



Enacting History

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Enacting History is a collection of new essays exploring the world of historical performances. The volume focuses on performances outside the traditional sphere of theatre, among them living history museums, battle reenactments, pageants, renaissance festivals, and adventure-tourism destinations. This volume argues that the recent surge in such performances have raised significant questions about the need for, interest in, and value of such nontraditional theater. Many of these performances claim a greater or lesser degree of historical "accuracy" or "authenticity," and the authors tease out the representational and historiographic issues related to these arguments. How, for instance, are issues of race, ethnicity, and gender dealt with at museums that purport to be accurate windows into the past? How are politics and labor issues handled in local- or state-funded institutions that rely on volunteer performers? How do tourists' expectations shape the choices made by would-be purveyors of the past? Where do matters of taste or censorship enter in when reconciling the archival evidence with a family-friendly mission?

Essays in the collection address, among other subjects, reenactments of period cookery and cuisine at a Maryland renaissance festival; the roles of women as represented at Minnesota's premiere living history museum, Historic Fort Snelling; and the Lewis and Clark bicentennial play as cultural commemoration. The editors argue that historical performances like these-regardless of their truth-telling claims-are an important means to communicate, document, and even shape history, and allow for a level of participation and accessibility that is unique to performance. *Enacting History* is an entertaining and informative account of the public's fascination with acting out and watching history and of the diverse methods of fulfilling this need.

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