



Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display

Jennifer Tyburczy

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All museums are sex museums. In *Sex Museums*, Jennifer Tyburczy takes a hard look at the formation of Western sexuality—particularly how categories of sexual normalcy and perversity are formed—and asks what role museums have played in using display as a technique for disciplining sexuality. Most museum exhibits, she argues, assume that white, patriarchal heterosexuality and traditional structures of intimacy, gender, and race represent national sexual culture for their visitors. *Sex Museums* illuminates the history of such heteronormativity at most museums and proposes alternative approaches for the future of public display projects, while also offering the reader curatorial tactics—what she calls queer curatorship—for exhibiting diverse sexualities in the twenty-first century.

Tyburczy shows museums to be sites of culture-war theatrics, where dramatic civic struggles over how sex relates to public space, genealogies of taste and beauty, and performances of sexual identity are staged. Delving into the history of erotic artifacts, she analyzes how museums have historically approached the collection and display of the material culture of sex, which poses complex moral, political, and logistical dilemmas for the Western museum. *Sex Museums* unpacks the history of the museum and its intersections with the history of sexuality to argue that the Western museum context—from its inception to the present—marks a pivotal site in the construction of modern sexual subjectivity.

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