CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS
MUSEUMS AND NARRATIVE

We are looking for English-language manuscripts on museums and exhibitions as narrative media for our new book series.

NEW SERIES: MUSEUMS AND NARRATIVE

How do museums narrate time and history?

Research in the humanities and social sciences that analyzes museums and their impact on culture has exponentially expanded in the last couple of decades following the museum boom that has made museums, memorials, and heritage sites one of the key mediums for regional, national, and international tourism. The more museums and exhibitions prioritize attracting certain audiences instead of giving precedence to their subject matter, the more tension this creates between traditional educational concepts bound to the generation of knowledge through the presentation of original artefacts on the one hand and entertainment on the other. However, whether museums are oriented more toward historical understanding or toward entertainment, they have all developed new narrative means of connecting visitors with experiences and knowledge from the past and present.

Whereas recent scholarship has advanced our understanding of 'difficult' museum narrative topics such as genocide, dictatorship, war, terrorism, trauma, colonialism, and slavery, new narrative constructions have also become important for other historical topics, including everyday and public history, allowing visitors to connect past, present, and future in novel and imaginative ways. Hardly any museum can function without a narrative concept, whether it opens up multiple avenues of experiencing and interpreting the past, or steers the visitor toward a master narrative.

History museums, which include museums with a focus on cultural history and anthropology, function as a model medium that connects history and memory. Experiential insights into the past do not just simulate how the past might have been, but can also prompt visitors to reflect on, firstly, the cognitive and ethical challenges of understanding and experiencing the past from a present-day perspective and, secondly, what they can learn from the past. In particular, the discussion of museum narratives of 'difficult knowledge' is creating a productive tension in museums between history on the one hand and current questions about human rights and social justice that also imply imaginative futures on the other.

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OUR NEW SERIES

De Gruyter's new Museum and Narrative book series approaches the museum as a narrative medium from literary, memory, media, and design, as well as historiographical, anthropological, and cultural studies perspectives. It invites manuscripts that examine how museums and exhibitions devoted to historical subject matter, heritage and memorial sites, as well as museums of ideas and utopias (institutions that engage in story-making and representations of the past, present, and future) represent temporal structures and processes. We welcome contributions that conceptualize visualization, theatricality, and linear and non-linear narrative constructions of time and space in the museum.

The aim of the series is to provide a vibrant scholarly platform for the analysis of theoretical concepts in museum narrative as well as specific case studies on a local, regional, national, transnational, and global scale, from the middle ages to the present. The series addresses the cognitive, emotional, ethical, aesthetic, experiential, and political questions that surround museum narratives pertaining to the organization of exhibitions and the representation of temporality for different visitor groups.

All volumes in the series will be published in English and will be peer-reviewed by two scholars in the series' subject area.

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