

Museums and Truth

Annette B. Fromm

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Museums are usually seen as arenas for the authorised presentations of reality, based on serious, professional knowledge. Yet, in spite of the impossibility of giving anything but a highly abstract and extremely selective impression in an exhibition, very few museums problematize this or discuss their priorities with their public. They don't ask "what are the other truths of the matter?" Though the essays in this collection are not written with museums and truth as their explicit subject, they highlight contested truths, the absence of the truth of the underprivileged, whether one truth is more worthy than the other, and whether lesser truths can dilute the value of greater truths. One of the articles included here lets youngsters choose which truth is most probable or just, while another talks about an exhibition where the public must choose which truth to adhere to before entering. One shows how a political change gives a new opportunity to finally restore valuable truths of the past to the present, and another describes the highly dangerous task of making museums and memorials for the truths of the oppressed. Lastly, one explores whether we live in a period where the sources for authorized truths are fragmented and questioned, and asks, what should the consequences for museums be?



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