

TITLE

People, Place, and Our Past: Curatorial reflections on the interpretation of difficult histories

ABSTRACT

Museums, and museum professionals engage in a significant role within society. This Pecha Kucha presents new museum research conducted last year in 5 national museums across the United States (9/11 Memorial Museum, The Arab American National Museum, The Japanese American National Museum, The Wing Luke Museum of the Pacific Asian American Experience, The National Center for Civil and Human Rights). Working with the curatorial staff of these museums, we explored the socially inclusive role of curatorial voice. In particular, we addressed issues of localization and the significance of place in the co-construction of identity. We noted that curators utilized mechanisms such as localization to amplify the co-creation of identity experience with museum visitors. In particular, curator participants that acknowledged the powerful significance of place, spoke of their role as facilitators – assisting museum visitors in an encounter with the significant and local space in which the museum itself is built. In a reflective qualitative process, the curators discussed the importance of cultural and historical context and the inclusion of community interpretation within their museum. This Pecha Kucha presentation should ignite dialogue concerning the changing role of museums in the United States, highlighting the ways in which museums now work with communities to interpret difficult and often contested histories.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY

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