

## Rhetorical Museology: Subverting Meaning-Making in Museum Exhibitions

### **Editors:**

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Existing scholarship on museum rhetoric focuses on ethics, identity, culture, and the museum as memory space. This edited collection of essays seeks to extend and disrupt these considerations by moving towards a more embodied experience of the museum visitor, one that considers how the curator's intended arrangement of display mediates the participant's sense of not only what, but HOW they see, based upon the curator's intended purpose. Each visitor's perception will impact them based on their prior knowledge of institutions, spaces, history, and culture, shaping the very identity and conclusions of the exhibit.

We rely on Carole Blair's theory of material rhetoric, Laurie E. Gries's approach of "new materialism," and Elizabeth Weiser's definition of "polyphonic juxtaposition" to research gaps into identity and consequentiality.

Through the place and space of the museum, we then use a rhetorical lens to examine how place, space, sensory modalities, objects, movements, culture, and ideology manipulate the museum space, creating individualistic experiences through what Michael Welsh terms "the museum effect." Museum exhibitions are rife locations to study the persuasive techniques used to shape insulated groups of visitors.

To build on the body of scholarship on museum rhetoric, this edited collection seeks to engage with the following questions:

- How do museum exhibitions attempt to shape cultural identity?
- How does embodiment work to persuade a museum visitor's experience?
- In addition to presence, what are the absences in museum spaces?
- How is meaning-making subverted, the mesological intent and the viewer's interpretation?
- How is the juxtaposition of artifacts used for comparison/contrast in museum exhibitions to appeal to visitors rhetorically?

The editors invite contributors in rhetorical studies, museum studies, memory studies, and cultural studies to apply these questions to various types of museums (e.g., art museums, national museums, house museums, natural science museums, and history museums) within an international context. This edited collection is under contract by Lexington Books.

**Topics to be considered:**

- Purposes/processes of shaping cultural identity through museum exhibitions
- Process/role of embodiment in forming a museum visitor's experience
- Juxtaposition as a rhetorical strategy in museum exhibitions

Please submit a 250-300-word abstract of your essay along with your bio to Kristina Gutierrez ([kristina.a.gutierrez@lonestar.edu](mailto:kristina.a.gutierrez@lonestar.edu)), Chelsey Patterson ([chelseypatterson@abtech.edu](mailto:chelseypatterson@abtech.edu)), and Susan Garza ([susan.garza@tamucc.edu](mailto:susan.garza@tamucc.edu)) by November 8, 2024.

**Notification of Accepted Abstracts:**

January 17, 2025

**Full Essay Manuscripts (6,500 words including notes and references, APA style) Due:**

May 30, 2025