

when blockbuster exhibitions are so essential to the success of almost any institution, is the lending of items from the collection. New College always responds as positively as it can to requests to borrow items in its ownership; not only are the objects seen in new surroundings and juxtaposed with different pieces, but we are able to share them with new and unexpected audiences. And the trips for the courier (usually the Chatters Fellow) associated with such loans are always in equal measure, trying and entertaining.

The concept of a blockbuster art exhibition is, of course, far from new, and when in 1857 Manchester staged the 'Art Treasures of Great Britain Exhibition', New College was among the lenders to the show. It was opened by Prince Albert and ran from 5 May to 17 October; at 16,000 objects, it remains the largest art exhibition ever held in the United Kingdom. From New College, the organisers requested the loan of the Founder's Crozier, an object that has been in the College since the death of William of Wykeham in 1404, and the gothic standing salt, *c.* 1475–94, the gift of Warden Walter Hyll. In 1857, neither object had been seen outside the College, which seems to have granted permission for the loans without demur, despite the fact that the request must have come with a very short lead time.



where we live, right here in St Louis'. The fairs and their exhibits came to the people; anyone and everyone could visit them and be (mentally) transported anywhere in the world by the objects they found there.

The aim of the Manchester Exhibition stood in contrast to these commercial ventures. Gustav Waagen had published a three-volume work titled *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* in 1854, making play with the fact that these were all privately owned and not accessible to the public. A member of the Society of Arts, John Deane, had the idea of approaching all the owners— helpfully listed by Waagen in his volumes— and asking if they would lend their objects for display. His idea is first recorded in February 1856, and things moved fast; by May that year a General Committee and an Executive Committee had been established, and a General Commissioner had been appointed. The site chosen for the Exhibition building was at Old Trafford and was adjacent to what was then the Manchester Botanic Gardens. The site included railway access via the Old Trafford station, the railway company, through excursion fares, making a greater profit from the show than the exhibition committee.

Like Paxton's Crystal Palace, the main structure of the Exhibition was glass and iron; but it had an ornamental eastern end in brick, designed by a local architect, Edward Salomons. The architect for the whole project was Francis Fowke, and the main contractor was C. D. Young & Co. The vast interior was divided into spaces and galleries, which were then packed with art treasures divided into ten

One of the show's legacies was the effect it had on public art collections and on taste in nineteenth-century Britain. While its attendance was less than, say, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition—the total for Manchester was 1.3 million visitors, that for the St Louis Fair, 19.7 million—it was staged at a time when the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery were developing their collections, and it helped to shape these institutions. The paintings in Manchester were 'arranged in chronological order and divided into geographical categories with Italian art on one wall and other nations opposite', constructing an enduring model of hanging that was both attractive and educative. The V&A also felt its influence, with its collection subsequently used to promote the notion of education through art, and late opening—possible now by gas light—so that the working classes could visit the collections.

Another result was the creation of the Hallé Orchestra. Charles Hallé was a German pianist and conductor, who after a successful career in London—he was the first pianist in England to play all the Beethoven sonatas in public—had moved to Manchester to direct the Gentleman's Concerts. Hallé was invited to give an organ recital every day and to assemble a small orchestra for the Exhibition's opening event, an ensemble that met with such success that he continued the band as the Hallé Orchestra, establishing it formally with its first concert on 30 January 1858. The orchestra became

BIBLIOGRAPHY

*A Peep at the Pictures; or, A Catalogue of the Principal objects of Attraction in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, with Biographical Notices of the Painters, Ancient and Modern, and a Ground Plan of the Building*