



# Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition

*Timothy W. Luke*

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Each year the more than seven thousand museums in the United States attract more attendees than either movies or sports. Yet until recently, museums have escaped serious political analysis. The past decade, however, has witnessed a series of unusually acrimonious debates about the social, political, and moral implications of museum exhibitions as varied as the Enola Gay display at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum and the "Sensation" exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

In this important volume, Timothy W. Luke explores the power that museums have to shape collective values and social understandings, and argues persuasively that museum exhibitions have a profound effect on the body politic. Through discussions of topics ranging from how the National Holocaust Museum and the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles have interpreted the Holocaust to the ways in which the American Museum of Natural History, the Missouri Botanical Gardens, and Tucson's Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum have depicted the natural world, Luke exposes the processes through which museums challenge but more often affirm key cultural and social realities.

Timothy W. Luke is University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Political Science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

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