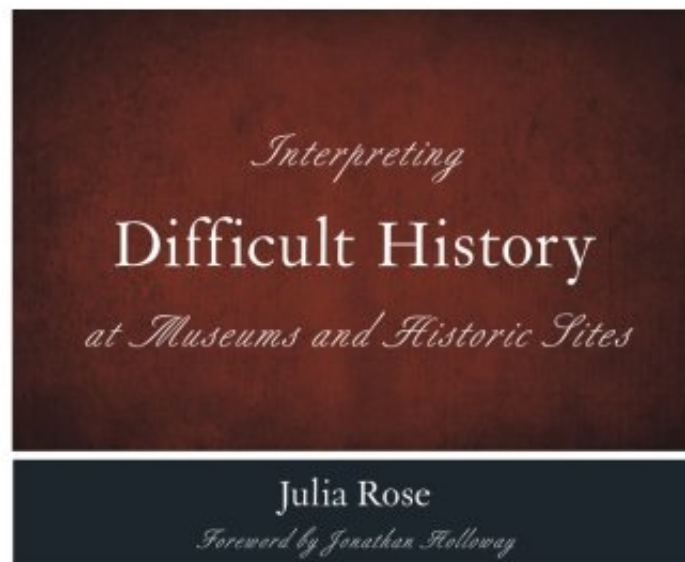


## Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites (Interpreting History)


*Julia Rose*


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INTERPRETING HISTORY SERIES



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**Julia Rose : Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites (Interpreting History)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites (Interpreting History):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and ThoughtfulBy MorettiThis is a very well-researched and thoughtful book on how museums can approach the representation of "difficult histories" through respectful and careful negotiation, keeping viewers' sensibilities in mind while ensuring historically faithful exhibits. The information about how people may resist what they are learning because it challenges their moral view of the world is really

interesting, and the strategies proposed are very helpful. This book is good for educators who teach upsetting histories as it helps you understand how to manage the learning process: how to ensure learning while having empathy for how difficult and stressful that learning might be for the student. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Useful beyond museums  
By Jacklyn H. Ducote  
Excellent ideas not only for the museum field but also for use in many other professions.

*Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* is framed by educational psychoanalytic theory and positions museum workers, public historians, and museum visitors as learners. Through this lens, museum workers and public historians can develop compelling and ethical representations of historical individuals, communities, and populations who have suffered. It includes various examples of difficult knowledge, detailed examples of specific interpretation methods, and will give readers an in-depth explanation of the psychoanalytic educational theories behind the methodologies. Audiences can more responsibly and productively engage in learning histories of oppression and trauma when they are in measured and sensitive museum learning environments and public history venues. To learn more, check out the website here: <http://interpretingdifficulthistory.com/>

Rose provides a remarkably thorough and thought-provoking theoretical basis for displaying difficult histories in public venues. By including an impressive bibliography of works that examine everything from memory to the psychology of the viewer to how to create intimacy in uncomfortable exhibit spaces, the author has broken new ground in how practitioners of public history should think about exhibiting the history of oppression, violence, and trauma. Divided into six chapters, the book provides a framework for defining and displaying difficult histories, along with a discussion of the ethics that surround such memorializations. Rose concludes by providing a case study as well as the five critical elements that she posits must be included in any delivery of a difficult history. She deftly illustrates that, when dealing with difficult histories, there are multiple, often conflicting points of view that must be considered in order to accurately represent what can be a painful past. In addition, difficult histories can help viewers and learners absorb and apply the lessons learned in that uneasy space to see how their actions can undo the injustices of the past in the present. **Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above. (CHOICE)** [I]t's hard at first to heed Julia Rose's advice in *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* that when visitors brazenly deny the brutal realities of the past, we should not insist that That is how the history happened and These are the facts since that will most likely not address learners' discomfort. But Rose's masterful book dives deep into discomfort. She is taking seriously what is required to create an environment where history workers and visitors can all finally go there, and truly confront the most disturbing and emotional implications of American history. . . . [B]y exploring the roots of resistance, the book forces any of us who start thinking I can't do this, this is too hard to examine where that's really coming from. And by bringing administrators, workers, and visitors together into a single category of learners, the book creates a sense of mutual enterprise, responsibility, and opportunity. I hope we'll all rise to the challenge. (Exhibition) (ed. jointly with *Fostering Empathy Through Museums*) Both books contribute to the dialogue on museums as social agents, and both address the importance of personalizing exhibitions by telling stories. They deepen the growing dialogue on the role of emotions aroused by exhibitions. As institutions increasingly present controversial issues, they need strategies for approaching anger and resistance. *Rose's Commemorative Museum Pedagogy* summarizes steps that are already taken by many institutions, but in a way that puts them into relief for those who have not yet discovered those strategies. Together, these books will be of use to museum educators, curators, and others as they strive to offer experiences in which members of the public engage with contested histories. [B]ooks like Rose's and Gokcigdem's offer pathways toward a deeper consideration of the issues involved. (Museum Society) In this original and insightful book, Julie Rose offers a penetrating analysis of the challenges confronting and the rewards awaiting public historians as they encourage audiences to take an honest, unblinking look at the past. It is a must read for anyone seeking to use effectively the transformational power of history to shape a better future. (W. Todd Groce, President and CEO, Georgia Historical Society) Julie Rose makes a valuable contribution in *Interpreting Difficult History*. As sites across the country bring challenging stories to their interpretation, history workers will come upon unforeseen challenges. *Interpreting Difficult History* synthesizes and adapts psychology to unlock the learning processes of both visitors and front line staff. This work is critically important for museum professionals. Dr. Rose's *Commemorative Museum Pedagogy* is a straightforward strategy for dealing with the particular needs and issues of contentious and upsetting history. Any historic site with a social justice focus or simply a temporary exhibition dealing with difficult topics will be well-served to turn to this book as a roadmap and training resource. (Ashley Rogers, Director of Operations, Whitney Plantation, Greater New Orleans) About the Author Julie Rose is presently the director of the West Baton Rouge Museum. Her primary research interests focus on interpreting difficult histories and documenting historical enslaved plantation communities for museum interpretations. Currently, Rose also serves as the Chairman for the Council for the American Association for State and Local History, and is a board member for the Louisiana Association of Museums. She received her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University, a Master of Arts in Teaching from the George Washington University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art and Education from State

University of New York at Albany. She has held curator positions at the Columbia Historical Society in Washington, D.C., Childrens Museum of Oak Ridge, East Tennessee Historical Society, and Magnolia Mound Plantation, and was a faculty member in the Master of Arts in Museum Studies Program at Southern University at New Orleans. In addition, Rose is presently an adjunct faculty member at Louisiana State University where she teaches museum studies.