

Gender and Heritage

Performance, Place and Politics

Edited by

Wera Grahn and Ross J. Wilson



Key Issues in Cultural Heritage

Gender and Heritage

Gender and Heritage brings together a group of international scholars to examine the performance, place and politics of gender within heritage. Through a series of case studies, models and assessments, the significance of understanding and working with concepts of gender is demonstrated as a dynamic and reforming agenda. Demonstrating that gender has become an increasingly important area for heritage scholarship, the collection argues that it should also be recognised as a central structuring device within society and the location where a critical heritage studies can emerge.

Drawing on contributions from around the world, this edited collection provides a range of innovative approaches to using gender as a mode of enquiry. From the politics of museum displays, the exploration of pedagogy, the role of local initiatives and the legal frameworks that structure representation, this volume's diversity and objectives represent a challenge for students, academics and professionals to rethink gender. Rather than featuring gender as an addition to wider discussions of heritage, this volume makes gender the focus of concern as a means of building a new agenda within the field.

This volume, which addresses how we engage with gender and heritage in both practice and theory, is essential reading for scholars at all levels and should also serve as a guide for practitioners.

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Ross J. Wilson is Professor of Modern History and Public Heritage at the University of Chichester, UK. His research interests include the experience, representation and memory of the First World War and he also focuses on issues of museum, media and heritage representations in the modern era.

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Series general co-editors' foreword

The interdisciplinary field of Heritage Studies is now well established in many parts of the world. It differs from earlier scholarly and professional activities that focused narrowly on the architectural or archaeological preservation of monuments and sites. Such activities remain important, especially as modernisation and globalisation lead to new developments that threaten natural environments, archaeological sites, traditional buildings and arts and crafts. But they are subsumed within the new field that sees 'heritage' as a social and political construct encompassing all those places, artefacts and cultural expressions inherited from the past which, because they are seen to reflect and validate our identity as nations, communities, families and even individuals, are worthy of some form of respect and protection.

Heritage results from a selection process, often government-initiated and supported by official regulation; it is not the same as history, although this, too, has its own elements of selectivity. Heritage can be used in positive ways to give a sense of community to disparate groups and individuals or to create jobs on the basis of cultural tourism. It can be actively used by governments and communities to foster respect for cultural and social diversity, and to challenge prejudice and misrecognition. But it can also be used by governments in less benign ways, to reshape public attitudes in line with undemocratic political agendas or even to rally people against their neighbours in civil and international wars, ethnic cleansing and genocide. In this way there is a real connection between heritage and human rights.

This is time for a new and unique series of books canvassing the key issues dealt with in the new Heritage Studies. The series seeks to address the deficiency facing the field identified by the Smithsonian in 2005 – that it is 'vastly under-theorized'. It is time to look again at the contestation that inevitably surrounds the identification and evaluation of heritage and to find new ways to elucidate the many layers of meaning that heritage places and intangible cultural expressions have acquired. Heritage conservation and safeguarding in such circumstances can only be understood as a form of cultural politics and that this needs to be reflected in heritage practice, be that in educational institutions or in the field.

It is time, too, to recognise more fully that heritage protection does not depend alone on top-down interventions by governments or the expert actions of heritage industry professionals, but must involve local communities and communities of interest. It is critical that the values and practices of communities, together with traditional management systems where such exist, are understood, respected and incorporated in heritage management plans and policy documents so that communities feel a sense of 'ownership' of their heritage and take a leading role in sustaining it into the future.

This series of books aims then to identify interdisciplinary debates within Heritage Studies and to explore how they impact on the practices not only of heritage management and conservation, but also the processes of production, consumption and engagement with heritage in its many and varied forms.

William S. Logan
Laurajane Smith

Introduction

by J. Wilson

There is something about the way in which the word "gender" has been used in the past that suggests that the concept of gender itself has a history. It is not a neutral, objective term, but one that has been shaped by the values and assumptions of the societies in which it has been used. The word "gender" is a relatively recent addition to the English language, having entered the language in the early 19th century. It was used to refer to the male and female of the human species, but it was not until the 20th century that it began to be used in a more general sense, to refer to the social and cultural roles and expectations that are associated with being male or female. This shift in the meaning of the word "gender" is a reflection of the changing social and cultural norms of the time. In the early 20th century, the idea of gender was often seen as a binary, with male and female being the only two options. However, as the 20th century progressed, the idea of gender became more complex. It was recognized that there were many different ways of being male or female, and that these ways were often shaped by social and cultural factors. This led to the development of the concept of "gender identity," which refers to the sense of one's own gender. Gender identity is a personal and subjective experience, and it can vary from person to person. Some people may identify as male, some as female, and some as neither or both. Gender identity is also shaped by social and cultural factors, and it can change over time. The concept of gender identity is a relatively recent one, and it is still being explored and debated by scholars and the public alike. The idea of gender identity is a reflection of the changing social and cultural norms of the time, and it is a testament to the power of language to shape our understanding of the world. The word "gender" is a powerful word, and it has the potential to shape our lives in profound ways. It is a word that has the power to define us, to shape our identity, and to influence our behavior. It is a word that we should all be aware of, and that we should all use carefully. The word "gender" is a word that has the power to change the world, and it is a word that we should all be proud to use.