



Museum Bodies: The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing

Helen Rees Leahy

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Museum Bodies provides an account of how museums have staged, prescribed and accommodated a repertoire of bodily practices, from their emergence in the eighteenth century to the present day. As long as museums have existed, their visitors have been scrutinised, both formally and informally, and their behaviour calibrated as a register of cognitive receptivity and cultural competence. Yet there has been little sustained theoretical or practical attention given to the visitors' embodied encounter with the museum. In Museum Bodies Helen Rees Leahy discusses the politics and practice of visitor studies, and the differentiation and exclusion of certain bodies on the basis of, for example, age, gender, educational attainment, ethnicity and disability. At a time when museums are more than ever concerned with size, demographic mix and the diversity of their audiences, as well as with the ways in which visitors engage with and respond to institutional space and content, this wide-ranging study of visitors' embodied experience of the museum is long overdue.

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