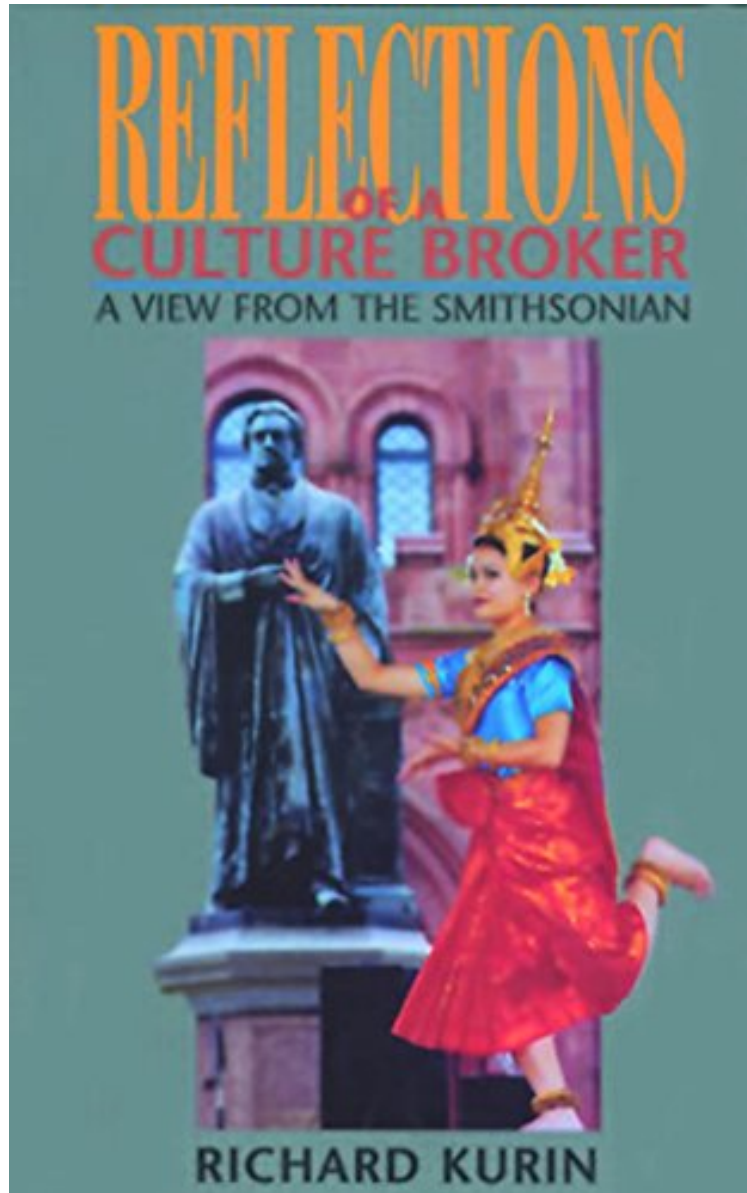


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Reflections of a Culture Broker: A View from the Smithsonian

Richard Kurin

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Richard Kurin : Reflections of a Culture Broker: A View from the Smithsonian before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reflections of a Culture Broker: A View from the Smithsonian:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fun and Informative By C. Blomberg Reading this book you start to feel like you can predict what Kurin will say when faced with different situations. This is not a bad thing. What I mean

is, you learn how he looks at his job as an anthropologist/ethnographer/broker of culture. The discussions of how the visiting teams and the American hosts had to overcome assumptions and produce accurate, honest, sensitive cultural events for the Smithsonian is really fascinating. We love Kurin from his first chapter (Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief) through the freedom he allows the Festival of India performers to transform the festival, into his head-butting with Soviet bureaucrats, and right to his conclusion when he discusses the future-- globalism, tourism, indigenous products, culture policy and more. Kurin is doing amazing work and I am thankful he found time to write this book and let us know about it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Discussion of Public Folklore (and culture) By A Customer This book includes interesting essays on ways that cultural traditions are brokered in public programs and within academic research. The case studies are especially interesting and provide excellent ideas about major issues involved in coordinating public events. The chapters on the state of anthropology, the controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit, and the future development of public programs are especially strong. The writing will be useful to coordinators of events that display history, folklife, and culture to audiences, and the book will also appeal to anyone who attends festivals, concerts, museum exhibits, and other presentations of culture.

Is culture brokered like stocks, real estate, or marriage? In this engaging book, Richard Kurin shows that cultures are also mediated and indeed brokered by countries, organizations, communities, and individuals -- all with their own vision of the truth and varying abilities to impose it on others. Drawing on his diverse experiences in producing exhibitions and public programs, Kurin challenges culture brokers -- defined broadly to include museum professionals, film-makers, journalists, festival producers, and scholars of many disciplines -- to reveal more clearly the nature of their interpretations, to envision the ways in which their messages can "play" to different audiences, and to better understand the relationship between knowledge, art, politics, and entertainment. The book documents a variety of cases in which the Smithsonian has brokered culture for the American public: a planned exhibit on Jerusalem had to balance both Israeli and Palestinian agendas; debates over the 1996 Olympic Arts Festival presented differing visions of the American South; and the National Air and Space Museum's controversial display of the Enola Gay prompted the Smithsonian to re-examine the role of national museums. Arguing that cultural exhibits reflect a series of decisions about representing someone, someplace, and something, *Reflections of a Culture Broker* discusses the ethical and technical problems faced by not only those who practice in a museum setting but also anyone charged with representing culture in a public forum.

From Library Journal Written by the director of the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Studies, this book is not an "official" accounting of Smithsonian policies, activities, and decisions but a personal essay based on firsthand knowledge. Intending to present a sorely needed casebook of professional practice for "culture brokers," Kurin offers a descriptive and analytic view of the process by which various types of major cultural presentations such as exhibits, museums, and festivals are developed, enacted, and situated. Regarding the Enola Gay controversy, he discusses the complex concept of "the search for truth and narrative" within "multiparadigmatic, deconstructed frameworks that make multiple versions of reality a fact of life." Kurin concludes that curation is process-oriented, not static, and is "a proactive effort to serve the public, increase understandability, and use the museum as a vehicle of inter- and intracultural communication." This down-to-earth, enjoyable, and thought-provoking title is highly recommended. ? Jennifer L.S. Moldwin, Detroit Inst. of Arts Lib. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. Written by the director of the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Studies, this book is not an "official" accounting of Smithsonian policies, activities, and decisions but a personal essay based on firsthand knowledge. Intending to present a sorely needed casebook of professional practice for "culture brokers," Kurin offers a descriptive and analytic view of the process by which various types of major cultural presentations such as exhibits, museums, and festivals are developed, enacted, and situated. Regarding the Enola Gay controversy, he discusses the complex concept of "the search for truth and narrative" within "multiparadigmatic, deconstructed frameworks that make multiple versions of reality a fact of life." Kurin concludes that curation is process-oriented, not static, and is "a proactive effort to serve the public, increase understandability, and use the museum as a vehicle of inter- and intracultural communication." This down-to-earth, enjoyable, and thought-provoking title is highly recommended. ? (from Library Journal; Jennifer L.S. Moldwin, Detroit Inst. of Arts Lib. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.) About the Author Richard Kurin, formerly director of the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies, is Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution.