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Stonehenge: Making Space (Materializing Culture)



Synopsis

This book is an imaginative exploration of a place that has fascinated, intrigued and perplexed visitors for centuries. Instead of seeing Stonehenge as an isolated site, the author sets the stones within a wider landscape and explores how use and meaning have changed from prehistoric times right through to the present. Throughout the millennia, the Stonehenge landscape has been used and re-used, invested with new meanings, and has given rise to myths and stories. The author creatively explores how the landscape has been appropriated and contested, and invokes the debates and experiences of people who have very different and often conflicting experiences of the same place. Today, heritage managers, archaeologists, local people, free festivalers, and druids come to the place with entirely different understandings and agendas. The book demonstrates that the creation of spaces and places for people to express divergent viewpoints is powerfully constrained by social and political forces that allow some voices to be heard while others are marginalized. With dialogues and illustrations that range from the conventional to the cartoon strip, this multi-vocal book not only presents a wide range of views in an innovative way, but provides important new insights on how people shape and are shaped by landscape.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“... a book that will enrage some and delight others: it is a milestone in writing about the past in the present.”
— Julian Thomas, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological*

Institute
“A book for reading everywhere and for scribbling in (it even has a page to write

notes and comments) ... Written by the foremost woman prehistorian in Britain, some will hate [it] and others will love it ... a very enjoyable book written in an enticing and stimulating format. *Antiquity* "... unusually insightful and a very refreshing reading experience too ... written with equal amounts of wit and intellectual commitment. In sum, a must for those who are keen followers of the current events around Stonehenge. *American Journal of Archaeology* "Bender has altered the tack of the sociological account through dialogue, explanation and interpretation. However, after bombarding the intellect, social perspective and senses (both political and economic) of the reader, as the climax of (the) volume is reached, it can be suggested that we are, in fact, seeing something new - what is possibly the end of the division between the traditional subjective and objective accounts. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* "A useful text on the 'politics of the past', and a lively, stimulating book which says much that needed saying. *Landscape History* "This book is quite clearly an experiment in publishing, an attempt to explore whether books can be more than a monologue. This will be an anathema to some and a delight to others, depending on their reactions to post-modernism. *Landscape Research* "Bender brings together a wide range of evidence relating to the monument's recent history, examining the completely different points of view held by people in varying political and academic positions. *Culture and Cosmos* "A splendid book, erudite, provocative and with disturbing implications. ... bender has shown that there are alternative ways to an apprehension of a major site. ... and that some scholars may be brought to accept other viewpoints. *Barbara Bender* Professor in Heritage Anthropology, University College London, Oceania

Barbara Bender is a Professor in Heritage Anthropology, at the University College London.

Everyone should read this book. Because identity, power, and the present are so wrapped up in how we interpret the past, the book is essential for understanding how there are multiple valid interpretations of history that can exist and be interwoven. Warning: some knowledge of Stonehenge is required to comprehend certain parts of the book.

My God, where to start.....This is the kind of fuzzy headed touchy-feely stuff that you were warned about by anyone with even a bare conception of scientific knowledge is about. Bender "is" an archaeologist, but quite frankly you wouldn't notice as she spends most of her time talking about

dirty Caucasian hippies and how "abused" they are by the British state. Multivocality should of course be a part of any good archaeological study, the voices of women, children, and other overlooked persons in the past is necessary to present a complete view of it, but Bender takes multivocality so far as to equate the aforementioned hippies with abused and downtrodden people in the third world, something that even Ian Hodder (the king of fuzzy logic and sloppy conjecture) takes her to task for during one of the Dialogue "chapters". That brings us to the structure of the book itself (or lack thereof). Bender obviously considers herself a brilliant post-modernist by doing away with such things as linear narrative, authoritative voice, and traditional writing. In the end, it comes off as lazy and ill-conceived. Four of the eight chapters consist solely of apparently recorded/email conversations with academics and activists lacking in both context and usefulness. One chapter engages the use of cartoons to illuminate her own personal and the book's theoretical background (a good idea in theory, academics should be self reflexive) but the execution is so slapdash that it imparts knowledge no better than the densest and most inaccessible theory chapter written by the type of academic she claims to be reacting against. This is a college text-book, there is no doubt about it (hell, look at the price). However, if the author of such a book essentially reduces their experience and expertise down to the thesis that "everyone's ideas matter" it is quite useless for students seeking to broaden their understanding in pursuit of a degree. As students we are paying to be tutored by those who know more than us about a particular subject so that we can go out into the world of work with at least a starting point of knowledge from which to generate our own expertise, refusing to take on the role of an experienced professional makes any academic author or professor lazy at best and a thief at worst.

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