of the space, while the classical doorcases subtly confirm the Gallery's educational remit, creating a hybrid space for the citizen/consumer. This exhibition of contemporary design has been shown in the civic art gallery, rather than the nearby Saltwell Park Museum which was for local and 'industrial' exhibits. At South Kensington the fabrics were shown in the marginal space of the Restaurant, not the main galleries.

The lamps on the display are connected and lit, as suggested by Circ, although there are no spotlights on the fabric, as recommended. The stand on the right at Gateshead can also be identified in a South Kensington photograph, with the lamp, bottle and jug sequence in an identical arrangement on the table top, replicating the narrative, although the more modern Kandya chair has been placed in the corner. The trailing fabrics draping over the stand and floor to divide sections, as well as those hanging in the background, create a softer and more relaxed atmosphere than in the South Kensington images. *Hand-made Furniture* at South Kensington is placed on angled display stands with a shallow platform base and sloped overhang, with rugs hung on the walls. At Gateshead the stands have been set up at right angles, rather than as a shallow 'V', and the sloping upper part has been removed; no rugs or shelves are hung on the lower walls of the stands. The higher walls act to contain the gaze and create a more convincing sense of the show as a coherent and 'real' domestic space, while the partial enclosure provided by the lower walls are more obviously a display device. Rather than being arranged in a long run to be walked along, the Shipley displays are adapted to occupy the centre of the gallery, each viewing angle separated from the next as part of a circuit. The spaciousness of the Shipley gallery as a whole emphasises the narrative as one of appreciation rather than consumption.

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Figure 36: *Hand-made Furniture with Contemporary Scandinavian Furnishing Fabrics*, Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Figure 37: Left, detail of *Hand-made Furniture*, Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead and right at South Kensington. MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Right, *Hand-made Furniture*, South Kensington. MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Figure 38: *Hand-made Furniture*, South Kensington. MA/19/4 V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

By October 1976, Circ had become part of the Department of Education and Regional Services (DERS) and curated the photographic exhibition *The Land: 20th Century Landscape Photographs Selected by Bill Brandt*.⁶⁵⁵ The files at the National Museum Wales give details of the display and installation and reveal the extent of Circ's collaboration in the correspondence between Mark Haworth-Booth, then Assistant Keeper of Regional Services, and Rollo Charles, Keeper of Art at the National Museum of Wales. This 'genuinely exhilarating major exhibition' was seen by London commentators as a 'brilliant, highly selective and imaginative compilation'.⁶⁵⁶ The formative plan for this exhibition was for the 'first time' to tour 'an exhibition originated at the V. & A. at its full size', rather than as a travelling version. Touring South Kensington shows were usually reduced for practical reasons concerning packing and transport or because loans could not tour – though here Circ aimed to hold the rare loan material from the United States and

⁶⁵⁵ Carol Hogben, Acting Keeper, Department of Circulation, 1975; Mark Haworth-Booth, Assistant Keeper of Circulation, letter to National Museum of Wales, 15 Dec. 1975, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁵⁶ Frank Hermann, 'Territorial Imperatives', *The Sunday Times*, 23 November 1975, p. 37, admission 40p.

France in order to show at the 'other three national capitals'.⁶⁵⁷ As well as showing in London, the exhibition did visit the capitals of Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff with the directors of these museums invited to the private view at South Kensington.⁶⁵⁸ Certain images were not included in the touring exhibition but this amounted to just eight works out of a total of 195 photographs.

The relationship between London and the Welsh museum seems to have been one of close collaboration on the evidence of the letters to and fro to arrange the exhibition. Charles arranged for the re-painting of the gallery in 'cream which should harmonize with the cream of the photographs' and commented that 'I should certainly like you to come down and help us cut the exhibition down to suit the gallery. Indeed I was relying on this.'⁶⁵⁹ Haworth-Booth visited Cardiff on 21st June 1976 to help hang, 'do some surgery on the show' and 'any publicity that can be arranged', for example local radio interviews as he had done at the Edinburgh and Belfast showings, commenting diffidently 'it probably helps'.⁶⁶⁰ On the lighting of photographs, Haworth-Booth referred to earlier discussions and advises 'as concentrated lighting as possible', commenting realistically that 'you will probably be restricted to a few spots'. He also advised on the positioning of screens at this particular venue and pointed out that 'Seats and even plants might help!'⁶⁶¹

The South Kensington display gave a distinct effect as critics noted: 'a series of partial enclosures which act as small, intense one-man shows, so that we are given a sense, too, of the style of various photographers'.⁶⁶² At South Kensington, the exhibition was staged in 24 spaces described as a 'visual journey' (Figure

⁶⁵⁷ Hugh Wakefield, letter to Dr G.O. Jones, Director, National Museum of Wales, 23 April 1974, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁵⁸ James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum*, VX.1975.030, 13 November 1975-15 February 1976, South Kensington private view 12 November 1975. National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 6 March-11 April 1976; Ulster Museum, Belfast, 24 April-6 June 1976; National Museum Wales, Cardiff, 19 June-1 August 1976 (advertised dates, 28 June-8 August 1976 also published). Exhibition fee £100 including transport.

⁶⁵⁹ Rollo Charles, letter to Mark Haworth-Booth, 4 June 1976, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁶⁰ Mark Haworth-Booth, letter to Rollo Charles, 20 May 1976, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁶¹ Mark Haworth-Booth, letter to Rollo Charles, 20 May 1976, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁶² Hermann, p. 37.

39).⁶⁶³ The works omitted from the touring show were one by Atget and two by Steichen lent by MOMA, and five by Stieglitz lent by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, though this was nearly the whole of Space 3. There were 12 loan images in all. The sketch plans show that at the National Museum of Wales the two curators made major changes to the order of sections where only the first image retained its exact place in the sequence, the 'forlorn emptiness of the Antarctic polar waste' (CIRC.542-1975).⁶⁶⁴ At South Kensington the narrative progressed from photographs of wild landscape to that tamed by man, ending with a view of *Earthrise from Apollo 8*, 1968 (E.98-2013). At Cardiff, Steichen's more abstract *Equivalents* from the start of the show in Space 3 were replaced with images from unusual angles, showing the hand of man at work changing the narrative sequence (CIRC.616-1975, CIRC.508-1975). Here Circ's own 'temporary constellations of trajectories' required shared negotiation and provisional accommodation between the two curators, enacting the political and communal 'through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation'.⁶⁶⁵

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Figure 39: *The Land*, South Kensington, plan, catalogue (London: HMSO, 1975).
Photograph: Joanna Weddell © of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁶⁶³ Mark Haworth-Booth and Elizabeth Bailey, 'Introduction', *The Land* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 2.

⁶⁶⁴ Haworth-Booth and Bailey, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁵ Massey, pp. 153/154.

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Figure 40: *The Land*, Cardiff, 1975, left, sketch showing major changes to order of sections, and, right, movement around gallery, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

A series of events had been organised to accompany the South Kensington showing and Cardiff followed the London initiative.⁶⁶⁶ Haworth-Booth was 'delighted to see the list of Cardiff events which look splendid' and thanked the Keeper of Art, Rollo Charles, for 'taking so much trouble over it'.⁶⁶⁷ These events were a series of well-publicised lunchtime lectures during July and August at the Museum given by eminent local figures on links in their field to 'The Land'.⁶⁶⁸ Whilst Haworth-Booth did suggest some names for these lectures (David Hurn for

⁶⁶⁶ Evening slide lectures at South Kensington: 13 November 1975 poetry reading by Jonathan Williams, Tom Meyer and Alastair Reid; 20 November 1975, 'Equivalence' by photographer Minor White; 27 November 1975, 'Time Stands Still' by Keith Critchlow of the Architectural Association; 29 January 1976, 'Edward Weston' by his son Cole Weston.

⁶⁶⁷ Letter, 9 June 1976, Mark Haworth-Booth, Assistant Keeper of Regional Services, Victoria & Albert Museum, to Rollo Charles, Keeper of Art, The National Museum of Wales; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁶⁸ Advertised in the Western Mail, 13, 12, 20 and 30 July 1976, 2 August 1976; South Wales Echo 23 and 30 July 1976, 2 and 28 August 1976; admission free; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

'The Land and the Artist')⁶⁶⁹, Charles had approached his own contacts. For example, Professor EG Bowen from Aberystwyth was approached by Charles to 'discourse on "The Land and the Historian" ... the influence of geography on cultures and civilizations, 18th century travellers in Wales ... fairly informal, the whole session lasting not more than an hour'.⁶⁷⁰ Similarly Edinburgh ran Sunday two morning lectures with 'numbers restricted to 40 on each occasion', one by a professional photographer working in Edinburgh (Dave Paterson).⁶⁷¹ Here we see the Department collaborating and supporting regional museums where Circ's London initiatives are clearly matched.

The exhibition was on display at the National Museum of Wales 19th July to 1st August 1976 and the Museum sold 212 catalogues or 'checklists' at 5 pence each ('useful for buffs') giving an idea of the number of serious visitors.⁶⁷² The accompanying paperback book at £2.75 was also available. The exhibition was taken down on a date earlier than that advertised and clearly for at least one visitor this was a disappointment as they wrote to complain and received a letter of apology from the Museum Director.⁶⁷³

Circ's relationship with the Ulster Museum showing of *The Land* was similarly mutually supportive. The Director Alan Warhurst visited the South Kensington showing of the exhibition, being 'very impressed' by its arrangement. The Ulster Museum private view included invitations to photographers, geographers,

⁶⁶⁹ 20 May 1976, Mark Haworth-Booth, Assistant Keeper of Regional Services, Victoria & Albert Museum, to Rollo Charles, Keeper of Art, The National Museum of Wales; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff. The full list of events was as follows: 15 July 1976, Mr D Emlyn Evans and D JM Eddington on 'The Land and the Scientist' (geologist and ecologist); 22 July 1976, Professor EG Bowen on 'The Land and the Historian'; 2 August 1976 Mr John Wright and Mr David Hurn (Gwent College of Higher Education, Newport) on 'The Land and the Artist' (photographer and painter); 4 August 1976 Dr JB Loudon on 'The Land and the gods' (anthropologist); ... on 'The Land and the Writer' (readings).

⁶⁷⁰ Letter, 26 May 1976, Rollo Charles, Keeper of Art, The National Museum of Wales to Professor Emeritus EG Bowen, Aberystwyth; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁷¹ Carbon copy list; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁷² Letter, 5 October 1976, Departmental Secretary, Department of Art, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff to the Department of Regional Services, Victoria & Albert Museum; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff. Also letter 20 May 1976, Mark Haworth-Booth, Assistant Keeper of Regional Services, Victoria & Albert Museum, to Rollo Charles, Keeper of Art, The National Museum of Wales; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁷³ Letter 17 August 1976, Director, National Museum of Wales, to Mr T. Iles, Penarth, South Glamorgan; Department of Art Files, National Museum of Wales.

geologists, botanists, archaeologists, poets, artists’, a similarly rich mix to the South Kensington approach to lectures and events. Ulster also organised evening events ‘musical, literary, poetic’ and had ‘no difficulty’ in accommodating all the items shown in London. The Director suggested to Haworth-Booth that he should arrange for Seamus Heaney to review *The Land* for the Irish papers as advance publicity for the Belfast showing.⁶⁷⁴ Haworth-Booth visited Belfast and was ‘delighted’ with their presentation of the show which he described as ‘spacious, elegant and fun’; however, he enclosed a set of labels used at Edinburgh as ‘I don’t like people to have to keep referring to a check-list: I think it can be distracting, like being in an auction’.⁶⁷⁵ *The Land* was also reduced for a smaller touring exhibition *Landscape Photography*, which from October 1976 to March 1977 toured to venues as diverse in location as Barnsley, Halifax, Wednesbury, Rottingdean and Durham – right at the end of Circ’s activities. One aim of this exhibition was ‘to acquire as much of the exhibited material as possible for its permanent collection of photographs’ and the curators appealed to ‘photographers who work in this field’ to contribute; of the 195 works shown 183 were donated to the Museum.⁶⁷⁶

Not all Circulation touring exhibitions could be easily accommodated by regional museums. In March 1975 the Director of the National Museum of Wales wrote to Hugh Wakefield, Keeper of Circulation, pulling out of accepting the *Destruction of the Country House* exhibition as it was ‘not at all the usual Victoria and Albert “package” exhibition’ and ‘a good deal would be left to us quite apart from the question of mounting a Welsh section’. The obstacle was ‘the necessary work at this end of mount the exhibition in the period suggested’ as the ‘exhibition team is under extreme pressure at the moment’, an exchange that clearly communicates the appeal to regional museums of the prêt-à-porter Circ show. The Director acknowledged ‘a great deal of interest here in the matter’ and instead planned to

⁶⁷⁴ Letter, 17 February 1976, Alan Warhurst, Director, Ulster Museum to Mark Haworth-Booth, Circulation Department; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁷⁵ Letter 25 April 1976, Mark Haworth-Booth, Victoria & Albert Museum, to Ulster Museum, Belfast; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁷⁶ Open notice, Victoria & Albert Museum paper, undated, headed *The Land*; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales.

mount their own version, *The Welsh Country House*, the following year.⁶⁷⁷ In fact the travelling version prepared by exhibition designer Robin Wade with Marcus Binney of the *Destruction of the Country House* did visit Cardiff in June 1975.⁶⁷⁸ The touring show consisted of 21 screens, three audio visual projection screens with six projectors and sound – clearly a complex ‘package’ to stage.⁶⁷⁹

Circulation did not always lead the way in matters of display and installation. In 1952 Manchester City Art Gallery showed Circulation’s *Gothic Art*, a ‘unique survey of European Gothic applied art’ which within ‘a comparatively small compass ... reflected the style of the period most effectively by means of carefully selected and admirably presented objects’. The exhibition was illustrated in the Annual Report and was viewed by 16,025 visitors, suggesting that it had significant impact. The highest number of visitors for a temporary show that year, however, were those for the Arts Council’s *Ravenna Mosaics* with attendance of 24,171. The Annual Report described this show in glowing terms: ‘Undoubtedly the outstanding exhibition of the year, these striking replicas of the well-known mosaics in the early Christian churches at Ravenna made a deep impression on visitors’.⁶⁸⁰

The ‘exact and faithful copies’ from Italy were only shown in London and three provincial centres, as the Report notes with some civic pride. The display gave ‘a marked solemnity and dignity’ with ‘natural light being reduced and the artificial lighting in the galleries tinted in order to suggest that of the Ravenna church interiors’. At this date, travel to Italy was likely to be out of reach for most but the

⁶⁷⁷ Letter 4 March 1975 from Dr GO Jones, Director, National Museum of Wales, to Hugh Wakefield, Keeper of Circulation, Victoria & Albert Museum; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales.

⁶⁷⁸ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Wales*, 19 (Cardiff: National Museum Wales, 1975), p. 40, *Destruction of the Country House*, 7 June 1975-20 July 1975; Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff. South Kensington show and design (8 October-1 December 1974), Ruth Adams, ‘The V&A, The Destruction of the Country House and the Creation of ‘English Heritage’, *Museum and Society*, 11.1 (2013), 1-18
<<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumstudies/documents/volumes/adams13.pdf>> [accessed 20 April 2013].

⁶⁷⁹ *Travelling Exhibitions 1977-78: Department of Education and Regional Services, Victoria & Albert Museum* (London: HMSO, 1976), p. 7, 21 screens, 3 audio visual projection screens with 6 projectors and sound, exhibition fee £180.

⁶⁸⁰ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1952* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1952), p. 7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive.

display made the show 'a revelation', 'Even to the fortunate who have visited Ravenna' as the catalogue pointed out.⁶⁸¹ The Circulation show with objects selected from the V&A collections was displayed in an even light in standard travelling display cases and, despite a longer display period and respectable visitor figures, in comparison does not seem to have been as popular.⁶⁸²

In spring 1958 Manchester City Art Gallery showed the Circulation exhibition *The Arts of China*, a show enthusiastically reviewed in the local press.⁶⁸³ The reviewer was Albert Sewter, senior lecturer and then Head of the History of Art Department at the University of Manchester and sometime art critic of Manchester Guardian. In spite of the Circ exhibition being shown in a 'small room', Sewter felt that it contained 'as instructive and rewarding a display as could well be fitted into such a space', providing a review 'in miniature' of Chinese civilisation. Sewter emphasised elements characteristic of the Circulation approach, a broad range of media - 'metalwork, ceramics, lacquer, jades, calligraphy, costume and textiles as well as painting and sculpture' - and scholarship – the 'just emphasis and judicious selection'.⁶⁸⁴ Sewter also praised display techniques writing on the ceramics vitrine as 'in itself an object-lesson in demonstrating what can be done with good materials well chosen; it includes [many] examples ... yet the case as a whole looks harmonious and uncrowded'. The critic concludes: 'Probably no other museum in the world could spare from its own display such an enviable selection of treasures'.⁶⁸⁵ The Gallery's own Annual Report agreed, describing 'another of the excellent one room exhibitions organised by the Department of Circulation'.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸¹ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1952* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1952), p. 7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive. *Ravenna Mosaics* was shown at the New Burlington Galleries; Giovanni Boldini, *Ravenna Mosaics* (London: Arts Council, 1952).

⁶⁸² *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1952* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1952), p. 7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive; *Gothic Art*, 11 October-30 November 1952; *Ravenna Mosaics*, 21 October-23 November 1952.

⁶⁸³ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1955: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954), p. 4, MA/17/3/1, V&AA, Category 2: Exhibitions needing both floor and wall space: K4 *The Arts of China*. A.C. Sewter, 'Loan Exhibition in Manchester', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 March 1958, p. 9.

⁶⁸⁴ 82 objects, 18 frames, 1 figure and 3 carpets in 5 cases with lectern, valued at £6,082, *The Arts of China*, V&A typed 7-page handlist, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁶⁸⁵ Sewter.

⁶⁸⁶ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1958), p. 4, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

From 1962-1976 the Director of Manchester Art Gallery was (George) Loraine Conran, also on the executive committee of the Contemporary Art Society 1952-70; under Conran the Gallery was described as 'up and coming' and 'starting new progressive policies'.⁶⁸⁷ In 1964 Conran wrote an article for the *Journal of the Society of Industrial Artists*, aimed at an audience of designers. Conran unfavourably compared British museum displays to those of Europe and America, warning against trends towards museums as 'amusement centres' rather than for the 'preservation of truth'.⁶⁸⁸ This article by a regional leader, written after two years in charge at Manchester, can be seen as flagging up some of the ambiguities presented by provincial audiences and the conflicting demands of the elite connoisseur and accessibility. Conran wrote 'there are two broad types of museums: the conservatories of valuable works of art and the information centres of a newly leisured and curious, but basically narrowly educated, society'. Museum displays should be 'founded on fact' rather than using commercial methods of display that have commercial objectives so that 'the object is made more striking but is diminished aesthetically'. Nevertheless Conran acknowledged the role of good design in creating museums that are 'accessible centres of culture rather than hushed temples of the arts for an élite', and continued: 'Good design, without any loss of integrity, can make facts more easily assimilable to the unspecialised ordinary museum visitor, it can make the true qualities of a work of art understandable to those with no knowledge of art history or modern art and it can help to attract vastly more of those people who may find Bingo and the dogs an unsatisfactory way of filling their growing leisure.'⁶⁸⁹

Circulation distributed shows to other galleries in the Manchester area and these received positive reviews in the local press suggesting some interest and impact. Salford Art Gallery showed English glass and fans in 1957 and the *Manchester Guardian* suggested that 'Myopic study on this occasion brings its rewards'. The display of glass was praised as 'an account of English glass from the seventeenth century to the present day, is contained in three cases with what one presumes to

⁶⁸⁷ 'Editorial', *Society of Industrial Artists (SIA) Journal*, 136.6 (1964) 2.

⁶⁸⁸ Loraine Conran, 'Museum Display and Design', *Society of Industrial Artists Journal*, 136.6 (1964), 3-4.

⁶⁸⁹ Conran.

have been commendable restraint; no overcrowding and no more exhibits than the untrained eye can satisfactorily behold'.⁶⁹⁰ For the *Manchester Guardian*, the eyes of the regional audience were 'untrained', demonstrating the challenges for display and installation.

Strategies of Appropriation

Regional museums and audiences could also adopt strategies of appropriation as a method of incorporating imported Circ exhibitions into provincial orbits. In 1958 the National Museum of Wales was the venue for the Circ show *The Art of William Morris* including 64 designs or samples of printing, wallpaper, chintz, woven textiles, embroidery, tapestry, stained glass, and carpets; a few on loan but about a third acquired by Circ as recently as 1953-56.⁶⁹¹ This travelling exhibition followed the 1952 *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* show, curated when other V&A departments thought objects later than 1830 were 'unsuitable for permanent retention'.⁶⁹²

At Cardiff the show was enlarged by an accompanying lecture on Morris by Professor Nikolaus Pevsner at the National Museum (2 January 1959).⁶⁹³ The Circ press release indeed follows Pevsner's approach, introducing Morris as 'universally acknowledged to have been one of the main founders of what has now come to be accepted as the "Modern Movement" in the decorative arts. The justification for the show is explained as 'it is already almost impossible for even the most earnest student to find surviving examples' and aims to 'provide a

⁶⁹⁰ By Our Own Reporter, 'Glass – And Fans: Two Exhibitions Which Repay Close Study', *Manchester Guardian*, 31 July 1957, p. 16.

⁶⁹¹ William Morris wallpaper acquired 23 April 1958 from Sanderson Fabrics: C.21189 and next six accessions. Sanderson bought Morris & Co. in 1940.

⁶⁹² Peter Floud, Memorandum to Leigh Ashton, 27 October 1951: 'There may be cases between now and the opening of the Exhibition [*Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts*] where Departments are offered as gifts or for purchase material produced during the period 1852-1952, which though possibly unsuitable for permanent retention in the Museum collections, should be considered for inclusion in the Exhibition.' *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949-1953, Part 1, MA/28/85, V&AA*. William Morris Society, founded 1955, circulated *The Typographical Adventure of William Morris – an Exhibition* to Stockholm, Berne, Copenhagen and Vienna, September 1958-March 1959. Victorian Society founded 1958.

⁶⁹³ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936).

welcome opportunity for those who only know of Morris's reputation in theory to see actual examples of his work in practice'.⁶⁹⁴

This publicity material indicates that taste for the Arts & Crafts was still viewed as unusual but nevertheless this show received a favourable review in the Newport—based *South Wales Argus* from Fred J. Dando.⁶⁹⁵ Dando recalled the impact of Morris & Co.'s 'magnificent' *Acanthus* wallpaper from his school corridors and studying Morris's then contemporary motifs when a teenage art student in Newport. Significantly this review thus appropriated the V&A exhibition as one of both personal and local importance which would 'evoke nostalgic longings'. Dando noted that Morris patterns which had been 'for long years unobtainable' were 'a joy to see again' and the embroidered panels were 'of great beauty'.⁶⁹⁶

In 1961 Turner House, Penarth showed Circ's *The English Chair*, a survey exhibition of 25 chairs from the 17th century to the contemporary, and again the *Western Mail* reviewed and illustrated the show.⁶⁹⁷ At Cardiff Circ exhibitions were further promoted by lectures that enhanced and extended the display of objects, suggesting the National Museum's embrace of such shows with their active integration into the regional museum programme. To accompany the display at Penarth, the influential designer David Pye, of the Royal College of Art,⁶⁹⁸ gave a lecture on *Modern Furniture Design*, an event that could be read as a continuation of the Coleian activities of the Government Schools of Design. Later, in 1970, Hogben was to turn to Pye for technical comments on captions for the travelling version of the related show *Modern Chairs*.⁶⁹⁹ For one Scottish regional curator, perhaps significantly in a smaller city, Dundee, Circ shows were important but

⁶⁹⁴ Circulation Department Press Release, *The Art of William Morris (1834-96)*, 16 July 1958, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁹⁵ Fred J. Dando, 'William Morris, Genius in the Workshop', *South Wales Argus*, undated [1958], Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁹⁶ Dando. For Victorian design in Cardiff, Peter Floud, *Castell Coch, Glamorgan* (London: HMSO, 1954).

⁶⁹⁷ *Western Mail*, 5 December 1961, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales, Cardiff.

⁶⁹⁸ David Pye, architect, designer, woodturner, taught at Royal College of Art from 1948, Professor of Furniture Design, 1963-1974. No attendance figures survive for the lecture.

⁶⁹⁹ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1970-72: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1969), p. 13, MA/17/7, V&AA.

could still be actively integrated into the regional museum; the flow of influence was not all one way:

The Destruction of the Country House which drew crowds ... was a wonderful show and very relevant as so many Victorian High Gothic mansions [locally] had been lost. We added in some drawings and photos to expand the local connection.⁷⁰⁰

Acceptance of metropolitan taste could be effected through appropriation of personal and local significance. When *The Fabric of Pop* show visited Norwich it was greeted with acclaim and enthusiasm, in part because local Norwich Art School alumni were featured:

John Dove and Molly White, former Norwich Art School students, who have won international recognition with their pop fabric designs ... Examples of their screen-printed satins, with diamante decoration and popular T-shirt designs are currently on display in the fabric of pop [sic] exhibition at the Castle Museum, Norwich ... with accompanying rock 'n roll music.⁷⁰¹

The objects contained in Circ exhibitions might also have local value through the involvement of regional museums and their curators' expertise, for example in the *English Creamware* exhibiton of 1968. The catalogue lists loans from the City Art Gallery Leeds and Temple Newsam House Leeds (four items), and Stoke-on-Trent Museum (five items), leaving 60 exhibits from the V&A. Further, the research acknowledgements list only regional curators, giving equal authority to the regions.⁷⁰²

Circulation Reports: Curatorial Authority

Circ staff made periodic visits to regional museums to inspect their suitability for travelling shows; a 1959 report on the Walker Art Gallery by Floud makes interesting reading.⁷⁰³ Circ reports frequently describe possible locations for their

⁷⁰⁰ Cumming, email to Weddell, 16 January 2013. Elizabeth Cumming, Dundee City Art Gallery, Art Assistant, 1972, Assistant Keeper of Art, 1974-75.

⁷⁰¹ Jenny Belson, 'World-famous Designers Shy From Publicity', *Norwich Evening News*, [n.d.] 1974 <<http://wonderworkshop.co.uk/v+a.html>> [accessed 10 March 2015].

⁷⁰² *English Creamware* (London: HMSO, 1968), Mr AR Mountford, Stoke-on-Trent Museum, Mr William Billington, Wedgwood Museum, Mr DS Thornton, Art Librarian, City Art Gallery, Leeds, Mr Christopher Gilbert, Temple Newsam House, Leeds, Mr RG Hughes, Derby Museum, Mr Alan Smith, Liverpool City Museum, visited by Circ's Betty Elzea. Betty Elzea, email to Joanna Weddell, 21 August 2014.

⁷⁰³ P.F. (Peter Floud), Report of a Visit, October 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA.

own travelling loans, for example: 'the upstairs landing, which would in fact make quite a good place for displaying one of our four-case exhibitions'.⁷⁰⁴ Circ's emphasis on showing both fine art and design perhaps explains Floud's perplexity at the fact that '6 large galleries were not in use and were used for either hanging or storing the 2nd John Moores' Exhibition'. Floud continued: 'Scrutton admitted that these 6 rooms contained very few interesting pictures in the normal course of events, thus emphasising the fantastic anomaly of large empty galleries here, while the Museum down the road is too full up to show any of its superb collection of ivories or a single piece of Liverpool pottery'. These Circ reports serve to highlight the breadth of expertise of V&A staff, offering authoritative judgements on an 'exceptionally interesting Hogarth' to 'a remarkable early de Stael' – as well as the much-missed Liverpool pottery. The Circ attitude seems to be one of critical and objective detachment, uninvolved in the miscellaneous difficulties of regional museum administration.

Floud's post-war activities were concerned to promote better teaching in museums; in Floud's view 'all museums can be of use to intelligent teachers'.⁷⁰⁵ Liverpool had a forward-looking education programme with a full-time schools' officer from 1957; Floud had high expectations and was unimpressed:

Somewhere in the building is a schools service room run by Miss Donaldson, full-time, but her activities seem to be limited to lecturing and gallery tours. No sketching by children is allowed as the Art School claims this would involve untrained staff in teaching drawing!⁷⁰⁶

Following extensive bomb damage during WWII, the City Museum, Liverpool, had to fight for reconstruction with their collections remaining in storage. The Museum re-opened a small section in 1956, the Lower Horseshoe Gallery.⁷⁰⁷ During this period Floud visited to compile a report on conditions:

⁷⁰⁴ B.M. (Barbara Morris), Report of Visit, November 1959, Walker Art Gallery, 12 November 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷⁰⁵ Floud, 'Commentary on a Projected International Circulating Exhibition'.

⁷⁰⁶ P.F. (Peter Floud), Report of a Visit, October 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA. Floud, Chair, Children's Section, International Council of Museums, 1950-3; Chair, Museums Educational Activities Committee conference, *Techniques of Teaching in Museums*, V&A, March 1952. Floud, 'Changing Fashions in Museum Teaching'.

⁷⁰⁷ First re-construction phase opened 1966, completed, 1970. (John) Harry Iliffe, Director 1948-March 1959; Elaine Tankard, Keeper of Archaeology and Ceramics, 1930-1966, Acting Director,

During the interregnum before Hume of Aylesbury takes up duty as Director, it seemed best not to make an official visit. The display in the temporary “Horseshoe Gallery” is a disgrace and looks more like an oriental bazaar than any museum I have ever seen in the world. It includes in complete confusion, ships models, stuffed birds, an exhibit on Linnaeus, a phoney Tibetan temple, the Sassoon Collection of late Chinese ivories, odds and ends from Fiji, Solomon Islands, etc. The favourite method of display is a sort of flat diorama with objects surrounding a horrible “reconstruction” of an eskimo igloo, etc.⁷⁰⁸

The displays are likely to have been created by Elaine Tankard, Keeper of Archaeology and Ceramics, with David Boston, Keeper of Ethnology.⁷⁰⁹ These curators were able and respected⁷¹⁰ drawing on material from Liverpool’s substantial ethnographic collections using innovative display techniques.⁷¹¹

This report seems particularly critical, even though there is some sensitivity to regional curatorial colleagues in that it was not made ‘an official visit’ and the report was for internal V&A use only. Floud’s criticism concerns the lack of a disciplined taxonomy with objects drawn from a wide geographic area (‘complete confusion’) as well as the method of display, being a ‘sort of’ diorama. Floud’s response would seem to be a qualitative judgement rather than simply a conservative opinion as Circ’s own display methods were innovative, with experimental open displays and display cases with backdrops, for example of Victorian trade literature behind a display of Victorian pottery (see Fig. 11).

April-December 1959; Tom (Andrew) Hume, formerly Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury, Director 1960-1971.

⁷⁰⁸ P.F. (Peter Floud), Report of a Visit, October 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷⁰⁹ David Boston, Assistant Keeper, New World Archaeology and Ethnography, British Museum, 1961; Curator then Director, Horniman Museum, 1965-1993; Vice President, Royal Anthropological Institute. ‘Boston, David M’, *Browse our Collections*, Horniman Museum & Gardens [n.d.] <<http://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections/browse-our-collections/authority/agent/identifier/agent-937>> [accessed 8 June 2015]. Emma Martin, ‘A Feminine Touch: Elaine Tankard and the Creation of National Museums Liverpool’s Tibet Collection’, *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 23 (2011), 98-114.

⁷¹⁰ *Liverpool Ivories*, 1954-55, loan exhibition, British Museum, Elaine Tankard, Department of Archaeology, Liverpool Museum with Peter Lasko, Department of British and Medieval Antiquities, British Museum; ‘Clementinus Diptych’, *World Museum*, National Museums Liverpool, n.d. <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/antiquities/ivories/item-319449.aspx>> [accessed 10 June 2015].

⁷¹¹ Millard.

In addition, Circ's own collections were also geographically diverse, with the 1955 Prospectus listing travelling shows such as *The Arts of China*, *The Arts of India* and *The Arts of Japan*, although it is notable that these are distinct collections. Circ also mixed materials, crossing South Kensington's departmental boundaries, with *Gothic Art* showing woodwork, ivory, enamels, alabaster, metalwork, earthenware and textiles.⁷¹² Photographs of Circ's *Gothic Art* exhibition, however, show that while sculpture is shown in the same case as pottery, the backdrops are plain and with a focus on the objects rather than presenting a visual context as at Liverpool, suggesting that this was a matter of curatorial 'taste'.

A later report was no more favourable, although again there was an effort to avoid embarrassing museum colleagues:

There seems nothing to add to Mr. Floud's report, except that, if anything, the display is even worse than he implies. The worst aspect is that quite a lot of time and money has been spent on producing hideous and vulgar settings for the objects. It is true that many of the objects are hardly worthy of display, but those that are (including some material excavated from Kouklia, Cyprus and some Tanagra figures) are completely ruined by the tasteless [sic] method of presentation. Like Mr. Floud, I made no attempt to see any member of staff – it would have been highly embarrassing to do so as no doubt they are quite proud of their display.⁷¹³

The City Museum's own director, Harry Iliffe acknowledged that the Lower Horseshoe Gallery was a 'token exhibition': 'This is not a museum but merely a shop window to remind the world of what the Museums have and could provide, given a modicum of effective interest and support'. The display was, however, popular with visitors as 2,896 came on the day after the public re-opening in 1956, suggesting that the Liverpool curators were in tune with their local audience and successful, despite the opinions of Circ staff.⁷¹⁴

There was also a Circ report on the then Sudley Art Gallery & Museum, described as 'well-kept', 'recently re-decorated with good quality flock and damask

⁷¹² *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1955: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1954), MA/17/3/1, V&AA.

⁷¹³ B.M. (Barbara Morris), Report of Visit, November 1959, Walker Art Gallery, 12 November 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷¹⁴ *Annual Reports to the 106th Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee*, p. 33, quoted in Millard, pp. 73/74.

wallpapers which provide a pleasant background to the paintings'.⁷¹⁵ The house was run by the Walker Art Gallery and Tankard 'put a collection of Liverpool Delft 'ship bowls' in one room, a small archaeological exhibition in a second room, and loan exhibitions from the Victoria and Albert Museum in a third room. Downstairs at Sudley, Tankard found a small room to show artefacts from Tibet'.⁷¹⁶ The Circ report is again critical, noting that there are 'two free-standing showcases with limited – and inadequately labelled – display of Liverpool pottery. Incidentally, this is the only Liverpool pottery on show in the city.' On the first floor is 'an ethnographical collection including shrunken heads (someone at Liverpool appears to have a passion for these)'. There is a favourable summary of sorts: 'In spite of the miscellaneous nature of the collections, the whole place looks pleasant and well cared for, and provides a striking contrast to the hideous and tasteless jumble of the Horseshoe Gallery in the City Museum'.⁷¹⁷

Whilst these reports were not prepared for open publication but for internal V&A use, they provide insights into the nature of Circ's curatorial standards as well as relationships with regional museums where the underlying position is one of authority, albeit with some sensitivity. The closing comments above indicate that full and detailed labels were a Circ expectation and that criticism of the city centre gallery displays was not concerned mainly with the heterogeneous nature of the objects selected – 'the miscellaneous nature' - but with 'taste' and order – 'the hideous and tasteless jumble'. Circ's criticism seems poignant given that due to wartime bombing Liverpool's collections had remained in storage and it was some triumph that after great effort the curators managed to get a few objects back on display, and then not until 1956.

In June 1958 the entrance hall of Manchester City Art Gallery's Athenaeum Annexe showed Circ's *Arts of Rome*, drawn from the collections of the British Museum, valued at £3,185, and at this time a visit was made by Floud as part of

⁷¹⁵ B.M. (Barbara Morris), Liverpool, Sudley Art Gallery and Museum, Mosley Hill Road, Liverpool, 12 September 1959, MA/14/141, Liverpool Sudley Art Gallery & Museum, V&AA.

⁷¹⁶ Millard, p. 66.

⁷¹⁷ B.M. (Barbara Morris), Liverpool, Sudley Art Gallery and Museum, Mosley Hill Road, Liverpool, 12 September 1959, MA/14/141, Liverpool Sudley Art Gallery & Museum, V&AA.

the regular series of inspection of host venues for suitability and conditions. A comparison of the Gallery's own *Annual Report* and this 1958 V&A inspection report is illuminating. The V&A memo writes that 'On the left of the central entrance hall is a large square side-lit gallery devoted to Old Manchester, which includes some surprisingly interesting Roman material', described in more general terms by the (unsurprised) Gallery as 'local finds ... covering various phases of the city's history since Roman times'.⁷¹⁸

The V&A report continues somewhat critically the 'corresponding room on the right contains the town collection of English earthenware, consisting of a carefully chosen but rather thin display'. This 'thin display', albeit 'carefully chosen', sounds substantial as according to the Gallery's listing it included 'examples of Romano-British and medieval ware; Staffordshire Slipware; Lambeth, Bristol and Liverpool Delftware; saltglaze; and Astbury, Whieldon, Ele[r]s and Wedgwood ware'.⁷¹⁹ The tone of the Circ report assumes a position of authority and judgement over the provincial gallery, albeit in an internal report that was not for publication. In contrast the *Manchester Annual Report* describes the Circ show in generous terms:

During the summer an additional attraction was a small but choice exhibition of the Arts of Ancient Rome, presented by the Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum. It contained examples of Roman decorative arts selected from the unrivalled riches of the British Museum, including stone portrait busts and other sculptures, bronze statuettes, some exceptionally distinguished and rare examples of pottery, specimens of the glass 'millefiori' technique, and a group of domestic utensils and jewellery.⁷²⁰

This report to the Art Galleries Committee, of course, aims to describe the year's activities and put them in the best possible light, given that the Committee had administrative and financial control of the Gallery. The V&A report expresses a

⁷¹⁸ P.C.F. (Peter Floud), Manchester Art Gallery, Museums & Public Library, 20 June 1958, MA/14/152, Manchester Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷¹⁹ P.C.F. (Peter Floud), Manchester Art Gallery, Museums & Public Library, 20 June 1958, MA/14/152, Manchester Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷²⁰ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1958) p. 6-7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

different viewpoint reflecting its aim to secure the most appropriate venues in order to widen access to Circ shows:

At the time I was there, our 'Arts of Rome' was occupying the entrance hall. It looked very well, but rather crowded in comparison with the galleries on either side. I presume that the entrance hall is usually empty. There is no natural lighting here but each of our cases had been rigged up with a metal tungsten shade immediately above. I had the rare sight of a visitor carefully reading the descriptive note, but he was the only visitor at the time. A large specially-printed poster was outside the entrance, but clearly not many people came into the building and Cleveland [then Director] admitted as much. For this reason, it is not a good showing place, but we should not resist showing here. In this instance, the idea was to link up with the Roman objects in the Old Manchester room.⁷²¹

Circ's delight in the 'rare sight' of a provincial visitor assiduously reading the display text on the lectern is balanced by practical concerns over the overcrowding of the display, its lack of natural light and small audience. These drawbacks are mitigated by the regional Gallery's efforts to relate the British Museum objects to local ones, to provide artificial lighting and to publicise the show. The conclusion is, happily, to 'not resist showing here'.

Platt Hall, Rusholme, became a Manchester branch gallery in 1927 and post-war became the Gallery of English Costume after the purchase of Dr CW Cunnington's Collection in 1947 – 'one of the most representative in the country'.⁷²² This was the first dedicated museum of dress history in the UK and the curator Anne Buck was a pioneer in methods of conservation, display and educational use of costume, for example in 1958 installing ventilation equipment studied by other galleries.⁷²³ Floud's 1958 report on Platt Hall records approvingly: 'A good 18th century house in a park fairly close to Manchester. It is used entirely as a costume museum, which is excellently arranged and well-run (by Miss Ann Buck). There is no probability of travelling exhibitions being installed here.'⁷²⁴ These comments seem

⁷²¹ P.C.F. (Peter Floud), Manchester Art Gallery, Museums & Public Library, 20 June 1958, MA/14/152, Manchester Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷²² *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1961* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1961), p. 12, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁷²³ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1958), p. 8, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁷²⁴ P.C.F. (Peter Floud), Manchester Art Gallery, Museums & Public Library, 20 June 1958, MA/14/152 Circ Inspection Files, Manchester Art Gallery, V&AA.

to indicate that with a good regional curator Circ's services would not be required. There was a collaboration for the 1961 summer exhibition *Fashions of Childhood* which used not only the permanent collection but loans from the V&A, the London Museum and Leeds Art Gallery.⁷²⁵

Floud's criticisms of regional museums in these internal reports sound harsh but are comparable to his frank account of Castell Coch, where though Burges' is an 'eccentric genius' with a 'quite uninhibited delight in the more picturesque aspects of medievalism', Floud unflinchingly describes the courtyard as 'unreal and cardboardy', 'too cosy and too tidy' and the 'exotic theatricality' of the Lady's Bedroom as 'not very different from the 'Palace of the Saracen Princess' in an old Lyceum pantomime'.⁷²⁶ In the 1952 exhibition *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* included 17 objects by Burges.⁷²⁷ An optimistic conclusion perhaps is that, for Floud, an awareness of faults did not necessarily suggest a lack of respect.

Comparison: Arts Council of Great Britain

In 1959 Hugh Wakefield, then Assistant Keeper of Circ contributed to a Museums Association Handbook on *Circulating Exhibitions*; Gabriel White of the Arts Council also authored a section and these demonstrate some differences in approach to the service provided to regional museums and galleries. Circ would 'lend its exhibitions to any institution or organization in Great Britain or Northern Ireland which is prepared to show them freely to the public and which can offer sufficient security, professional experience and facilities for display'.⁷²⁸ The 'essential condition under which Arts Council exhibitions are lent is that they must be open to the public'; the key distinction here is the word 'freely' – Arts Council exhibitions could have an admission charge indeed 'a gallery may be asked to impose an admission charge to the exhibition, which the Council takes in lieu of a fee'.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁵ Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 134-137.

⁷²⁶ Floud, *Castell Coch*.

⁷²⁷ Floud, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts*, pp. 53-55.

⁷²⁸ Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, pp. 7-17.

⁷²⁹ Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, pp. 18-23.

Circ's activity was funded by 'a national charge borne by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Works' with the borrower only 'paying for part of the cost of transport, in the form of a "transport charge", and of paying for the whole cost of insurance'. These transport charges varied from £2 10 shillings to a maximum of £10 and were 'constant for all borrowers irrespective of their geographical position' so that distance from London made no difference.⁷³⁰ This system provided a cost-effective service, for example, in 1959 Manchester City Art Gallery showed Circ's *Durer and his Contemporaries*, formed from British Museum loans valued at £6,784 for which the transport charge was £6 17 shillings.⁷³¹ The Arts Council system was not to charge for transport or insurance – again giving equality to all venues – but to make a 'nominal' booking fee, from 5 to 60 shillings a day. Continuing the theme of free admission to Circ shows was the structure of the display and display text:

As a matter of principle all of the Department's exhibitions are designed so that they can be fully appreciated by the public without the necessity of having to buy catalogues. For this reason all of the individual objects are fully labelled, and most of the exhibitions are accompanied by a descriptive note on the subject mounted on a lectern.⁷³²

Notable new shows in 1959 covered both historic and contemporary art and design, including *William Morris*, *British Studio Pottery*, *Two Thousand Years of Silk*, with book illustration, lithography, prints, Dresden china and English pottery.⁷³³ Not many Circ shows had a catalogue and regional galleries were provided with a cost-effective alternative:

Of the present list of sixty-one exhibitions, three have catalogues at prices varying from 3d. to 1s., two have picture-books at 1s.6d. and 2s., and one has a booklet at 1s. For those borrowers who wish to produce their own catalogue for an exhibition the Department is willing at any time to provide a copy of the descriptive note and of the detailed list of objects which will respectively provide copy for a catalogue introduction and text.⁷³⁴

⁷³⁰ Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, pp. 7-17.

⁷³¹ 'Temporary Exhibitions', *The Museums Journal*, 59.1 (1959), 25, Manchester City Art Gallery, *Durer and his Contemporaries*, 1 April to 22 May 1959. *Durer and his Contemporaries*, Circ Handlist with valuations, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester. GD Harling, Circ, letter to SD Cleveland, Director, Manchester City Art Gallery, 2 July 1959, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁷³² Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, pp.7-17.

⁷³³ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1959: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1958) p. 1, MA/17/4/1, V&AA.

⁷³⁴ Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, pp. 7-17.

A slightly different approach prevailed at the Arts Council, where loan exhibitions were the norm and lenders often expected a catalogue to be produced as evidence of the value (literal or metaphorical) of their collections. Here the emphasis was on encouraging the sale of catalogues to regional audiences rather than designing out the need for them in the interests of access for all:

The borrowing gallery is particularly requested to see that exhibition catalogues are available on sale to the public. It is appreciated that local arrangements are dependent on the size of the gallery staff. The number of catalogues sold varies greatly from gallery to gallery, and it is felt that improvement in facilities should still be possible in some places. Catalogues are sold by the Arts Council at cost price, or at a very small profit. It is the policy of the Arts Council to make them as cheap as possible, but when a fully informative text with illustrations is regarded as essential to the enjoyment of the exhibitions, a relatively expensive catalogue may be necessary.⁷³⁵

The Appeal of the Prêt-à-Porter Exhibition

Circ shows had the advantage of being completely prepared as novelty attractions for provincial audiences; problematically, the presence and availability of such exhibitions might have prevented the development of regional curators' skills and knowledge of their own collections. In 1973 Manchester showed the V&A's *Indian Sculpture*, opened by Director Pope-Hennessy and drawn from the permanent India collections rather than from Circ. The exhibition was an 'admirable introduction to the study of the rich and complex field of Indian art' attracting over 15,000 visitors but not all curators were impressed.⁷³⁶ A former member of staff at Manchester City Art Gallery, Julian Treuherz, commented 'It was a rather distinguished exhibition with important pieces in it, and was regarded as a great coup for Manchester, although to me..., it didn't seem to bear much relationship to the collections, nor to the expertise of the staff.'⁷³⁷

⁷³⁵ Wakefield and White, *Circulating Exhibitions*, 18-23.

⁷³⁶ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, VX.1972.XXX.002 *Indian Sculpture*, 4 December–30 January 1973, Manchester City Art Gallery.

⁷³⁷ Julian Treuherz (b.1947), email to Joanna Weddell, 29 October 2012. Treuherz, trainee at Manchester City Art Gallery 1971, Assistant Keeper of Fine Art, 1972, Keeper of Fine Art, 1974.

Treuherz recalled that during the period 1971-74 Circ exhibitions were booked by the Director, Loraine Conran, and his wife, Elizabeth Conran, then Keeper of Paintings.⁷³⁸ Due to the small number of staff 'there were not many options for a changing programme, and certainly at the branches the V&A Circ shows were virtually the only means of having a programme'.

My recollection is that the small exhibitions booked for the 'branch' museums Wythenshawe Hall (and possibly also the Fletcher Moss Art Gallery) were fillers or so it seemed to me: I had the distinct feeling that it was a kind of automatic process, the booklet came round, the Keeper and Director made a selection, the shows went up, and they went down at the end of the period but I don't think any activity was arranged around them, (maybe one gallery talk) nor were the subjects chosen for any relevance to the particular venue. I probably had to arrange some of them for hanging, but it all seemed rather perfunctory.⁷³⁹

This commentator specifically noted that the 'big points in favour of the Circ shows ... were that they were very inexpensive and the standard types of show were simple to mount'. Regional curators were not encouraged to contribute or add to Circ displays, although they could ask permission to do so, and this did lead to a 'stand-alone' status and lack of integration with provincial collections – arguably for many curators this was the main attraction of the V&A service. This alternative view of Circ's activities highlights the lack of staff time for research in regional galleries:

Exhibition policy, if you can call it that, was somewhat haphazard in those days. There was no separate staff to organise exhibitions so one just did what was possible. Every few years Manchester had previously had a record of mounting a big, unique, fully researched show of its own (at the City Art Gallery), but these seemed to have come to an end by the time I got there [early 1970s]⁷⁴⁰

Treuherz did value other travelling exhibitions such as those 'from cultural departments of various national embassies and from the Arts Council' particularly the 'occasional really major shows' that 'certainly had a big impact'. Treuherz acknowledged that 'there was a great deal of lamentation when the Circ dept was closed' and that 'in some kinds of venue the V&A exhibitions did make sense' but

⁷³⁸ Elizabeth Conran, Curator, Bowes Museum, 1979-2001.

⁷³⁹ Treuherz, email to Weddell, 29 October 2012.

⁷⁴⁰ Treuherz, email to Weddell, 29 October 2012.

felt that 'I wanted to organise my own programme of exhibitions, rather than choose them ready-made out of a catalogue' – one size did not fit all.⁷⁴¹ This assessment of Circ's impact from a regional curator presents a contrast to the oral testimonies of Circ staff which could be read as more 'artificial, variable, and partial'.⁷⁴² Treuherz recalls an early, junior, stage in his career before increased professionalization - 'those early days' – and before he was in a position to organise his 'own programme of exhibitions', as he was later able to do at the Walker Art Gallery. Nevertheless, Treuherz' account of events from a position within his own personal narrative shows that it is possible for sources to make distinctions between past and present self, as Portelli notes. During the early 1970s from this account Circ seems to have had little impact and the V&A service could be said to have a negative result for regional curators if not for all audiences.

At Dundee City Art Gallery Elizabeth Cumming, the Keeper and Assistant Keeper of Art selected around six exhibitions a year from Circ's prospectus and had a more positive recollection of the impact of the shows:

These exhibitions were considered highly prestigious and formed much of the backbone of our programme. Our application was sent in during the preceding year and we shaped the rest of our shows around what we were granted. The exhibitions in part put our own collections in focus but others were quite independent.⁷⁴³

Again, however, the importance of these exhibitions was their ready-made format as the 'show arrived crated and was installed only by our own technicians, using, where applicable, our own display cases. All such details had been worked out well in advance'. And again, the other attraction was the low cost as these 'exhibitions were incredibly good value with rentals of only something like £75-£125, some a little more' so that they 'really stretched our tiny annual exhibition budgets'. Circ's exhibitions 'were so important for our community and were much missed after 1977'.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴¹ Treuherz, email to Weddell, 29 October 2012.

⁷⁴² Portelli, p. 70.

⁷⁴³ Cumming, email to Weddell, 16 January 2013.

⁷⁴⁴ Cumming, email to Weddell, 16 January 2013.

Independent Temporary Exhibitions

To balance this examination of the value and impact of the regional activities of Circ during the post-war period, there is considerable evidence of provincial galleries independently running lively and innovative programmes, either with self-generated shows or using a range of other sources of travelling or temporary exhibitions, as previously outlined. The greater numbers and increasing professionalism of regional curators at this time is likely to have contributed to this positive cultural landscape.⁷⁴⁵

John Morley was Director of Brighton Museum and Art Gallery from 1968-85 then moving to the V&A as Keeper of Furniture and Interior Decoration, 1985-89. From 1968 Morley rejuvenated the buildings and collections, working with the Brighton painter, Martin Battersby to collect 20th century decorative art, making significant Art Nouveau and Art Deco acquisitions. The development of Brighton International Festival from 1965 led by Ian Hunter provided the impetus for a series of innovative and lively temporary exhibitions that were both theatrical and controversial. In 1969 *The Jazz Age* used stage-like displays accompanied by music from the period. In 1970 the theme was *Death, Heaven and the Victorians*, with a pianola playing 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'. As a contemporary reviewer wrote, Morley and Battersby 'refuse to accept the word "exhibition" with its less-than-swinging connotations and prefer to call the show a "visual entertainment"'. Artists, musicians, furniture and dress designers will combine to create the required atmosphere of gaiety and "style" and this will even be helped along by a period cocktail bar.'⁷⁴⁶

In 1971 the *Follies and Fantasies* exhibition celebrated the 150th anniversary of the coronation of George IV with displays of decorative art from the Regency to the contemporary in homage to the King's exotic taste. Curated by Morley, with Norman Rosenthal, Exhibitions Officer 1970-74, and designed by Battersby, unconventional juxtapositions included the Kylin Clock from the Royal Collection

⁷⁴⁵ Wilkinson, p. 14, p. 91, p. 94, p. 95, p. 219.

⁷⁴⁶ Sean Day-Lewis, 'Brighton's Festival Will Include All The Arts', *The Montreal Gazette*, 11 April 1969, Brighton Local History Centre, Brighton.

loaned by HM the Queen, and the Mae West sofa loaned by the Edward James Foundation. International loans included the original Crace designs for the Royal Pavilion loaned by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York and in total there were 623 exhibits and 188 lenders with these significant and major shows attracting national and international press coverage.⁷⁴⁷ It is clear that during this period Brighton Museum and Art Gallery flourished independently of Circ shows, with the two institutions creating exhibitions comparable in subject matter and innovative display.

The National Museum of Wales also generated its own travelling exhibitions as part of its Schools Service, for example the 1972 *Early Christian Monuments of Wales*, 15 full-size replicas in glass-reinforced plastic, originally produced with the Welsh Arts Council in 1971 as part of the Royal National Eisteddfod. This activity recalls the earlier project of the V&A to circulate casts and electrotypes to art schools around the country, here with modern techniques and an emphasis on promoting the national.⁷⁴⁸ In addition, in 1963 the National Museum of Wales Museums Schools Service was illustrated in a UNESCO survey of travelling exhibitions to which Circ also contributed, suggesting parity.⁷⁴⁹ Regional in-house exhibitions could also have wider ambitions, comparable to Circ's, showing that curatorial innovation was by no means restricted to South Kensington.

In 1961 the National Museum's own Department of Art showed an exhibition of *Artist Potters* at Turner House which featured the work of Dan Arbeid, Alan Caiger-Smith, Lucie Rie and James Tower – all studio potters collected by Circ in the 1950s.⁷⁵⁰ The *Western Mail* reviewed the exhibition of studio pottery, commenting

⁷⁴⁷ John Higgins, 'Edwardian Merriment', *The Times*, 7 May 1970, p. 16, *The Times Digital Archive*. Philip Howard, 'Brighton's Exotic Festival Fit for Discoverer-king', *The Times*, 7 May 1971, p. 5, *The Times Digital Archive*. Bevis Hillier, 'A Collector of Follies and Fantasies', *The Times*, 15 May 1971, p. 20, *The Times Digital Archive*. <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/times.aspx/>> [accessed 1 November 2012].

⁷⁴⁸ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Wales*, 11 (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1972), p. 39, Department of Art Files, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. Sally M. Foster, 'Circulating Agency: The V&A, Scotland and the Multiplication of Celtic Crosses', *Journal of the History of Collections* 27.1 (2015), 73-96.

⁷⁴⁹ Osborn, 'Travelling Exhibitions', V&A, images 44 a-e, Cardiff, images 32 a-c.

⁷⁵⁰ *Annual Report. National Museum of Wales 1960-61* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1961), p. 14, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales. Comparable Circ acquisitions: Alan Caiger-Smith, CIRC.59-1959; Dan Arbeid, CIRC.157-1959; Lucie Rie, CIRC.20&A-1952; James

that previously 'very little of this work has been seen in South Wales'. The article eloquently praises Rie's work for 'a certain timeless quality. Beautifully shaped and balanced it is an art which combines delicacy with an assured firmness'.⁷⁵¹ In range and quality this exhibition is comparable to and pre-dates the later Circ show *Five Studio Potters*, 1969, which showed the work of Dan Arbed, Alan Caiger-Smith, Anthony Hepburn, Gillian Lowndes, and Lucie Rie.⁷⁵² It would seem that whilst earlier Circ acquisitions may have increased the profile and standing of these *Artist Potters*, the initiative to feature them in a group show was Cardiff's own. The innovative display was on open stands and later travelled to Swansea, showing that in Wales the National Museum acted in much the same way as Circ in its dissemination of design.⁷⁵³

There was also a new type of display at the National Museum of Wales, *Personal View – The Craftsman Cometh*. In February 1970 the 'idea of a permanent exhibition devoted to the work of modern artist-craftsmen was mooted' and this 'new development', 'unique in such an institution as this' was created in 1973.⁷⁵⁴ Three linked cases showed the work of three or four craftsmen with one changed at the start of each month; eighteen individuals had exhibited up to Spring 1975. Illustrated in the Museum's Bulletin is the work of John Makepeace and Peter Collingwood, makers collected and/or exhibited by Circ at this date, as well as Wendy Ramshaw.⁷⁵⁵

Tower, CIRC.7-1958. Circ toured *Contemporary Studio Pottery*, 1959 but this comprised 'Photographs of recent work by British and continental studio potters'; *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: School Loans 1959-60*: (London: HMSO, 1959), p.14, MA/17/1/5, V&AA.

⁷⁵¹ Geoffrey Watkins, 'Potters Who Please', *Western Mail*, 21 January 1961, Press Cuttings, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales.

⁷⁵² *Loan Collections 1968-70: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1968), p. 1, *Five Studio Potters*.

⁷⁵³ *Annual Report: National Museum of Wales 1960-61*, p. 45.

⁷⁵⁴ Alun Williams, Officer in Art, Schools Service, 'Personal View – The Craftsman Cometh', *Bulletin of the National Museum of Wales*, 19 (1975), pp. 35-36, Department of Art Files, National Museum Wales.

⁷⁵⁵ John Makepeace, *Five Craftsmen*, *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Travelling Exhibitions 1971-72* (London: HMSO, 1970), p. 14, MA/17, V&AA. Peter Collingwood, *Handmade Furniture* organised by the Rural Industries Bureau, 1950 and *Weaving for Walls*, in *National Museum Loan Service: Circulation Department, Victoria & Albert Museum: Exhibitions 1966-67, Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1965), p.6, MA/17, V&AA.

That the Cardiff article states that ‘the exhibits should be the best available at any one time is the sole criterion’ communicates the ambition of this exhibition series which can be seen as running in parallel with Circ shows such as *Collingwood Coper*, 1969, and *Flockinger Herman*, 1971.⁷⁵⁶ At Cardiff, however, *The Craftsman Cometh* developed as an integral part of the curatorial programme, in contrast to the lesser status of the temporary Circ exhibitions shown at South Kensington (Coper’s work was not formally acquired by V&A Ceramics until a 1996 gift). In 1973 South Kensington also held a comparable exhibition, *The Craftsman’s Art* which, while partly selected by Wakefield as Keeper of Circ, was organised by the Crafts Advisory Committee rather than by V&A Keepers, perhaps indicating the conservatism of the main Museum departments at this date and contradicting the stereotype of London as avant-garde.⁷⁵⁷

At the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, temporary ‘ready-made, free or low-cost exhibitions’ were bought in ‘from a very wide range of organisations’ as ‘More exhibitions usually led to more visitors’ and this stretched the budget. Morris and Stevens note that the ‘principal national provider of exhibitions for the Gallery after 1951 was the Arts Council’.⁷⁵⁸ In contrast to the contribution made by the Arts Council’s touring exhibitions, other commentators such as Read have drawn attention to the ‘only fairly modest support for their own exhibitions’ received by museums like the Walker.⁷⁵⁹ For Morris and Stevens the temporary programme was ‘primarily concerned with the wider world of art outside Merseyside’ but ‘has not ignored local culture’.⁷⁶⁰ To demonstrate the wide variety of sources and subjects of loan shows, for example:

- On architecture: *Modern Swedish Architecture* from the National Association of Swedish Architects 1952, *Venetian Villas* from the Royal Institute of British Architects, 1954,

⁷⁵⁶ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, VX.1969.001, *Collingwood Coper*, VX.1971.003 *Flockinger Herman*.

⁷⁵⁷ *The Craftsman’s Art*, 15 March-13 May 1973, organised by the Crafts Advisory Committee, including Hugh Wakefield, with Lucie Rie ceramics and John Makepeace furniture, James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum*, VX.1973.009. Hans Coper, washbasin and pedestal, C.15:1-1996.

⁷⁵⁸ Morris and Stevens, p. 203.

⁷⁵⁹ Donald Read, *The English Provinces c1760-1960: A Study in Influence* (London: St Martin’s Press, 1964), p. 95.

⁷⁶⁰ Morris and Stevens, p. 203.

- On fine art: *Goya* from the Arts Council, 1954, *Bernardo Bellotto 1720-1780* from the National Museum of Warsaw, 1957; *The Heywood-Lonsdale Loan*, 1959, major old masters from a local family; *French Paintings from The Samuels Collection*, 1961, a local private collection; *German Expressionist Prints* from the German Arts Council, 1963
- On contemporary art: the snappily titled *A selection from the Oil Paintings Part I* from the Arts Council, 1955, by living British artists; *Alan Davie in retrospect* from Wakefield City Art Gallery 1958; *Modern Colour Lithographs* from the Redfern Gallery, London, 1957, a selling exhibition; *Recent Australian Painting*, Arts Council, 1962
- On decorative art: *Soviet Graphic Art* from the USSR Union of Artists; *Modern Stained Glass* from the Arts Council, 1960-61.⁷⁶¹

The Walker Art Gallery had a major collection of works by sculptor Alfred Stevens, acquired from 1939 and given a dedicated gallery in 1951, showing an early taste for Victorian art, though this may follow the lead of the Tate and V&A.⁷⁶² Stevens' work was shown at the Tate in 1950 and then at the Walker, and three Liverpool works were loaned to the Circ's *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* show at South Kensington in 1952.⁷⁶³ In 1959 Circ's specialism in Victorian art and design was echoed at the Walker where 'One whole gallery is filled with 19th century favourites' however Floud noted that 'None of the Alfred Stevens material is now on show'.⁷⁶⁴ A Circ report just a month later, however, found that: 'The Alfred Stevens collection – two mirrors and a large number of drawings and sketches – is now displayed (temporarily) in the Lecture Theatre to provide a background to the series of lectures on the Victorian Decorative Arts being held by the University of Liverpool Extra-Mural Studies Department', suggesting that in Liverpool Victorian design was appreciated, if not at this point by the curators.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶¹ Catalogues, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁷⁶² Morris and Stevens, p. 77.

⁷⁶³ Kenneth Romney Towndrow, *The Works of Alfred Stevens at the Tate Gallery* (London: Trustees of the Tate Gallery, 1950), *Alfred Stevens* (Liverpool, University Press of Liverpool, 1951). Floud, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts*, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁶⁴ PF [Peter Floud], Report of a Visit, October 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA.

⁷⁶⁵ BM [Barbara Morris], Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, Report of Visit, 12 November 1959, MA/14/140, Liverpool Museum & Art Gallery, V&AA.

On this evidence it would seem that the Walker Art Gallery was not dependent on Circ to any great extent. Whilst at the V&A in the post-war period it was left to Circ to continue the collecting of contemporary decorative art, regional galleries could have advantages when it came to organising shows of modern design. At the port of Liverpool the presence of consulates 'anxious to promote their national culture' provided unique contacts for the Walker Art Gallery which in 1956, together with the Italian Consul, organised the 1956 exhibition *Modern Italian Design*, with an illustrated 49-page catalogue.⁷⁶⁶ The *Liverpool Daily Post* emphasised many 'exhibits are making their first appearance in this country' – so not at all behind South Kensington – and noted that over 20,000 people visited the show, 'double the normal attendance at the gallery'.⁷⁶⁷

Modern Italian Design bears comparison with Circ initiatives from this period, such as shows of European contemporary tableware from 1952 and European contemporary fabrics from 1956, although due to size, Circ furniture shows were unusual. Like many Circ shows, *Modern Italian Design* exhibits were 'in fact designed for the most part for every day use in private houses or in public buildings' in addition the 'scope of the Exhibition is unusually wide, [with] ... specimens of furniture, ceramics, textiles and printed fabrics, glass and metal work, ... remarkable both for their originality of design and varied nature'.⁷⁶⁸ Here Liverpool is accessing modern up-to-date design without any need to defer to metropolitan tastes. On show was furniture by Angelo De Baggis, who went on to found the Milan Furniture Fair in 1961, together with early works by Renata Bonfanti and Paolo De Poli.

The show was well received by visitors and enthusiastically reviewed in the local press with generous illustrations of early work by Alessio Tasca and glass by the famous Murano company of Barovier & Toso, in a feature provocatively titled "This

⁷⁶⁶ Morris and Stevens, p. 203. *Modern Italian Design*, Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana in association with The Walker Art Gallery, 1-29 September 1956, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁷⁶⁷ 'Live Art You Can Live With', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 6 September 1956, [no title], *Liverpool Daily Post*, 28 September 1956, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁷⁶⁸ J. Johnstone, Chair, Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee, 'Foreword', *Modern Italian Design* (Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery, 1956), p. 2.

Art is Living – Not Just Academic”, a sentiment that Circ staff echoed in their approach to contemporary collecting.⁷⁶⁹ Local coverage noted that the ‘exhibition is representative of items used every day in private houses’ continuing for ‘many people this will be an unique opportunity to see glass and furniture that is displayed for sale in many Italian shops’.⁷⁷⁰ Loyalloy, the *Liverpool Daily Post* felt that ‘the fabric design does not compete with the best of Lancashire products [but] it is at least a challenge’.⁷⁷¹

Modern Italian Design is comparable to Circ’s exhibition series of national contemporary design – high quality objects of everyday use, immediately comprehensible to the wider public and not usually seen in the UK or widely available. In the UK in the post-war period international contemporary design was hard to access; travel was more difficult and expensive and imports were restricted as reconstruction took place. In 1952, for example, Circ mounted the *Tablewares of Today* show of European and American ‘industrial pottery’: ‘Nearly all of this will be new to the public since most of the best British wares are for ‘export only’ and most of the foreign wares cannot normally be imported into this country’.⁷⁷² It is in this context that the *Daily Post* could write of the Liverpool exhibition’s ‘rejuvenating effects’ – the pleasures of possession and acquisition were a goal and aspiration rather than an immediate reality.⁷⁷³

A crucial difference to highlight is that the Liverpool show was created by an Italian craft organisation and the Consulate with the aim of promoting exports of Italian products. V&A shows were selected by Circ staff with the agenda of disseminating ‘good’ design, educating the public and improving the standard of British designed objects for export, much as Cole had originally proposed. The 1956 Circ prospectus emphasised that for a series of contemporary furnishing fabrics the

⁷⁶⁹ ‘This Art is Living – Not Just Academic’, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 6 September 1956, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁷⁷⁰ ‘The Critic Says ... Italian Craftsmanship’, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 13 September 1956, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive, Liverpool.

⁷⁷¹ ‘The Critic Says ... Italian Craftsmanship’.

⁷⁷² *Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1952* (London: HMSO, 1951), p. 10, MA/17/2/3, V&AA.

⁷⁷³ [no title], *Liverpool Daily Post*, 28 September 1956, Press Cuttings, Walker Art Gallery Archive.

'textiles have all been chosen by the Department and collected directly from manufacturers in the various countries'. The series was motivated 'with the intention of representing the most significant work being produced at the present time' and, with a now familiar appeal, 'very few of the fabrics will have been seen before in this country'.⁷⁷⁴ Again, in 1957 Circ prepared travelling shows of national contemporary ceramic tableware and prints. The tableware examples 'have all been chosen by this Department ... to concentrate upon the most interesting of the industrial wares which have been recently designed in a modern spirit'.⁷⁷⁵

However, Circ is careful to distinguish the selection of the prints where the 'choice of the material has in both cases been made by the Department, but in the case of 'P18' with the assistance of the Norwegian Embassy in London', suggesting a degree of transparency and acknowledgement of separate agendas here.⁷⁷⁶

Manchester was notable during the post-war period in its promotion of an Art Gallery Schools Service, a collaboration between the Art Galleries and Education Committees. On the first floor of the Athenaeum Annexe were 'well-equipped' rooms and 'specially qualified and devoted teachers' giving lessons in art appreciation and art history. 'Classes are also frequently taken to see the permanent displays and temporary exhibitions at Manchester City Art Gallery and its several branches' evoking 'an encouraging response'. Saturday morning sessions were also 'enthusiastically supported'.⁷⁷⁷ These children can be said to have 'received the instruments which imply familiarity with art ... from their schooling' and rather than being offered only 'the *pure possibility* of taking advantage of the works on display in museums' had 'the *real possibility* of doing so' and would not as adults 'feel out of place and always feel disoriented because

⁷⁷⁴ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 16, MA/17, V&AA, contemporary fabrics from America, Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, Switzerland and France.

⁷⁷⁵ *Modern Tablewares From Germany, Holland, Italy, and Scandinavia* in *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 4, MA/17, V&AA.

⁷⁷⁶ *Contemporary Norwegian Prints* in *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 19, MA/17, V&AA.

⁷⁷⁷ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1958) p. 7, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

they are not well prepared to confront the works on display'.⁷⁷⁸ Circ's activities were connected to such educational initiatives.

Floud, was Chair of the International Council of Museums, International Subject Committee on Children's Activities in Museums, when he spoke at the Museums Association conference in Oxford in 1952, noting the professionalization of teaching in museums since the war and making an appeal against the segregation of children from museum galleries. Floud discussed a meeting of the Museums Educational Activities Group in March 1952 where the representative of the 'go-ahead' Manchester Education Authority was 'astonished' that there were objections to the introduction of museum classrooms (as at the Athenaeum Annexe). Floud criticised 'the appointment of a full-time teacher, the equipment of a classroom, and the institution of automatic lessons as part of the curriculum – without ... the end result to which they ultimately lead ever being really considered'. For Floud rather than being 'progressive and up to date' these developments 'can hardly avoid squeezing out almost all that is vital in museum education, till a visit to the museum becomes ... routine and uninspired'.⁷⁷⁹

Floud believed that streamlining museum education separate from the gallery's objects was 'a travesty of everything that I had always hoped that museum education should stand for. ... it reduces museums to the level of minor teaching aids to school teachers, and completely obscures the fact that they should have, and often do have, an indispensable role in the pattern of civilized li[v]ing'.⁷⁸⁰ Further, 'one of the main tasks should be to awaken in at least a few of the children a sense of wonder and excitement' and this 'can only be stimulated if the children are free to exercise some personal initiative as to what they see, and can have a sense of doing a little personal exploring'. Children used to visiting museums as part of their schooling would have an above average 'cultural level' (anticipating 'cultural capital') and so appreciate objects which have their own 'intrinsic beauty or aesthetic interest'.⁷⁸¹ Floud's emphasis here seems to be on

⁷⁷⁸ Bourdieu and Darbel with Schnapper, p. 44, p. 37, p. 93, p. 94.

⁷⁷⁹ Floud, 'Changing Fashions in Museum Teaching', p. 219.

⁷⁸⁰ Floud, 'Changing Fashions in Museum Teaching', p. 218.

⁷⁸¹ Floud, 'Changing Fashions in Museum Teaching', pp. 216-217.

encouraging or nurturing an individual's curiosity in searching out knowledge; beautiful objects awaken a (previously dormant) wonder and access to such civilised aesthetic culture is a result of the citizen's active choice rather than passive acceptance of didactic instruction.

Floud picked out Manchester's reaction of surprise, even if highlighting it as a progressive institution, so perhaps the emphasis in the later Annual Report on school visits to the Athenaeum Annexe being accompanied with tours of the Gallery is a response to this criticism. The 1957 Manchester Report stated that 'for those at a distance from the galleries, talks and demonstrations on the art collections of the city were provided in the actual school buildings' but the 1961 Report mentions frequent visits by 'children to the City Art Gallery, the Gallery of English Costume, Heaton Hall and Wythenshawe Hall'.⁷⁸² In 1961 Manchester hosted the Museums Association conference of the Group for Children's Activities in Museums, with the Gallery's Director giving an address, suggesting a leading role in such activities.⁷⁸³

Under Conran from 1962, Manchester City Art Gallery contributed to a new North Western Museum and Art Gallery Service 'whose object is to co-ordinate and improve the museums and art galleries of the area'. Manchester was appointed the art centre of the north west and provided four travelling exhibitions 'for the smaller galleries of the region' in 1962.⁷⁸⁴ This initiative allowed regional galleries to build on their particular strengths and expertise and to maximise the impact of exhibition research and preparation within the provinces.

⁷⁸² *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1957* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1957), p. 6, *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1961* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1961), p. 6, Manchester City Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁷⁸³ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1961* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1961), p. 13, Manchester City Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁷⁸⁴ *Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1962-64* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1964), p. 5, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

Closure of Circulation

In 1977 the strong reaction from the regions to news of Circ's proposed closure revealed both the value of touring exhibitions and divisions between the regions and the centre. The Member of Parliament for Leeds South-East, said 'This is another instance of the neglect of the provinces, and it fails to recognise the cultural needs and desires of the people who live outside the South East of England' while the national press commented 'Do the elitists in London truly believe that nothing matters north of Watford?'.⁷⁸⁵ So what was the impact of the closure of Circ in the regions? The example of Liverpool is instructive.

In spite of the lack of evidence within the Walker Art Gallery archives, an absence which implies a lack of impact by Circ in Liverpool, closure of the service was 'much to the Gallery's regret'.⁷⁸⁶ While there was a general outcry at closure, Merseyside County Council as the funding body for the Walker was 'prepared to lead a provincial revolt against the London art establishment' including a withdrawal of 'cooperations with all London-based arts and museum organisations and the Arts Council'. Roy Strong was quoted as responding in a somewhat haughty tone: 'Who will be the loser from that? This museum has given 130 years of service to the regions, I find it a very strange expression of gratitude'.⁷⁸⁷ The Council's art and culture committee lobbied Parliament without success and their militant attitude was singled out for criticism. Rosenthal wrote: 'Merseyside may huff and puff about being deprived of their exhibitions from London, but what cultural facilities are they generating through their own resources?' These comments highlight Circ's possible negative effect as:

museums in cities like Birmingham and Brighton, Liverpool and Sheffield ... have come to rely most heavily on the V & A's touring shows from the department. ... Most provincial museums are so deprived of funds that the V & A shows arrive like neatly packaged manna from heaven. The museums are at least able to fill up their programme leaflets and pretend that they are fulfilling their real function of providing a varied, informed and

⁷⁸⁵ Our Political Correspondent, 'Rough Deal for the Provinces', Westminster Notebook, [n.d.], MA/19/13, Press Cuttings 1965-77, V&AA.

⁷⁸⁶ Morris and Stevens, p. 203.

⁷⁸⁷ Peter Niesewand, 'Regions versus V and A', *The Guardian*, n.d., (November 1976), MA/19/13 Press Cuttings 1965-77, V&AA.

above all enthusiastic vision of art for the public. This is of course precisely what they are not doing.⁷⁸⁸

Rosenthal's provocative opinion was that provincial museums were the reverse of what they should be, that is they were dull, ignorant and disengaged or passive. Rosenthal had worked in a regional museum, Brighton, 1970-74, staging *Follies and Fantasies* in 1971, perhaps the kind of varied, informed and enthusiastic vision he thought all regional galleries should produce.

Morris & Stevens' history of the Walker Art Gallery is particularly relevant in that they may be regarded as informed insiders, having worked at both the Walker and at the V&A.⁷⁸⁹ They note that regional art galleries 'did benefit greatly from the exhibitions, often of very high quality, circulated by the Council, by the Victoria and Albert Museum and occasionally by the other national museums.' However, again in contrast to the tale of abject loss from Merseyside County Council:

The high standards of these touring exhibitions could persuade the regional galleries to produce similar exhibitions from their own resources, although this form of state aid in kind could also have precisely the opposite effect. It could encourage provincial galleries, especially the smaller ones, to rely on exhibitions from London rather than organizing their own loan exhibitions and displaying their own permanent collections. Indeed the possible detrimental impact of the Arts Council's touring exhibitions on the development of exhibitions originating in the provinces was recognized in the early 1980s by one of their own committees chaired by Gerald Forty, formerly head of fine art at the British Council. Some cynical observers noted that the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Arts Council only began to emphasize the unfortunate effects of their exhibitions on local initiatives just when they were starting to withdraw or reduce these exhibitions in the late 1970s and late 1990s.⁷⁹⁰

The list of temporary exhibitions at the Gallery certainly seems to show no diminution of quantity or quality in the years after Circ's demise and this picture is continued across the city. In 1998 Tate Liverpool opened and a year later the city held its inaugural biennial culminating in 2008 with Liverpool as European Capital

⁷⁸⁸ Rosenthal.

⁷⁸⁹ Edward Morris joined Walker Art Gallery, 1966, retiring as Curator of Fine Art; Timothy Stevens joined Walker Art Gallery, 1964, Director, 1971-1987, then Keeper of Art, National Museum Wales, then Assistant Director (Collections), V&A 1994-2000.

⁷⁹⁰ Morris and Stevens, p. 95.

of Culture. In 2007 Tate Liverpool staged the exhibition *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde* which stated confidently:

Liverpool has emerged as a centre of global pop culture, a source of inspiration for documentary photography practice and politically motivated tendencies, and played host to a series of major avant-garde artists and movements ranging from Pop to Conceptual Art.⁷⁹¹

In conclusion, during the post-war period regional museums flourished with and without Circ, with the metropolitan and provincial institutions creating exhibitions comparable in subject matter and display on an equal footing. Following Circ's closure, funding of Area Museum Councils was substantially increased to enable them to support replacement travelling exhibitions and this should have had a mitigating effect.⁷⁹² For Coachworth the concern was that regional museums 'didn't have adequate staff for doing many exhibitions ... they didn't have collections', and temporary exhibitions 'they couldn't do themselves ever'.⁷⁹³ For Opie a reassessment of the impact of Circ came after closure:

When we finished the outcry from one person I heard was ... 'What are we going to do now? We shall have to think up exhibitions for ourselves.' So I think we were being used, to fill schedules.⁷⁹⁴

These testimonies chime with Treuherz' comment that 'it all seemed rather perfunctory', memories that can be read as credible in part due to their participation in the Circ narrative from different viewpoints.⁷⁹⁵ Consequently, it is possible to agree with the secretary of the Museums Association who felt that in 1976 'the V&A material which is sent out is a highly valuable means of bringing modern design and contemporary craftsmanship to the notice of the public in the provinces' and also to see that Circ was just one element in the provision of culture, art and design in the regions.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹¹ 'Centre of the Creative Universe', Tate Liverpool Exhibitions, Tate, n.d.
<<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/centre-creative-universe/centre-creative-universe-exhibition-6>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

⁷⁹² 'Travelling Exhibitions', HC Deb, 23 March 1979, Vol 964: C266
<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1979/mar/23/travelling-exhibitions#S5CV0964P0_19790323_CWA3_134> [accessed 3 July 2013]. From 1977, the Area Museum Councils' grant increased by 28% in 1978-79 and by 12% in 1979-80.

⁷⁹³ Coachworth, interviewed by Weddell.

⁷⁹⁴ Opie, interviewed by Weddell.

⁷⁹⁵ Treuherz, email to Weddell, 29 October 2012.

⁷⁹⁶ Keith Nurse, 'V&A Economy Cuts Will Deprive Regions', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 1976, MA/19/13 Press Cuttings 1965-77, V&AA.

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Chapter 5 Impact on Regional Schools of Art, on Artists & Designers and on Manchester's Textile Industry 1947-77

Introduction

The impact of the Circulation Department (Circ) on regional art and design education has been examined through Schools of Art archives at Brighton, Cardiff, Liverpool and Manchester. As previously discussed, in the post-war period Circ's aim was to provide travelling loan exhibitions of art and design for schools of art that contained high quality historic and contemporary objects, as well as demonstration sets by leading practitioners illustrating techniques and processes, to inspire student artists and designers and improve standards of manufacture.

The main centres for art education examined in this thesis changed their nomenclature several times during the period 1947-77 reflecting changes in the status and focus of art and design education during this period and these are listed at the start of this section for clarity. At one stage schools of art were 'Regional Colleges of Art' and now many are part of 'metropolitan' universities – when considering regional impact, terminology requires care. In 1947 Brighton School of Art, founded in 1859, was re-designated as Brighton College of Art by the Ministry of Education. Brighton College of Art joined Brighton College of Technology to become Brighton Polytechnic in 1970, which was re-designated as the University of Brighton in 1992.⁷⁹⁷ Cardiff School of Art was founded in 1866 and in 1965 the Cardiff School of Art & Design moved to a new purpose-built site in Howard Gardens. In 1976 the School became part of South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, then Cardiff Institute of Higher Education in 1990. Having become University of Wales Institute in 1996, the School has been part of Cardiff Metropolitan University since 2011.⁷⁹⁸ The Liverpool School of Art also has a long history and many names; the Liverpool Mechanics' School of Art Institute (1825) became the Liverpool Institute and School of Art (1856), then the Liverpool College of Art (1880) for most of the period being discussed, becoming part of

⁷⁹⁷ Lyon and Woodham, pp. 11-19.

⁷⁹⁸ Gaynor Kavanagh, 'The School of Art: In the Beginning', *Cardiff Metropolitan University*, n.d. <<http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/about/CardiffMet150/Pages/The-Origins-of-the-School-of-Art-and-Design.aspx>> [accessed 30 July 2015].

Liverpool Polytechnic, Faculty of Art & Design from 1970 and currently designated Liverpool John Moores University (1992).⁷⁹⁹ Manchester School of Art is the second oldest in the UK, founded in 1838 as the School of Design, it became the School of Art in 1853, the Municipal School of Art from 1892 and from 1951-61 the Regional College of Art, Manchester. The institution was re-named Manchester College of Art & Design in 1963, became an original constituent part of Manchester Polytechnic in 1970 and is now part of Manchester Metropolitan University, Faculty of Art & Design which houses the School of Art Archive as part of Special Collections.⁸⁰⁰

Schools of Art Archives

It was hoped that these research visits would uncover evidence of the impact of Circ's travelling art and design exhibitions through archival records such as visitor numbers, student responses, connected teaching programmes, photographs, reviews or catalogues. This thesis recognises that, given the complexity of educational development in designers and artists, the shows are also likely to have had results that are not quantifiable, or directly causal. There were few records of Circ's activities in the schools of art archives consulted; this may reflect a lack of impact but it is thought more likely that filing, recording and storing documents may not have been a priority for those organising travelling exhibitions.

The University of Brighton Design Archives were consulted for evidence of regional impact relating to the Brighton College of Art, however the records held are 'slim to negligible', as the Deputy Curator, Dr Lesley Whitworth, phrased it.⁸⁰¹ The Brighton School of Art archive boxes which document exhibitions and events do not cover the V&A circulating exhibitions as the archive is not fully comprehensive, therefore, it is not possible to show a positive or negative impact.

⁷⁹⁹ 'The History of LJMU', *About Us*, Liverpool John Moores University, n.d. <<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/history>> [accessed 22 September 2016].

⁸⁰⁰ 'Timeline', *About Us*, Manchester School of Art, [n.d.] <<http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/about/timeline/>> [accessed 21 July 2015]. '175 Anniversary', *Manchester School of Art*, Manchester Metropolitan University, [n.d.] <<http://www.artdes.mmu.ac.uk/175/>> [accessed 21 July 2015].

⁸⁰¹ Dr Lesley Whitworth, Deputy Curator, University of Brighton Design Archives, email to Joanna Weddell, 23 July 2012.

Brighton is not a typical regional centre as it is within easy reach of London by train, indeed College of Art staff commuted from London. Brighton students were able to visit London exhibitions on a more informal and frequent basis than more distant centres which relied on termly, organised and sometimes subsidised visits. The art and design collections of Brighton Museum and Art Gallery were also a short walk from the College. The College Library holds catalogues for just three Circ travelling shows *American Studio Pottery*, 1968, *Ansel Adams*, 1976 and *E McKnight Kauffer: Poster Art*, 1976, suggesting these visited Brighton and were thought significant, and also catalogues for Circ's major London exhibitions *English Chintz*, 1960 and *Collingwood Coper*, 1969.

The Cardiff Metropolitan University Library which holds the Cardiff School of Art library does not have any catalogues from Circ studio loan exhibitions, again suggesting that these were not thought important enough to accession by teaching or library staff. The Library does hold copies of catalogues from shows such as *Britain Can Make It*, 1946, hosted by the V&A, as well as *Collingwood Coper*, 1969 (original price £5, but acquired second-hand for £35), *Flocking Herman*, 1971, *International Ceramics*, 1972, and *The Craftsman's Art*, 1973, showing the strength of craft education at Cardiff.

The lack of records in the Liverpool College of Art Archive may suggest that Circ exhibitions were considered unimportant or peripheral to the education of Liverpool art and design students as there were no references to the many V&A shows that visited. For example, in 1964/65 Liverpool College of Art showed six framed studio sets and the *Pop Graphics* show, 45 original prints and drawings of British and American artists 'on whom the 'pop' label – welcome or no – has been irremovably stuck'.⁸⁰² Nonetheless, the lack of an archive footprint for *Pop Graphics* may not be a reflection of its wider impact on staff and students.

⁸⁰² *Loan Collections 1972-74: National Museum Loan Service: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions: Victoria & Albert Museum* (London: HMSO, 1972), p. 7, MA/17, V&AA.

In the Manchester School of Art Archive there are no specific files relating to the V&A Circ schemes although there are references to loans from the 'SKM' and the V&A in log books and exhibition lists. This might suggest that Circ loans were not thought significant or perhaps that archiving accompanying documentation was not seen as important once the show had closed or the display was taken down, given the art school ethos of the time.⁸⁰³ The Archive has retained documentation on exhibitions with local significance however, for example a 1945 selling show of paintings by *The Manchester School* and the *John Moores Painting Prize* held biennially from 1957.⁸⁰⁴ The only archive with relevant material was Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections where the Manchester Regional College of Art Museum & Library Log Book records the numbers of Circ exhibitions taken in each academic year; these fall within a band of 6-17 each year, mostly complete exhibitions but including portfolios of mounted examples for closer study.⁸⁰⁵ The larger Circ travelling exhibitions were held in the Grosvenor Gallery/Holden Museum with smaller collections shown in the studios.

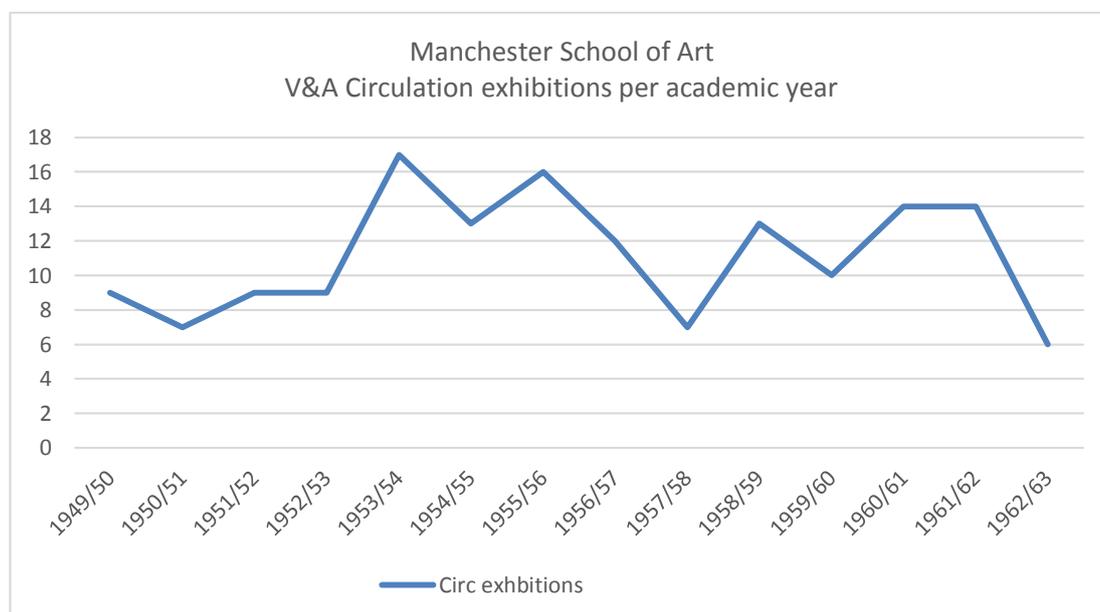


Figure 41: Circ Exhibitions per Academic Year, Manchester School of Art, 1949-63. Figure by author. Original in colour.

⁸⁰³ Stephanie Boydell, Curator, Manchester Metropolitan University Library Services, email to Joanna Weddell, 19 June 2014.

⁸⁰⁴ MSA/3/2/2/3/1/1-8, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁰⁵ MSA/3/2/1/1, Museum and Library Log Book, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

Other sources of Manchester Regional College of Art shows were regional galleries which sent just four shows over two academic years during this period, for example in 1952/53 Manchester City Art Gallery sent 12 examples of 18th century transfer Wedgwood and a display of *Table Glass*, whilst in 1953/54 Salford Art Gallery sent nine examples of *Persian Pottery* and Hanley Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke, 15 examples of *Stoneware Ceramics*. Another local lender in 1952/53 was 'Mrs K Brayshaw' who loaned *Children's Books*. There were some commercial or industrial materials shows as in 1950/51 British Celanex (Courtaulds from 1957) sent a show of *Celanex Plastics* and there are others described as *Latex Foam* in 1952/53 and *Latex Exhibit A* in 1955/56. In 1955/56 there was a travelling show from the Scottish Council of Industrial Design,⁸⁰⁶ and *Northern Artists* from Liverpool, whilst in the last academic year in this Book, 1962/63, three other sources of temporary exhibitions are recorded: the National Book League, the Arts Council, and a commercial gallery, the Dillwyn Gallery, Swansea. The Log Book records just one or two loan exhibitions each academic year received from other sources, clearly making Circ the largest provider of such shows, although as a caveat this may be a partial record as some shows recorded in the visitor book are not listed in the Log Book system.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁶ A separate committee, part of the Council of Industrial Design, the Scottish Design Centre, Glasgow, opened in 1957.

⁸⁰⁷ MSA/3/2/2/4/1 Exhibition Visitor Books, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, records *Danish Posters*, 1-13 December 1952, visited by Mephistopheles, address Hades, 4 December 1952.



1948-1950

1961-64

Figure 42: Art schools receiving/sending V&A Circ shows from/to Manchester, 1948/50 and 1961/64, MSA/3/2/1/1 Museum and Library Log Book, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections. Figure by author. Original in colour.

In the early years of Circ's post-war operation (1948-50) the list of Schools of Art sending travelling shows on to Manchester, or receiving Circ shows from Manchester, demonstrates that the majority of participating Schools were in the north-west on this particular transport route with some in Scotland, plus the home museum in South Kensington.⁸⁰⁸ In the last lists written in the Log Book, 1961-64, the transport connections show a similar network focused on the north-west with some expansion to Wales and Northern Ireland. Figure 37 demonstrates the parity of metropolitan influence and wide access provided by the V&A national service both to large schools of art in major centres like Manchester and to smaller schools in the wider region.

⁸⁰⁸ MSA/3/2/1/1, Museum and Library Log Book, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester.

Stereotypes

This thesis examines the validity of oppositional concepts drawn from post-colonial theory of the centre and periphery, the metropolitan and vernacular in relation to the desire on the part of the Museum to have a reformatory impact on the regions. What is the evidence for stereotypes of metropolitan sophistication versus provincial barbarism, and to what extent do the centres examined operate as agents of autonomous, independent power bases?

As discussed previously in relation to Circ's 1955 *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition* and Norman Jaques, Manchester, the work of teaching staff at regional Schools of Art was collected by Circ demonstrating a more complex relationship between the Department and other loan institutions, rather than a straightforwardly one-directional flow of authority from the core to the margins. Mary Burch Barker taught at Brighton College of Art from 1950 and was also an exhibitor in the *Weaving for Walls* show, 1965, first displayed at South Kensington and then travelling as part of the Museums Loan service.⁸⁰⁹ Further demonstrating a richer if less simplistic picture of this circular influence is the 1971 show *Design in Glass* which gave equal emphasis to both regional and metropolitan contributions, drawing as it did on student work in glass from London, Edinburgh and Stourbridge, colleges of art at which the Royal College of Art guest curator, Sam Herman, had either studied or taught.⁸¹⁰ On this evidence, a binary opposition is insufficient to describe the power dialectic between central and local players.

Liverpool Polytechnic Weaving files contain (undated) samples by Marianne Straub, who was a visiting lecturer at Liverpool Polytechnic and also a contributor to the Circ textiles collection.⁸¹¹ The Circ *School Loans* prospectus for 1962-63 lists Textile Loan 81, *Tabby Weaving*: 'Commissioned by the Museum to illustrate the variety of textures and effects obtainable in a single simple weave, this set consists of about twenty pieces by a leading individual weaver, bound in a volume

⁸⁰⁹ Lyon and Woodham, p. 191.

⁸¹⁰ James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, VX.1971.009 *Design in Glass*, Edinburgh College of Art, Foley College of Art, Stourbridge, Royal College of Art, London; VX.1971.003 *Flockinger Herman*.

⁸¹¹ Shelf 22, Liverpool Polytechnic Weaving, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

of plastic envelopes'. Later increased to fifty pieces, these samples were commissioned from Marianne Straub and Peter Collingwood.⁸¹² The presence of the Straub weaving samples at Liverpool directly comparable to those at South Kensington illustrates the fluidity of perceived boundaries between metropolitan and provincial and a more complex circulatory model of influence rather than a one-directional movement from centre to periphery.

Liverpool School of Art was a dynamic centre for conceptual art in the 1960s⁸¹³ and another Liverpool lecturer also contributed to Circ shows; Keith Arnatt began lecturing at Liverpool in 1962 and notably buried students up to their necks in *Liverpool Beach Burial*, 1968.⁸¹⁴ In 1970 Circ invited curator and art historian Charles Harrison to create a travelling version of the major exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (itself a touring show) that was shown in London at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1969. The Circ show, *Art as Idea*, consisted of international works by around 10 artists and from 1972 it included work by Arnatt.⁸¹⁵ The inclusion of 'regional' artists, designers and makers again complicates a simplistic view of London as a centre for diffusion of the avant-garde in a top-down process.

Regional schools of art actively engaged with leading metropolitan authorities, for example at Manchester in 1956 arranging lectures by Ashley Havinden, Audrey Withers, and Misha Black covering the disciplines of advertising, fashion and industrial design to accompany the Annual Exhibition of Student Work.⁸¹⁶ In 1957

⁸¹² *The Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department: School Loans 1962-1963* (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 10, MA/17/1/6, V&AA, *Tabby Weaving. National Museum Loan Service: School Loans 1966-68: Loans available to Art Schools and Colleges of Education: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 13, MA/17/7, V&AA, *Tabby Weaving*, 50 pieces, Marianne Straub, Peter Collingwood.

⁸¹³ 'A Happening Place', *Centre of the Creative Universe*, Tate, n.d. <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/centre-creative-universe/centre-creative-universe-exhibition-2>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

⁸¹⁴ 'Liverpool Beach Burial', *Keith Arnatt*, Keith Arnatt Estate, n.d. <http://www.keitharnattestate.com/kasite/keith_arnatt_10.html> [accessed 29 June 2015].

⁸¹⁵ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1972-74: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions, Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1972), p. 1, MA/17, V&AA, *Art as Idea*.

⁸¹⁶ MSA/3/2/2/3/1/8 Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

there were lectures by local expert Cecil Stewart on *Victorian Manchester* (Head of Department of Architecture, Manchester Municipal School of Art), but also from London-based designers. Hans Schleger spoke on *Some Aspects of Advertising Design*, and Hulme Chadwick on *Industrial Design and the Industrial Designer*.⁸¹⁷ On this evidence, rather than passively waiting, Manchester had an agency that generated its own sphere of active ambition as it emerged from the immediate post-war years of rationing and austerity.

Against these complications of stereotypical provincialism are examples of established attitudes in the prominence given to London through near-deferential attitudes towards the capital from the regions. A lecturer at Cardiff in the period 1947-77 recalled travelling to V&A and National Gallery exhibitions in London. Significantly, the lecturer's recollections included the comment that 'they quite often had special shows on in London and we went to see the real thing'⁸¹⁸ (my emphasis), implying that what was available in Cardiff was somehow not as valid or valuable, even if on loan from the V&A. As Portelli writes 'memory is not a passive depository of facts'⁸¹⁹ and the personal narrative context of justifying taking coachloads of students to London, 'a jolly expensive business', to some extent mitigates a reading of this comment as a consistent regional attitude.⁸²⁰

The achievements of fashion designers trained at the Liverpool College of Art were a matter of regional pride; in 1953 students are praised for 'their flair for originality and their tremendous accuracy' and 'it is the Liverpool training which is the means of it'. In local press cuttings, however, the validation of these achievements is provided by the acceptance of 'the London fashion world' and the high salaries commanded there:

⁸¹⁷ MSA/2/1/17/28 + 29 +30, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸¹⁸ Joan Baker (b.1922) telephone conversation with Joanna Weddell, 18 February 2015. Baker studied at Cardiff School of Art 1939-44, member of staff 1945-83, Head of Foundation Studies.

⁸¹⁹ Portelli, p. 69.

⁸²⁰ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

There are at least twelve designers, Liverpool-trained in the last four years, who are holding high positions in the London fashion world. One who left three years ago has just obtained her fourth job in that time and, at the age of twenty-five is earning more than £1,000 a year with a top grade house. Another who left last year has in eight months jumped from her first job at £3 a week to her third at £10 a week, though she is only twenty-two.⁸²¹

The theme of exile or escape from Liverpool to London is continued in a *Sunday Express Reporter* article about the designers 'reaching for £1,000-a-year jobs – trying to make their names in London's "rag trade"'. Even allowing for journalistic flair, it is significant that this article uses military terminology – 'a small army' batters the 'golden gates', local girls are 'armed' and fight their way in – as though London is a distant, impregnable fortress with the 'prize' a West End salary, emphasising a perceived divide between provincial and metropolitan.⁸²² Regional press coverage reiterates the importance of success away from Liverpool, albeit trumpeting those competing on a wider stage, for example in 1969 coverage of winners of Danish, Italian and Swiss textile and fashion competitions, and the move by Welsh designer Pauline Wynne [Jones] to Jean Muir in London.⁸²³ When Liverpool students featured in the national press, however, they are featured alongside students from London colleges such as St Martin's or Hornsey, suggesting acceptance and equality.⁸²⁴ Some national critics who reviewed London fashion students and the Liverpool cohort felt that the city was behind London trends as it was 'still "swinging" while down South fashion students are making calmer clothes'. The critics lamented that these Liverpool students were - in an emotive use of language - 'emigrating' as 'a one-way ticket south is still the best investment for young talent.'⁸²⁵

⁸²¹ 'Liverpool Trained', Shelf 30, Box 2, Dress Show 1953, n.d., Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸²² '30 Girls Reach up for £1,000 a Year', *Sunday Express Reporter*, [n.d. post-June 1953], Shelf 30, Box 2, press cutting, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸²³ Gillian Linscott, 'A Fashion Fiesta that Promises a Lot of Talent Ahead', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 24 June 1969, Shelf 29, item 753, Dress Show, 1969, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸²⁴ *The Times*, 27 May 1969, Shelf 29, Item 753, press cutting, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸²⁵ Deirdre McSharry, 'Pacesetters: The Change of Line on the Fashion Campus', [n.d. 1969], Shelf 29, Item 753, press cutting, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

The Liverpool College of Art Dress & Textile Department staged annual fashion shows to display the talents of students, as widely practiced around the country. Press reviews of shows further demonstrate a sense that the provincial is subordinate to the metropolitan, even while preferring more practical considerations over avant-garde taste. For one local reporter 'Most of the models were wearable even in the provinces, where, according to some experts, we are a trifle "stuffy" and conservative about clothes'.⁸²⁶ Important figures in the textile industry attended such as the Director of Colour Design and Style Centre of the Cotton Board, Donald Tomlinson, who again commented on a duality between the practical and the fashionable being 'greatly impressed by the wonderful way in which the college kept the balance between practicability and inspiration'.⁸²⁷ To paraphrase Massey, regional distance was established both spatially *and* temporally, negating contemporaneity. The language used both by and about the provinces sees no 'possibility of multiple trajectories'. These press comments reinforce the near-colonial view of centre and periphery as a valid, if not definitive, model for understanding the relationship between the V&A in South Kensington and the regions. It is then a challenge to read Circ's own peregrinations and migrations of exhibition material around the country as 'an assertion of coevalness'.⁸²⁸

Studying Art and Design Objects

As previously discussed, Circ had originally been formed from the teaching collections of the Central School of Design and the Museum of Manufactures and was part of this long tradition of using objects in art and design education. In the post-war period regional schools of art appear to have had different priorities in the use of such objects, in the status of and need for art and design education, and in the prosperity and generosity of local government and citizens. These priorities were reflected in widely differing spaces for the study of art and design objects.

⁸²⁶ Mary Ventris, 'A Woman's Note: Students Do It Again!', n.d., 1953, Shelf 30, Box 2, Dress Show 1953, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸²⁷ 'Art Students Model Own Dress Designs By a Post Woman', n.d., 1953, Shelf 30, Box 2, Dress Show 1953, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸²⁸ Massey, p. 70.

Manchester School of Art has its own long history of using art and design exhibitions as part of teaching; from 1880, and for most of the post-war period, the School was housed in Victorian Buildings on Cavendish Street with the splendid provision of dedicated top-lit exhibition halls at the rear. The 1898 exhibition space was:

considered an important feature of a School of Art and at the official opening of the School the public were invited to view a fine collection [sic] ceramics, metal work and paintings. This display was assembled from the teaching examples which had adorned the classrooms of the Royal Manchester Institution, gifts from the School's various generous benefactors and items loan [sic] by the South Kensington Museum (V&A). The idea of creating a proper museum and developing the teaching collection, and, in particular creating an Arts and Crafts collection, was frequently the subject of discussion. In his paper 'Recommendations and Suggestions' (MSA/1/8/1) Director of Design Walter Crane deemed it a 'most important and necessary thing.'⁸²⁹

The School's 1898 Arts and Crafts Museum by J Gibbons Sankey had a main Textile Court centred on Burne Jones' *Adoration* tapestry, an east wing Gothic Court showing plaster casts mainly from the Trocadero, Paris, and a west wing Italian Court with casts of renaissance sculpture.⁸³⁰ During World War II the Manchester School of Art acted as the 'emergency distribution centre' for the V&A Circ scheme, emphasising the city's role and agency in the region as a key player with its own satellites.⁸³¹ In the mid-1950s Schools of Art were held to have 'differing local functions' with their 'character much affected by district' as they 'still train students for local industries' – the specialism of Manchester being 'textile design and printing', as befitted the regional capital, Cottonopolis.⁸³² In 1956 a new School of Textile Design at West Didsbury was opened by Alastair Morton, Director of Edinburgh Weavers, and this received Circ shows.

⁸²⁹ Text appended to the Index to the School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester.

⁸³⁰ Text appended to the Index to the School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester.

⁸³¹ Boydell to Weddell.

⁸³² 'Lecture Notes', handwritten by Mary Turner, A.T.D. Course, West of England College of Art, University of Bristol, 1953/54, Mr. Milner, Lecture on *The School of Art, Differing Local Functions*. Private Collection: Mary Smythe. With thanks to Mary Smythe.

The Manchester School of Art Collection comprises examples of fine and decorative art and includes 'some of the finest examples of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain' and functioned much like Circ's objects as a working study collection. 'Use of museum collections was integral to the curriculum in the late nineteenth century', however, as 'methods of teaching changed, the emphasis on object based instruction declined and the shape of the collection altered accordingly'.⁸³³ The V&A provided a model for the Collection in a very specific way as the acquisitions were numbered following 'S.K.M.' practice in differing for originals, and for reproductions.⁸³⁴ The Collection reflects 'changing attitudes to taste and teaching styles'; exhibitions of material from the School of Art's own collections continued throughout Circ's activities in the post war period.⁸³⁵

This parallel activity maps the School of Art as a regional hub that accommodated Circ shows in service of its own priorities, rather than being subsumed by an imperialist model. The Manchester gallery guides from 1956-7 state that 'Contemporary Exhibitions are held in the Galleries and loans from the V&A Museum are shown by arrangement with the Circulation Department'.⁸³⁶ A Circ exhibition of more than sixty *Modern British Drawings* was displayed at the Manchester Regional College of Art during April and May 1959, listed in the *Museums Journal* and reviewed in the local press.⁸³⁷ This was a School of Art show that would be visited by both the general public and by art students, comprising 'an abundance of nudes, drawn for the most part in a conservative style' with some drawings on 'a more adventurous plane'.⁸³⁸

⁸³³ Text appended to the Index to the School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester.

⁸³⁴ *The Manchester Municipal School of Art Museum Chronical* [sic], Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Insert headed 'Regional College of Art Manchester 15': 'Following the practice (tear) S.K.M. the acquisitions are numbered thus – Originals – first numerical number – followed by year of acquisition Reproductions year first followed by numerical number'.

⁸³⁵ Manchester School of Art Collection moved to Sir Kenneth Green Library, 2002, access by appointment only. 'Manchester School of Art', *Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections*, Manchester Metropolitan University, n.d. <<http://www.specialcollections.mmu.ac.uk/schoola.php?&img=1#iview>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

⁸³⁶ Stephanie Boydell, Curator, Manchester Metropolitan University Library Services, email to Joanna Weddell, 6 December 2013.

⁸³⁷ 'Temporary Exhibitions', *The Museums Journal*, 59.2 (1959), 53.

⁸³⁸ D.B., 'Loan Exhibition of Drawings: Modern British Artists', *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 April 1959, p. 6.

In 1956 there are entries in the Manchester Log Book that list the spaces where travelling shows were exhibited, giving an insight into their purpose and use.⁸³⁹ The Arts & Crafts Museum showed Circ exhibitions covering a variety of decorative art. From October 1956 to January 1957 the East Gallery showed *Arts of England* whilst the West Gallery displayed *English Furniture* (photographs). In January 1957 *English Embroidered Pictures* was displayed in the main galleries. These College of Art exhibitions were open to the general public as well as to students and this show was given an illustrated review in the *Manchester Guardian* in a somewhat ironic tone, discussing the 'essentially minor art' of 'aesthetic curiosa' whilst acknowledging the show 'displays its whole range over the past 300 years'.⁸⁴⁰ The show contained 18th century embroidered pictures and contemporary panels that were 'encouraging signs of a revival of the art' as art schools 'are now doing much to raise the general level'.⁸⁴¹ From February 1957 the East Gallery displayed 13th to 19th century *Enamels* whilst the West Gallery showed 19th century *Fashion Plates*.⁸⁴² The locations of these shows, varied in their media, date and scale, demonstrate that students might study a range of decorative art, furniture, fashion and textile design in a formal museum-style setting, as they were seen doing in photographs taken during the early years of the Gallery, where light easily moveable chairs are ranged, ready for detailed examination of objects.⁸⁴³

In addition to these gallery exhibitions were the studio displays with *Piranesi Drawings* used in the Etching Room and *Contemporary Life Drawings* appropriately shown in the Life Room, South Studio. Examining the Manchester Log Book for the academic year 1961/62, it is clear that Circ exhibitions were

⁸³⁹ Museum & Library Log Book, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁴⁰ *English Embroidered Pictures*, Manchester Regional College of Art, 11-23 January 1957. By our own Reporter, 'College of Art Exhibition; Pictures in Needlework', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 January 1957, p. 5, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester.

⁸⁴¹ Barbara Morris, *The History of English Embroidery* (London: HMSO, 1951) p. 12.

⁸⁴² *Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges 1953-1954* (London: HMSO, 1953), p. 7, MA/17/1/2, V&AA.

⁸⁴³ Textile Court, Arts and Crafts Museum, Manchester Municipal School of Art, 1898-1901, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mmuvisualresources/>> [accessed 2.11.2016].

booked for a number of different studio disciplines; for drawings, for graphic design and illustration, for sculpture, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, and stage design. In 1962/63 Circ loans ranged from *Sickert Etchings* to *Greetings Cards*.⁸⁴⁴ For Carol Hogben, Deputy Keeper in charge of Art School Loans, the close access to these studio loans, seen every day and studied 'with and without attention',⁸⁴⁵ was a distinct but equally valuable experience to a formal museum visit in providing students with inspiration. In the 1972 Circ prospectus for schools of art Hogben made it clear that the 'loan collections are properly regarded as miniature thematic exhibitions, addressed to the interest of the whole student body and intended to be shown in a central area' whereas studio loans 'are more in the character of teaching material, addressed to the interest of students taking related courses, and intended to be shown either in a studio or the physical teaching space of the craft concerned'.⁸⁴⁶

At Liverpool College of Art from 1936 there was a 'museum room' in the basement, but as the College grew from 1952 this space was progressively walled off to provide office and class space.⁸⁴⁷ Documents at Liverpool provide evidence of mixed attitudes to viewing art and design objects at first hand. The undated Syllabus for the National Diploma in Design (phased out following the 1960 Coldstream Report) announced that 'Whenever necessary or advisable in extension of study special visits will be arranged to factories, workshops, museums, and art galleries in the locality, other towns and abroad'.⁸⁴⁸ Here it would seem that viewing art and design at first hand was only sometimes undertaken, and that factories and workshops were seen as just as useful as museums and art galleries, suggesting a vocational focus as part of their overall educational provision alongside Diploma in Art & Design courses. London galleries

⁸⁴⁴ Museum & Library Log Book, 1961-62, 1962-63, MSA/3/2/1/1 Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester.

⁸⁴⁵ Carol Hogben (1925-2016), telephone conversation with Joanna Weddell, 9 October 2012.

⁸⁴⁶ Carol Hogben, 'Further Education Loans', *Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work, 1972-73* (London: HMSO, 1973), p. 12; 180 loan collections shown 729 times.

⁸⁴⁷ Charles W. Hale, *A Short History of the Origins of Art and Design Further Education in Liverpool*, 1977, Misc Box 1, Shelf 1, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool.

⁸⁴⁸ Syllabus of National Diploma Courses in Design, [undated typescript], Liverpool College of Art, Shelf 13, Damaged folders in wrapping 1, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

are not mentioned, just those 'in the locality' or 'abroad' and there is no reference to studio loan collections or Circ exhibitions in-house, even though these were being staged at Liverpool School of Art during this period perhaps suggesting that it was the metropolitan that was considered as peripheral.

A proposal for the Intermediate Art & Crafts Certificate from around 1950 more firmly states that: 'Visits to museums, art galleries, private collections and works have been arranged from time to time'.⁸⁴⁹ The 1964-5 Printing Department Prospectus makes no reference to exhibitions or visits to them, and this absence may reflect the vocational nature of printing courses, however the 1968/9 Prospectus does state that at the School of Fine Art 'visits are arranged to see exhibitions in London and elsewhere'.⁸⁵⁰ In 1971-72 students taking the Fashion and Textiles Diploma in Art & Design were 'able to visit the continent during their second year with the assistance of the John Moores Travel Award'; international placements often featured in textile courses.⁸⁵¹ The high cost of visits to see exhibitions for provincial art students was one of the arguments against the closure of Circ in 1977. Whilst in the Liverpool John Moores University Archive there are few references to students viewing art at first hand, the Director of the Walker Art Gallery, Hugh Scrutton, highlighted the way contemporary works could engage art students (if not designers):

A young artist for instance may have his life changed by a chance visit – provided we have the pictures (above all modern pictures) which he ought to see. ... This is the sort of miracle an Art Gallery can achieve. It may be that a student now at the College of Art will do this thing – they do at least come to the Walker.⁸⁵²

In the post-war period, many new school of art buildings seem to have included a large, semi-public gallery space separate from the working studios, on the model of the Victorian Manchester example. In 1969 at Brighton College of Art, Phase II

⁸⁴⁹ Proposed Courses leading to the Ministry of Education Diplomas and Certificates in Art (1950), Intermediate Art and Crafts Certificate, Liverpool College of Art, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸⁵⁰ Prospectus, Liverpool Regional College of Art, Department of Printing, 1964-5, Prospectus 1 Box. Liverpool College of Art and Design, Prospectus 68/9, School of Fine Art, 14/15, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸⁵¹ Liverpool Polytechnic Prospectus 1971-72, Liverpool John Moores University Archive, Liverpool.

⁸⁵² Scrutton.

of the new Grand Parade buildings was opened to include a new exhibition gallery, one of the largest in the south east, on the site of the 1877 building. Before the appointment of a full-time exhibition officer, members of staff organised exhibitions, for example, Harvey Daniels, principal lecturer in Printmaking, at Brighton 1963-88.⁸⁵³ In 1966 a purpose-built campus was constructed for Cardiff School of Art, opened in 1970, and in early 1975, just as Circ was being merged with the Education Department to form Regional Services, the School opened a dedicated exhibition gallery for contemporary art, the largest available in South Wales at that time, also used for V&A shows. It is tempting to speculate that the availability of the more substantial exhibitions from Circ, and touring collections such as the Arts Council and Crafts Council, encouraged the construction of spaces to accommodate such travelling shows.

As well as exhibitions in the School of Art, Cardiff students visited the National Museum of Wales which was only a short walk from its Howard Gardens site and this use of the nearest museum for sketching and study was traditional art school practice.⁸⁵⁴ A lecturer from Cardiff School of Art, Michael Hose valued the National Museum of Wales which 'continued to expand and develop its permanent displays and exhibition program, as well as support for students' providing 'an invaluable source of stimulation and reference'. Hose felt that the loss of Circ and later the Crafts Council travelling shows was 'deeply disappointing' as they were 'immensely valuable, when students in the provinces – then as now – could not afford to travel to London regularly'.⁸⁵⁵ Students were taken to London every year to visit the V&A or National Gallery, as Joan Baker, lecturer at Cardiff between 1945 and 1982, recalled.⁸⁵⁶ In this period student trips to London were funded by regional schools.⁸⁵⁷ When they left Cardiff students might stay locally, go to London or on to the Midlands and 'we wanted to make them aware of what was on

⁸⁵³ Lyon and Woodham, p. 247.

⁸⁵⁴ As recalled by Jonathan Woodham, his Fine Art training at Edinburgh included sketching at the National Scottish Museum (1968-73), Jonathan Woodham, email to Joanna Weddell, 22 September 2015. In September 2014 Cardiff School of Art moved to Llandaff campus.

⁸⁵⁵ Michael Hose, member of staff Cardiff School of Art 1974-2012, email to Joanna Weddell, 6 August 2014.

⁸⁵⁶ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

⁸⁵⁷ Jonathan Woodham, email to Joanna Weddell, 22 Sept. 2015; Woodham worked at North Staffordshire Polytechnic 1974-82.

offer', to open 'their eyes to the breadth of art and the range of people'. Baker recalled that during wartime youngsters 'from the Valleys, as they called it' might have felt they needed a passport for Cardiff, let alone for going to London, and that many had not been outside Wales.⁸⁵⁸ Circ's project would seem to have been valued as just one part of a range of activities to introduce students to direct study of objects, demonstrating that schools of art had their own agency in determining educational direction.

Joan Baker spoke about the practice of taking Circ travelling shows, giving a valuable qualitative assessment of the impact on students. At Cardiff, in Baker's recollection, though there were ceramics shown in what she termed 'safe cases', the main material displayed was two-dimensional, original prints and drawings from the Impressionist to contemporary periods, though this recollection reflects Baker's own personal narrative and interests. Like other schools of art, different Cardiff staff visited the annual open day to make their selections from Circ material on display 'backstage' at South Kensington. Although they did not always get their first choice, they knew that they would get something close to this preference. Baker felt that 'the staff enjoyed them as much as the students did' and said 'we were thrilled to see what we had got in September' at the start of the academic year.⁸⁵⁹ While 'the product of both the narrator and the researcher',⁸⁶⁰ in a dynamic that encouraged a positive contribution to a shared national narrative, this enthusiasm for Circ counters the lack of evidence in the art school archive.

Prints and drawings were straightforward to transport, and at Cardiff were seen as easier to display, being shown in two long corridors which provided lots of wall space. Baker commented that 'it's seeing the living drawing on the paper they were handling and the chalk or whatever it was that they were using to draw with, [that] makes an awful lot of difference to youngsters'.⁸⁶¹ This was important as 'it's so different to see somehow the actual paper and the marks that were made on that surface, it was very exciting'. As discussed in Chapter 3, Circ's project was to

⁸⁵⁸ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

⁸⁵⁹ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

⁸⁶⁰ Portelli, p. 71.

⁸⁶¹ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

develop 'haptic experience as a source of knowledge and pleasure in its own right', abandoning the traditional curatorial aim of 'a closely prescribed set of responses'.⁸⁶² Rather than finished works created for exhibition, Baker was more interested in 'the preliminary thoughts and the first-hand experience', 'the seedbed as it were, of ideas and ways of going about it'. This preference was because the study of process was more useful for students: 'finding and exploring like they were the roots of things rather than going to see the finished paintings because somehow you just wonder *How on earth did they get to that stage?*'.⁸⁶³ Baker offers a testimony that is wholly absorbed in recalling the stages of education, as indicated by the emphasis of italics given in transcribing this last question. In recalling the impact of such 'wonder', Baker is also recalling with nostalgia her own agency in guiding and prompting that process, in working as an educator. This is not an impartial record of Circ, Portelli's 'passive depository of facts', but it is a potent one.⁸⁶⁴ With their use of demonstration sets, such studio displays acted as 'a space that navigates the open, the emotional and the imaginary as well as the closed and focused world of the expert'.⁸⁶⁵

It was important to the Cardiff School of Art staff that they displayed originals and not reproductions ('that was the nice part') as 'the flesh of the paper was real and solid', and 'something printed in a book hasn't got the same feeling'. Baker communicated the excitement of receiving originals to display when she said 'You could pick them up and you could get so close to them, you could almost purr over them, like stroking a cat!' It also 'made an awful lot of difference to students to see drawings with names of people that they knew' and 'Oh it was lovely ... to see the original and get the feel of the touch of the artist's hand on the paper in your mind as they were drawing'.⁸⁶⁶ Here, touch was being used 'to fill in the inevitable gaps and uncertainties of vision',⁸⁶⁷ and there was no sense of a tension between experience as 'intellectual and conceptual' as well as 'sensory and embodied'.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶² Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', p2.

⁸⁶³ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

⁸⁶⁴ Portelli, p. 69.

⁸⁶⁵ Hourston Hanks, Hale, and MacLeod, p. 2.

⁸⁶⁶ Baker, telephone conversation with Weddell.

⁸⁶⁷ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', p. 5.

⁸⁶⁸ Hourston Hanks, Hale, and MacLeod, p. 1.

Baker's comments convey her emotional connection to appreciation of original objects on display and to inspiring students, part of Baker's own personal narrative but also fulfilling Circ's own aims and mission. These are very strong indications of a positive impact from the Circ's activities which emphasise the importance of seeing original objects together with demonstrations of technique and process in what Candlin terms a 'conjuncture of vision, aesthetics and knowledge'.⁸⁶⁹

Circ exhibitions were specifically designed for art students and so had a deliberate focus on showcasing the current and the new as well as demonstrating process and technique. Significantly these elements were not promoted when the same exhibitions were toured to museums and galleries emphasizing Circ's role in promoting the development of designers for industry. In 1972-73 the then Liverpool Polytechnic, Faculty of Art & Design, showed nine studio loans with etchings by *David Hockney: Grimm's Fairy Tales* and *Eduardo Paolozzi*.⁸⁷⁰ The show of Hockney's etchings, only published in 1971, included preparatory sketch drawings and the original copper printing plates.⁸⁷¹ The Paolozzi was formed from two 1971 suites of etchings included in his Tate retrospective that year – *The Conditional Probability Machine* and the *Cloud Atomic Laboratory* – accompanied by original source photos from obscure space-research journals, popular news magazines, and comics, with retouched art-work involved in the intermediate printing.⁸⁷² Here we see Circ promoting an engaged form of learning, connecting excellence to active method, rather than a more passive authoritative connoisseur approach.

Whilst some Circ travelling shows were used by schools of art for a whole academic year, others were kept for just a month or so. For example at Manchester, *Embroideries*, and *Drawings: Nudes* were used for year-long study

⁸⁶⁹ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', p. 22.

⁸⁷⁰ *Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Circulation: The National Museum Loan Service: The Year's Work 1972-73* (London: HMSO, 1973), p. 15.

⁸⁷¹ *V&A Museum, Circulation Department: National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1974-76: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1974), p. 2/3, MA/17, V&A.

⁸⁷² *V&A Museum, Circulation Department: National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1974-76: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1974), p. 3, MA/17, V&A.

while the Coats Needlework Development Scheme was a short-term loan, possibly reflecting demand for this resource.⁸⁷³ The Scheme ran from 1934 to 1961 originally funded by Scottish thread manufacturers J & P Coats for use in Scotland; in the post-war period this international collection of embroidery and textiles was circulated to art schools across the UK by the V&A.⁸⁷⁴ Circ's six-part *Decorative Arts in England* series was designed to be shown in sequence term by term, 'generation by generation', providing a complete introduction to design in England from 1675-1825. At Manchester the successive exhibitions were indeed held in this way in 1949-50. Each set included 'original examples and photographs covering architecture, interior decoration, sculpture, furniture, textiles, metalwork, engraving, ceramics, glass, printing'.⁸⁷⁵ Even at this early stage the travelling shows provided to this major regional art school cover a wide range of disciplines, from textiles and fine art, to ceramics and product design.

The Manchester School of Art Log Book notes that Circ's *Contemporary Scandinavian Furnishing Fabrics* was displayed for students at the new School of Textile Design at West Didsbury from September 1956, rather than in the main gallery.⁸⁷⁶ The show was displayed at South Kensington in spring 1956, part of a series shown in the V&A Restaurant, contemporary fabrics positioned literally 'outside' the remit of the main museum collections. The textiles were selected and collected by Circ directly from Scandinavian manufacturers 'with the intention of representing the most significant work being produced at the present time'.⁸⁷⁷ For textiles students at Manchester, the great centre for British textile production, this was a great opportunity as 'very few of the fabrics will have been seen before in this country' and photographs show the fabrics being examined and handled (Figure 43). This close engagement with the objects was enabled as Circ left the

⁸⁷³ Manchester Regional College of Art Museum & Library Log Book, MSA/3/2/1/1 Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁷⁴ 'Needlework Development Scheme', *Victoria & Albert Museum*, n.d., V&A Museum <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/n/needlework-development-scheme/>> [accessed 20 July 2015].

⁸⁷⁵ 'Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA.

⁸⁷⁶ Manchester School of Art Log Book, MSA/3/2/1/1, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁷⁷ *The Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 14, MA/17/3/2, V&AA.

display arrangements for this show to borrowers explaining that the 40 fabrics were:

about 9 feet 6 inches in length and occupying about 2 feet 6 inches of wall space when hanging in folds. Each fabric is hemmed at the top for hanging from a curtain wire or a rod, and has a sewn-on label at eye level. Before hanging, borrowers will need to make arrangements for ironing. A fairly lofty gallery is necessary in order to hang the fabrics at full length on the walls and/or tall screens, and the use of spotlights will be an advantage.⁸⁷⁸

With close access to the works, art school staff and students were not 'characterised as unruly, unwashed' or as 'lay commentators' and if, as Candlin says, touch in museums is 'hierarchical and proprietorial', then rights and power over these objects was negotiated and shared.⁸⁷⁹ Following MacLeod, these approaches 'preclude an experience based solely on looking and open the door to myriad meanings and references beyond the frame of the work itself, blurring the boundaries between curatorial vision and visitor experience and between the quixotic nature of the everyday and the often limited experience of art.'⁸⁸⁰

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Figure 43: *Contemporary Scandinavian Furnishing Fabrics*, Manchester Regional College of Art, Manchester, 1956, MA/19/4, V&AA. Photograph: Joanna Weddell © courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁸⁷⁸ *The Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 14, MA/17/3/2, V&AA.

⁸⁷⁹ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', p. 11, p. 3, p. 13.

⁸⁸⁰ MacLeod, 'This Magical Place', pp. 56-57.

In 1956 the Department began a series of contemporary exhibitions described as 'industrial wares which have been recently designed in a modern spirit', only shown at South Kensington in the Restaurant not the main galleries, for later regional circulation. As with MOMA's precedent, these were on open units rather than in locked cases, bringing them close to a department store display.⁸⁸¹ The 'contemporary' series included national surveys of ceramics, fabrics and wallpaper bringing international design to art school students and citizens across the UK as rationing and import restrictions were lifted. Circ post-war shows exhibited some British objects that were produced solely for export, as rationing precluded their sale in the UK. For example *Tablewares of Today*, 1952, would be 'new to the public since most of the best British wares are for 'export only' and most of the foreign wares cannot normally be imported into this country'.⁸⁸² The emphasis on international design relates back to the original function of Cole's innovations – to improve British design, increase exports and diminish imports, now a vital part of post-war reconstruction. These contemporary touring collection displays may be seen to act as a distanced but authoritative locus for a meeting between commercial industry and decorative design.

Independent Temporary Exhibitions

In the post-war period there is clear evidence that regional schools of art developed lively temporary exhibitions programmes that operated independently and were not solely reliant on the services of Circ. In Liverpool for example, the annual fashion shows were staged in a dynamic and professional form.

Commercial fashion and textile firms from the region (Liverpool, Birkenhead, Manchester) gave prize money to students of the College of Art Dress & Textile Department demonstrating close ties and engagement with local industry of the kind that Circ itself practiced by collecting from such firms by gift and purchase.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸¹ Staniszewski, *Useful Objects* began 1938, p. 160, collaboration with Bloomingdales began 1940, p. 167, *Good Design* with Chicago Merchandise Mart began 1950, p. 173. Wakefield, 'Open Display', 243. Peter Floud, 'Foreword', *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1957: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 1.

⁸⁸² *Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Travelling Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries 1952* (London: HMSO, 1952), p. 10.

⁸⁸³ *Dress Parade 1957*, Department of Dress and Textiles, prizes donated by E.M. Roskin & Sons Ltd, Jacksons the Tailors, Kidd & Co. Ltd, C.W.S. Belmont Slumberwear Factory, Tootal Broadbent

In addition, over this period leaflets for the annual 'Dress Parade' demonstrate a movement from the plain printed versions to coloured and illustrated covers as wartime restrictions were lifted and the department flourished.

At Brighton, with the opening of the Polytechnic Gallery, exhibitions there began to be listed in the local press for the interest of the general public, for example in 1973 the *Drawings and Paintings of George Hooper*, an artist who taught at Brighton and whose work as a war recording artist was incidentally also in the V&A collections.⁸⁸⁴ The Polytechnic Gallery showed exhibitions comparable to those supplied by Circ to art schools, for example in May 1973 a member of the academic staff, John Boulton Smith, curated *Scandinavian arts today*, an exhibition of graphic and applied arts from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden as part of the Brighton Festival.⁸⁸⁵ Individual lecturers pursued personal interests, for example, designer Paul Clark who lectured at Brighton from 1969 to 2000, curated *Alphabet Allsorts* in 1978, and *Robots and Space Toys* (with Chris McEwan).⁸⁸⁶

Schools of art could also be involved in staging exhibitions beyond their own galleries. In 1958 Manchester Regional College of Art created an exhibition with the 'original title' *Art for Society* 'in which the work of Regional College of Art students was imaginatively and stimulatingly displayed'.⁸⁸⁷ The major show occupied five rooms in the City Art Gallery and was completely designed, constructed and staged by staff and students to show a range of work across the College, from architectural models and furniture, to ceramics, illustration and textiles. The innovative displays were 'Mondrianesque in character, with angular frames and panels and flat, bright colour, offering unusual vistas of the various

Lee Co. Ltd. *Fourteenth Annual Dress Parade* 1960, Dress & Textile Department, prizes donated by Jackson The Tailor, J.P. Jacobs Paula Works, Kidd & Co. Ltd. (Countess Ladies Wear), C.W.S. Belmont Slumberwear Factory, Tootal Broadhurst Lee Co. Ltd, John Pock & Co. Ltd. Liverpool College of Art, Liverpool John Moores University Archives, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool.

⁸⁸⁴ *Brighton Gazette*, 7 July 1973, p. 4, Brighton Local History Centre, Brighton.

⁸⁸⁵ John Boulton Smith, *Scandinavian Arts Today: An Exhibition of Graphic and Applied Arts from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden* (Brighton: Brighton Polytechnic Gallery, 1973).

⁸⁸⁶ Lyon and Woodham, p. 304.

⁸⁸⁷ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1958), p. 4-6, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

display units'. The College also designed the publicity, including not just posters but also bus stickers. The show was popular, attracting 14,740 visitors with only the V&A's *Arts of China* attracting more that year with attendance of 16,515; the other show of regional contemporary art, the annual Manchester Academy of Fine Arts show had 11,779 that year, suggesting a high standard at the College of Art.⁸⁸⁸

Manchester Regional College of Art also took the initiative to exhibit in a commercial setting, the G-Plan Gallery, Stevenson House, Stevenson Square, in a quarter of the city traditionally associated with the textile industry. Stevenson House was a:

centre where five major companies have combined to provide a comprehensive advisory service for those about to equip a new house or to renovate an existing one. The latest ideas and developments in furniture, décor, bedding, carpets, oil-fired heating and latex foam rubber are available for the public to see for themselves.⁸⁸⁹

No dates are recorded for the two exhibition leaflets but they can probably be dated between 1959 and 1963; the show *Profile* showed the work of seven students each representing one of the disciplines at the College, at that date categorised as Textile Design, Interior Design, Pottery, Graphic Design, Painting, Sculpture and Dress Design. As at Liverpool, an annual fashion show leaflet titled *L'Idée* acknowledges support received from a number of commercial partners, demonstrating the ambition of the show.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁸ *The Annual Report of the Art Galleries Committee 1958* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1958), p. 4-6, Manchester Art Gallery Archive, Manchester.

⁸⁸⁹ *Profile*, Leaflet, Manchester Regional College of Art, MSA/3/2/2/3/1/9, Manchester School of Art Archive, Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester. G-Plan Gallery: The Crown Bedding Co. (Northern) Ltd, E Gomme Ltd, Shell-Mex and B.P. Ltd, AF Stoddard & Co Ltd, Vitafoam Ltd.

⁸⁹⁰ *Avant*, leaflet, Department of Dress of the School of Industrial Design, Manchester Regional College of Art, MSA/3/2/2/3/1/1-8 Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester. E Gomme Ltd, Berkshire Stockings Ltd, Jewelcraft, Dolcis Ltd, Steiner, Lancome Ltd, Tootal Broadhurst, Lee Co.

At Manchester temporary exhibitions anticipated developments in the Circ programme, perhaps because of the city's strengths in the industry of mechanised printing production. Circ did have a wallpaper travelling show as part of its range of sets for Schools of Art but this was 'designed to illustrate the history of their development from the late 16th century to the present day'; it was not until 1953 that a set of contemporary wallpapers was assembled.⁸⁹¹ In 1952 at Manchester Regional College of Art, however, an exhibition of *Wallpaper of Today* covering contemporary machine and hand printed wallpapers was arranged by staff member Joan Hoverstadt in the Grosvenor Gallery, displayed with contemporary furniture.⁸⁹² The visitor books survive for this exhibition and show that, as well as individual visitors, several institutions attended, including five separate visits from different staff of the Wall Paper Manufacturers Ltd, a national amalgamation of suppliers in operation since 1899.⁸⁹³ Other visitors were from educational institutions, mainly in the region such as Didsbury College, Manchester College of Housecraft, Manchester College of Technology, and the Schools of Art of Northwich, Stockport, Salford and Wigan, but also further afield, such as Durham University and Brighton College of Arts & Crafts.⁸⁹⁴ This exhibition succeeded in attracting not only students but industry.

The Manchester archives demonstrate a lively exhibitions programme run independently of Circ in the years before closure. In March 1964 the Holden Gallery showed a temporary exhibition of the work of contemporary artists Arthur Giardelli and Jeffrey Steele from the commercial Swansea gallery, the Dillwyn

⁸⁹¹ 'Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges 1951-2', [8 pages, typed, June 1951], MA/17/1/1, V&AA, *Wallpapers. Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges 1953-1954* (London: HMSO, 1953), MA/17/1/2, V&AA, *Contemporary Wallpapers*.

⁸⁹² MSA/11/1/1/1/1/7 1951-52, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁹³ MSA/3/2/2/4/1 Exhibition Visitor Books, 13-25 June 1952, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester. 'Wallpaper', *Our Collection*, The Whitworth, [n.d.] <<http://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/collection/ourcollection/wallpaper/>> [accessed 23 July 2015].

⁸⁹⁴ Belinda Black from Brighton, Premier RSA Bursary and Sir Frank Warner Memorial Medal for machine-printed furnishing fabric, 1952, Lyon and Woodham, p. 118.

Gallery.⁸⁹⁵ There were also commercial graphics exhibitions similar to those produced by Circ, for example *Wilson 60-75*, a review of fifteen years work in communication design from the practice of Norman Wilson, again in the Polytechnic's Main Gallery.⁸⁹⁶ In 1968 and 1969 Manchester College of Art & Design held a series of exhibitions with international schools of art, showing student collaboration across nations with work from Leningrad, Saarbrücken and San Francisco.⁸⁹⁷ In 1973 between January and June, the main gallery of the Polytechnic site at All Saints showed *Oriental and Foreign Scripts, Printed Textiles and Drawings, Miniatures by Paul Johnson* (a member of staff), and *Thomas Worthington Architect*, a local Victorian architect.⁸⁹⁸

National promotions also provided a source of exhibitions during this period for example 8-13 October 1973 was *Window on Hungary* week, with *Contemporary Hungarian Textiles* in the main gallery of the Polytechnic, sponsored by the Hungarian Institute for Cultural Relations and *Hungexpo*, Hungarian Foreign Trade Office for Fairs and Publicity, with North West Arts Association and City Council of Manchester. This show of recently produced textiles is very similar to the kind of international show put on by Circ, here generated by the city with other bodies and having a direct relevance to the trade Manchester made its own, textiles. Similar examples were the 1976 *Grafik-Design Deutschland '71/'72/'73/'74*, with the Manchester Goethe-Institut, in the Polytechnic's Undercroft Gallery, and in 1977 again with the Goethe-Institut, *Art Nouveau-Jugendstil-Modern Style*, held in the Grosvenor Gallery.⁸⁹⁹ These kinds of exhibitions show that at Manchester the

⁸⁹⁵ 'Exhibitions', *Jeffrey Steele*, Jeffrey Steele Artist, n.d. <<http://www.jeffreysteale.co.uk/index.html>> [accessed 23 July 2015]. David Moore, 'Arthur Giardelli Obituary', *The Guardian*, 11 November 2009 <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/nov/11/arthur-giardelli-obituary>> accessed 23.7.15 [accessed 23 July 2015].

⁸⁹⁶ *Wilson 60-75*, 1975, MSA/3/2/2/3/1/9, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁹⁷ 6-18 March 1968, Leningrad Higher College of Industrial Art; 26 September–25 October 1968, Staatlichen Werkkunstschule Saarbrücken; 7-17 January 1969, San Francisco State College; MSA/3/2/2/3/1/9, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁹⁸ Exhibition Galleries, 1973 poster, MSA/3/2/2/3/1/9, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁸⁹⁹ MSA/3/2/2/3/1/9, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

School of Art was independently providing a rich programme for students and the wider public and that Circ's loans were just one element in a varied mixture of displays.

Closure of Circulation

When the closure of the Department was proposed in 1976, users of the Schools Loans service bemoaned the fact that without Circ 'the Victoria and Albert Museum would become just another passive, metropolitan monolith, to be visited by out-of-towners once or twice a year',⁹⁰⁰ but how did the art schools respond? In 1979, after Circ's closure, again in association with the Goethe-Institut, Manchester Polytechnic held a *Bauhaus* exhibition in the Undercroft Gallery, later travelling to the Ulster Museum, Belfast.⁹⁰¹ In 1968 the Royal Academy had held the major exhibition *50 Years Bauhaus*; Hogben, visited the show and followed up the addresses at the back of the catalogue. Hogben put in a bid for a travel subsidy from the Museum to coincide with a family holiday to Switzerland, and visited Gunta Stölzl to buy tapestries and designs. Hogben 'played the natural alliance at the Royal College of Art at all stages' and also bought from Margaret Leischner who had taught at the RCA and trained at the Bauhaus.⁹⁰² The result was the Circ show *Bauhaus Weaving Designs* which:

consists of some two dozen ink and watercolour designs for wall-hangings, rugs and tapestries, made by Gunta Stölzl when head of the textile department at the Dessau Bauhaus, between 1926 and 1931. Two actual wall-hangings are included with these, and a number of small weaving samples (intended for commercial production) are displayed in frames; most of the latter are again by Gunta Stölzl, but a few are by Margaret Leischner. One wall-hanging was designed by Anni Albers. A short bibliography is supplied for this exhibition, which was shown in a gallery of the V&A in 1968.⁹⁰³

It does not appear that Manchester School of Art selected this earlier Circ Bauhaus show despite the focus on textiles; this may be as exhibitions of this

⁹⁰⁰ Hugh Adams, 'The Museum as a Metro-monolith'.

⁹⁰¹ MSA/3/2/2/3/1/9, Manchester School of Art Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.

⁹⁰² Hogben, telephone conversation with Weddell, 1 February 2013.

⁹⁰³ *Loan Collections 1968-70: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1968), p. 2, MA/17/7, V&AA.

scale 'can only be lent to those larger colleges that have a proper exhibition gallery of at least one thousand square feet' and perhaps this was not available.⁹⁰⁴ In addition, Donald Tomlinson had previously staged three exhibitions of work by Margaret Leischner's Royal College of Art students at the Cotton Board Colour Design and Style Centre between 1948 and 1962.⁹⁰⁵ Whilst Circ's earlier show was pioneering, with the 1979 *Bauhaus* exhibition the Polytechnic demonstrated that Manchester's established pattern of innovative international exhibitions to inspire students continued unabated after Circ's closure. Contemporary objects are still used in teaching at Manchester today as with the 2013 exhibition *The Language of Process* shown in Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Gallery, Sir Kenneth Green Library.⁹⁰⁶

At Brighton Dr Julian Freeman was appointed as the then Polytechnic's first full-time exhibition officer in October 1978 in the period after the closure of Circ in 1977. Although there is no evidence for this supposition, it is tempting to read the two events as linked; certainly Hogben, had encouraged the Schools of Art to create dedicated and secure exhibition spaces.⁹⁰⁷ Dr Freeman's first exhibition was on the work of Charles Knight, drawn from the *Recording Britain* series in the V&A some of which were already on loan locally at East Sussex County Council's Records Department, Lewes.⁹⁰⁸ Charles Knight had a long association with Brighton, studying at the School of Art and retiring as Vice Principal in 1967; Knight was active in securing the V&A loans for the show.

Maggie Gordon, a graphic designer who taught at Brighton 1969-1990, designed the first publicity schemes for the new Polytechnic Gallery.⁹⁰⁹ Dr Freeman

⁹⁰⁴ *National Museum Loan Service: Loan Collections 1972-74: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions, Victoria & Albert Museum, Circulation Department* (London: HMSO, 1972), p. 1, MA/17, V&AA.

⁹⁰⁵ Donald Tomlinson, 'Margaret Leischner Obituary', *Design* 259 (1970), 83
<<http://vads.ac.uk/diad/article.php?title=259&year=1970&article=d.259.43>> [accessed 24 July 2015].

⁹⁰⁶ David Grimshaw, *The Language of Process* (Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University, 2013); 23 September-20 December 2013
<http://www.specialcollections.mmu.ac.uk/files/langproc_catalogue.pdf> [accessed 23 July 2015].

⁹⁰⁷ Hogben conversation with Weddell, 30 October 2012.

⁹⁰⁸ Julian Freeman, *Charles Knight R. W. S.: A Catalogue of a Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings in Oil and Watercolour* (Brighton: Brighton Polytechnic Gallery, 1979).

⁹⁰⁹ Lyon and Woodham, p. 363.

exhibited modern British fine art, seeing it as the role of Brighton Museum to cover decorative art.⁹¹⁰ These fine art shows, both solo and mixed exhibitions in different media, were linked to the wider activities of the Brighton Festival and went on to tour elsewhere, both in London and regionally, for example on Frank Brangwyn in 1980.⁹¹¹ An interest in design and decorative art was a feature of teaching at Brighton Polytechnic which offered an honours degree in History of Design; the launch there of the Design History Society in 1977 was a significant development for the discipline as Circ closed. After Circ's closure the Liverpool College of Art continued to stage high quality touring exhibitions, for example the Liverpool John Moores University Archive has retained the posters for the Arts Council's touring show on *Sonia Delaunay* in 1979, and the Crafts Council's 1980 touring show *British Shoes Since 1790*, when material on Circ was sparse. This activity seems to demonstrate that, without Circ loans, regional art schools developed their own dynamic programmes, collaborating with other regional museums and galleries to maximise impact from spending as well as using other sources of touring shows.

The Manchester School of Art material provides valuable evidence of a full range of shows accepted by a major art school. The evidence of shows from other sources, for example self-generated and the Goethe-Institut, provides a balanced picture of Circ's contribution. The Manchester Archive log book had a complete listing of Circ shows from 1949 to 1963 but no visitor figures or supporting information. There were some exhibition catalogues but none by Circ and there was no direct evidence of impact on students or staff. At Cardiff School of Art discussions with former members of staff indicate in a qualitative manner a deep appreciation of Circ shows as a valuable source of inspiration with the emphasis on seeing the original, despite London, as the metropolitan origin and centre, retaining its status.

⁹¹⁰ Dr Julian Freeman, email to Joanna Weddell, 15 October 2012.

⁹¹¹ Julian Freeman, *The Art of Frank Brangwyn* (Brighton: Brighton Polytechnic, 1980). Gallery, Brighton Polytechnic; Fine Art Society, London; Graves Art Gallery Sheffield, 1980.

⁹¹² Cooper, interviewed by Partington. 'Ceramic Points of View: 'Bull' by William Newland, *Visit*, Victoria & Albert Museum, n.d. <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/ceramics-points-of-view-william-newlands-bull/>> [accessed 5 August 2015].

Impact on Regional Artists and Designers

In the very early stages of the thesis research, attention was directed to the V&A Oral History resource directed by Linda Sandino and Matthew Partington. This resource includes an interview with the ceramicist Emmanuel Cooper that demonstrates a relationship between the activities of Circ in the regions, albeit through the Schools Service (not otherwise the focus of this investigation). In the interview Cooper recalled viewing a Circ object, William Newland's earthenware *Bull*, 1954 (CIRC.57-1954):

When I was at school, which was in the 1950s, a very nice grammar school, they took the cases, which were circulating exhibitions from the Victoria and Albert Museum and in one of them there was a bull. And I don't know whether it was this bull or a smaller version, he made many versions, but I just thought at the time what a wonderful object it was. It seemed to me to be so up to date, so clear and simple and I don't know, it just seemed to me to be so thrilling. So when I see it I'm back in that art room in that grammar school in Derbyshire thinking and seeing that bull there and thinking about that. And this brings it back. What is always a shock to me when I see this is how big this bull is. My memory is that it's always very much smaller and he did make smaller versions, but this is actually quite a big piece and when you pick it up it's a tremendous weight which roots it.⁹¹²

In a neatly circular resolution, Cooper's own contribution to Circ's collections, a stoneware dish from 1970 (CIRC.490-1970), is now displayed in Room 142 of the Museum, just a couple of metres from Newland's *Bull*. The focus of Circ on the acquisition of contemporary objects, 'so up to date', is justified here, where viewing is clearly recalled as a physical experience, 'back in that art room', with study at first hand in relation to scale, 'a shock to me', and haptic impact, 'tremendous weight'. This early research success in demonstrating the impact of Circ has not been sustained.

Whilst artists and designers value the V&A, even if not uncritically, no evidence has been found of specific recollection of Circ exhibitions, even if they were being exhibited at a particular school of art they attended. For example, a painter

⁹¹² Cooper, interviewed by Partington. 'Ceramic Points of View: 'Bull' by William Newland, *Visit*, Victoria & Albert Museum, n.d. <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/ceramics-points-of-view-william-newlands-bull/>> [accessed 5 August 2015].

(b.1949) trained at Newcastle,⁹¹³ a landscape architect (b.1951)⁹¹⁴ trained at Manchester, and a sculptor (b.1949) trained at Leeds⁹¹⁵ produced no recollections of Circ exhibitions, although local art galleries and museums had been visited. Another painter (b.1934) who trained at the West of England College of Art could not recall having heard of Circ, despite having handwritten lecture notes from 1953/54 with a recommendation from lecturer Mr Horstmann ARCA to attend Circ exhibitions.⁹¹⁶ Similarly, an architect (b.1952)⁹¹⁷ recalled the positive impact of visiting local galleries in Gateshead, the Shipley Art Gallery and the Saltwell Park Local & Industrial Museum in his youth; both these venues hosted Circ exhibitions but they were not specifically recalled or identified as such. This lack of evidence of impact perhaps demonstrates that a student audience focuses on the contents rather than the provenance of exhibitions.

It is possible to find many prominent designers who credit the V&A at South Kensington as a formative experience, such as Terence Conran, or Lucienne Day, but the same has not been possible for the V&A in the regions.⁹¹⁸ Lucienne Day also credits the Circ purchase of her textiles produced for her Royal College of Art student show and it may be that the acquisition of contemporary objects was the major way that Circ had an impact on designers in the post-war period. The 1961 *International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961* held with the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths contained several examples made at the joint invitation of the Company and the Museum, for example by Alan Davie (CIRC.374-1961) and William Scott (CIRC.401-1962).⁹¹⁹ There are also records of artists and designers citing the influence of Circ exhibitions, but again those held in London rather than their regional versions. The impact of the *Collingwood Coper* exhibition at its South Kensington showing in 1969, for example, is mentioned as significant in

⁹¹³ Richard Cave, conversation with Joanna Weddell, 6 June 2012.

⁹¹⁴ Hilary Parkinson, conversation with Joanna Weddell, 6 June 2012.

⁹¹⁵ Bryan Lumsden, conversation with Joanna Weddell, 20 August 2013.

⁹¹⁶ Mary Smythe, conversation with Joanna Weddell, 8 November 2013.

⁹¹⁷ Anonymous, conversation with Joanna Weddell, 22 July 2014.

⁹¹⁸ 'V&A Search the Collections: Event: 150th Anniversary of the V&A', *V&A Museum*, Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d. <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/cis/search/event/529/slug/150th-anniversary-of-the-va-v723>> [accessed 27 May 2016].

⁹¹⁹ *International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961* (Westerham, Kent: the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, 1961).

recordings of interviews by Hawksmoor Hughes with designers such as Mary Wondrausch and Robin Welch held by the British Library's Sound & Moving Image Catalogue as part of *Recording the Crafts*.⁹²⁰ Barbara Morris's *Inspiration for Design: The Influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum* does discuss the activities of Circ but other than direct commissions, and general influences, there are no specific examples.⁹²¹ This lack of evidence of impact is perhaps a reflection on the resistance of the process of inspiration to direct causal relationships with an output that can be straightforwardly quantified, measured and estimated.

Circ staff recalled the positive impact of seeing Circ exhibitions when they attended regional art schools. For Geoffrey Opie who was at Falmouth School of Art:

I can remember thinking when I was at art school that I would never have seen these drawings by Michelangelo ... Rembrandt etchings, there were drawings of Piranesi's architecture. I remember all those coming to the art school when I was there in the fifties and they were all Circ exhibitions.⁹²²

Margot Coatts also had positive memories of Circ shows at Folkestone School of Art, whilst for Elizabeth Knowles who went to St Albans School of Art, 'we'd had their exhibitions at the art college where I was so I knew that this scheme existed and that it did, in my opinion, good stuff'.⁹²³ These memories are recalled from a position of justifying Circ's activity as well as validating their own origins in the art school system – a vital part of Circ's curatorial identity as distinct from the rest of the Museum. These experiences of Circ shows would also have provided insight when constructing travelling exhibitions destined to reach art students like themselves. Opie remembered that he had not known that the Falmouth shows came from the V&A and it was only later that he recognised the shows he worked on. This emphasises that the impact on these three sources was recalled and testified in light of that later realisation of the significance of what was seen for

⁹²⁰ Mary Wondrausch (b.1923), interviewed by Hawksmoor Hughes, 20 September 2007, Robin Welch (b.1936), interviewed by Hawksmoor Hughes, 29 January 2008, *Sound & Moving Image Catalogue*, British Library <<http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=2DMYOcE6gE/WORKS-FILE/0/49>> [accessed 12 December 2010].

⁹²¹ Morris, *Inspiration for Design*, pp. 56-64.

⁹²² Opie interviewed by Weddell.

⁹²³ Coatts conversation with Weddell. Knowles interviewed by Partington.

their own personal narrative. This demonstrates that, while personal and institutional narratives ‘become inextricably mixed up’, these oral recollections provide valid information. It is not that impact was not present at the time of viewing, rather that it was not lodged in the memory as an identifiable event. In this case oral testimony, or Portelli’s ‘much closer personal involvement’, precisely because of its connotations of being partial, provides us with a more substantial record than the archive.⁹²⁴

Impact on Manchester’s Textile Industry

In 1950 the Director of the Council of Industrial Design, Gordon Russell, wrote about the development of co-operation between museums and industry in *The Museums Journal*. Russell felt that for ‘the important job of going out to meet industry’ much ‘would depend on the personality of the curator’.⁹²⁵ Russell highlighted the Council’s small *Design Fair* touring shows as a successful collaboration between regional museums and industry. Russell felt that the Council’s selection of the best contemporary industrial products for the Festival of Britain provided an opportunity for the V&A:

Would it not seem most fitting that one of the greatest of our national museums, whose collections are unrivalled and whose Director [Sir Leigh Ashton] is so sympathetic to contemporary work, should explore actively the possibilities of still further co-operation with industry?⁹²⁶

Russell’s clarion call to the Museum did not stir Ashton or the Keepers of the main Departments, and Circ’s response, the projected *English Arts & Crafts 1851-1951* exhibition, became *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1952.⁹²⁷ Despite this, Floud and Circ can be said to have actively collaborated with industry. This thesis

⁹²⁴ Portelli, p. 68.

⁹²⁵ Gordon Russell, ‘The Development of Cooperation between Museums and Industry’, International Council on Museums Second Biennial Conference, London, 17-22 July 1950, ICOM/BI/Conf.2/6, 15 May 1950, p. 6. Later published in *Museums Journal*, 50.8 (1950), 172-176.

⁹²⁶ Russell, ‘The Development of Co-Operation’, p. 6. By 1950 *Design Fair* had visited National Museum of Wales, Manchester City Art Gallery, Birmingham City Museum & Art Gallery, Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol City Art Gallery, Southampton Art Gallery, Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston, Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull.

⁹²⁷ P.C.F. (Peter Floud), Plan for 1851-1951 Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Minute Sheet to the Director, 10 March 1950, Floud ‘mentioned the project in passing to Mr. Gordon Russell, who was extremely enthusiastic’, MA/28/85/1 *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1949-1953, Part 1, V&AA.

examines Circ in relation to Manchester textiles as a model of museum engagement with and impact on industry where Peter Floud's diligent scholarship combined with the energy of Donald Tomlinson's activities at the Cotton Board.

During the war in 1943 the Museum had already sent an exhibition of textiles to Manchester, 'intended to help inspire future designs'.⁹²⁸ As Circ re-opened after the war there were visits to Manchester textile manufacturers to source contemporary fabrics, for example by Floud, in July 1947, and Morris, in June 1948.⁹²⁹ Recorded in the Circ Acquisitions Registers from 1947 onwards are numerous textile gifts from Manchester textile firms as well as purchases, already demonstrating this strong relationship with industry in the north-west. Manchester firms such as JA Duke & Co, JH Birtwistle & Co, Alfred Kay & Co Ltd, Victor Hassan Ltd, Logan, Muckelt & Co Ltd, and Nahum's Fabrics Ltd, all donated textiles to the Museum, whilst Circ also made purchases from Bolton firm Helios Ltd, paying 9s 8d for the *Sutherland Rose* pattern (CIRC.71-1947).⁹³⁰

Two major Circ exhibitions were developed in collaboration with the Manchester-based trade organisation, the Cotton Board. The Cotton Board had been founded in 1940 by a levy on industry to promote and regulate textiles during the war. In 1948 the Board became a statutory body concerned with post-war reconstruction,

⁹²⁸ Marguerite Dupree, *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat: Vol 2* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.152.

⁹²⁹ V&A Archive MA/1/L1836, thanks to Nicola Stylianou for sight of thesis chapters, Nicola Stylianou, *Producing and Collecting for Empire: African Textiles in the V&A 1852-2000*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of the Arts London, October 2012 <http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/6141/1/Stylianou,_Nicola_CCW_final_thesis.pdf> [accessed 30 September 2015].

⁹³⁰ CIRC.37-1947 JA Duke & Co Manchester, CIRC.38-1947 JH Birtwistle & Co, Manchester, CIRC.39-1947 Alfred Kay & Co Ltd, 125 Portland Street, Manchester, CIRC.45-1947 Victor Hassan Ltd, 53 Whitworth Street, Manchester, CIRC.79-1947 Logan, Muckelt & Co Ltd, 14 St Peter's Square, Manchester 2, through to CIRC.87-1947, CIRC.36 to 37-1948 Nahum's Fabrics Ltd, 14 Cumberland Street, Manchester 3; CIRC.71-1947 Graham Sutherland, Sutherland Rose, 1946, Helios Ltd, Bolton, Lancashire, price 9s8d, dated 17.9.47, through to CIRC.78-1947. Several of these exhibited in the British Industries Fair, Olympia and Earls Court, London, 5-16 May, 1947, organised by Board of Trade, Export Promotion Department. '1947 British Industries Fair', *British Industries Fair*, Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, 19 February 2016 <http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/1947_British_Industries_Fair> [accessed 24 July 2016]. The same firms were probably used for Utility Collection clothing designed by the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers, Board of Trade donation to V&A, 1942. Thanks to Professor Lou Taylor for 'Export Drive: London Fashion for South America,' *Vogue*, May 1941, pp. 53-55; AC Kay and Logan Muckelt textiles illustrated on fashions by Utility clothing designers.

an Industrial Development Council of industry representatives with a chair appointed by the Board of Trade. The Board set up the Manchester Colour Design and Style Centre to promote research innovation and exports as trade was threatened by foreign trade barriers and international competition, as shown by the 1959 Cotton Industry Act. The Board closed in 1969.⁹³¹ Donald Tomlinson was the influential Director of the Colour Design & Style Centre from 1951-64, having been Deputy Director 1948-51, and donated many of the couture dresses designed in cotton during this period to Manchester Art Gallery. The Cotton Board, Colour Design & Style Centre Photographic Collection is held by the Special Collections Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University and comprises some 1,300 photographs taken between 1950 and 1969 only one of which relates to the V&A Circ collaborative exhibitions.⁹³² This may not only suggest that Circ shows were considered unimportant and lacking gravitas, but also reflect the Board's economic objectives and industrial priorities, rather than the aesthetically charged outlook of Circ exhibitions. Similarly the University of Manchester Library, which holds archives relating to textile firms, did not have any holdings related to Circ exhibitions again suggesting that these were not considered significant in this industrial centre.⁹³³

The first collaboration between Circ and the Cotton Board was *English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste* in 1955 first displayed at the Colour Design & Style Centre in Manchester rather than at South Kensington, and later travelling as

⁹³¹ David Clayton, 'Buy British: The Collective Marketing of Cotton Textiles, 1956-1962', *Textile History*, 41.2 (2010), 217-235 <<http://www.york.ac.uk/media/history/documents/Clayton%202010.pdf>> [accessed 28 December 2010]. 'Papers of Sir Raymond Streat', *Electronic Gateway to Archives at Rylands*, University of Manchester, n.d. <<http://archives.li.man.ac.uk/ead/search?operation=full&rsid=373840&firstrec=1&numreq=20&highlight=1&hitposition=0#rightcol>> [accessed 28 December 2010]. The effectiveness of the Cotton Board is hard to assess, see Clayton and 'Cotton Couture', *Past Exhibitions*, Manchester Art Gallery, n.d. <<http://manchesterartgallery.org/exhibitions-and-events/exhibition/cotton-couture/>> [accessed 21 August 2014].

⁹³² Jeremy C. Parrett, Special Collections Archivist, Manchester Metropolitan University, email to Joanna Weddell, 9 October 2013; V&A *English Chintz* 1955 and 1960 catalogues are held.

⁹³³ Dr James Peters, Archivist, University Archive & Records Centre, University of Manchester Library, email to Joanna Weddell, 23 May 2014; records include McConnel & Kennedy, Samuel Oldknow and Rylands & Sons.

Two Centuries of Chintz.⁹³⁴ A press view was held in Manchester with Peter Floud presenting his local discovery, the Bromley Hall pattern book later donated to the Museum.⁹³⁵ As the local press explained:

Cellars in Oxford-street, Manchester, have given up a secret ... a unique eighteenth-century pattern book ... was discovered by chance when Mr. Peter Floud, one of the keepers of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, came North to undertake research ... He was given permission to go through the archives of the Calico Printers' Association where he waded through 1,000 pattern-books.⁹³⁶

There was a degree of national pride as the pattern book 'discovered only a few weeks ago' contained 'a host of gorgeous and extravagant designs' confirming 'eighteenth century English fabric printing as the envy of all Europe'.⁹³⁷ 'Mr Floud believes that [the pattern book] may well have some influence on present-day design. ... he said: "I should have thought that any present-day designer would get a lot of inspiration out of these."⁹³⁸ Indeed this show was followed up in 1960 by *English Chintz* where contemporary fabrics based on the pattern book were displayed in the last section of the show. By 1960 it was noted that the 1955 exhibition:

was ahead of its time, though it did encourage British designers and fabric producers to examine afresh the roots of the British tradition. It has enabled them to appreciate more clearly those special qualities of fine drawing, craftsmanship, which people overseas have long associated with British furnishing fabrics.⁹³⁹

The Calico Printers' Association Archive is now held by Manchester Central Library but the only records of Peter Floud's extensive research into Manchester textiles which had begun in 1952⁹⁴⁰ were illustrated local and national press

⁹³⁴ *The Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), MA/17/3/2, V&AA. James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum*, VX.1955.XXX.002.

⁹³⁵ E.458:135-1955, V&A.

⁹³⁶ Margaret Roberts, 'He Opened a Yellowing Book – and Rediscovered an English Century's Tastes', (probably) *News Chronicle & Daily Dispatch*, 30 November 1955, M75/NC, Calico Printers' Association Archive, Manchester Central Library, Manchester.

⁹³⁷ Roberts, 'He Opened a Yellowing Book'.

⁹³⁸ By Our Industrial Staff, 'Unique Book Discovered in Calico Printers' Archives' *Manchester Guardian*, 30 Nov. 1959, M75/NC, Calico Printers' Association Archive, Manchester Central Library, Manchester.

⁹³⁹ 'The New Chintz Tradition', *The Ambassador*, p. 103.

⁹⁴⁰ Briggs.

cuttings on the occasion of the 1955 *English Chintz* exhibition. The fact that coverage of Floud's research was archived, however, does support the judgement of the Council of Industrial Design's James Noel White that his sudden death in 1960 was a loss to the 'textile industry'.⁹⁴¹ The 1955 exhibition appears to have been opened by the fashion editor Alison Settle and was favourably reviewed in the local press.⁹⁴² The *Manchester Guardian* described the show as 'of major interest', praising 'the amazing depth of colour, subdued yet opulent, achieved by the "madder-style" wood block prints .../among the peaks of the show, to which visitors are likely to return again and again'. Regional if nostalgic pride noted 'a reminder in the Century Guild items of how well ahead in the advance guard of design Manchester then stood'.⁹⁴³

The travelling 'Special Exhibition' prepared from this Manchester show was *Two Centuries of Chintz*, also discussed in Chapter 4. The description in the prospectus for museums not only tells us the large scale of this 'special' exhibition – 150 textiles – but also Circ's focus on the design process, with the inclusion of original designs and printing blocks. Display methods and collections management standards are further emphasised. The show had a travel charge of £10 and was:

the first exhibition that has ever attempted to cover the complete history of British printed furnishing fabrics from their eighteenth-century origins to the present day. It will incorporate much hitherto unknown material which has come to light as a result of the research undertaken in its preparation. In addition to 150 fabrics, the exhibition will include ancillary material such as original designs, printing blocks etc. It will be displayed on specially designed units and screens, and will require the floor and wall space of the equivalent of a gallery 1,200 square feet in area. Its showing will necessitate the most exacting precautions against strong light. There will be a catalogue and a separate picture-book for sale with the exhibition. Its first showing will be at the Cotton Board Design Centre in Manchester.⁹⁴⁴

⁹⁴¹ Noel White.

⁹⁴² 'Alison Settle Archive', *Design Archives*, University of Brighton, n.d. <<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/collections/design-archives/archives/alison-settle>> [accessed 10 October 2015].

⁹⁴³ By Our Own Reporter, 'Two Centuries of Chintz: Fantasies of Colour', *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 December 1955, p. 4.

⁹⁴⁴ *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions 1956: Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1955), p. 3, MA/17/3/2, V&AA. James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum*, VX.1955.XXX.002.

The need for high quality textile design inspiration, whether derived from historic or contemporary fabrics, is highlighted by the newspaper cuttings kept by the Calico Printers' Association Archive. In the 1950s copying of British designs, particularly by Japanese companies, was a recurring and persistent concern for textile and ceramics manufacturers.⁹⁴⁵ The Archive does record local press coverage of other exhibitions of textiles, suggesting these were considered significant, for example at London commercial galleries such as *Design at Source* at Gimpel Fils, 1956, Louis le Brocquy textiles for David Whitehead, photographs by Jay, at the suggestion of *The Ambassador Magazine*.⁹⁴⁶ The Archive also kept cuttings of other exhibitions at the Colour Design & Style Centre, Manchester, for example in 1956 of overseas fabrics from America and France that aimed to inform regional manufacturers of the more 'sophisticated' trends in fashion by 'the traditional leaders'.⁹⁴⁷ Clearly a wide variety of exhibitions were of interest in the search for market advantage through innovative design.

One Circ exhibition did merit a local press notice and inclusion in the Calico Printers' Association Archive, this was *Scandinavian Furnishing Fabrics*, 1956, at Oldham Municipal Art Gallery – later shown at Manchester Regional College of Art. The exhibition was seen as offering 'a challenge to the textile industry' through 'recent trends in Scandinavian design'. The review notes that the fabrics 'although unmistakably "contemporary," could have been produced anywhere from Paris to New York', being screen-printed with 'vigorous images on a large scale ... more suitable for public than for domestic interiors'. Typical of these fabrics was Maija Isola's *Citrus*, 'one of the most striking prints in the exhibition'.⁹⁴⁸ The importance

⁹⁴⁵ 'Textile Mission to Japan: Talks on Copying', *The Manchester Guardian*, 22 October 1954, M75/NC, Calico Printers' Association Archive, Manchester Central Library, Manchester. 'Pottery Industry (Japanese Competition)', HC Deb, 27 July 1950, Vol 478 C659-60 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1950/jul/27/pottery-industry-japanese-competition#S5CV0478P0_19500727_HOC_41> [accessed 7 October 2016].

⁹⁴⁶ *The Ambassador Magazine: Promoting Post-War British Textiles and Fashion*, ed. by Christopher Breward and Claire Wilcox (London: V&A Publishing, 2012), p. 74.

⁹⁴⁷ Stephen Bone, 'Designs and Their Sources: Textile Exhibition', *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 September 1956; By Our Own Reporter, 'Foreign Fabrics Fashion Hint: Darker Shades Dominate', *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 September 1956, M75/NC, Calico Printers' Association Archive, Manchester Central Library, Manchester. Louis le Brocquy: CIRC.643-1956.

⁹⁴⁸ By Our Own Reporter, 'Furnishings from Scandinavia: An Oldham Exhibition', *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 September 1956, M75/NC, Calico Printers' Association Archive, Manchester Central Library, Manchester. CIRC.659-1956.

of high quality designs in the quest for international competitiveness was underlined in a speech given that same year in Manchester by political economist, Professor GC Allen of University College London. Allen emphasised that success depended on 'doing superlatively what others were doing indifferently, or by discovering how to produce and sell new varieties of products that others had yet devised'.⁹⁴⁹

Floud's research in the field of textiles continued to the Patent Office where, in a breakthrough of scholarship, he pioneered the accurate dating of textiles through previously unused records. The fruits of this scholarship were seen in the May 1960 exhibition *English Chintz: English Printed Furnishing Fabrics from their Origins until the Present Day* at the V&A and later touring, produced by Barbara Morris according to Floud's plans. The show was posthumous as Floud died suddenly of a brain tumour at the start of the year.

English Chintz was a further collaboration with Manchester's textile industry as the Cotton Board staged two exhibitions in support of Circ's South Kensington show. *A New Chintz Tradition; Britain's Cotton Furnishings Today* was held in Manchester at the Colour Design & Style Centre, 24 May-24 June 1960, and at the Ceylon Tea Centre, 22 Lower Regent Street, London, 2-18 June 1960. It is perhaps significant that in a trade publication, *The Cabinet Maker*, the London and Manchester exhibitions are discussed in terms of complete equality as both 'are important and likely to create widespread interest'. The close relationship of the Museum to the Cotton Board show is explained as:

a number of firms have co-operated in reproducing by modern methods some of the most distinguished of the prints in the V.&A. exhibition and there will be others specially commissioned from a number of young British designers who have produced inspired variations based on the older designs. It should all add up to a fascinating exhibition aimed at boosting British domestic, as distinct from decorator fabrics, in retail shops and stores.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁹ From Our Own Correspondent, 'Key Textile Qualities: Novelty and Cheapness', *The Financial Times*, 7 April 1956, M75/NC, Calico Printers' Association Archive, Manchester Central Library, Manchester.

⁹⁵⁰ 'Two Important Fabrics Exhibitions', *The Cabinet Maker and Complete House Furnisher, Old and New*, 20 May 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA.

This trade article specifically mentions the improvements in textiles as the ‘greater flow of the drawing and also the verticality in the patterns were getting away from the previous small and repetitive designs.’ The 1960 South Kensington exhibition was displayed chronologically so that the last four fabrics were contemporary ones, ‘produced specially for this exhibition on the basis of some of the historic material assembled for it’, with the aim of providing ‘further inspiration to textile designers’.⁹⁵¹

For Barbara Morris the two exhibitions ‘played a vital part in revitalizing the British textile industry’, being studied by designers and students.⁹⁵² The *Evening Standard* critic felt the V&A exhibition would be ‘a major influence on fashion’ not just for its own content but because ‘most particularly, the go-ahead Cotton Board is organising a show of modern cotton design to run in both London and Manchester at the same time’.⁹⁵³ The trade and export magazine, *The Ambassador*,⁹⁵⁴ ran a major feature as the:

Cotton Board’s simultaneous exhibitions, in London and Manchester, show how British furnishing fabric manufacturers have taken inspiration from their great past, and will no doubt help designers, distributors and the public as a whole to assess the quality of today’s design standards.⁹⁵⁵

The feature was extensively illustrated to ‘show some of the wealth of ideas available’. This repeated emphasis in the press coverage of the value of the direct relationship established between the scholarly historical museum exhibition and the contemporary textile displays in both London and Manchester can perhaps be summed up by the headline in the *Textile Mercury and Argus*, Manchester, of 24 June 1960: “Printed Cotton Furnishings: Encouraging the Retailer to Stock Better Fabrics”.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵¹ *Loan Exhibition of English Chintz* (London: HMSO, 1960), pp. 69-70.

⁹⁵² Morris, *Inspiration for Design*, p. 116.

⁹⁵³ Barbara Griggs, ‘From a Museum: A Design for the Future’, *Evening Standard*, 4 January 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA.

⁹⁵⁴ Breward and Wilcox explain the standing of this publication.

⁹⁵⁵ ‘The New Chintz Tradition’, 103-114. Breward and Wilcox, p. 155.

⁹⁵⁶ ‘Printed Cotton Furnishings: Encouraging the Retailer to Stock Better Fabrics’, *Textile Mercury and Argus*, 24 June 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA.

In the same year, 1960, an editorial in *The Burlington Magazine* commented on the need for better design in British industry, specifically linking improvements to student examination of historic examples and deploring the lack of a permanent display in London. The article noted as significant the temporary exhibitions in Manchester in 1955, together with Circ's *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*, 1952, and *English Chintz*, 1960 – 'three landmarks, [that] have come as a revelation'. Perhaps prompted by a previous editor, Herbert Read, the unusual editorial called on the V&A:

not only to secure outstanding examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century designs before prices become prohibitive, but to display them with the generosity they deserve. A proper recognition by our leading museum of applied arts of our achievements in these fields during the last 100 years would be of great educational value, and would be in harmony both with the traditions of this museum and with the new spirit of determination with which problems of design in industry are at last being tackled.⁹⁵⁷

For *The Burlington Magazine* the 1960 *English Chintz* exhibition is seen with national and regional pride and some satisfaction as the textile industry is one 'in which we can still claim to lead the world' while the 'standard of wood-block printing in the North of England was higher during the first quarter of the nineteenth century than anywhere else in Europe'. The article laments that at the V&A in 1960 'for twentieth-century applied arts, we can search for them in vain'; the *English Chintz* show represented an exception to this rule, with new designs such as Lucienne Day's *Halcyon*.⁹⁵⁸ In the final section of the 1955 *English Chintz* show, 1945-51, just two contemporary textiles were shown whereas in the 1960 show this section covered the period up to 1960 and 16 post-war fabrics were selected, including the four specially commissioned for the exhibition representing the V&A's 'selection of the best in contemporary design'.⁹⁵⁹

To summarise, in the post-war period Circ engaged with the textile industry in Manchester in several ways so that it is perhaps more accurate to say that it was

⁹⁵⁷ Nicholson, 343.

⁹⁵⁸ Nicholson, 343.

⁹⁵⁹ 'Cotton Board Chintzes to Tour South Africa: Australian Store to Stage Exhibition in September', *Household Textiles & Soft Furnishings*, p. 3, 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA. CIRC.316.1960; T.320:1-1999; CIRC.317A-1960; CIRC.90A-1961.

the city that had the greater impact on the Museum showing that a straightforwardly post-colonial reading of the dynamic would be inaccurate. Circ had a close and sustained engagement, starting with the very first new acquisitions in 1947, followed by Floud's extensive research in the city, culminating in the discovery of the Bromley Hall pattern book, eventually the inspiration for fabrics produced for the 1960 *English Chintz* exhibition. In 1955, *English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste*, held first in Manchester gave Cottonopolis its due as the centre of the British textile industry, whilst the travelling version of this and other contemporary textile shows spread design inspiration through the north-west. Circ collaborated with a trade archive, the Calico Printers' Association, an industrial development council, the Cotton Board, and its associated textile companies, the trade promotion magazine, *The Ambassador*, and interiors magazine, *House & Garden*, as well as researching in the Patent Office and the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, which loaned and donated many textiles. The close relationship between the Department's scholarly expertise and the textile industry can perhaps be said to have reached a zenith with 1960's *English Chintz: English Printed Furnishing Fabrics from their Origins until the Present Day* at South Kensington accompanied by the Cotton Board's *A New Chintz Tradition; Britain's Cotton Furnishings Today* in Manchester and London.

Touring exhibitions after Floud's death continued to incorporate contemporary textiles in association with industry, for example *RCA Courtaulds* 1969, showcasing new printing and fabricating techniques and previously displayed at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield.⁹⁶⁰ The prediction that 'Peter Floud, with his scholarship and enthusiasm, seemed likely to sponsor a dramatic revival of the great English textile tradition' would seem on this evidence to have some validity.⁹⁶¹ Here Floud and Circ can be seen to be part of a state-backed

⁹⁶⁰ *Loan Collections 1968-70: Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions* (London: HMSO, 1968), MA/17/1/7, V&AA. Insert: Department of Education and Science: Loan Collections 1968-70, Supplementary list of collections newly available to colleges from September, 1969: *RCA – Courtaulds*.

⁹⁶¹ 'A New Chintz Tradition?', *House & Garden*, June 1960, MA/19/5, V&AA.

framework that negotiates with the markets of mechanised mass production for their absorption into culture - a synthesis of culture and commerce.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: The Impact of the V&A Circulation Department in the Regions 1947-77

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Figure 44: Reproduction Circ Poster, *Victorian Popular Art*, 1971, V&A Shop Display 2016. Author photograph. Original in colour.

To re-cap, the research questions posed in this thesis are:

1. What is the historical significance of the V&A Circulation Department in the collection and display of contemporary design 1947-1977?
2. What particular design narratives were promoted by the spatial dynamics and installations of the Circulation Department's touring exhibitions at different regional venues?
3. From this study of the regional impact of the Circulation Department, is there evidence for a simplistic model of the operation of influence or for a more complex circulatory flow, regenerating both museum and regions?

There are some caveats when evaluating the regional impact of Circ in the period 1947-77. Quantitative and qualitative information on travelling exhibitions has been explored, drawing on the model of Bourdieu & Darbel with Schnapper who used visitor numbers and comments. Circ travelling shows were accepted by museums, galleries and schools of art and education on a voluntary rather than compulsory

or mandatory basis, meaning that UK coverage was not necessarily even, being dependent on a receptive institution.

One caveat is that the evaluation is focused on the regional activity of Circ so the research may have become a self-fulfilling exercise where the Department appears to have a disproportionate importance in post-war design and museology. It is hoped that such a bias has been mitigated by undertaking detailed primary research within regional archives and attending to a spectrum of provincial travelling exhibitions from other sources. As is evident, the types of information and level of detail available some 40 years after the Department's closure has been limited and not directly relative to current statistical methods. The contemporary V&A has 41 public spending performance indicators with two that loosely relate to Circ; Performance Indicator 12 is 'Regional engagement' (Number of UK loan venues, mandatory) and Performance Indicator 16 is 'Number of visits by professionals, teachers and students in the Creative Industries' (voluntary).⁹⁶² There may have been impact where a causal relationship exists but cannot be observed or verified, for example, a designer may have been positively inspired by a Circ show at art school but not have articulated this inspiration in accessible form.

There may have been unintended changes as a result of Circ's travelling shows. For example, as in the discussion of the appeal of the prêt-à-porter exhibition in Chapter 4, there are indications that a reliance on the efficient provision of 'ready-made' Circ shows may have facilitated a more passive role for regional institutions in the research and display of their own collections. The structure of Circ operating from a metropolitan institution may be seen to have promoted passive provincial reception as there is some evidence that more active institutions participated, whilst others ignored Circ initiatives in favour of quiet inertia. The absence of Circ shows after closure may have prompted more regional activity as curators had an

⁹⁶² 'Sponsored Museums Performance Indicators 2014/15', *Official Statistics*, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 19 November 2015
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sponsored-museums-annual-performance-indicators-2014-15/sponsored-museums-annual-performance-indicators-2014-15>> [accessed 11 October 2016].

incentive to act because the expectation of regularly changing temporary exhibitions had been established in local audiences.

As there was no base assessment of the state of design as Circ re-opened in 1947, it is not possible to assess objectively the value added by impact. There are some factors that may have favourably affected the impact of Circ's activities in the post-war period such as a social and political bias in favour of equality for all; the Attlee Government's National Health Service is an example, as is the 1951 Festival of Britain's nationwide activities. As previously outlined, factors include wider changes in access to education through radio and television, rising numbers entering university and the launch of the Open University,⁹⁶³ more generally increasing prosperity and consumption, the growth in advertising of consumer products and closely allied initiatives such as Council of Industrial Design and Arts Council travelling shows. In addition, factors that may have had an adverse effect on the specific impact of Circ include state control of production to improve balance of payments by promoting exports, the restriction of consumption by rationing as well as historical, commercial and technological trends that widened social influences (radio, television, colour magazines, advertising). These factors may confuse the perceived impact as they are likely to have intervened in the outcome, however, at this distance it is not possible to consider a comparison approach.

What this study could assess is what might have happened to design in post-war Britain if Circ had not operated until 1977. As the maverick Department within the V&A, Circ's championing of contemporary art, design and ephemera may have reflected the period's blurring of traditional fine art hierarchies but also gave credibility to collecting in areas such as poster art, to some extent shaping market values as well as curatorial interests.⁹⁶⁴ Closure also had an unintended 'ripple'

⁹⁶³ 17,337 students obtaining university degrees in 1950, rising to 51,189 students in 1970. Paul Bolton, 'Education: Historical Statistics', SN/SG/4252, House of Commons Library, 2012 <<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04252/SN04252.pdf>> [accessed 7 October 2016].

⁹⁶⁴ 'Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges: 1951-2' [8 pages, typed, June 1951], p. 4, *Contemporary Posters*, MA/17/1/1, V&AA. *The Victoria & Albert Museum Circulation Department: Exhibitions*

effect in disseminating Circ's ethos and practice more widely as staff moved to other institutions, for example, Elizabeth Bailey to Tate's Print Department, then Newlyn Art Gallery, or Margot Coatt's work at the Crafts Council and as an independent author and curator. Study of the post-closure 'legacy' shows, the political, press and public reaction to closure and the current health of design and museology in the regions gives an indication of the alternatives to the Circ model of regional engagement by national museums such as the V&A, but cannot give a rigorous or definitive evaluation.

In spite of these caveats, Circ's post-war period of activity saw many landmarks of achievement as national shows travelled to bring inspiration to student designers and products to consumers. Historic surveys such as *Gothic Art* could be seen to exemplify the goal of 'the best for the most'. The loss of the proposed 1951 survey of a century of design, was vindicated through the ground-breaking *Victorian Edwardian Decorative Arts* show of 1952. Versions of *English Chintz* in 1955 and 1960 provided inspiration for the textile industry at a time when it contended with international competition and the copying of designs. *Finlandia* in 1961 presented a humanised modernism combining craft with mechanised production as a fresh model of for British industry. The accession of Design Council Award winners from 1962 prompted the acquisition of international industrial design. *Modern Chairs* of 1970 had a focus on traditional and modern materials and processes with technical comments by a prominent designer to drive industrial improvement. A new democracy of the genres was a feature of Circ shows from 1947 through the inclusion of packaging and posters, but by the late 1970s this approach was expanded with *Barge Art* and *Victorian Christmas Cards*, matching history 'from below'.

The Circ approach of 'sideboards not fantasy' can be seen as retaining curatorial control of content and authority, but given the level of available information in the post-war period, this may not be a reasonable critique. The thesis has outlined the debate within Circ on the value of narrative or thematic exhibitions practice and the

1963-64: *Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries* (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 3, *Posters of the 'Nineties*, MA/17/4/5, V&AA.

extent to which this was 'talking down'. Rather than a closed narrative of past events, this oral testimony was an open-ended debate providing a vivid account as valuable as the 'supposed equanimity and objectivity of the written document', as Portelli writes.⁹⁶⁵ Opie identified the historic approach as 'we supply facts about objects to the nation',⁹⁶⁶ or what Aslin termed 'sideboards not fantasy'.⁹⁶⁷ Coachworth felt this encouraged independence: 'what you do with it is up to you', it was 'not for us to dictate' 'the way we think you ought to look at it'.⁹⁶⁸ In contrast to current thinking, presenting 'sideboards' as 'sideboards' may not have been straightforwardly dictatorial in the context of the pre-information era. For cultural commentators such as Holden, such curatorial expertise may be termed benign, inclusive, socially useful and democratic professionalism, the public servant as educator, in contrast to the populist manipulator.⁹⁶⁹

Display narratives 'projected by the museum and constructed by the visitor'⁹⁷⁰ have been examined through installations of Circ's *Two Centuries of English Chintz* at different regional venues in the 1950s. Examination of this photographic evidence revealed the marked flexibility and consequent informality offered as display narratives, for example at Hull, demonstrating Circ's shows as responsive to space, place and identity. There was also evidence that Circ, far from pursuing 'institutional resistance to touch', developed 'haptic experience as a source of knowledge and pleasure in its own right', with both historic and contemporary fabrics handled, as at Harrogate.⁹⁷¹ At Leicester and Batley, the show can be seen in contrasting settings with complex existing ritual and educational functions that resisted a simplistic linear narrative to create a variety of opportunities for citizens to enact social change and construct identity. At Gateshead, a similarly complex range of visual cues flag up Circ's role in creating new hybrid model, between the civic and commercial. A complex interweaving both replicated South Kensington's

⁹⁶⁵ Portelli, p. 66.

⁹⁶⁶ Opie interviewed by Weddell.

⁹⁶⁷ Coatts, conversation with Weddell.

⁹⁶⁸ Coachworth interviewed by Weddell.

⁹⁶⁹ Holden, *Democratic Culture: Opening Up the Arts to Everyone* (London: Demos, 2008), p. 19, p. 31 <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Democratic_Culture.pdf?1240939425> [accessed 14 August 2014].

⁹⁷⁰ Hourston Hanks, Hale and MacLeod, p. 1.

⁹⁷¹ Candlin, 'Don't Touch!', p. 3, p. 2.

narrative and adapted it to local needs and constraints, to negotiate between appreciation and consumption. Curatorial display narratives can be seen to both alter the reading of a space and to adapt to it, demonstrating Massey's complex and entwined temporalities. Art school lecturer Baker's comments give strong and positive indications that Circ's project moved beyond traditional curatorial didacticism to promote more open-ended, independent and haptic methods of acquiring knowledge.

This thesis provided further evidence of a collaborative approach, both in the way that Circ engaged with its regional users and in the way that Circ shows were presented. This unpicking and analysis can be said to be presented as a gift of skill, the start of a conversation in the cultural chain.⁹⁷² Circ still held in reserve that tradition of curatorial authority – they presented 'sideboards' but 'not fantasy'. Collaboration was encouraged through the opportunity to leap from the sideboard to the next object or form, an opportunity presented but not described, expected or provided. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill notes, users bring their own interpretative strategies to construct meaning and ideas.⁹⁷³ What distinguished Circ's practice was a sense of duty, that the whole point of their collecting provenanced objects was to produce newer, better, more informed artists and designers for the objects of the future. Rigorous scholarship was pursued in tandem with collaborations with dynamic individuals in industry, such as Donald Tomlinson; with media partnerships, such as *The Observer* for *Modern Chairs*; with a deferral of curatorial authority to others using award winning jury-selected objects, even if not British, as for *Design Review*; and with the commission of the final objects in survey shows to showcase the best in contemporary design, as with Rut Bryk for *Tiles*. In this way, engagement with contemporary design was integral to the department's activities, a culmination, even if an emphatically open-ended one.

⁹⁷² Bal, 'Telling, Showing, Showing Off', p. 173.

⁹⁷³ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Developing a Scheme for Finding Evidence of the Outcomes and Impact of Learning in Museums, Archives and Libraries; The Conceptual Framework: Learning Impact Research Project Report* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2002) p. 3
<<https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/lirp-1-2/LIRP%20analysis%20paper%201.pdf>> [accessed 29 September 2015].

This integration saw Circ applying the scholarly curatorial imperative for firm information on provenance to contemporary industry. Hogben drew up forms for manufacturers to complete with a detailed category to establish which designers were responsible for particular designs, even if previously anonymous in-house practitioners. Circ's engagement in process was furthered by the high number of staff trained in art schools, and even shows with a high proportion of historic material would contain a section on creation and manufacture, whether by hand or machine. Process and technique was at the heart of their activity. The focus was crucial as curators should 'explain the process and technology of design, [and] investigate its economic, social and cultural conditions' in order to develop an audience of critical viewers of design 'reinforcing its centrality in a modern consumer society'.⁹⁷⁴ New formats and techniques in popular culture were quickly subsumed and sent out and Circ engaged with a wide range of objects from photography and screen prints to packaging. Circ embraced the full range of design production, covering the areas in which contemporary designers currently worked, not just the traditional hierarchy of materials-based categories.

Circ's formula for touring shows may have enabled economies in that the staff and procedures were standardised and efficient, without the effort required to re-invent every time, as attested by the large number of shows that went out during any one year. There would seem to be both advantages and disadvantages to using well established channels of distribution. The post-closure assessment of Circ may have indicated the danger that formulaic tours lead to atrophied touring services. Nevertheless, Circ was delivering touring shows not to faceless institutions in distant locations but to individuals they regularly met. Networks were formed with regional museums at the Museums Association conference and at the annual open day. Art school principals attended their own open day each year to select shows. It seems likely that the regularity of these events created a more equal exchange between both national and regional parties. The majority of shows went out with firm instructions not to alter or tamper with the order or format of display, but there was also collaboration, where major shows responded to changing

⁹⁷⁴ Rees, p. 152.

conditions, giving both support and a degree of autonomy to regional museums, for example with *The Land* at Cardiff. The nature of the relationship was less that of mono-directional exercise of power from centre to periphery and more a partnership. This was clear before Circ's closure. In 1975 Pope-Hennessy had balked at the term 'aid' in relation to travelling exhibitions from national to provincial museums; '... I dislike the noun 'aid'. It seems to me derogatory and I am glad that the concept of reciprocity or 'interaction' has been substituted'.⁹⁷⁵

The V&A established a pre-eminent reputation for scholarship in the decorative arts in part thanks to its organisation into materials-based departments which encouraged specialisation and in-depth knowledge. Circ's place in the history of the V&A has been somewhat obscured beyond its walls, being summarised as a focus on the Victorian and the contemporary. This thesis highlights the network approach that Circ constructed with regional partners in schools of art, industry and museums around the country. In addition, Circ had a strong and consistent curatorial focus on process and technique which was seen as compatible with both rigorous scholarship and an interest the latest contemporary developments.

This thesis on Circ's dissemination of design to the provinces established the validity of a colonial binary opposition that elaborates Barringer's evaluation of the South Kensington Museum to cover London's relationship with the regions. Evidence has been presented not only from Circ but also in the deferential attitude of regional museums, schools of art, and commentators towards the metropolitan, giving validity to a model of centre and periphery in this period. In contrast, however, there is additional evidence of regional centres operating as spheres of power with autonomous agency, so that the imperial paradigm can be of only partial assistance in understanding the wider regional impact of a national museum, complicating a simplistic dyad.

⁹⁷⁵ Pope-Hennessy, 'Session 2, Museums Association National Conference', 110.

Bourdieu and others emphasise analysis of the social class of visitors to art and decorative art exhibitions - lower socio-economic groups in modern terminology - but visits by young people and students of design are also important. The impact on a pupil or design student may not become apparent for many years and may be more tangential, rather than directly causal. Exhibitions by their nature generate an impact on visitors that is less tangible, harder to measure and quantify, through a range of haptic experiences, as Candlin discusses. The lack of concrete evidence of quantifiable impact makes estimating the impact of Circ shows on industry and education somewhat conjectural. As Circ staff regretted, museological impact is partly concerned with publications and print media produced to accompany exhibitions because these are the traces of a temporal experience that are most readily absorbed by the archive. That Circ staff could recall specific experiences of viewing Circ shows when at art school suggests that memories of such visits rely on subsequent connections to personal narratives, hence it can be inferred that unrecalled experiences remain unidentified.

The thesis demonstrated that Circ's approach to travelling exhibitions negotiated a path between the metropolitan and the provincial. The picture is problematic and contradictory but not straightforwardly oppositional. A more nuanced reading of Foucault on power suggests the discourse between central and local cannot be straightforwardly expressed as a top-down process. Seen 'from below', as established by the detailed archival research at regional centres, Circ can be considered as one touring exhibition provider among many in the post-war period, servicing demand for art and design novelty, as well as for education. Travelling shows were also staged by the Arts Council, the Design Council, and locally sourced contacts such as the Italian consulate in Liverpool and the Goethe-Institut in Manchester. In addition, Circ exhibitions such as *English Creamware* demonstrate the Department operating a partnership or network model in its connection with regional museums and regional culture, rather than a one-way dissemination of knowledge. The agency of regional museums and art schools is demonstrated in their independent shows, created not only after closure but while Circ still operated. The Walker Art Gallery's 1956 *Modern Italian Design* show is a notable case.

Attitudes to Circ range from passively receptive of the ready-made exhibition, to actively integrating shows into established characteristic narratives that furthered an independent regional identity. South Kensington could itself be sleepily backward rather than representing the dynamically avant-garde, in a reversal of stereotypical tropes. As established, the circular movement of objects also confounds a colonial reading, as design from the regions was absorbed into the national collection, only to re-emerge on an outward trajectory once more. The circulation of work by artists and designers at the Royal College of Art, such as Edward Bawden, may have followed the historical precedent set by the Government School of Design, but contributions were also drawn from a wider pool of prominent practitioners, such as Mary Burch Barker at Brighton, and Keith Arnatt at Liverpool. Massey's 'multiplicity of trajectories' here undermine a simplistic power/knowledge relation to reveal the regional as interconnected and dynamic.⁹⁷⁶ It is clear that a binary opposition is insufficient to describe the power dialectic between central and local players regarding Circ's migration of South Kensington objects around the country - despite press coverage of Liverpool College of Art fashion graduates as 'exiles'.

It may be seductive to view Circ in terms of a neatly Coleian vision as the end of a great Victorian meta-narrative, however, as Floud's *Times* Obituary noted: 'In building up the Department of Circulation after the war he had almost to begin anew, transforming the character of the department and bringing it in closer touch with the needs of the post-war world'.⁹⁷⁷ Floud had a vision of Circulation as a continuation of Cole's original project, but less as a programme of capitalist expansion to overseas markets and colonies than as a means to bring art and design to all. The post-war project was reconstruction; despite a sub-text of improving colonial exports and international competition, the overt text was that of peacetime activity to widen access to cultural understanding. A noble tradition of public service acted as inspiration, but it is helpful to see Circ embedded in its own historical context, rather than a continuation of a straightforwardly Victorian project.

⁹⁷⁶ Massey, p. 64.

⁹⁷⁷ 'Peter Floud: Obituary', *The Times*.

Floud adapted shows to accommodate changes in demand from regional museums. Changes included shorter terms, and complete shows rather than groups of objects individually by regional curators, who were offered a prêt-à-porter or turnkey solution. While rationing lasted, it could seem that increasing exports to improve balance of payments and encouraging consumption promoted social equality compatible with Floud's Communist Party of Great Britain membership. It is hoped that this thesis has demonstrated that while in 1947 Circ was an initiative congruent with Attlee's post-war settlement, by the time of its closure the Department faced a very different political, social, cultural and economic landscape. In the late 1970s the political priority accorded to individualism, private enterprise and the market did not sit well with the interventionism of disseminating 'good' design as part of a consensus; public interest would apparently be served by the market.⁹⁷⁸ When reflecting on the legacy of Circ and the reasons for closure, it is perhaps necessary to recall Linda Colley's view that 'ideology is effective where it reflects the interest of the groups to which it makes its appeal'.⁹⁷⁹ The validity of Circ's methods of operation remained, but the context had altered.

Today the V&A has several different forms of collaborative regional engagement and operates through both formal partnerships and flexible alliances.⁹⁸⁰ As was projected on closure in 1977, the Museum has carried on 'its long tradition of placing at the disposal of regional museums and galleries its expertise in every field of activity within the sphere of the fine and decorative arts'.⁹⁸¹ In 2014-15, the V&A toured nine exhibitions to 16 venues around the UK, with over 560,000 visitors. The shows were *Japanese Cloisonne*, *Modern Masters*, *The Birth of British Rock: Photographs by Harry Hammond*, *War Games*, *Magic Worlds*, *Teddy*

⁹⁷⁸ For example Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech Opening Design Museum', 5 July 1989, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation* <<http://www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107722>> [accessed 30 July 2013].

⁹⁷⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale: Yale University Press [1992] 2009), p. 55.

⁹⁸⁰ 'National Work', *Information*, Victoria & Albert Museum, n.d. <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/info/va-national/>> [accessed 7 October 2016].

⁹⁸¹ Roy Strong, 'In Confidence: The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Regions', Memorandum 77/896, n.d., MA/30 Central Inventory 1977, V&AA.

Bear Story, Recording Britain, Shooting Shakespeare: 100 years of Stage Photography, A World to Win: Posters of Protest and Revolution. The shows travelled widely to Stoke-on-Trent, Durham, Plymouth, Bath, Inverness, Gravesend, Sunderland, Carlisle, Southampton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Canterbury, Maidstone, Sheffield, Coventry, Dundee.⁹⁸² For museums and galleries, if not for art schools, this range and scale seems comparable to the first full listing of Circ shows given in the *Museums Journal* of August 1949. The most northerly venue then was Berwick upon Tweed which received the *History of Lithography*, the most southerly was Hove, which saw *Early English Watercolours*, the most westerly was Carmarthen, which viewed *Decorative Woven Textiles*, and most the easterly was Norwich which displayed a show of *English Chairs*.⁹⁸³ From the evidence discussed in this thesis, Circ's ethos was to see the exhibition, both regional and national, as the location for exchange, disseminating institutional knowledge about design. This exchange model has currency today despite the change in the terminology of cultural politics from regional circulation to national outreach.

Massey defines '... the political as 'a community consciously undergoing the experience of its sharing''; from this definition, Circ would seem to be an enactment of the political. For Massey, place emerges and is defined by sharing, and sharing requires negotiation. Each place has its own individual 'range of means through which accommodation' may be reached, and this marks its identity because 'places vary'. As 'collective achievements', 'formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation', places are arenas 'where negotiation is forced upon us.'⁹⁸⁴ Circ's post-war touring exhibitions can be read as unique museological hybrids between dominant official and subaltern popular culture that acted to promote social change. The need for touring exhibitions was driven in part by a colonizing desire on the part of the museum to have a reforming impact on the regions and by the tacit acknowledgement that the periphery was

⁹⁸² *Victoria & Albert Museum Annual Report and Accounts 2014/2015: HC239.* (London: The Stationery Office, 2015), p. 8

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/458605/Victoria_and_Albert_Museum_annual_report_and_accounts_2014-15.pdf> [accessed 21 March 2016].

⁹⁸³ 'Temporary Exhibitions', *Museums Journal*, 49.5 (1949) 29, see Figure 20.

⁹⁸⁴ Massey, p. 154.

valuable, significant and could not be ignored. The core aim of today's V&A remains true to Circ's post-war ethos as understood in this thesis in that 'Britain's National Museum of Art and Design seeks to inspire creativity, critical thinking and critical looking by everyone'.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸⁵ Julius Bryant, 'Values and Ambitions: From the V&A's Origins to Another Outstanding Year of Exhibitions', *V&A Annual Review 2013/14*, ed. by Thomas Phongsathorn (London: CultureShock Media/V&A Museum, 2014), pp. 16-21 (p. 18).

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Appendix: Oral History Documentation

Oral History Clearance Notes and Deposit Agreements

ORAL HISTORY CLEARANCE NOTE AND DEPOSIT AGREEMENT: Project Information

AHRC CDA 'Disseminating Design: museums and the circulation of design collections'

You have been invited to contribute to the oral history interviews for this Arts and Humanities Research Council Collaborative Doctoral Award entitled 'Disseminating Design: museums and the circulation of design collections' administered by the Centre for Research and Development at the University of Brighton and the Research Department of the V&A. The supervisors for this project are: Professor Jonathan Woodham, University of Brighton, j.m.woodham@brighton.ac.uk
Ghislaine Wood, V&A Museum, g.wood@vam.ac.uk
Professor Christopher Breward, University of Edinburgh, chris.breward@ed.ac.uk

The **key aim** of this investigation is to provide an historically informed understanding of the economic, cultural and social impact of touring design collections in order to contribute to future national and regional strategies for museology and design education. This evaluative study of touring design collections examines the Victoria and Albert Museum's Circulation Department in the period 1947-1977 as a means of better understanding the impact of a national museum beyond its London base. The research establishes the role played by the Department in the collection and interpretation of modern objects and in the public dissemination of design across the British Isles.

Research questions

- What is the historical significance of the V&A Circulation Department in the collection and display of contemporary design 1947-1977?
- What particular design narratives were promoted by spatial dynamics and installations of the Circulation Department's touring exhibitions at different regional venues?
- From this study of the regional impact of the Circulation Department, is there evidence for a simplistic model of the operation of influence or for a more complex circulatory flow, regenerating both museum and regions?
- To what extent can changes in post-war attitudes to the study of historic objects in design education and practice inform museology and design education in the digital age?
- In the future, how effective and necessary are circulating design collections in disseminating institutional knowledge about contemporary design to the public and to industry, in raising standards in design education, and in promoting design culture as an agent of regeneration throughout the UK?

These oral history interviews are being conducted to support this project in the following ways:

- To record details and information that cannot be gained from existing archives
- To confirm details and information that have already been gained from existing archives
- To confirm particular lines of research enquiry
- To identify new and fruitful lines of research enquiry

Initially these oral history interviews are likely to be used in the following ways, although this list is not exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with the full Agreement attached:

- Transcribed as appendices to the final doctoral thesis
- Quoted to support opinions in the final doctoral thesis
- Quoted in oral presentations as part of the final doctoral thesis
- Quoted in articles that develop the final doctoral thesis
- To inform the conclusions of the final doctoral thesis which will in turn inform V&A UK Policy and DCMS Regional Policy

Please ask the interviewer if you have any queries or concerns about the project or the interviews.

Interviewer: Joanna Weddell, CDA Disseminating Design, j.weddell@brighton.ac.uk and j.weddell@vam.ac.uk

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