

AUDIO TOUR TRANSCRIPT

A Contemporary Spin: The Guinness Collection Re/Imagined

Stop 1 - Introduction

Hello, and welcome to our exhibition, *A Contemporary Spin: The Guinness Collection Re/Imagined*! My name is Chris, and I am one of the project managers for this exhibition. This exhibition represents two semesters of work conducted by the graduate students of the Museum Professions program at Seton Hall University. Through our partnership with the Morris Museum, we were able to access the historic Guinness Collection and all of the amazing things it has to offer. *A Contemporary Spin: The Guinness Collection Re/Imagined* explores four themes that arose from our research that relates them to the world we live in today. Within this exhibition you will be presented with the historic Guinness Collection through the contemporary perspectives of Stereotypes and Identity, Public Music, Technology and Innovation, and Migration and Memory.

Stop 2 - Migration, Memory, & Music

Hi, my name is Ilona and I worked with Shannon to research music boxes in the Guinness Collection. We learned about cylinder music boxes and how they work! Did you know that music boxes were popular in homes in the late 19th century? Maybe your ancestors had one in their home! Cylinder music boxes produce sound when the metal teeth of a comb are vibrated by raised pins on a rotating cylinder. The vibrations of the metal comb create the notes of the songs. The lower notes are made by longer pins, while the higher notes are produced by the shorter pins. Turn your phone into a modern music box by scanning our QR codes to hear three songs from the music boxes on display.

Stop 3 - Pierrot Écrivain

Pierrot Écrivain, also known as “Pierrot Writing” or “the Writing Pierrot,” is an automaton created by Gustav Vichy in 1895. This automaton is a representation of a character commonly used in 16th-century Italian comedy troupes. The character of Pierrot has a deep love for his fellow troupe member, Columbine. But alas, Columbine only has eyes for another, Pierrot’s fellow troupe member Harlequin. The mechanical automation of Pierrot Écrivain depicts Pierrot late at night, dozing in and out of sleep as he expresses his love for Columbine in a letter that he will never send. Automata such as Pierrot Écrivain enabled people to bring life to the stories of Pierrot and many others through their use of mechanical automation.

Stop 4 - Ernst the Artist

The automaton in front of you is Ernst the Artist, a replica of the original created by Gustav Vichy in 1890. This replica, created by Michel Bertrand in the 1970’s, is a great example of mechanical automation, as Ernst is able to use his mechanical parts to complete 13 different types of animations. Did you notice the back of Ernst’s chair? Here you can see the combination of cams, levers, wire linkages, and clockwork motor that enable Ernst to move in all different ways. This combination of mechanical parts allows Ernst to do things such as cross his legs, nod his head and, most importantly, draw in his sketchbook! These may not seem like very complicated movements, but they were actually quite the automated marvel at the end of the 19th century. Looking at today, we have machines that are able to think artificially and complete a much more complex range of motions and tasks. Automation has been a part of our lives for a long time whether we realize it or not, and automata such as Ernst have paved the way for the evolution of technology and automation today.

Stop 5 - Seeburg Coin Piano

Hello, one and all! My name is Emily. The object in front of you is the Seeburg Coin Piano, made in 1926 in Chicago, Illinois. In the early 1900s, popular music was enjoyed in restaurants, taverns, and dance halls played on ornate coin pianos. But in the 1920s, the American government outlawed the drinking of alcohol. This meant that taverns- and their coin pianos- had to become discreet and easily hidden. J.P. Seeburg designed this style of coin piano to roll in and out of secret taverns, called speakeasies, when nobody was looking. Can you imagine sneaking this piano through the streets? What disguises the piano?

Stop 6 - Jukeboxes

Hi everyone, I'm Julie. While researching the Guinness Collection, I learned a lot about how people listen to music in public. Did you know that the first jukebox was created in 1889? I didn't! These jukeboxes featured an early form of headphones called "listening tubes" where you and three of your friends could listen to music together. At first, these machines could only play one song at a time. It wasn't until the 1940s, over 50 years after the first jukebox was created, that these machines started being called jukeboxes in the United States. For more exciting information, visit the next stop on the audio tour.

Stop 7 - Untitled Barrel Organ

I'm Sutherlyn. Taylor and I researched the untitled Barrel Organ with Animated Figures that was built between the 1820s and 1840s. This is not long after the Napoleonic Wars, which jump-started European politics. This object was created in the relatively new country, Germany. Due to war and the formation of new countries, Nationalism was on the rise. European countries competed for power and expansion, which led to 19th century Imperialism and colonization. Germany colonized parts of Southwest Africa and experienced other cultures along the way.

Colonial experiences in Africa led to Black individuals being stereotyped as “primitive” and “inferior.” Asia, also impacted by colonial expansion, was viewed as one culture known as “the Orient.” Orientalism focused on the exotic nature of Asian cultures, which were also viewed as inferior to European cultures. The establishment of negative stereotypes of those from Africa and Asia, along with the generally positive stereotypes of Europe, still influence biases today.

Stop 8 - Chinese Opium Smoker

Look at the automaton labeled Chinese Opium Smoker. It was created in 1885 during the height of Imperialism. The figure is dressed in a Chinese Tang-style suit jacket, Qing Dynasty-style hat, and has noticeable facial hair curling on both ends. These are features also found in the “John Chinaman” caricature shown in the nearby panel. Sensationalized descriptions of “opium dens” and the British Opium Wars contributed to the association between the Chinese and Opium. The Chinese were stereotyped as dangerous people who were stealing jobs from white workers and spreading drugs and disease. How do you think these stereotypes led to prejudice and discrimination? In what ways do these stereotypes exist today?