TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S) – DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Questions of Heritage, Cultural Appropriation, and Modern Design at Mary Colter’s Hopi House, Grand Canyon, Arizona, 1905

• Author(s) Name:

Rebecca Houze

• University or Company Affiliation:

Northern Illinois University (US)

• Presentation Method. I would like to:

i. present in person (with a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):

This paper explores the thorny subject of heritage by examining Hopi House, a living museum and curio shop at the Grand Canyon, Arizona, which was established as a United States National Park in 1919, and is today a UNESCO World Heritage site. Architect Mary Colter designed Hopi House in 1905 for the Fred Harvey Company, a purveyor of hotels and restaurants along the route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Modeled on the ancient Puebloan architecture at Old Oraibi, a Hopi village in Navajo County, Arizona, dating to the ninth century CE, Colter’s Hopi House raises questions about the relationship between travel, tourism, heritage, national identity, cultural appropriation, and preservation. How can we reconcile the efforts made by the U.S. National Park Service to express traces of the land’s indigenous past, both real and imagined, in the
design of the parks, with the U.S. government’s violent Indian wars of the nineteenth-century, in which native peoples were killed, or were removed from their hereditary lands by force and through disadvantageous monetary exchanges? Did the railway companies bring new economic opportunity to the indigenous artists whose lands they traversed, or did they facilitate the U.S. government’s exploitative policies on land use and distribution? Whose heritage do the American national parks represent today?

- Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Rebecca Houze is Professor of Art and Design History at Northern Illinois University specializing in the history of design and the decorative arts, with an emphasis on textiles and dress. Her research examines the relationship between art, industry, collection, and display in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She is author of Textiles, Fashion, and Design Reform in Austria-Hungary Before the First World War: Principles of Dress (Ashgate, 2015), and New Mythologies in Design and Culture: Reading Signs and Symbols in the Visual Landscape (Bloomsbury, 2016). She has published her work in Design Issues, Fashion Theory, Textile, Centropa, and the Journal of Design History, where she also serves on the Editorial Board. She is co-editor of The Design History Reader (Berg, 2010), and co-author of the forthcoming World History of Design, vol. 3 (Bloomsbury, 2021). Her current research project investigates the relationship between world’s fairs, open-air museums, and national parks in Europe and North America at the turn of the twentieth century.