State authority and the public sphere: Ideas on the changing role of the museum as a Canadian social institution
State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution
Susan Ashley

Abstract

Museums are important public sites for the authentication and presentation of heritage in Western cultures. The authority of museums is derived from their long history as repositories of material culture and as agents of identity formation, nationalism, and most recently, social inclusion. But in a country such as Canada where global economics and popular culture combine with an unprecedented influx of immigrants, how society imagines itself and how the nation articulates its community and its heritage is changing radically. Issues of power, meaning, authenticity and citizenship have threatened the museum's representational authority. How are Canadian museums responding to these changes, and is their authority now up for debate? Or is the need to assert authority a problem in itself and can museums evolve a new type of discourse about heritage? This paper investigates museum authority inherent in its simultaneous roles as voice of the state and as a public space for opinion and meaning making. It focuses attention on Canadian museums and government policies that have influenced their authority, in particular, theoretical implications of the current drive for 'social cohesion'. An exhibit on the Underground Railroad and African-Canadian history at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto is examined to consider how museums as instruments of the state can be re-tuned as sites of public identity discourse and social inclusion.

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Money, Power, and the History of Art: Whose money? Whose power? Understanding science as a social institution. Social institutions are historically established stable forms of organizing joint activities and relations of people performing socially significant functions. It is believed that for the first time the term "institute" was used; in the social sciences, the Italian philosopher and historian D. Vico (1668-1744). His pedigree institutional approach leads from the founders of sociology O. Comte and G. Spencer. - these mechanisms are in the form of value-normative complexes that regulate public life as a whole or its separate sphere. The process of institutionalization, i.e. the
formation of a social institution, consists of several consecutive stages: the emergence of a need, the satisfaction of which requires joint organized action. Media Accounts and Changing Public Attitudes and Behaviours. The Importance of Repeated Exposure to Media Messages. The media play a central role in informing the public about what happens in the world, particularly in those areas in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience. This article examines the impact the media has in the construction of public belief and attitudes and its relationship to social change. Drawing on findings from a range of empirical studies, we look at the impact of media coverage in areas such as disability, climate change and economic development. Findings across these areas show the way in which the media shape public debate in terms of setting agendas and focus.