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Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain

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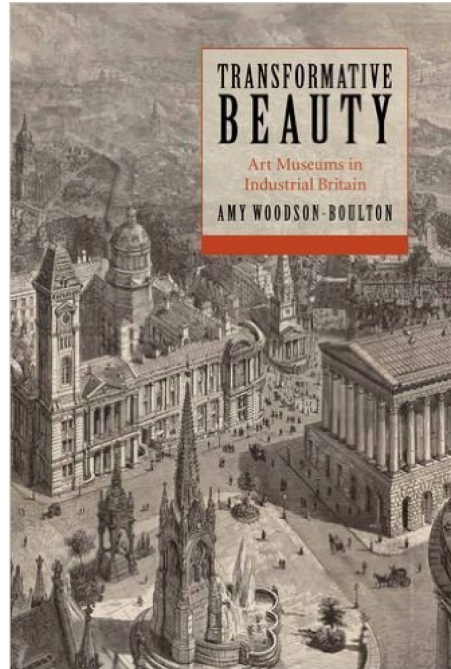
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Faculty Pub Night – Spring 2013

Date: February 26, 2013

Speaker: Amy Woodson-Boulton



About the Author

Amy Woodson-Boulton is associate professor and currently chair of the history department at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. She earned her doctorate from UCLA in 2003. Her work concentrates on cultural reactions to industrialization, particularly the history of art museums, the social role of art, and the changing status and meaning of art and nature in modern society. She has received funding from a number of institutions, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and has published a monograph, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford, 2012), as well as coediting a volume of essays, *Visions of the Industrial Age, 1830–1914: Modernity and the Anxiety of Representation* (Ashgate, 2008). Her essays have appeared in *History Compass*, *The Journal of British Studies*, *Museums and Society*, *Victorian Review*, and the BRANCH online collective (Britain, Representative, and Nineteenth-Century History). She is currently working on a study of the relationships between anthropology and art in the age of empire.

About the Author's Work

Why did British industrial cities build art museums? By exploring the histories of the municipal art museums in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester, *Transformative Beauty* examines the underlying logic of the Victorian art museum movement. These museums attempted to create a space free from the moral and physical ugliness of industrial capitalism. Deeply engaged with the social criticism of John Ruskin, reformers created a new, prominent urban institution, a domesticated public space that not only aimed to provide refuge from the corrosive effects of industrial society but also provided a remarkably

unified secular alternative to traditional religion. Woodson-Boulton raises provocative questions about the meaning and use of art in relation to artistic practice, urban development, social justice, education, and class. In today's context of global austerity and shrinking government support of public cultural institutions, this book is a timely consideration of arts policy and purposes in modern society.