

# Museums as Places of People, Time, and Memory



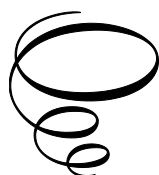
# Museums as Places of People, Time, and Memory:

*The Intersection of  
Place and History*

Edited by

Jitka Cirklová

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Museums as Places of People, Time, and Memory:  
The Intersection of Place and History

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*This book is dedicated to all those who strive to make museums and heritage spaces truly inclusive, accessible, and participatory—places that foster diversity, dialogue, and sustainability for the benefit of our societies.*

*Jitka Cirklová*



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## **PART 1**

# **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND EMERGING CONCEPTS - PLACE, IDENTITY, AND MEMORY IN MUSEUMS**

## EDITORIAL

# MUSEUMS – PLACES OF PEOPLE, TIME, AND MEMORY: AN EXPLORATION OF THE INTERSECTION OF PLACE AND HISTORY

JITKA CIRKLOVÁ

In the rapidly evolving field of museum studies, museums are undergoing profound transformations. Traditionally seen as static institutions housing historical artifacts, today's museums have evolved into dynamic spaces of engagement, interaction, and community-building. The modern museum, rather than simply presenting artifacts as isolated relics of the past, acts as a platform for active dialogue, offering new ways for visitors to engage with history, culture, and contemporary issues. As cultural landscapes shift in response to social, political, and technological developments, museums find themselves at the forefront of conversations about identity, memory, and inclusivity. This book, *Museums – Places of People, Time, and Memory: An Exploration of the Intersection of Place and History*, is timely and deeply relevant to this current moment, as museums across the globe are renegotiating their roles and responsibilities in an increasingly interconnected and ever-changing world.

### **The Relevance of Museums Today**

We are at a pivotal juncture where museums are no longer simply passive holders of history; they have become active participants in ongoing debates about cultural representation, social justice, and community engagement. This transformation is not a mere rebranding but a deep-seated structural change that reflects how museums perceive their social responsibilities. As public institutions, museums now recognize their potential influence on society's understanding of history, culture, and identity. This evolution aligns with broader global movements calling for more inclusive, participatory, and democratic spaces, particularly in the wake of decolonization, civil rights movements, and the digital revolution.

In recent years, museums have taken on a central role in shaping place-based identities and collective memory, particularly as they grapple with questions about representation and historical ownership. The essays presented in this volume explore these themes, positioning the book firmly within the current academic and professional discourse on museology. As museums increasingly engage with their local and global contexts, they are required to reconcile the demands of preserving cultural heritage with the need to act as facilitators of dialogue and agents of social change. Whether through the adoption of technology, the development of participatory practices, or the implementation of community-based approaches, museums today are redefining their roles as spaces where people, time, and memory intersect. They are not only sites for displaying history but arenas where identities—both individual and collective—are shaped and contested.

This volume responds to these transformations in the field of museology by offering an in-depth exploration of how museums navigate these complex terrains. By focusing on place-based identities, inclusivity, and democratization, the book critically assesses contemporary shifts in museum practices, framing them as part of a broader movement toward more participatory and socially engaged cultural institutions. As public awareness of social inequalities grows, museums are increasingly called upon to reflect on their practices, reconsider their curatorial choices, and open up their spaces to more diverse voices.

The relevance of this book is underscored by its engagement with several key theoretical frameworks that dominate current museological discourse. Concepts such as Place-Based Museology, Critical Museology, and Community-Based Museums form the foundation upon which this volume builds, providing a robust intellectual structure for understanding the evolving role of museums. These frameworks emphasize the importance of museums being deeply embedded in their local contexts while simultaneously critiquing traditional power structures and advocating for inclusive and participatory practices.

### **Place-Based Museology and Identity Formation**

Place-Based Museology emphasizes the unique role of museums in interpreting and preserving the cultural and historical significance of specific places. Museums serve as custodians of local heritage, reflecting broader social, political, and environmental changes, and acting as sites where the past is continuously reinterpreted in light of present-day concerns. Museums not only present artifacts but also function as active agents in shaping cultural and visual identities. As Smith (2012) has argued, museums today must

engage with the intangible aspects of place, such as local narratives, identities, and memories, in addition to preserving objects.

In this context, museums play a significant role in visually anchoring local narratives within a broader global framework, often acting as sites where history, memory, and contemporary identity intersect. This process of place-making is central to how museums foster a sense of belonging and connection, particularly in the face of global crises that threaten cultural and social stability. Recent scholarship emphasizes that museums, through their engagement with place-based knowledge, play a crucial role in addressing issues related to sustainability and resilience. For instance, Ramírez (2023) explored how museums in rural Spanish areas integrate transhumance and sustainability, connecting historical practices with contemporary environmental concerns.

### **The Commodification of Experience and Identity in Museums**

Today's museums are not only repositories of artifacts and cultural memory but also spaces where personal identity and social status are constructed and performed, often through visual media. As highlighted in *Reaffirming Identity Through Images* (Cirklová, 2020), the commodification of illusions and experiences plays a central role in how individuals engage with museum spaces. Museums, which historically functioned as places to view and interpret cultural artifacts, are now intertwined with the act of creating and consuming personal narratives, particularly through photography and social media. The notion of capturing an idealized experience within a museum aligns with broader cultural trends where visitors use these spaces not only for learning but also as stages for visual self-presentation and identity affirmation.

The act of photographing oneself in a museum transforms the visitor from a passive observer into an active participant in a narrative that extends beyond the museum walls. These images, once shared on social media, function as social currency, symbolizing not only the individual's engagement with high culture but also their social and economic capital. The image of a museum visit becomes commodified, serving as a curated piece of an individual's identity that they present to the world.

Ethnographic study (Cirklová, 2020) draws attention to how visual self-presentation, particularly in spaces like museums, reflects a broader cultural trend of commodifying personal experiences. By framing museum visits through the lens of consumer culture, she suggests that individuals are increasingly seeking to reaffirm their identities through carefully

curated visual content. This is particularly true in the context of social media, where the act of sharing a photo taken in a museum can be seen as a form of self-branding—a process essential to the rise of “micro-celebrity” culture (Khamis & Ang, 2017). Museums, as visually significant cultural landmarks, are prime locations for these identity-affirming practices. The commodification of heritage and the creation of illusions through photography enable visitors to present themselves as engaged, cultured individuals, even as the authenticity of the experience may be secondary to its visual impact.

### **Critical Museology and Decolonizing the Museum**

This shift dovetails with Critical Museology, which challenges the traditional power dynamics that have historically shaped museum practices. Museums have been complicit in reinforcing dominant narratives—often colonial, patriarchal, and Eurocentric—while marginalizing the voices of the communities whose heritage they display. Richard Sandell (2002) and others have critiqued these practices, advocating for more reflexive approaches that engage marginalized voices and histories. The framework of Critical Museology seeks to address these inequalities by encouraging museums to confront their roles in upholding unequal power relations, both in their collections and institutional histories.

Sandell’s work aligns with broader debates in sociology and anthropology regarding the politics of representation and identity formation. Stuart Hall’s (1997) seminal work on representation explores how cultural institutions like museums shape social identity, particularly through the lens of race, ethnicity, and power. Museums must navigate these tensions, critically assessing the ways in which they can present diverse cultural narratives without reducing them to mere symbols of consumption or spectacle. The process of decolonizing museum practices is central to this critical engagement, ensuring that the representation of marginalized groups is not tokenistic but deeply integrated into the institution’s mission.

### **Museums in the Digital Age: A New Paradigm**

The increasing digitalization of museum experiences, where visitors use technology to capture and share their experiences, raises important questions about the role of museums in the digital age. Museums are not only spaces for cultural education but also stages for personal performance, where the boundaries between public and private, real and illusion, are blurred. The process of photographing oneself within these spaces trans-

forms the museum from a place of learning into a backdrop for personal narratives and social media content.

As Cirklová's research (2020) highlights, this transformation is part of a broader shift in how individuals construct and present their identities in the digital age. The commodification of the museum experience, particularly through visual media, reflects a growing desire for individuals to assert their social status and cultural engagement in a way that is easily consumable by others. Museums, in this sense, become part of a larger network of identity-affirming spaces, where the visitor's interaction with cultural artifacts is mediated by their desire to be seen and validated within the context of digital and consumer culture.

The role of digitalization in reshaping cultural practices is further explored in Cirklová's work on *Traditions Through Time: The Radiant Intangible Heritage of Czech Culture* (2024), which examines how local, place-based traditions are transformed when they enter the digital third space. The use of digital technologies, while making cultural heritage accessible to a broader audience, also risks diminishing the intimate, community-based significance of these traditions. For museums, this presents a challenge: how to balance the demand for accessibility and engagement with the need to preserve the authenticity and local ownership of cultural heritage.

## **The Role of Community-Based Museums**

Alongside the theoretical contributions of Place-Based and Critical Museology, this book highlights the growing role of Community-Based Museums as participatory and collaborative spaces. These museums offer a model for how institutions can empower local communities by actively involving them in the curation, interpretation, and management of museum spaces. This democratizing shift is critical for ensuring that museums reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of the communities they serve, moving away from top-down curatorial models that have historically prioritized the narratives of cultural elites.

Community-based museums are particularly important in fostering resilience and capacity-building in the face of global crises, such as climate change, displacement, and cultural erosion. The concept of "resilience building" is explored in works like *Anthropology and Climate Change* (Crate & Nuttall, 2023), where the authors discuss the role of museums in supporting local communities as they navigate environmental and social challenges. By embracing participatory practices, museums can offer more

nuanced and multifaceted representations of cultural heritage, challenging the notion that exhibits must be static or objective.

Instead, community involvement encourages a more dynamic and dialogical approach, where the stories presented in museums are continually evolving in response to the needs and perspectives of the communities they represent. This collaborative spirit fosters a sense of ownership and agency among local populations, ensuring that museums are not just places for the passive consumption of culture but active spaces for cultural production and exchange.

## **A Vision for the Future of Museums**

At its core, this book is driven by the idea that museums are not static relics of the past but active agents contributing to cultural continuity and transformation. They serve as spaces where local and global narratives converge, shaping not only our understanding of history but also the ways in which we engage with the present and envision the future. The interdisciplinary approaches presented in this book—spanning sociology, historical ethnography, and digital technology—offer a multifaceted exploration of how museums contribute to the formation of identities and the preservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

One of the key insights from these essays is the recognition that museums, far from being neutral spaces, are deeply implicated in the construction of social identities. Jitka Cirklová (2020) discusses how museum visitors interact with institutions in ways that shape both individual and collective identities. Museums, she notes, play a central role in the visual identity of the places they inhabit, often situating local narratives within a broader global context. In this sense, museums act as both mirrors and creators of social meaning, helping to forge connections between visitors and the cultural heritage on display.

This book demonstrates that museums are powerful sites for cultural dialogue, where social identities are negotiated and reimaged in response to changing political and cultural conditions. Whether examining the architectural design of museums, their societal role in shaping collective memory, or their use of new technologies for storytelling, the essays in this collection invite readers to consider museums as dynamic spaces where people, time, and memory converge to create new meanings.

## Museums as Catalysts for Change

Ultimately, this volume challenges the outdated notion of museums as passive institutions. Instead, it presents museums as dynamic spaces where cultural traditions and historical narratives are continuously reimagined and renegotiated. Museums, through their interaction with specific places and communities, contribute to ongoing social and cultural transformations, becoming sites of active engagement rather than mere repositories of the past. Whether through their architectural design, their role in shaping collective memory, or their use of new technologies for storytelling, the museums examined in this book exemplify how these institutions are navigating the challenges of the 21st century.

By positioning museums as both preservers of memory and agents of change, this book highlights their potential to be powerful tools for cultural dialogue and societal reflection. Each chapter offers a unique perspective on the evolving role of museums, contributing to a broader narrative about their significance in shaping contemporary interpretations of place and history. As museums continue to evolve, they offer a crucial space for fostering understanding, empathy, and engagement in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

### Part 1: Theoretical Foundations and Emerging Concepts – Place, Identity, and Memory in Museums

This first part sets the theoretical stage, framing museums as spaces where history is not only preserved but actively reimagined. The introductory chapter, *Reading the Stories of House-Museums through Transpositions* by Hatice Sule Ozer, et al., introduces readers to house-museums as dynamic spaces that blend the private and the public, offering new ways of engaging with history through personal narratives and architecture. The chapter demonstrates how these unique museums play a role in shaping place-based identity.

Following this, *Living Museum Concept as a Community-Led Approach* by Ann Hubert and Manoj Kumar Kini introduces the idea of the *living museum*, where tangible and intangible heritage is preserved through active community participation. The chapter underscores the importance of museums deeply embedded in the social fabric of their locales, interacting continuously with the people and spaces around them.

In *Slavín: A Study of Place, Memory, and Identity*, Václav Liška delves into the relationship between national identity and architectural memorials. Focusing on Slavín, the chapter explores how physical monuments, along-

side historical events, contribute to collective memory and cultural identity (chapter 3).

Judith Joel's chapter, *The Role of Materiality in a Deaf Community and its Future*, focuses on Newfoundland and Labrador, highlighting how museums preserve the material culture of marginalized communities, ensuring their stories remain a vital part of public memory (chapter 4).

## **Part 2: Museums as Active Participants in Cultural Narratives**

This part moves from theory to practical examples of how museums actively shape cultural narratives. *Ongoing Cultural Narratives in Two Industrial Museums* by Xijing Chen, Jonathan Hale, and Laura Hanks investigates how industrial museums continuously reshape local histories by linking past industrial heritage to present-day cultural identity.

Leah Reilly Sherman's *Taking the Museum to the People: Cultural Heritage Community Engagement and Postwar Poland's Museobus* illustrates how museums can adapt to societal needs, in this case by using mobile museums to engage rural communities in postwar Poland (chapter 6).

In chapter *Rethinking the Role of Museums: A Space of Impressions and History Brought to Life* closes this section by arguing that museums today must act as vibrant forums for public interaction, breaking free from the constraints of traditional static exhibitions and embracing new forms of cultural engagement (chapter 7).

## **Part 3: Interdisciplinary Approaches and Future Directions**

The final part of the book looks at how museums are incorporating interdisciplinary approaches and innovative technologies to shape their future. Rabab Almalki's chapter explores how digital technology at the Ithra Museum in Saudi Arabia helps create a deeper understanding of national identity through the preservation of collective memory (chapter 8).

In *A Phantom Museum?* Eduardo Terán takes a forward-looking approach, contemplating the role of technology and virtual exhibitions in expanding accessibility and reshaping the visitor experience in museums, emphasizing the critical role of digital archives in sustaining museums in the 21st century (chapter 9).

The closing chapter, *Museums as Multivocal Platforms: Enhancing Community Practices through Digital Technology*, by Alessandra Miano, discusses how museums, through their adoption of digital platforms, can serve as multivocal spaces that democratize cultural heritage and foster inclusive narratives.

Chapter 11, *Bringing Slavery History into Contemporary Focus*, by Paul Longley Arthur and Isabel Smith, critically examines how museums are addressing the legacies of slavery through digital and immersive storytelling techniques. This chapter highlights how museum exhibitions can contemporize the history of slavery, particularly in Australia, by employing multimodal approaches such as audio tours, interactive documentaries, and digital mapping. The authors demonstrate how these methods not only enhance visitor engagement but also contribute to a broader understanding of how colonial wealth, racial ideologies, and labor exploitation shaped the Australian cultural landscape. By integrating historical research with innovative museum practices, this chapter presents a compelling case for the role of museums in confronting difficult pasts and fostering meaningful public dialogue.

Chapter 12, *Combatting Nihilistic Perspectives in Contemporary Virtual Museums of the Metaverse*, by Haitang Zhang, shifts our focus to the digital realm, addressing the existential challenges posed by virtual museums. Drawing on theories from Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, and Walter Benjamin, this chapter examines how digital museum spaces risk detachment from material authenticity, leading to a sense of digital nihilism. Through case studies of Sir John Soane's House Museum and Dennis Severs' House Museum, Zhang explores how spatial design, materiality, and narrative techniques can mitigate the loss of aura in digital heritage. The chapter argues that rather than merely replicating physical artifacts, virtual museums should embrace imperfection, decay, and fragmentation as tools for fostering emotional and intellectual engagement. By foregrounding the dialectical relationship between original objects and their digital representations, this chapter offers critical insights into how museums can navigate the evolving landscape of digital heritage without losing their deeper cultural significance.

All chapters contribute to the central themes of this volume by demonstrating how museums—whether physical or digital—serve as active spaces where historical narratives are interpreted, contested, and reimaged. These discussions underscore the ongoing transformation of museum practices in response to contemporary cultural, technological, and ethical challenges.

# CHAPTER 1

## READING THE STORIES OF HOUSE-MUSEUMS THROUGH TRANSPOSITIONS

HATICE SULE OZER, ARIF R WAHID,  
JONATHAN HALE AND LAURA HANKS

### **Introduction**

House-museums offer us a glimpse of their (mostly former) inhabitants' life. Embedded stories inside the house can take visitors on a time travel (Mårdh 2015); with the house with its objects, how they are displayed, the inhabitant's personality, and also the architectural heritage being the vehicle of the travel. The physical evidence of the life inside the house conveys memories of the place. These unique places challenge the encounter of the past with the present and shift a private life of a house into a public museum visit. House-museums bring two aspects into one space; on the one hand, the house serves as a personal space, reflecting privacy and daily lives. They are memory-filled havens and intimate settings. On the other hand, they are museums, "civic space that encourages strangers to congregate peaceably" (Gurian 2022, 8); most are collection shelters where objects are preserved to be displayed. They serve as valuable repositories of cultural heritage, offering visitors the opportunity to explore and gain new insights through the presentation of objects. As public spaces where cultural or personal objects are displayed, they provide a window into our collective heritage.

The transformation of a private house into a public museum does not occur only through physical change; it also happens in the context and experience of the place. "In a house museum, the document (object/cultural asset) is the actual space/setting (the building), as well as the collection and the person who owned (or lived in) the house" (Cabral 2001, 41). The object is a house that mostly formerly belonged to its residents, carrying their own stories and personal significance within the environment. Looking only at the encounter of those two words, "house"

and “museum,” raises the following questions: Is it a museum of a house or house of a museum, museum as a house or house as a museum, house of objects or house as an object, or a combination of all of them: the museum as a house of objects or house as a museum of objects? The complex interaction between house and museum transpositions is demonstrated by the multidimensional meaning of the term “house-museum.” What messages do they communicate, and how is the message conveyed? This chapter investigates the storytelling of two particular house-museums through the shifting of physical space, context, and experience and its implications.

### **Reading the house-museum: With *or* without text**

A well-known researcher, Linda Young, categorised about 600 examples of house-museums from English-speaking countries under six main titles: *Country*, *Artwork*, *Historic Process*, *Heroes' Houses*, *Collector Houses*, and *Sentimental* (of no great historical interest) (Young 2012; 2017). Even though Young gives the title and categorises to houses, she still sees that if a house has a certain opening time, it is a museum indeed. In her PhD research, Ozer has compiled over 150 properties from the UK. This analysis of historical houses that are open to the public highlights a diverse selection, as each house-museum presents itself as a unique and hard-to-classify entity (Ozer, Hale, and Hanks 2021). Further investigation is needed to fully comprehend the intricacies and importance of house-museums in the field of cultural heritage. A house can be both a Country house and a Collector House; one describes the physical surroundings and architectural structure, while the other pertains to the displayed objects. It's clear to see how house-museums often overlap between these categories. Exploring the intricate structures known as house-museums requires a close examination of the displayed objects, units, narratives, and their role in conveying stories that underscore the distinctiveness of the locations they represent.

How and when does one experience the dynamic interplay between “house” and “museum” within a house-museum setting? What factors might influence and shape a visitor's experience, oscillating between the feeling of visiting a museum and being a guest in someone's home? Since house-museums narrate the stories of their occupants, the objects within, and the space itself, it is crucial to understand the methods of these narrations. “Storytelling can be viewed as the concept that combines the articulation of understandings that defines museum communication and the engaging narrative that forms the story” (Nielsen 2017, 445). In the case of house-

museums, storytelling often manifests in the portrayal of both the former and current life of the house through the museum display. The display media might include showing domestic objects as it is, explanative captions, audio guides, or other multimedia forms. These narrative techniques are the ones that are read by the visitors, and in the case of house-museum, they have the capability to transpose themselves into something else.

This study delves into “reading the transposition” as a means to enhance the understanding of the complex nature of house-museums, focusing on how the interpretation of museum messages influences visitor engagement and enhances the understanding of narratives through two cases: Kettle’s Yard and Hill House. Hill House is in Helensburgh, Scotland, managed by the National Trust for Scotland. Whereas Kettle’s Yard is in Cambridge, England, and is overseen by the University of Cambridge. They were selected for their distinct approaches to museum communication where Hill House employs direct, literal text to convey its narratives, while Kettle’s Yard is known for its non-label approach. A wide range of data, including images and videos, was collected by doing field visits and conducting thorough desk research. The following sections provide comprehensive examinations of the two house-museums, highlighting the diverse methods of storytelling and institutional monitoring that influence the shifting that occurs within these museums.

### **Kettle’s Yard: *Stately home* of Jim and Helen**

“a living place where works of art would be enjoyed, inherent to the domestic setting, where young people could be at home unhampered by the greater austerity of the museum or public art gallery, and where an informality might infuse an underlying formality.”

Jim Ede’s vision of the house (1984, 17)

Although the place is called Kettle’s Yard (the name comes from the Kettle family), its creator was Jim Ede (Harold Stanley Ede), who wanted to be an artist, but the war of 1914 changed everything in his life (Fisher 2019). When he was young, he worked as an assistant at the National Gallery of British Art—the Tate Gallery after 1932—and became close friends with artists. He started to have its collection in 1926 with paintings by Alfred Wallis (Ede 1984, 16), where now Kettle’s Yard has hundreds of them. Around 1936, Ede left England during the Second World War (Ede 1984, 16). He lived in Morocco and France (Ede 1984, 17). He taught art in the United States. 1957 was the year he started dreaming about a living place (Ede 1984, 17). He wanted to reflect the inspiration of museums and all the

places he visited (Ede 1984, 17). There are great details of Jim Ede's life, art interests and travels where all inspirations come from, but one of the milestones was when he started searching for a place to live with his wife Helen and their children, Elisabeth and Mary. It was the time they decided to have a permanent home and a place to hang their art collection (Personal correspondence, and related papers, c 1920 - 1990).

Jim Ede's idea was to live where art could be enjoyed, inherent to the domestic setting, by reflecting an art gallery environment for young people to come and go. However, Ede was unsure how to make the dream a reality, and the solution came as a recommendation from the President of the Cambridge Preservation Society. This suitable home search ended with a transformation project of four derelict cottages of "Kettle's Yard" in 1957. The nature of Ede's family life and interest in art turned their daily routines into a living around and in the great collection of Ede. In his words, "Kettle's Yard is in no way meant to be an art gallery or museum, nor is it simply a collection of works of art reflecting my taste or the taste of given periods" (Ede 1984, 17-18).

Kettle's Yard was the result of Ede's dream and everyday living. Initially, it did not aim to be a museum, but his intention to have "art in a home" resulted in it. Later, Ede used the house as an "open house" (Ede 1984, 17) for university undergraduates every weekday afternoon, followed by artists visiting the house. This move, in itself, blurred the boundary of the house's private and public. It turns out to be a place where people can see how life happens and see art in comfortable surroundings. Ede was giving the tours by himself every afternoon; he was taking the names, writing in cards, and each evening, he was entering them into the book (Ede 1984, 30). In 1966, Kettle's Yard was taken care of by the University of Cambridge, and soon enough, the collection got bigger; even though Ede's family continued to live there until the day they moved to Edinburgh in 1973. It immediately brought the need to extend the house. The first extension and adjoining gallery to the house was completed in 1970. This was the only extension work that happened while the Edes lived there. Ede thinks that displaying all these art collections, giving tours, and so on were a continued *way of life* (Ede 1984). He had a strong belief that this place would inspire others to visit and have kind of places that would be reachable. "There should be a Kettle's Yard in every university" (Ede 1984, 18). He began to work on a book about Kettle's Yard as a definitive statement in 1981, and the book, *A Way of Life*, was published in 1984 (Personal correspondence, and related papers, c 1920 - 1990).

The house was extended again in 1981 and 1986, incorporating a harmonious blend of old and new architectural styles. These extensions were

designed by Sir Leslie Martin and David Owers, while the arcaded expansion along Castle Street in 1994 was constructed by Bland, Brown & Cole. Following Kettle's Yard's integration into the University in 1966, the nearby properties at 4 and 5 Castle Street were acquired with the intention of generating rental income (The Chancellor 2010). However, the overarching goal was eventually to incorporate them into the Kettle's Yard Gallery. Unfortunately, these properties were damaged by fire in September 2003 and have remained unoccupied since (The Chancellor 2010). The final touch on Kettle's Yard was made by Jamie Fobert Architects in 2018. In the final phase of this project, a decisive choice was made to remove all structures from the 1970 extension to the preserved Victorian frontage on Castle Street (Jamie Fobert Architects, n.d.).



**Fig. 1** “Integration of the original house and museum extensions at the Kettle’s Yard (Diagram by authors, original plan drawing ©Jamie Fobert Architects)”

As one approaches Kettle’s Yard, a quaint road leads to its entrance. The site’s current layout demonstrates an effort to maintain the unity of museum and gallery spaces while avoiding interference with the original setting of the house. Therefore, the visit commences by entering the extension, which houses all public amenities: a ticket desk, a small museum shop, a café with outdoor seating, and galleries. Exploring the original historical house or immersing oneself in the gallery exhibitions is optional, with

different tickets available. This signifies that the historic house is treated as a museum object that visitors can choose to visit, allowing them to decide which displays to see.

This perspective is also reflected in the architectural plan of Kettle's Yard; Fig. 1 illustrates how the extension expands the site and museum on one side while the house sits atop the museum. The prominence of the museum section on the plan is evident, with galleries on one side and the house on the other, prompting consideration of which site attracts visitors. Upon ticket purchase, visitors are guided to the door of the original house by claiming a few steps. The door is locked, requiring one of the visitors to ring the bell, reminiscent of old-fashioned customs (Fig. 2), evoking a sense of stepping back in time.



**Fig. 2** Threshold to the Kettle's Yard original house

The house serves as a residence where art seamlessly integrates into everyday life, housing its owners amidst a collection of remarkable artefacts and tastefully selected furniture (Fig. 3). This characteristic is the rationale behind its designation as a “label-free” house. Notably, the absence of captions or explicit textual narratives throughout the interior space signifies a deliberate choice to abstain from conveying information regarding the house's history, its occupants, the artworks displayed on the walls, furniture that fill the interior or the architectural features of the structure. This no-text policy of the Kettle's Yard also gives the visitors a degree of

uncertainty, in which crucial in provoking an open-ended story, create a more stimulating interpretation (Hanks, 2015).



**Fig. 3** Arts in a domestic environment

In an everyday corner of life that exhibits where the days happened, the seen objects are not only artefacts. They are lived collections, the deliberate and particular selection of Jim Ede. The objects are arranged uniquely; some paintings hang lower on the wall and need to sit on the floor to see what is inside the frame. There are still chipped pieces, even cracked teacups; all this makes a home to live in, a place for people to visit and feel at home, said J. Ede. The idea behind this was to keep the place as it is so that it will remain an alive place. However, drinking from a cracked teacup and looking at the beauty of the imperfect object by trying to read the history behind the physical change are two different actions and experiences. The nature of house-museum shows this transposition in various examples. The function of the object changes. It became more than an item to be used for its nature; it transposed to displayed objects, boundary items, storytellers, proof of life, etc. From this perspective, the house's bathroom (Fig. 4) became a frozen movement displayed and not a functioning place. Therefore, the non-functional areas are transposed into a display unit/object for the visitor's interpretation.



**Fig. 4** Bathroom as a non-functional place, a displayed object instead



**Fig. 5** Museum touches in Kettle's Yard

Despite its designation as a label-free house-museum, the absence of textual information only eliminates some museum-related features from the space. Fig. 5 shows some combined interior photos of the domestic and private areas of the Ede family under the museum's control. In this instance, exit signs, rope barriers, and fire extinguishers serve as a clear reminder that guests are now visitors to a museum rather than house guests. These objects fundamentally alter the perception of the space and sharpen the distinction between a private house and a public museum. This transformation is apparent when visitors encounter them and when they are absent.