

Book Reviews

Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis and Gerard Corsane (eds), *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage* The Boydell Press 2012, ISBN: 9781843837107, hardback £60.00, 275pp

Aiming to provide 'international perspectives' from both 'established voices' and 'new voices', Volume 8 in the Heritage Matters series – produced by academics within the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University – delivers a comprehensive and through-provoking response to issues affecting intangible heritage across the world. It also offers an analysis of the UNESCO definition as detailed in the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (see UNESCO 2012b). The term 'intangible cultural heritage' (ICH) can be open to interpretation. As the editors state, defining it as 'cultural heritage that lack[s] physical manifestation', including 'knowledge, memories and feelings' so suggesting that 'intangible cultural heritage represents everything: the immaterial elements that influence and surround all human activity', is rather vague (p. 1). UNESCO's definition is far more precise (see pp. 1–2), yet this too requires further nuancing and it is a definition that has, and is, evolving over time (see UNESCO 2012a for an overview of how the Convention has developed).

This book provides some of that important nuancing. As such, it adds to an important body of literature on the subject, a substantial amount of which has been published since the 2003 convention (see, for example, Blake and Institute of Art and Law (Great Britain) 2006; Blake 2007; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Labadi 2013; Lixinski 2013). Ranging from Africa, Europe and Asia to Australia, Canada and the Middle East, the contributors to this volume reflect on the implementation of the Convention, discuss what is included and, perhaps more importantly, what is not, and offer suggestions for future practice.

Following an introduction by the editors, the book is divided into three sections: 'Negotiating and Valuing the Intangible'; 'Applying the Intangible Cultural Heritage Concept'; and 'On the Ground: Safeguarding the Intangible'. One of the pleasures of this book is the inclusion in each of these sections of five international conversation pieces with representatives of specific countries – Sweden, India, Botswana, South Africa and Italy. Written in an interview style, with questions and answers, these chapters focus on the countries' perspectives on ICH, whether and how they are safeguarding it and how they have responded to the Convention. There is sufficient similarity in the questions to enable comparison across the countries and the individuals being interviewed provide an honest and in depth assessment of their knowledge and how their country is responding to the issues of ICH.

The first chapter in the section 'Negotiating and Valuing the Intangible', investigates 'the paradoxes of intangible heritage', focusing on ICH through the heritage practice of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the National Museum of the American Indian. Indigenous communities are also the focus of Cummins and Hennessy's chapters. In discussing digital cultural heritage, Hennessy explores the challenges of copyright and the notion of 'virtual repatriation'; an idea that has links to the work of Binney and Chaplin (2003) and Peers and Brown (2009) in their discussions of visual repatriation. Abungu's discussion of Africa and Abu-Khafajah and Rababeh's analysis of Jordan explores countries dealing with the effects of colonialism and the exclusion of intangible heritage. Abungu's geographically wide-ranging chapter focuses on 'cultural practices that were "banned" by colonial powers but continued in secret places' (p. 57). Although the importance of ICH is now being recognised, there is still much to do to preserve 'a heritage of all humanity' (p. 68). Jordan's archaeological sites embody 'memories and stories', and it is these intangible elements that make the tangible meaningful.

Despite this, the legacy of colonialism has ensured that, until recently, ICH has been marginalised in Jordan. This is being addressed, but much still remains to be done to engage local communities further in the recognition of their ICH.

From an exploration of the concept of ICH, the second section, 'Applying the Intangible Cultural Heritage Concept' concentrates on the definition of ICH in the 2003 Convention. Ranging from Europe to Australia and Canada, the authors explore national and local responses to the Convention, how the countries are responding to ICH and the implications and consequences of their ratification of the Convention, or not. In some ways, this is the most thought-provoking section, as it explores attitudes towards ICH and challenges facing both the Convention and the safeguarding of intangible heritage. Hottin and Grenet compare and contrast the treatment of French ICH by UNESCO and the French Ministry of Culture. Despite 'disharmonies' between the two organisations, significant progress has been made and there is now recognition that ICH is much more than 'dematerialised' or 'virtual' heritage. Australia has also been rather reticent in its attitude to the 2003 Convention and, similarly to Canada, in 2012 had still not signed up to it. What the Convention does appear to have done is raise awareness of ICH and make the countries concerned examine what their ICH is and attitudes towards its preservation, compared to tangible heritage. The various authors present fascinating case studies and these are often linked to concepts of national identity, difficult histories and, particularly in the case of the chapters on Wales and Canada, the importance of language preservation.

The book concludes with 'On the Ground: Safeguarding the Intangible'. Focusing on a range of approaches and taking in an even wider range of countries, I found this section the most useful. It not only considers what ICH is and assesses the role of the Convention, but also gives suggestions for how communities and countries might move forward in the recognition and safeguarding of intangible heritage. In describing the role of the ICH Field School in Thailand, Denes advocates training as a means of implementing the Convention. Kreps examines the subject through the Dayak Ikat Weaving Project, making the insightful suggestion that an enterprise such as this can 'offer more culturally appropriate, holistic and integrative heritage interventions than those proposed by the Convention and Indonesian laws' (p. 177). Such a project demonstrates that the tangible and intangible are intimately entwined. Bowers and Corsane concur with this, exploring aspects of heritage in the context of tourism, its implications for identity, 'economic capital' and 'the exchange of cultural capital' (p. 211), and their role in safeguarding ICH. Two of the final chapters provide a more overarching approach to the subject. Stefano debates ecomuseums, a key philosophy of the ICCHS, while Corsane and Mazel conclude with an assessment of UNESCO's work and discussion of a 'project [which] provides a model and a way forward for the promotion and safeguarding of ICH using a multinational approach' (p. 248). Both chapters work well to summarise what has been achieved so far and necessary future developments.

This is an important book, which provides a timely overview of ICH and the responses to UNESCO's 2003 Convention. It not only includes a wealth of national case studies, but also an insightful assessment of attitudes to the Convention, what it has achieved and what the future for ICH might be. Useful for both scholars and students alike, it demonstrates what can be done and what needs to be done in this significant area.

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Amy Levin (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2010, paperback £27,99, pp. 1+309

'The only repository of key articles, new essays and case studies for the important area of gender and sexuality in museum', 'the first reader to focus on LGBT issues and museums' and 'the first reader for nearly fifteen years to collect articles which focus on women and museums' are the three distinctive features of this volume edited by Amy K. Levin, as stated at the back of the book. It actually responds very convincingly to the continuing silence or reluctance of the museum sector to engage with these topics dynamically.

As the editor states, the intention was to produce a book that could be of use for museum professionals, but predominantly for students who could now have a long missing valuable source. However, this edited volume despite being among the pioneers in advancing the topics of gender and sexuality in museums, seems to lack in contemporary studies on the subject. Especially if we consider the editor's early observation in the Introduction from her own teaching experience that in her teaching 'on race, class, and gender in museums' she had been using a book published in 1994, *Gender Perspectives*, deemed by her students as 'dated' (1), then, this absence of more recent scholarly or professional voices is further singled out.

The articles are logically grouped within five broader themes, each explored under separate sections, although in the abstract there seems to be a misleading statement that it 'is organized into 3 thematic parts', which is not true. Further, each of the five parts attempts to shed light on multiple aspects of museum practice and theory, ranging from women's role in museum workforce (Part 1: Women in museum work), the possible applications of queer and feminist theory on museum practice (Part 2: Theories), the inclusion of gender and sexuality in museum collections and programming (Part 3: Collections and exhibitions & Part 4: Case studies) and finally an intriguing critique of the literature concerned with the social role of museums, yet, lacking -as very pointedly evidenced- substantial references to the major topic of this volume (Part 5: Bibliographic essay). Moreover, the compelling critique presented in the last section seems to me as one of the main strengths and contributions of this book. It is intriguing to see such an extensive and well-articulated review of key publications discussing the social role of museums but overlooking museums' exclusion of gender and sexual minorities. In fact, the last

part of this book extends the thought-provoking questioning of this kind of literature by James III Sanders whose analysis of prominent theorists on the social aspect of museums, such as Hilde Hein, Hooper-Greenhill and Stephen Weil, led him to the conclusion that 'each largely ignores how museums fail to address [museums'] complicity in the maintenance of heteronormativity' (Sanders 2008:17). Thus, the review offered by Anna Conlan and Amy Levin at the end of this volume stresses the multiplicity of the factors resulting in gender and sexual diversity receiving low levels of attention in the sector.

Likewise, contributors from a range of sectors were carefully selected to cover diverse viewpoints in relation to the experiences and stories of women and sexual minorities. Twenty-five essays have been included in this volume and the specific projects included in the book refer to a range of contexts. Overall, the editor manages to offer a balanced review of the two main central themes and how they are experienced and represented in museum practice and theory across different countries.

Regarding the intended audiences, it seems that the book will be of use for students, but also researchers, engaged with gender on its own and in conjunction with museology, and more importantly for scholars interested in understanding how sexuality has been, and could be, handled in collections and temporary projects. This volume is in fact the second major publication, after the 'Where is Queer' of *Museums & Social Issues* journal in 2008, that brings together various studies in support of a more proactive museum practice in relation to the inclusion and representation of past and contemporary gender and sexual diversity. Besides, it could be certainly a valuable source for practitioners seeking to enrich their institution's programming by making it more responsive to various gender and sexual identities.

Thus, this edited volume is a long awaited addition to museum studies literature concerned with issues around gender and sexuality, but is also a remarkable initiative to expand the literature on the socially purposeful agenda of museums from a rarely encountered perspective. Its only disadvantage is that due to the recent growing increase in fresh in-depth studies on the representation of gender and sexual minority identities, the book might soon become dated. Still, I honestly feel that it will continue forming the point of departure when studying, researching or displaying gender and sexuality in museums.

References

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J.Pedro Lorente (ed.), *The Museums of Contemporary Art, Notion and Development*, Farnam, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011, ISBN: 978-1-4094-0586-3, hardback £.70.00, pp. vii+318

The question of where, how, by whom and for what purposes the first museums of contemporary art were created is addressed by J. Pedro Lorente in this new book which builds on his groundbreaking 1998 study, *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity*. In this new book, Lorente explores the concept and history of museums of contemporary art, and the shifting ways in which they have been imagined and presented. A visually appealing and elegant volume, with the addition of thirty-two half-page black pencil drawings which help show the significance of architecture in this history of museums of contemporary art, *The Museums of Contemporary Art* is clearly the product of a great deal of careful research.

The two parts of the volume are arranged thematically, and chart a course from the nineteenth-century museum of arts to the twenty-century gallery of modern and contemporary art. Presenting a chronological narrative, Lorente presents a series of key historical moments in order to illustrate changing practices, dilemmas and the concepts which underpinned these. Lorente begins by establishing the historiography and considering questions of terminology in

relation to the concepts of 'modern' and 'contemporary'. By identifying significant moments in the history of the creation of museums of art and exploring how these are connected with issues of architecture, politics and culture, Lorente adequately justifies the choice of selection of the term contemporary in his book.

Following this introduction, the first part of the book then examines the paradigm of the Musée des Artistes Vivants in Paris and its equivalents in the rest of Europe during the nineteenth century. Interestingly, Lorente in remarkable detail presents the critical issue of museums of national or contemporary art, a dilemma posed in the end of the nineteenth century. He then discusses the image of modernity regarding architecture, art and politics. From here, Lorente moves logically to address changes in European museum policy regarding modern art with reference to the Impressionists at the Luxemburg as 'the most significant opening through which *avante-garde* art started to make its way into French museums and their imitators' (p.107, emphasis in original).

Lorente proceeds then in the second part to describe the story forward from 1930 to the present, presenting New York's Museum of Modern Art as a new universal role model that found emulators or 'contramodels' in the rest of the Western world during the twentieth century. Using historical evidence, Lorente describes how the Museum of Modern Art was established and expanded in times of war, and the agreements and conflicts which occurred with other institutions 'which definitively forged MoMA's personality (and that of the others)' and moved it away from being a 'passing museum' (p.184). Lorente presents in sufficient historical detail how the MoMA turned into the recognized *omphalos* of the world's art capital (p.199). The book then proceeds to indicate a determining point in the history of museums of contemporary art with the establishment of the Pompidou Centre in Paris in the late 1960s and early 1970's which resulted to the artistic revolution and socio-cultural rebirth of Paris as an international capital for the arts.

The book concludes with a brief epilogue that reviews recent museum developments in the last decades as a result of postmodernity.

Through its adoption of a long-term perspective, the book not only provides a narrative of the development of museums of contemporary art, but also sets this into its international perspective. By assessing the extent to which the great museum-capitals – Paris, London and New York in particular – created their own models of museum provision, as well as acknowledging the influence of models from elsewhere, the book uncovers fascinating perspectives on the practice of museum provision, and reveals how present cultural planning initiatives have often been shaped by historical uses.

Overall, *The Museums of Contemporary Art* is an interesting, and in parts, illuminating read, that will be of interest to a variety of scholars, including material culture, visual studies, art history, and museum studies, as well as museum practitioners, especially curators and students of modern and contemporary art. Lorente succeeds in presenting a carefully constructed chronological analysis of the evolution of modern art museums. An impressive amount of material is presented in a rather slim volume. The contributions provided through this book should be given a very thoughtful consideration.

On the other hand, some aspects of the book's presentation may present problems for the reader's navigation through it, particularly the extensive use of explanatory boxes which often take up a whole page (for example p.99). In these boxes, the author analyzes theories that are very esoteric, which for some readers may be tiring and distracting. The frequent use of detailed description may also appear too much for the casual reader. However, Lorente is an engaging writer and clearly demonstrates the connections and themes that led to the changes in the notion and development of museums of contemporary art which is the focus of the book. Although, the author's writing style is rather complex in the introduction, his ideas attain greater clarity as the book progresses. The evidence that the author incorporates from the first part of the book and onwards pertains more directly to issues of art, politics and architecture which makes his arguments more relevant and understandable.

To conclude, Lorente's work successfully illuminates an area in the history of museums of contemporary art. With the addition of a 16-page multilingual bibliography as one of its many strengths, this volume is an appropriate current reference towards understanding the high stakes of the cultural game in a renewed debate of the role and purposes of museums of art.

Rebecca A. Senf and Stephen J. Pyne, *Reconstructing the View: The Grand Canyon Photographs of Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, hardcover £34.95, pp. 230.

Raymund Ryan, *White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, hardcover £27.95, pp. 120.

How artists represent and use the landscape in their work is the subject of this review, featuring two works that take a very different approach to this theme. Senf and Pyne's catalogue, *Reconstructing the View: The Grand Canyon Photographs of Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe* (2012) delves deep into a collaborative project concentrated on an iconic and specific landscape, whilst Ryan's *White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes* (2012) takes a wider focus to explore the landscape as a potential canvas for works of art.

Since the discovery of the Grand Canyon, one of the seven wonders of the natural world, artists have attempted to capture its majesty through drawing, painting, and photography. The collaborative team of Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe find their inspiration not only in the canyon but also in other artists' interpretations of this immense landscape. The catalogue, *Reconstructing the View: The Grand Canyon Photographs of Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe*—the outgrowth of an exhibition of the same name held at the Phoenix Art Museum and the Center for Creative Photography in 2009—is an in-depth look at Klett and Wolfe's five year collaborative project (2007–2011).

Following two introductory essays, the catalogue opens into lush reproductions of the artist's work. While Klett and Wolfe's original photographs are large format, the device of utilizing several foldout pages allows the eye to pick out details that we might not ordinarily see. Rebecca Senf's informative essay contextualizes Klett and Wolfe's project by detailing their intricate process of incorporating other artists' work to both capture the essence of the original image and to chart differences to the canyon wrought by time. She likens this approach to that of the musical mashup wherein two or more songs are woven together seamlessly. The artists think of their work as historical mashups; '[T]he pair string together historic images and new photographs, using the consistency of geographic space to connect things that happened at different times...' (p. 29).

Senf's clear writing and close relationship with both artists shines through and by incorporating a number of quotes by the artists she gives voice to their ideas. She reveals Klett and Wolfe's multi-step process of using existing photographs by both celebrated and anonymous sources and rephotographing from the same access points. In what Senf calls an 'unwitting collaboration,' (p 20) the artists combine their new photographs with the original images or incorporate other materials such as post-cards to create sometimes seamless, sometimes blatantly stitched together works of art. This process of rephotographing is based upon scientific methods, specifically geological mapping and math along with the use of sequential photography as evidence, all methods familiar to the artists who, as Senf points out, have scientific roots through their education.

Complementing the artists' images and Senf's essay, Stephen J. Pyne contributes a discussion on the discovery and exploration of the canyon while detailing what he terms '*culturization*' or the shifting views of the canyon through history. He charts the various viewpoints—geological, artistic, environmental, and political—as well as the dips and surges in popularity that the canyon has enjoyed since its discovery. This wider view of the canyon, familiar to so many through visiting or the vast existing imagery, provides a nice counterpoint to the specificity of Klett and Wolfe's encounters and their contributions to the depictions of this enduring, and imposing landscape.

While *Reconstructing the View* examines how two artists utilize the landscape as inspiration for works of art that document the landscape, Raymund Ryan's *White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes* shifts the focus to the landscape as the canvas for works of art. At the heart of the catalogue are six sites scattered around the world—Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, USA; Raketestation Hombroich, near Neuss, Germany; Benesse Art Site in Naoshima, Japan; Inhotim, near Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Jardín Botánico, Culiacán, Mexico; and the Grand Traiano Art Complex, Grottaferatta, Italy. With these selections, Ryan documents how the landscape has shifted to become integral to presenting art in innovative ways.

The catalogue, published in conjunction with an exhibition presented at the Heinz Architectural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art posits new ideas about how to think about exhibition spaces as well as documenting several inventive new initiatives. In her forward, Director of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Lynn Zelevansky suggests that the exhibition and catalogue poses the following question: 'If we remove art from the grand architectural monuments in which it is usually publically housed, does it become imbued with the kind of life that it has in the artist's studio or some equally informal space?' (p.7). Certainly, in his introductory essay, 'A New Museum Ecology,' Brian O'Doherty, known for *Inside the White Cube* (1999), which charts how the art world functions through the space of the white cube, sets the foundation for breaking out of this traditional space into the green maze, an advancement of his earlier theories.

Ryan, in the most comprehensive essay in the catalogue, deftly follows O'Doherty's lead by focusing on the architecture of the various selected sites and situating each space into a larger narrative of art integrated with landscape. He demonstrates the creative and collaborative thinking that current architects, artists, landscape architects, and museum curators now use to challenge the ubiquitous idea of the white cube gallery as the best way to display art. By drawing distinctions between what he classifies as 'white cube, brownfield, and green maze' (p. 13) Ryan demonstrates the linear progression of these spaces through various examples. Furthermore, the author suggests that the advancement of green maze spaces may be a backlash to the recent influx of museum expansions powered by 'starchitects' and outlandish budgets.

As a counterpoint, Marc Treib's essay, 'Sculpture's Nature,' discusses the differences between sculpture parks and courtyards, and details various precedents for green maze spaces in the historical siting of sculpture outdoors. Outlining five different categories for outdoor works, each of the selected sites, and the idea of the green maze, fit into different slots on Treib's continuum of categories. In six dedicated sections to each of the sites, a short text outlining the mission of the space and planning details leads into wide-ranging photographs of the site along with artists' renderings, architectural sketches, and site plans. Ending each section is a list documenting construction particulars and those involved in the site's creation. What is fascinating about the site selections are not only the geographic variations and the different approaches to presenting art within the landscape but also the shifting nature of some of the institutions. While some have art permanently sited, others think of the landscape as rotating exhibition space. Furthermore, not all the sites present are complete; for example, construction on the Grand Traiano Art Complex will begin in 2014. Another interesting facet is noting what kinds of institutions create these green mazes. Non-profit public art museums such as the Seattle Art Museum and their Olympic Sculpture Park tend to be in the minority. Instead, for many of these spaces, the vision and the financing start with individual collectors or foundations such as Bernado Paz and Inhotim or corporations such as Benesse Holdings with the Benesse Art Site in Naoshima. While the author does not explore this aspect specifically, it is another question to add to those initially posed by Ryan and Zelevansky.

The interest in these catalogues lies in the coming together of art with science, geography, ecology, history, and photography to create new art forms that are contained within landscape rather than represented out of context within the 'white cube.' They show how artists are crossing traditional boundaries to create works of art that help us to understand and appreciate the landscape in new ways. As Robert R. Janes writes in *Museums in a Troubled World* (2009), museums often hold themselves aloof from the impact that human beings are having on the landscape of our planet and make no mention of the environment in their mission statements or guiding principles. By bringing the landscape into the museum and art gallery, and taking art out into the landscape perhaps this distance can be bridged.

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