Museums that depict the history of sex are popular among tourists and gallery-goers. Addressing the rise of such sites across the globe, *Sex Museums* is fundamentally about the ways that “controversial knowledge” (p. 17) is displayed in museums and gallery spaces. Jennifer Tyburczy’s book should thus appeal to any reader interested in museums, galleries, representations and curation. *Sex Museums* is also specifically about sex, how sex and sexuality are exhibited, and the often heated “political and social battles about what sex means” (p. 18) that ensue. For this reason, the text should appeal to sex and gender as well as cultural studies scholars.

According to Tyburczy, museums are spaces for display and performance, which involve an intermingling of “bodies and objects” (p. 1). Because of the prominent roles they play in fostering public knowledge and culture, museums have served as an influential site “in the construction of modern sexual subjectivity and the categories of normalcy and perversity” (p. 2). In this sense, as Tyburczy notes, all museums are sex museums (p. 207), insofar as they represent sex and sexuality in explicit or implicit ways. While *Sex Museums* is broad in scope, ranging from the historical to the contemporary, from the structural to the ethnographic, several chapters do focus on sex museums. Sex museums are of specific concern to the author because these sites serve as spaces for sexual education and entertainment. Tyburczy’s key argument is that museums generally and sex museums specifically have offered monolithic versions of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Drawing from a range of conceptual influences including the work of Michel Foucault, Tony Bennett, as well as museum theory, critical race theory, performativity theory and cultural studies, Tyburczy claims museums have not been sufficiently queer or disruptive of understandings of sex and sexuality. Tyburczy conducted fieldwork at the LA&M in Chicago, the Museum of Sex in New York, the World Erotic Art Museum in Miami Beach, El Museo del Sexo in Mexico City and others. Tyburczy also draws from archival data collected regarding many exhibitions of sexual display.

The first chapter begins with the life and times of Gustave Courbet’s *L’origine du monde*, as well as artistic and philosophical interpretations of it throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Tyburczy uses the ideas of hard-core collecting and erotic exhibitionism to refer to the fixation on aspects of women’s anatomy in art. Chapter 2 examines the racialized, stereotypical display of the “Hottentot Venus” and continuities between “freak shows” and scientific laboratories. The chapter also examines responses to Henri Matisse’s nude paintings (p. 81), and Nazi exhibitions of so-called degenerate art. Chapter 2
ends with a focus on violence, sex and art, including vandalism against representations of sex such as the axe attack on Andre Serrano’s *A History of Sex*. The main point of this chapter is to analyze the ways curators and artists in colonial, imperial and totalitarian settings have mobilized ideas pertaining to perversity through exhibitions and art, and the consequences thereof.

Chapter 3 scrutinizes examples of warnings in contemporary sex museums. Tyburczy is interested in the politics of how some exhibits are deemed worthy of warning signs, whereas others are treated as benign (p. 104). The author shows how these decisions reflect underlying, often stereotypical assumptions about normalcy and perversity. In the fourth chapter, Tyburczy explores tourist visits to sex museums as a means of reflecting on the intersection of architecture, capital and sexual commerce. The author explores gift shops at sex museums as a space for commercialization of sex. Tyburczy reflects on interviews with curators and guides to provide insights into the operation of these sites.

Interestingly, some curators and guides did not feel their museums were sex museums. These staff used other terms such as erotic to refer to the displays and operations. Tyburczy then assesses the motivations of tourists and visitors. Though the inquiry in this chapter is quite novel and innovative, I was hoping for more empirical depth (e.g. greater use of interview quotes from curators and tourists alike).

The last two chapters examine issues of curation and display at El Museo del Sexo in Mexico City and the LA&M in Chicago. Based on analysis of field notes, Tyburczy suggests monolithic versions of both heterosexuality and homosexuality are retuned or rezoned at El Museo del Sexo. Sexual tropes and stereotypes are not sufficiently challenged. Next, Tyburczy argues the LA&M in Chicago provides an example of queer curatorship, the “process of heritage making at public history sites dedicated to physicalizing the encounter with diverse sexual histories” (p. 192). For Tyburczy, queer curatorship is the means of challenging stereotypes regarding sex and sexuality.

While I agree that the idea of queer curatorship provides an important interjection in literature on and the practice of museum and gallery managing, I would have liked to see more attention to the social, political and economic barriers and challenges to such a critical approach. Another criticism I have is that Tyburczy was not able to take the idea that all museums are sex museums far enough in empirical terms. For example, with all of their depictions of families and human behavior, natural history museums around the world would seem to me to be bastions of the monolithic versions of both heterosexuality and homosexuality that Tyburczy is critical of. It would have been interesting to see this unique theoretical framework applied to a greater number of contemporary museums. But no book can do it all. I do believe Tyburczy’s core concepts will be usefully applied in the future to other museum and gallery sites including prison and jail museums as well as military museums.

Overall, *Sex Museums* is empirically and conceptually rich. The book touches on issues of culture, tourism and art. Any social science and humanities scholar interested in exhibition halls, galleries and the politics of representation will want to give *Sex Museums* a thorough read.

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