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Tammy S. Gordon

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PRIVATE HISTORY IN PUBLIC

Exhibition and the Settings of Everyday Life

TAMMY S. GORDON
FOREWORD BY HAROLD SKRAMSTAD



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Tammy S. Gordon : Private History in Public: Exhibition and the Settings of Everyday Life (American Association for State and Local History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Private History in Public: Exhibition and the Settings of Everyday Life (American Association for State and Local History):

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In small community museums, truck stops, restaurants, bars, barbershops, schools, and churches, people create displays to tell the histories that matter to them. Much of this history is personal: family history, community history, history of a trade, or the history of something considered less than genteel. It is often history based on the historical record, but also based on feelings, beliefs, and memory. It is neglected history. *Private History in Public* is about those history exhibits that complicate the public/private dichotomy, exhibits that serve to explain communities, families, and individuals to outsiders and tie insiders together through a shared narrative of historical experience. Tammy S. Gordon looks beyond the large professionalized museum exhibits that have dominated scholarship in museum studies and public history and offers a new way of understanding the broad spectrum of exhibition types in the United States.

Tammy Gordon is an engaging guide through a world of historical exhibitions that remains mostly unrecognized by professional public historians. Whether considering displays in bars or barbershops, tributes to firefighters or 'Freakatoriums,' Gordon has a wry but generous touch as she analyzes the sites on their own terms and considers their implications for more traditional museums. Since Americans are just as likely to seek out exhibitions by the roadside as in a museum, it's time we understand what sort of history they are getting and how it sustains them. Gordon's book is a thought-provoking introduction to how the past gets constructed outside the gallery walls. (Benjamin Filene, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Director of Public History, University of North Carolina at Greensboro) Written with a sense of humor and blissfully free of academic jargon, *Private History in Public* is a journey, literally and figuratively, through a past that has not been professionally curated. The past is, as Gordon makes clear, sometimes bizarre, often beautiful, always treasured. (Heritage Resource Center) Tammy Gordon's fascinating exploration of exhibits beyond the world of professionalized history museums leads readers to a new appreciation of the mix of elements in bars, restaurants, and off-beat museums that engages and sometimes enlightens visitors. Arguing that visitors to mainstream museums also look for 'private history in public,' she challenges professionals to find ways to incorporate the best of these alternative displays. (Maria Quinlan Leiby, Michigan Historical Center) About the Author Tammy S. Gordon is assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.