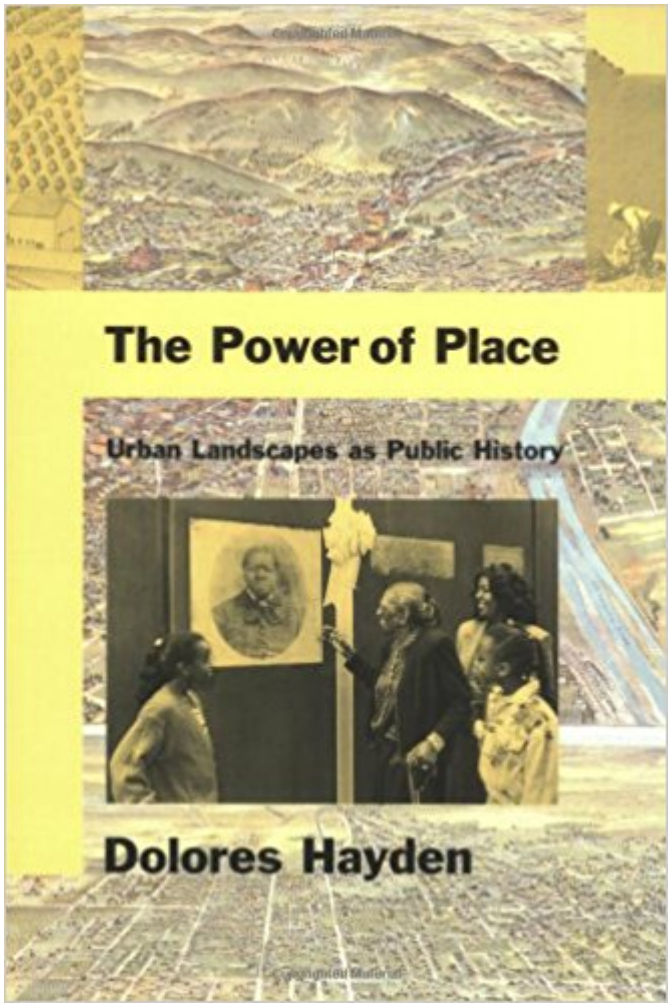
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The Power Of Place: Urban Landscapes As Public History (MIT Press)



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Synopsis

Based on her extensive experience in the urban communities of Los Angeles, historian and architect Dolores Hayden proposes new perspectives on gender, race, and ethnicity to broaden the practice of public history and public art, enlarge urban preservation, and reorient the writing of urban history to spatial struggles.In the first part of The Power of Place, Hayden outlines the elements of a social history of urban space to connect people's lives and livelihoods to the urban landscape as it changes over time. She then explores how communities and professionals can tap the power of historic urban landscapes to nurture public memory.The second part documents a decade of research and practice by The Power of Place, a nonprofit organization Hayden founded in downtown Los Angeles. Through public meetings, walking tours, artists's books, and permanent public sculpture, as well as architectural preservation, teams of historians, designers, planners, and artists worked together to understand, preserve, and commemorate urban landscape history as African American, Latina, and Asian American families have experienced it.One project celebrates the urban homestead of Biddy Mason, an African American ex-slave and midwife active betwen 1856 and 1891. Another reinterprets the Embassy Theater where Rose Pesotta, Luisa Moreno, and Josefina Fierro de Bright organized Latina dressmakers and cannery workers in the 1930s and 1940s. A third chapter tells the story of a historic district where Japanese American family businesses flourished from the 1890s to the 1940s. Each project deals with bitter memories -- slavery, repatriation, internment -- but shows how citizens survived and persevered to build an urban life for themselves, their families, and their communities.Drawing on many similar efforts around the United States, from New York to Charleston, Seattle to Cincinnati, Hayden finds a broad new movement across urban preservation, public history, and public art to accept American diversity at the heart of the vernacular urban landscape. She provides dozens of models for creative urban history projects in cities and towns across the country.

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Customer Reviews

The Power of Place is a well-timed, well-reasoned call forfusing history and the environment to create a more democratic andinclusive interpretation of the places in which most of us live andwork. Ms. Hayden greatly strengthens preservation with arguments that give the historic environment a critical dimension beyond beauty and rarity. (The New York Times Book Review)

Based on her extensive experience in the urban communities of Los Angeles, historian and architect Dolores Hayden proposes new perspectives on gender, race, and ethnicity to broaden the practice of public history and public art, enlarge urban preservation, and reorient the writing of urban history.

Using Los Angeles as a case study (based in her own professional projects) Hayden argues for shifting the public history paradigm in urban places to acknowledge a more diversely gendered, racial and ethnic past. The case studies are preceded by a brief examination of urban public history in other American locations. Hayden’s text is accessible to a broad readership, but at times the narrative might have benefited from greater depth of exploration.

Hayden provides a nice summary of public history projects she has undertaken. Her emphasis is on including women and minorities in public history projects. She also gives a great assessment on how to use the physical landscape to determine what types of projects are incorporated.

great book to use at the university

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Dolores Hayden’s book, The Power of Place, is a comprehensive guide for anyone whose goal is to engage in an examination of spaces and places. It retains a historical perspective that allows the reader to apply the places focused upon by Hayden to his or her own specific spatial examination. While she focuses specific attention on the Los Angeles area, I found her work compatible with any examination of spatial use or spatial history and contextualization. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the power of place.

I admire Hayden’s book, "Building Suburbia" so I anticipated this volume with great pleasure. Unfortunately, "The Power of Place" lacks the insight and observation of Hayden’s later book. That is forgivable; I expect authors to develop their skills, and Hayden is an astute writer.She wasn’t particularly astute, however, when she wrote "The Power of Place". I don’t want to offend anyone, but the idea of white liberals going in to disenfranchised "ethnic" neighborhoods, to give those poor deprived people some art--well, that is patronizing and rather pathetic. Who asked them?Every community has art, and I hope Hayden has learned from the mistakes she made in "The Power of Place". Bringing art to the poor ignored masses (as she sees them) merely replicates and reinforces minority and ethnic groups as "marginalized" and "needy". It never occurred to Hayden that there are artforms that are inaccessible to her; she is not the target audience for this art, and may not be able to perceive or understand it. She readily assumes that her understanding of art and her access to it is superior to that of various cultural and ethnic minorities, so she’s going to help the poor, culturallly-starved plebes. She delivers her own clumsy aesthetics to "underrepresented" groups and assumes that if she can’t see or understand an art force or cultural form, it must not be there. So, a Euro-American process of art is the only legitimate one for her, and she didn’t see that in these poor, isolated, marginalized, disenfranchised, communities, the members of which were probably too polite to tell Hayden and her do-gooder, well-meaning buddies to "Hit the road. Who asked you? We got this." If only Hayden had the same courtesy. Assume that art is everywhere, Hayden, and learn to understand forms and expressions that might be unfamiliar to you. The author wrote this book in the mid-1990s, I hope by now she has grown at least as sophisticated as the patient recipients of her imposed "community artwork".

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