



Museums, Equality and Social Justice (Museum Meanings)

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The last two decades have seen concerns for equality, diversity, social justice and human rights move from the margins of museum thinking and practice, to the core. The arguments – both moral and pragmatic – for engaging diverse audiences, creating the conditions for more equitable access to museum resources, and opening up opportunities for participation, now enjoy considerable consensus in many parts of the world. A growing number of institutions are concerned to construct new narratives that represent a plurality of lived experiences, histories and identities which aim to nurture support for more progressive, ethically-informed ways of seeing and to actively inform contemporary public debates on often contested rights-related issues. At the same time it would be misleading to suggest an even and uncontested transition from the museum as an organisation that has been widely understood to marginalise, exclude and oppress to one which is wholly inclusive. Moreover, there are signs that momentum towards making museums more inclusive and equitable is slowing down or, in some contexts, reversing.

Museums, Equality and Social Justice aims to reflect on and, crucially, to inform debates in museum research, policy and practice at this critical time. It brings together new research from academics and practitioners and insights from artists, activists, and commentators to explore the ways in which museums, galleries and heritage organisations are engaging with the fast-changing equalities terrain and the shifting politics of identity at global, national and local levels and to investigate their potential to contribute to more equitable, fair and just societies.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Richard Sandell is Professor and Head of the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester and his research interests focus on museums, human rights and equality. He is Series Editor, with Christina Kreps, of *Museum Meanings*. His books include *Museums, Society, Inequality* (2002); *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference* (2007); *Museum Management and Marketing* with Robert Janes (2007) and, with Jocelyn Dodd and Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Re-Presenting Disability: activism and agency in the museum* (2010).

Eithne Nightingale is Head of Diversity and Equality Strategy at the V&A and has worked in equal opportunities, education, community development and museums for over 30 years. She has taken a lead on museum wide equality strategies; collaborated with culturally diverse communities on initiatives encompassing collections research, public programming and partnership development; and has written and lectured extensively on diversity in museums both in the UK and internationally.

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