

How do iconic landscapes become created? And how do World Heritage Sites facilitate the preservation of cultural, iconic landscapes?



Let's Get to Know More About Iconic Landscapes...

Iconic Landscapes:

Why is it that there are places in the world we can picture so vividly even if we have never been there? For example, the Grand Canyon. I bet you can picture it in your head even if you have not been there. It is because these landscapes have become iconic. There are many places in the world that have become popular from postcards, images on advertisements, movies, and word of mouth.

Cultural Landscapes

The cultural identity of a landscape is the “political, economic, historic, sentimental or educational underpinnings of the society that produced and consumed the [landscape and its representations]” (Darby 2000).

Art and Iconic Landscapes

Art, such as landscape photography and painting, is a great tool for understanding and visualizing the attributes of specific sites (Allen et al. 1998). There are recurring visual prejudices in iconic landscape art because “landscape pictures breed landscape pictures” (Andrews 1999).



Siena, Italy



Katsushika Hokusai: *The Inume Pass in Kai Province from Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Methodology

--For both Mt. Fuji and Siena, I did a content analysis on the Advisory Body Evaluation. Next I did interviews with locals, government officials, historians, and tourists. I collected materials of the site such as pamphlets, and tourist information books. Along with interviews and print materials, I took numerous photographs of the sites. I then used the information I gathered to see how well the site in reality met the criteria laid out in the Advisory Body Evaluation. I did this by comparing the adjectives used to describe the site in the evaluation with the adjectives that were being represented by the people, print materials, and photographs of the site.

World Heritage Sites

In 1972 the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created the World Heritage Convention. UNESCO is paving the way for these cultural landscapes to be preserved and maintained because of their “outstanding universal value”. Siena, Italy and Mt. Fuji, Japan are both cultural World Heritage Site's. Each property's physical description of the place as well as the cultural and historical significance of the property is evaluated in the Advisory Body Evaluation by UNESCO.



"Fuji Mandala" at Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine



7th Station on Mt. Fuji: Sign that represents WHS status

Results

--The results of my research on Mt. Fuji and Siena, Italy indicate that these World Heritage Sites are being represented and portrayed in the same ways that got them acknowledged as World Heritage Sites. The images that were portrayed in their Advisory Body Evaluations are the images that are being perpetuated in the sites.
--Siena's criteria stands out when walking anywhere in the city, especially if you have a guide book or a historian with you.
--Japan is different in the fact that its criteria are not necessarily attached to the mountain. The criteria is met by the culture of Japan.
--**Mt. Fuji's criteria are found in Japanese culture, in the stories and art of Mt. Fuji, and Siena's criteria are found in the built environment of the city.**



Siena, Italy

What Did We Learn?

Iconic landscapes are created because humans interact with landscape on a personal and cultural level. As Cresswell suggests, “**place does not have meanings that are natural and obvious but ones that are created by some people with more power than others to define what is and is not appropriate**” (Cresswell 2013). Art has played a role in perpetuating images that we see repetitively. There are recurring visual prejudices in iconic landscape art because “landscape pictures breed landscape pictures” (Andrews 1999). World Heritage Sites were created not only to preserve the iconic image of their properties but the cultural significance. **Landscapes become iconic because we place vast cultural value onto sites which then makes them stand out to us as places of significance.**