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Odile Join-Lambert, *Travailler au musée. Publics, gardiens et conservateurs du Louvre et du British Museum : regards croisés (1946-1981)*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2019. 310 pp. Foreword, bibliography, appendices, and index. €28.00 (pb). ISBN 978-2-7574-2958-7; €21.00 (eb). ISBN 978-2-7574-2973-0.

Frauke V. Josenhans, Rice University

The museum, as an institution, has undergone significant changes over the course of the twentieth century that reflect wider shifts in society and a growing recognition of the important educational role of culture. As museums and their mission expanded their responsibilities beyond preservation to education, the associated professions likewise experienced profound transformations. In her book *Travailler au musée. Publics, gardiens et conservateurs du Louvre et du British Museum : regards croisés (1946-1981)*, Odile Join-Lambert presents a case study to highlight these changes and points out the evolution of the educational mission of the organization and its employees through the example of two national museums, the British Museum in London and the Musée du Louvre in Paris. With her comparative approach, the author juxtaposes their practices, focusing on the period from World War II until the early 1980s as a way to shed light on how some of the key functions of museums have evolved. These two institutions--that seem like entire microcosms given the depth of their collections and the various professions associated with them--are also used in the context of this study to highlight profound structural differences with regard to mission, employment, and evaluation in museums and broader cultural politics in both countries. Join-Lambert establishes the museum as a larger field of study for social science through these two examples, pointing out similarities with regard to changes in the public service during that time period. Interestingly, *Travailler au musée* takes as its focal point two core positions in the institution which are rarely examined in the same context: museum curators and museum guards (or museum attendants). Through her comparative study, the author analyses the attention given to the public that reflects the institutional priorities in each country. Join-Lambert uses extensive historical resources, archival documents from both museums as well as professional associations, and interviews with witnesses and actors inside the museums to follow their professional and institutional evolutions over the course of several decades.

In her book, the author adopts a loosely chronological structure around three major sections that elucidate major developments with regard to the institution, professions, and educational approach. A key observation in the first chapter that shapes the narrative of the study is that, early on, museums in Great Britain started to put the public at the core of their mission. Join-Lambert highlights the role of education in British museums and its evolution as it began with Henry Cole and John Ruskin, who recognized the power of the museum as a tool for learning at

the end of the nineteenth century. During the first decades of the twentieth century, this role was officially recognized and documented. Compared to how institutions and museum professionals in the nineteenth century conceived their mission as that of preservation and elite gathering, the importance given to the study of their audiences marks a major difference with their French counterparts.

The first part also offers a discussion of structural changes that museums underwent, examining the role that the government played in redefining the museum and its mission. Compared to how museums today on either side of the English Channel are run, it is fascinating to note that only since the middle of the twentieth century did governments become involved, little by little, in the institution and its management, and eventually dedicated a department to oversee the cultural endeavors in each country through the *Ministère de la Culture* in France and the Arts Council in Great Britain. With the institution itself becoming more structured and overseen, both professions—curators and guards—also saw greater regulation, as opposed to a more amateur-driven approach that had prevailed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between the two World Wars, employees of both sectors were fighting for more established guidelines and rules with regard to education and pay, as well as seeing their work be aligned with the public. The study also establishes that, as a result of growing professionalization, the core mission of the British museum system was more inclined toward education whereas the French model was guided by scientific priorities. However, Join-Lambert highlights that the importance of the educational mission was also eventually recognized by French museums and that the transfer of ideas was encouraged by professional circulation in the immediate post-war period. On an international scale, the transmission of concepts and museum practices from one country to another was accelerated by the founding of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1947 that came out of previous attempts to create structures to further international collaborations in both countries in the early twentieth century.

The second part of the study analyses the standardization of two professions, curators and guards, in France and Great Britain. In the years following the war, the hiring process in both countries became more structured, based on training and accreditation. Nevertheless, fundamental discrepancies persisted regarding education, notably for curators. In the anglophone world, curators began to be equipped with university degrees, scientific training, as well as study in museology, whereas in France they were issued from the *École du Louvre*, usually with a background in art history. The author also points out the distinctions inside the professional organization of curators which impacted specialization and workflow. The curators of national museums were focused on scientific research in specific areas of expertise, whereas regional curators more often developed a general set of skills. Interestingly, the author also highlights that in both countries volunteers continued to be employed as curators until the early 1980s, and that in most of these cases women were employed at an assistant level, with or without pay, and were simultaneously giving tours for the public, thus indicating early on that the role of education was considered minor and left to women.

The third part of the book is dedicated to a thorough examination of the public and how each museum profession has evolved in the context of a growing attention toward general audiences and more educational tools being put in place. The documentation and archives of French professional committees consulted by the author seem to indicate that the discrepancy has persisted despite all of the apparent progress. Curators continue to be judged solely by scientific standards, whereas attendants are evaluated in terms of their relationships with the public and

with their colleagues. Furthermore, despite the changes that the curatorial profession has seen since the post-war period, and the creation of new positions in charge of the public, guards in both countries had not yet seen their mission expanded to a more constructive educational dialogue with visitors, and have basically been limited to observing, protecting, and maintaining order. In addition, several key duties relevant to maintaining security in the museums have been delegated to private companies whose employees do not directly report to the museums' internal security departments, thus creating another barrier.

Although Join-Lambert focuses on a specific period, and on two institutions in particular, her observations could easily be generalized to other institutions and the research expanded to include more specific educational models. Over the last three decades, there have been important developments and the creation of new positions. For instance, since the 1990s, cultural mediators have become part of the educational efforts of French museums. But the question of equal consideration for the different positions at a museum remains of foremost importance. Guards, who often are the first point of contact for a visitor, have gained more attention in recent years. While Join-Lambert's study gives valuable insight into how both professions have evolved over one part of the twentieth century—and points out the differences between British and French institutions—the reader is almost disappointed that the book does not make the connection to the present day other than briefly in the introduction and conclusion. And yet this study could certainly form the basis for a contemporary analysis of both professions over the last forty years, and beyond the Western sphere. The book also includes an exhaustive bibliography, organized geographically and by topic. In addition, the appendix lists functions and grades at the British Museum for three different years, although it does not give the same overview for the Musée du Louvre.

The elitism of museums has largely been attacked, in France, Great Britain, and elsewhere, and today the public has become a crucial factor for the institution, be it a civic museum, a state museum, a private museum, or a university one. *Travailler au musée* is very timely at a moment when museums are profoundly rethinking their collections and their provenance; addressing the cultural aftermath of colonialism; and restructuring their institutions to respond to an evolving society.

Frauke V. Josenhans
Rice University
frauke.josenhans@rice.edu

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