

North Ireland Assembly, Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure
Committee Inquiry
Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities

Museum of London submission
written evidence from Sharon Ament,
Director, Museum of London

7 March 2014

I am Sharon Ament. I write in my capacity as Director of the Museum of London. The museum tells the story of the history of London from 450,000 BC to the present day city, and beyond. It is funded in the main by the GLA and the Corporation of the City London. The museum works in partnership with cultural and heritage organisations across the UK and indeed further afield.

The Museum of London was invited to respond to this inquiry by Catherine McGuinness, Chairman of the Barbican Centre Board, as part of the City of London's cultural hub of arts and heritage organisations within the square mile.

1. Executive summary

2. Visitors are at the heart of all we do. And the way we look at our audiences has changed with the times. We have developed a new audience strategy *We Are London*. It moves away from the more traditional approaches to audience segmentation. In particular, we seek not to ghettoise particular communities. Instead, we prefer to take a more holistic approach by getting to know our audiences better offering an excellent visitor experience – whoever those visitors are and wherever they come from.
3. Our new approach to audiences involves targeting a contemporary and connected *Leading* audience of Londoners who will spread the word and encourage our more mainstream *Core* audience of regular museum goers. These audience segments cut across the traditional lines of gender, class and ethnicity.
4. *Inspiring a Passion for London* is our new five-year strategic plan - 2013-2018. Our schools programme is a central part of our strategy. We are committed to touching

the lives of every schoolchild in London. Many of these children, of course, live in some of the more deprived communities in the UK.

5. Another central tenet of our new strategic approach is volunteering. We want to help people from diverse backgrounds develop new skills through volunteering, improving their own career prospects and making connections with people across the city. We deliver this work in partnership with the Mayor of London and other funders, especially Arts Council England (ACE).
6. As part of this new strategic direction, we now work to embed our community work - including the need to attract working class communities to our museum - across all of our activities. We feel this is a more effective way to reach out to all visitors, regardless of creed, colour, class, religion, marital status or sexual orientation. It's more in keeping with our times and it celebrates the diverse and confident modern capital that we call home.
7. The museum is changing fast. We want to continue to dispel those lingering perceptions that some of our key audiences still have that we are 'worthy and educational'. We recognise that we have a role to play in entertaining as well as informing. This message will help attract a broader audience. It increasingly reflects our programming choices. We feel that it is possible to broaden our appeal without *dumbing down*.
8. The digital realm offers us exciting new opportunities to break down barriers. It enables us to open up our collections to new audiences, particularly those who might not be described as regular museum goers. We list some examples below.
9. We are committed to keeping both of our museums free of charge to all comers and we offer generous discounts to our paid-for exhibitions.

10. Language and terminology

11. In respect of language used in the terms of reference, *working class communities* is not a term that we apply internally when considering our visitor profile or areas of engagement. The very term itself prompted debate among colleagues during the process of gathering the information provided here. Feedback was that describing it

in this way could imply being working class (however defined) is in itself a barrier to engaging with the arts. We feel strongly that this is not the case.

12. Museum of London visitor profile

13. As explained, our audience segmentation strategy takes a new approach to visitor demographics. However, we still record the more traditional elements of visitor data to build up a more complete picture.

14. Our annual rolling visitor research still uses the eight-part National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) as part of the questions to UK visitors. Although the data cannot be mapped to the term “working class” there will be some elements of the classification system that are of relevance.

15. We summarise visitors as in categories 1-4 or 5-8 in our high level reporting. At the time of writing, our visitor numbers have increased significantly during 2013/14 and with visitors numbers reaching over 800,000 at London Wall and 200,000 at Docklands however our full year visitor research will not be available until after 31 March 2014 so 2012/13

16. Visitor figures are included below.

17. 478,706 onsite visitors to Museum of London (London Wall site) in 2012/13 – **10%** from NS SEC categories 5 – 8.

18. 136,215 onsite visitors to Museum of London Docklands in 2012/13 – **12%** from NS-SEC categories 5 – 8.

19. A changing emphasis at the Museum of London

20. Identifying the most effective ways of engaging all groups of Londoners is a live debate within the museum. Our new strategic plan *Inspiring a Passion for London* outlines the importance of our schools, family and volunteering programmes in reaching, engaging and making a positive difference to all communities across London.

21. This emphasis goes right to the heart of our social purpose as a museum. As described in our summary, our approach to working with different communities has

shifted with our new strategic direction. Our approach today seeks to embed our thinking about communities across our planning and programming. We feel this is preferential and ultimately more effective than targeting small numbers of people from specific and hard-to-reach groups. We think this will be a more effective way of reaching out to all communities. Our ultimate strategic aim is to more than double our overall visitor numbers to 1.5million by 2018. These increased numbers will include more people from all communities and classes.

22. At the heart of this we feel that improving our offer to all visitors and maintaining free entry at both our museums will encourage new audiences including people from what we used to describe as 'hard-to-reach' communities'.

23. Democratising our content

24. Life online offers museums the world over the chance to reach out. The growth of digital opportunities - eg the use of augmented reality on Smartphones - has allowed us to share our content with new audiences. These include people who might not traditionally consider a museum to be a place for them.

25. In 2010 the Museum of London led the way with its pioneering use of augmented reality. Using GPS technology, our award-winning *Streetmuseum* smartphone app unites 300 photos and paintings from our collection with real London locations. It takes elements of our (rare, precious and often unseen) painting and photography collections on to the streets of London. *Streetmuseum* been downloaded more than 500,000 times. It's *the museum in your pocket* and the model has been copied by others, including the National Trust and the national museums in the Netherlands.

26. The boundaries between visitors, curators and exhibitors are becoming less apparent every day. In 2012/13 we partnered with the Gallery of Lomography (makers of low-cost, ex-Eastern bloc plastic-bodied film cameras). With its help and funding we created a massive 'Lomowall' of analogue photos of London in its Olympic year. Although we ran free workshops for key communities, the beauty of this exhibition was that every photograph submitted (taste allowing) was displayed in the museum.

27. Launching in March 2014, is a crowdsourcing project 'London Street Views 1840s'. This looks to engage members of the public in recreating a virtual London street scene based on London's historic *Tallis* maps. These very local directories mapped

out London's streets in the first half of the 20th century and also listed businesses trading at the time. With the help of a wider digital community's exploration of the maps, their business directories and even the historic adverts printed on their pages for long-forgotten brands, we can start to re-imagine neighbourhoods as they once were. This project is a new way for non-traditional and younger audiences to engage with the museum. And it will involve people from across the city and from many diverse backgrounds.

28. Working with families

29. From April 2012 to April 2013, we launched our family outreach programme. Its aim was to review the museum's current family visitor profiles and identify and engage with those families who were not visiting the museum.

30. This work was funded by Arts Council England (as part of a three-year funding programme as a Major Partner Museum for ACE). The programme was also developed to contribute to the personal development of families, while introducing the museum to non-traditional museum visitors. It encouraged families to visit independently to take part in family and early years activities.

31. The programme consulted with over 300 family visitors and over 50 families from some of the poorest boroughs in the country, eg: Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham. We also worked with families in the City of London. Our aim was to analyse who was and who was not visiting the Museum of London and to evaluate the motivations of these groups.

32. Touching the life of every London school child

33. Engaging young Londoners goes right to the heart of our social purpose as a museum. We want all children across the capital to be fascinated by our history. Many of these children live in London's most socially-deprived boroughs and we seek to create exciting and inclusive learning opportunities for all.

34. Volunteering at the London Archaeological Archive

35. The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre runs a series of schemes based on our Volunteer Inclusion Programme (VIP). These programmes are also ACE-funded.
36. The key principle of VIP is that it is a totally egalitarian, collaborative enterprise centred on real museum work: auditing, packaging and helping preserve for posterity the hundreds of thousands of items that comprise the Archive. Anyone can participate. Older people work alongside younger; novices alongside experienced curators.
37. The sole qualification is a desire to contribute, to collaborate and to learn. Nearly 1000 people from all walks of life have taken part in our Classic VIP scheme. Besides discovering secrets about London's history, many have said how much they have benefited as people: they have learned how to work in teams, learned new technical skills, and learned to be proud of their achievement in contributing materially to the essential work of collections' care.

38. Engaging Londoners

39. We seek to engage with and represent the views of Londoners on contemporary London issues. Below are two specific examples of how we worked with people around the potential sale of the Henry Moore sculpture Draped Seated Woman (aka Old Flo) and consultation with different groups about life in London's East End. Both these pieces of work culminated in displays at Museum of London Docklands.
40. **Draped Seated Woman/ Old Flo:** Artist Bob & Roberta Smith was commissioned to create two pieces of artwork as part of this consultative project about public art exploring how Londoners feel about the campaign to Save Old Flo. Consultation took place in public spaces as well as at the following partner organisations, [Stifford Centre](#), St Matthias Centre, [St Hilda's East Community Centre](#) and [Oxford House](#). The artworks are being accessioned. A film of the consultation process was made by film-maker Sarah Carne: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqx7IS3FBm8>
41. **Many East Ends:** This small collaboratively-developed exhibition explores different interpretations and experiences of the East End. The display involves films and artwork from artist [Adam Dant](#), partners [Toynbee Hall](#), [SoundDelivery](#) and Tolerance

in Diversity youth organisation. Additional projects in 2013 have explored the West India Dock Road area through animation, creative writing and audio production projects, which focus on local activism, music hall and social spaces. We worked with creative partners Pencil & Help and Screeendeeep, and involved a range of local young people and elderly residents from Poplar Harca.

42. The *Dispossessed*: In the lead up to the 2012 Olympics the museum joined forces with the London Evening Standard to promote its *Dispossessed* campaign. We ran this photo-based campaigning exhibition for six-months. It profiled stories featuring the way young Londoners from deprived inner-city backgrounds had transformed their lives with the help of the £20m campaign, which provided opportunities to develop new skills tackle gun and knife crime and wean young people away from drugs.

43. Conclusion

44. Working with communities from across all social backgrounds goes right to the heart of our social purpose as a museum.

45. We launched a new strategic plan in 2013 and are changing the way we work. This includes the way we strive to meet the needs of all of our audiences. We have pledged to touch the lives of every London schoolchild and to improve the lives of Londoners through training and volunteering.

46. The digital future provides new opportunities to open up our collections to all.

47. We now seek to embed our community work across all of our programming and strategic thinking and development. This is in line with the way other museums and major funders, including Arts Council England are re-evaluating their own work to make a bigger impact on the communities they serve.

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