



Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage

By Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

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Destination Culture takes the reader on an eye-opening journey from ethnological artifacts to kitsch. Posing the question, "What does it mean to show?" Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explores the agency of display in a variety of settings: museums, festivals, world's fairs, historical re-creations, memorials, and tourist attractions. She talks about how objects—and people—are made to "perform" their meaning for us by the very fact of being collected and exhibited, and about how specific techniques of display, not just the things shown, convey powerful messages.

Her engaging analysis shows how museums compete with tourism in the production of "heritage." To make themselves profitable, museums are marketing themselves as tourist attractions. To make locations into destinations, tourism is staging the world as a museum of itself. Both promise to deliver heritage. Although heritage is marketed as something old, she argues that heritage is actually a new mode of cultural production that gives a second life to dying ways of life, economies, and places. The book concludes with a lively commentary on the "good taste/bad taste" debate in the ephemeral "museum of the life world," where everyone is a curator of sorts and the process of converting life into heritage begins.

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"*Destination Culture* is a book of discovery. Reading it is to accompany Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett through fairs and museums, as a tourist and as an always sharp observer of people. The power of this book is to show how first-rate ethnographic work is also the stuff of cultural studies. This volume, including her widely cited "Exhibiting Jews," shows why there are few commentators on the cultural scene who are as insightful, critical—and often funny—as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett."—Sander L. Gilman, author of *Smart Jews*

"A book of wide appeal that has few rivals It develops an original perspective on museums and other forums for displaying culture and art and does so in a witty and accessible style."—Ivan Karp, coeditor of *Museums and Communities*

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is Professor of Performance Studies and of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University.

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