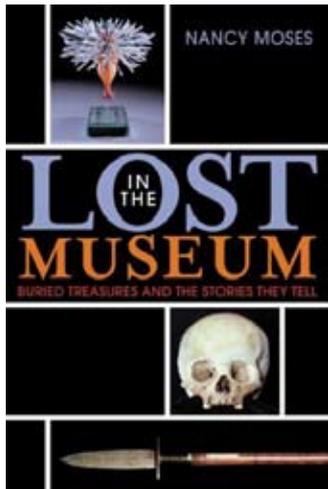


LOST IN THE MUSEUM: BURIED TREASURES AND THE STORIES THEY TELL



Nancy Moses
AltaMira Press
Lanham, MD
2007
ISBN 978-0-7591-1070-0
(Paperback)

Reviewed by **Natasha Barrett**

MUSEUM WONDERS

With this book, Nancy Moses takes the reader on a magical ride through nine different American institutions in Pennsylvania, in the North-Eastern United States. She reveals the richness and variety of these collections through exploring museum objects specially chosen by curators, many of which have never been displayed before, ranging from clothing to drawings, military arms and even human remains. Integral to each chapter is the story behind the object selected – the person who collected, made or used it – thus bringing the object and people's stories back to life.

MUSEOLOGICAL EXEMPLARS

The objects are also used as a device through which key museological themes are unpacked and discussed. These topics included: the mechanics of a museum; the gap between institutions/societies and their public; the quandary of how to deal with old style typological museum displays; tempering the imbalance between the display and storage of objects; the relatively new approach of combining art and science within exhibitions; collecting the old and new; making collections relevant and loved by their public and practical matters relating to conservation and funding.

Moses sets a positive tone, almost childlike with wonder at times, which would appeal to the specialist and the interested reader alike. For some though, attention may wane at times if the object each chapter is dedicated to does not immediately spark their interest. This book is best dipped into at leisure so that the wealth of detail, different characters and stories can be relished. It is the personal touch through Moses' own experiences at several of the museums or discussions with curators, which animate this book and break down the boundaries between the expert and the general reader.

A SOMEWHAT EXCLUSIVE READ

However, the book mainly speaks from and about the white colonial viewpoint, history and experience. Whisperings of a new museological voice, one inclusive of Indigenous peoples, can just be heard in the final chapter on the 'Summer Garments of A Tibetan Princess', although a Native American object chapter is glaringly absent. Overall it is an enjoyable book, leaving the reader with a deeper understanding of the museum world and insight into the marvellous variety of collections held in institutions in this part of America and indeed all around the world.

Natasha Barrett was a member of Te Papa's Repatriation team prior to her current post managing Auckland Regional Council's Cultural Heritage Index.

Lost in the Museum is available (in NZ) through Real Groovy online for NZ\$59.95, Ships from the USA.
<http://www.realgroovy.co.nz/Product/3650828/Lost-in-the-Museum>