



Carnival and the performance of heritage

Global heritage: course taster

Is heritage about the past or the present?

Darcus Howe:

This is a part of the Caribbean history in England.

How does heritage form the basis for our sense of collective identity?

David Clarke:

In one sense of course, the displays are a commentary on Scottish identity, but their very existence now is a factor in the development of future identity. Because what they've brought to people will change their perceptions about what they think about Scotland.

Man (vox pop):

We've really rediscovered our national identity and there's a feeling that the best is still to come.

Can heritage transcend local meaning and acquire universal value?

Susan Denyer:

It's not enough to say well, this is a place associated with some strong ideas that have had worldwide influence. In terms of World Heritage what one has to be able to demonstrate is how the site manifests those ideas, why it's important, why it has outstanding universal value.

Newsreader (Huw Edwards)

At least 38 people dead, hundreds injured as bombers attack central London. At the height of the rush hour they hit the transport system with four massive bombs.

How do societies use heritage to remember (and forget) the events of the past?

Julie Nicholson:

I think what everyone wanted was something that represented the 52 individuals but also expressed something about the collective nature and that it would be something that stood as a thing of beauty a work of art.

How do authority and power play out through heritage?

Christopher Wilk:

We don't regard ourselves as the sole source of authority. It used to be that curators would say, right, I know my collection, I know the history, I will tell the public what they have to know. We now know that the most important thing that happens in the museum visiting experience is what the visitor brings with them.

Sarah Medlam:

People must feel they that they can use a gallery as they wish, and that they don't have to follow some pre-determined route or take it in a linear fashion if they don't choose to.

Chris Mullard:

There is a tendency I think for us all to begin to look at culture and to look at heritage in a way that is defined by one specific interest group. You know, and it tends to be white, it tends to be male, and it tends to be upper class.

How is the performance of heritage a form of social action?

Chris Mullard:

It isn't just people dressing up and dancing on the streets, this is about community action.

Darcus Howe:

People came and made it an event and if you don't understand that, you do not understand carnival at all.

Chris Mullard:

At the heart of Carnival lies community. At the heart of community lies the individual, and individual freedoms and individual rights. And Carnival has always been about the expression of all that within a collective form.

How do heritage decisions affect people's lives?

Jim Blackender:

The choice is – do we want to live on a high-density housing estate, or do we want to keep a vital part of history and continue into the future the way we're living now, and we all want to continue with what we've got.

And how might heritage choices bring local people into conflict with the state?

Nicholas Bullock:

The grounds for listing make it difficult to bring in the play of local sentiment as a rationale for preservation. Essentially it's framed in terms of architectural and planning history, rather than in terms of social history.

Eddie Benn:

That is our heritage, it may not be in the form of a lovely Grade II listed building, but it is heritage, so how can you ignore that?