

Fashion Storytelling through Dress and Lego Mini-figures: Mary Queen of Scots

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Abstract

Purpose: Falkland Palace in the Kingdom of Fife, Scotland, belongs to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. It was built between 1501 and 1541 and was the country residence of the Stuart kings and queens. Mary, Queen of Scots was happy there "playing the country girl in the woods and parks" (National Trust for Scotland 2020). Recently, this historic palace has been restored and the Palace's royal arms, centuries-old paintings and reproductions of 16th-century period costumes can now be seen by the public. Yet between the meticulously curated dresses, materials and legacy of Royals past are more modern props – Lego mini-figures – hidden around the Palace as part of a Lego trail, aimed at engaging young children in the story of Mary and her forebears. The Mary, Queen of Scots miniature Lego figure, displays a red floor-length dress, blue underskirts with flashes of gold, and a red cape; she is also carrying a white tennis racket. What story components are coming into play here, what value is there in using miniatures as playful story props, and how do these Lego figures energise storied characters, events and plots for visitors?

Design / methodology / approach: The qualitative methodology, narrative inquiry, is used to view "individuals as living storied lives on storied landscapes" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 24) and is a valuable methodological approach to analyse, chronicle and theme stories through material objects, along with gathering first-person accounts to gain multi-perspective reflections. Textual analysis is also employed as a secondary methodology to examine case-study texts and draw interpretative meanings from them.

Findings: The findings are significant to cultural promoters and communicators in how to understand the value of stories in the transmission of fashionable historic legacies.

Originality/value: This research brings new insight into the area of fashion storytelling through the examination of experimental story props, and informs current debate around the subjects of fashion

legacy, museum curation, object interpretation, and dialogic, cultural engagement between institutions and their audiences.

Keywords: storytelling, fashion, material, legacy, Lego, story props, museum curation, Mary Queen of Scots

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