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The face of the factory girl: Educational rhetoric in the mediation of an historical place

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Abstract

World heritage cities and sites convey culture and form understandings of the past as well as show a way to relate to it in a present context. These cities and sites are concrete examples of what to remember; and their mediated rhetoric, as found in exhibitions and on websites, gives a view into the management of our collective, cultural memory. This article will analyse key elements of the website for New Lanark, a Scottish heritage site, and in so doing will observe how rhetorical agency is shaped through the use of iconic photographs, visual rhetoric and the foregrounding of specific topics. Predominant on this website is the face of a young factory girl, smiling at the viewer. The heritage site thus has its identity formed, but so does the public addressed by this rhetoric. The institutional position of the historical place and its mediated rhetoric point to the fact that world heritage sites are rhetorical educational texts, far from being as neutral as might be expected.

Keywords: Place identity, Historical sites, Heritage sites, Websites, Iconic pictures, Visual rhetoric, Ideological texts