

Symposium

KEEPING

HOUSE

conserving, managing, and  
interpreting house museums

# KEEPING

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KEEPING HOUSE WEBPAGE

For a link to the digital version of this programme, please scan the QR above.

The 2024 annual ACAHUCH symposium focuses on the fascinating world of house museums.

As a type, house museums are a fascinating hybrid of public and private realms. Australia has a rich array of houses that are open to the public as museums and heritage sites. Some houses and gardens are associated with particular designers and aesthetic movements, some with artists, writers and collectors, others are rare survivors that speak to lost social histories and the particular people who lived in them.

Since the earliest opening of historic homes and gardens like Vaucluse House in 1915, they have evolved and diverged by both design and necessity. While the National Trust remains one key custodian, since the 1970s many other owners and caretakers have taken up the challenge of maintaining and renewing house museums for contemporary audiences.

Through the one-day program of expert speakers and themed panel discussions, presenters at the 2024 annual ACAHUCH symposium will explore some of the significant issues facing institutions and properties today including innovative ways of reinterpreting and displaying the history, memories and stories that house museums harbour; challenges in sustaining, conserving and updating of material fabric, collections, interiors and gardens; the maintenance of viable support, management and ownership; and developing house museums in the Asian context.

*We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their elders' past, present and emerging who have been and continue to be the custodians of these lands. This land was stolen, and sovereignty of this land has never been ceded. This is especially important to keep in the front of our minds as we listen to stories of place today.*

## PROGRAMME

- 9.30-9.35 **WELCOME**  
Julie Willis, Dean, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning,  
University of Melbourne
- 9.35-9.45 **INTRODUCTION**  
**KEEPING HOUSE**  
Conserving, managing and interpreting house museums  
Hannah Lewi
- 9.45-11.00 **SESSION 1 | SUCCESSION: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES IN SPACE AND TIME (Chair: Jarrod Haberfield)**  
*The Lyon Housemuseum – Securing the Museum’s Future*  
Corbett Lyon  
*“A museum is a bit like a home”: The de Menil House, River Oaks Houston*  
Georgina Walker  
*Photography as Authenticator and Interloper at Kettle’s Yard*  
Inga Fraser  
*The Barnes Foundation: a Gallery and a House*  
Derek Gillman
- 11.00-11.30 *Coffee Break*
- 11.30-12.30 **SESSION 2A | INTERPRETING HOUSE MUSEUMS: TELLING AND SHOWING (Chair: Rory Hyde)**  
*Interpreting gendered labour in heritage house kitchens*  
Hannah Lewi  
*Beyond the velvet rope - A Reflection on Interpretation, Engagement, and the particular challenges in running a Historic House museum tour business in south eastern Australia*  
Georgina Downey  
*Elizabeth Farm: the challenge of maintaining a ‘no barriers’ house museum*  
Scott Hill  
*Centring the Residents: How to tell the story of the Isokon Building*  
Andrew Murray
- 12.30-13.15 *Lunch*  
*Slideshow – John Curtin Project, Hannah Lewi*

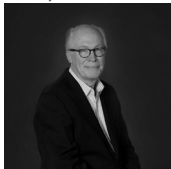
- 13.15-14.15 **SESSION 2B | INTERPRETING HOUSE MUSEUMS: TELLING AND SHOWING (Chair: Jane Eckett)**
- Lanyon Homestead: Exploring multiple histories through contemporary art*  
Anna Wong and Virginia Rigney
- Boyd & Japan: activating house and archive*  
Josephine Briginshaw
- Session 2A & 2B Discussion**
- 14.15-14.30 *Coffee Break*
- 14.30-15.45 **SESSION 3 | CONSERVATION CHALLENGES: MATERIAL FABRIC, GARDENS AND INTERIORS (Chair: Philip Goad)**
- Keeping Her House: Margaret Olley and the Transported Interior*  
Suzanne Bravery
- Building Resilience to Climate Change at Eryldene*  
Sheridan Burke
- Curatorial and Collection Management Narratives at The Johnston Collection: Sustenance, Preservation, and Growth*  
Louise Voll Box
- At Home with the Wallers*  
Samantha Westbrooke and Louise Honman
- 15.45-16.00 *Afternoon Tea*
- 16.00-16.45 **SESSION 4 | HOUSE MUSEUMS IN THE SOUTH-EAST ASIAN CONTEXT (Chair: Soon-Tzu Speechley)**
- Penang House Museum*  
Khoo Salma Nasution (Miles Lewis Fellow)
- Three Indian House Museums*  
Roger Beeston and Phillipa Hall
- 16.45-17.00 **CLOSING REMARKS**
- 17.00 *Drinks commence*
- 17.00-18.30 **BOOK LAUNCH | NAVIGATING ENCOUNTERS**

## SESSION ONE | SUCCESSION: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES IN SPACE AND TIME

CHAIR: JARROD HABERFIELD

### NOTES

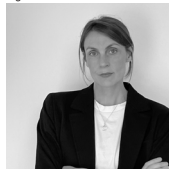
Corbett Lyon



Georgina Walker



Inga Fraser



Derek Gillman



## The Lyon Housemuseum – Securing the Museum’s Future

Professor Corbett Lyon

Founding Patron, Lyon Housemuseum, Melbourne

In this illustrated talk collector and architect Corbett Lyon charts the evolution of Melbourne’s Lyon Housemuseum from modest beginnings in the early 1990’s into one of Australia’s largest privately funded public art museums.

The museum’s thirty five year development has been underpinned by a clear strategic vision on the part of its two founders who have also embraced serendipitous opportunities that have taken the museum in unexpected directions.

Now its final phase of development, the founders face the challenge of planning for its long term future. How might the unique characteristics and visitor experience of the Housemuseum be preserved and its story told? How will the museum and its collection be curated and managed? How can its financial sustainability be assured?

Lyon will speak to these challenges and discuss the founders’ proposed next steps in securing its future.

*Corbett Lyon is an Australian architect and one of the country’s leading patrons and collectors of Australian contemporary art.*

*Between 2002 and 2009 he designed and established the Lyon Housemuseum, a hybrid private residence and museum to exhibit works from the Lyon Collection. Following its opening for public visits the Housemuseum was described by Larry’s List as ‘one of the world’s 10 most exciting buildings of private art museums’.*

*In 2019 he designed and established a second museum, the Housemuseum Galleries on a site adjacent to the original Housemuseum.*

*In 2023 the two buildings were conjoined to form a single public museum. Lyon currently chairs the Lyon Foundation which owns and operates the museum.*

*Lyon is a Professorial Fellow and Visiting Professor in Design at the University of Melbourne and an Honorary Fellow of Monash University. He is an Emeritus Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria and a Member of the International Council of Museums.*

**“A museum is a bit like a home.” The de Menil House, River Oaks, Houston.**

Dr Georgina S. Walker

Lecturer, Art History & Curatorship, University of Melbourne

The Menil Collection, Houston was designed by architect Renzo Piano and established by Dominique de Menil in 1987. It was never intended to be a conventional museum as de Menil wanted to build a space for scholarly pursuits and a quiet place for the contemplation and appreciation of modern art. The museum’s flat-roofed architectural design, human-scale ambient interiors alongside Piano’s masterly use of natural light suggests de Menil may have wanted to create a museum version of her ideal house museum; one that would encapsulate her subjective exhibition aesthetic and personal aspects of a house without the fussy domestic interiors. In doing so, de Menil recreated an intimacy between the viewer and the artworks that she experienced in her own home. This paper will show how the public areas of the de Menils’ 1951 Philip Johnson designed house in River Oaks informed the scale of the galleries and character of the Menil Collection.

*Dr Georgina Walker is Lecturer in Art History and Curatorship at the University of Melbourne.*

*She has developed a significant academic profile in the field of private museums and cultural philanthropy in Australia and internationally with an innovative specialisation in historical and contemporary museums, curatorial and art market studies. Georgina’s monograph *The Private Collector’s Museum: Public Good Versus Private Gain* (Routledge, 2019) is the first study to connect the rising popularity of private museums with new models of collecting and complex inter-relationships between private and public museums. Her forthcoming monograph (Routledge) will offer an in-depth survey of an unprecedented period of private museum building in Asia and the Arabian Peninsula. Recent publications include “A new type of house museum: Lyon Housemuseum, Melbourne (2009)” in *The evolving House Museum: Art Collectors and Their Residences, Then and Now* (Brill, 2024) and peer-reviewed article in *Arts & Communication*, ‘From here to eternity: The rise and fall of global art worlds and the contemporary private museum’ (2024).*

*Georgina is a Member of the Board of Management at The International Art Market Studies Association (TIAMSA), member of The Grainger Academic Reference Group at the University of Melbourne and formerly, a Member of the Board of Management at The Duldig Studio Museum and Sculpture Garden (2019 - 2022).*

## Photography as Authenticator and Interloper at Kettle's Yard

Dr Inga Fraser

Senior Curator, Kettle's Yard

The memorandum that describes Harold Stanley (known as 'Jim') Ede's gift of Kettle's Yard and its contents to the University of Cambridge in 1966 consists of textual descriptions of the original house and its (as yet unbuilt) extension in which Jim Ede and his wife Helen (née Helena Schlapp) had lived since 1957, as well as the collection of artworks, furniture, ceramics, glass and natural objects within. Subsequent addenda encompass further acquisitions, and also Jim Ede's annotations to the inventory in which he details recollections of when and where different pieces were bought by or given to him.

At the time of Jim and Helen Ede's gift to Cambridge, they were still resident in the house, which is why no greater consideration was paid to the precise placement of objects in the Memorandum, beyond the phrase: 'The purpose of this gift is to establish a permanent Collection in which the said contents and works of art will be maintained together for exhibition in their present setting...' The need to establish the significance of particular placements only arose once the Edes had left Kettle's Yard in the hands of a new Resident, having themselves moved to Edinburgh in Scotland. During a return visit to Kettle's Yard during Jeremy Lewison's tenure as Resident/Curator (1977-1983) Jim Ede conveyed, via extensive reference notes, lists, annotated photographs and sketches, the precise locations and relationships between objects. This was further consolidated with the publication in 1984 of Jim Ede's book *A Way of Life* which contains photographs by the artist George Kennethson, laid out with precision – naturally – by Jim Ede and juxtaposed with texts by Ede, as well as selected quotations. In the years since 1984, subsequent curators have produced or commissioned further photographic documentation of Kettle's Yard, in order to record for posterity and facilitate the maintenance of the special atmosphere and environment of the house and collection.

What emerges, in defiance, is a somewhat paranoid record, which reveals a degree of consistency, but also many alterations. Beyond the well-established formal relationships between, for example, the lemon on the pewter plate and the yellow sphere in Miró's 1927 painting, *Tic Tic*, hung nearby – a mainstay of the visitor assistants' script – what emerges is a house somewhat more alive than expected, changing in minute movements on a bandwidth registered only with close observation. Furthermore, in exhibitions and interventions staged within the house and adjoining galleries since 1973, artists have used the medium of photography to trouble and transfigure the supposed intractable configuration of Kettle's Yard.

This paper explores the paranoid layers of curatorial photographic documentation through which, implicitly, Kettle's Yard is supposedly consolidated, as well as selected case-studies of work in photography by artists such as Tim Head, Susan Hiller, Sherrie Levine, Victor Burgin, Mary

Kelly, Sharon Kivland, Zarina Bhimji and others, which seek to complicate or unravel this unitary idea of the spaces as conceived by Jim Ede.

*Dr Inga Fraser is a curator and art historian with a special interest in the intersections of modern art with emerging media and the broader visual cultures of the twentieth century. She is currently Senior Curator, House and Collection at Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge. Prior to joining Kettle's Yard, she worked as a freelance Curator at Tate Britain on the current exhibition, Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970-1990. Her PhD (2016-23) was a collaborative doctoral partnership between Tate and the Royal College of Art that explored artists' engagement with film in the first half of the twentieth century in London, focusing on intermedial practices and the developing discourse of artists' moving image. Before beginning her PhD, she was Assistant Curator of Modern British Art at Tate (2013-2017) where she co-curated exhibitions and displays including Paule Vézelay (2017), Paul Nash (2016) and Barbara Hepworth: Sculpture for a Modern World (2015). Inga has been a Visiting Lecturer at the Royal College of Art and an Associate Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art and has previously also held curatorial positions at the National Portrait Gallery (2011-2013) and Central Saint Martins in London (2009-2011). She has contributed essays to artist monographs and anthologies published by Courtisane, Lund Humphries, Koenig and Ashgate, and written for magazines and peer-reviewed journals including British Art Studies, Sculpture Journal, Costume, Document and Tate Etc.*

## The Barnes Foundation: a Gallery and a House

Professor Derek Gillman

Distinguished Teaching Professor of Art History, Arts Administration & Museum Leadership, and the Cara Keegan Fry University Curator and Executive Director, University Collections and Exhibitions, Drexel University, and Former Director, Barnes Foundation

Albert Barnes and John Dewey conceived of the Foundation as an educational institution, which would use the founder's already exceptional collection as a springboard for students to engage in experiential learning. When it opened in 1925 in Merion, Pennsylvania, in buildings designed by Paul Cret within the grounds of a late 19th century arboretum, classes were held in a modernist-Palladian gallery, linked above and below ground to an adjacent house in which Albert and Laura Barnes lived. Having evolved from instruction on various topics for workers at Barnes' pharmaceutical factory, classes at Merion included undergraduates from regional institutions, and others who had been vetted by the founder or his subordinates.

The speaker will first introduce the educational brief and physical structure of the original Foundation, its history after Albert Barnes' death in 1951, and then briefly discuss large issues surrounding its move from Merion to central Philadelphia, some five miles away, just over a decade ago.

*Derek Gillman is Distinguished Teaching Professor, Art History and Arts Administration, and Cara Keegan Fry University Curator and Executive Director, University Collections and Exhibitions, at Drexel University.*

*He was an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he read Chinese Studies, after which he spent the year 1975-6 in Beijing. In 1977 he joined the Chinese department at Christie's, London, moving in 1981 to the British Museum as Research Assistant for China, and then to the University of East Anglia as Keeper of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts. From 1995-99 he was Deputy Director of the NGV, involved in the construction projects at St. Kilda Road and Federation Square. He then led the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, and from 2006 to 2013 was President and Director of the Barnes Foundation, stewarding the collection to its new home.*

*Gillman is author of *The Idea of Cultural Heritage*, which he is revising for a 3rd edition (CUP, 2025). With Claire Finkelstein and Frederik Rosén, he co-edited *The Preservation of Art and Culture in Times of War* (OUP, 2022). In 2013 he was Marina Kellen French Distinguished Visitor at the American Academy in Berlin.*

## SESSION TWO (A) & (B) | INTERPRETING HOUSE MUSEUMS: TELLING AND SHOWING

CHAIRS: RORY HYDE AND JANE ECKETT

### NOTES

Hannah Lewi



Georgina Downey



Scott Hill



Andrew Murray



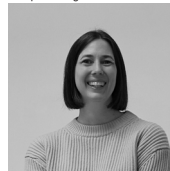
Anna Wong



Virginia Rigney



Josephine Briginshaw



## Interpreting gendered labour in heritage house kitchens

Professor Hannah Lewi

Professor in Architecture, University of Melbourne

Despite its material and metaphorical centrality to the home, the kitchen has been viewed as somewhat of a lacuna in architecture and design histories and heritage accounts. This is in part because of its traditionally gendered and class-dictated use, and its heightened exposure to obsolescence, with the result that there is surprisingly little recorded about kitchen and servant life, or remnant, artifactual historical evidence preserved.

This presentation draws on my research into a series of historic houses in Victoria spanning the 1850s-1960s that are open to the public. With a focus on the kitchens and associated service and servant areas, the historical shifts in the employment of servant and domestic labour, and the technologies and infrastructure that supported them will be overviewed.

Through these exemplars, and in light of established feminist framings in historiography, curatorship and material studies, the presentation will argue that heritage interpretation and management can offer more to the re-evaluation and evocation of the history of women's work in the home. And in turn, that visitor experience might open productive conversations about the history of home-based work, and the mundane and tacit attributes of domestic settings, technologies and infrastructures.

*Hannah Lewi's areas of expertise are in architectural design, history and theory. Her research interests include Australian and modern history, heritage and place-making, and the innovative use of new media in heritage and history.*

*Lewi currently teaches 19th- and 20th-century history and design; architecture, heritage and urban theory; research methods; workplace internships. She has been a registered architect with the AIA; is a past President of SAHANZ and past co-editor of Fabrications Journal and had been elected as a Life Member; current vice-chair of DOCOMOMO Australia, and member of DOCOMOMO international. She is the current co-director of ACAHUCH The Australian Centre for Architectural History and Urban and Cultural Heritage.*

*Key recent publications include co-authoring of multiple chapters in CAMPUS: Designing the Modern Australian University, UWA Press, 2023; Australia Modern: architecture, landscape and design, co-eds. Lewi and Goad, Thames & Hudson, 2019 and The Routledge International Handbook of New Digital Practices in Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Heritage Sites, co-eds Lewi, Smith, Vom Lehn and Cooke, 2019. Current research projects include the adaptive reuse of historic precincts with the co-authored book ADAPT: New Lives for Old Buildings, URO books, forthcoming 2024. Plus an ongoing research project into heritage and house museums with numerous articles and chapters published on this theme.*

## **Beyond the velvet rope - A Reflection on Interpretation, Engagement, and the particular challenges in running a Historic House museum tour business in south eastern Australia**

Dr Georgina Downey

Visiting Research Fellow, University of Adelaide

This paper reflects upon the background, methodological approach, day to day running issues and eventual closure, of my micro business as a historic house museum tour business owner, from 2018 to 2023. It explores how I set the business up, how I conducted detailed research on each property, and how I used my teaching experience in art history at the University of Adelaide and my research profile to engage visitors. It explores how I tried to shape visitor perceptions, and how I tried to provide a balance between shallow and deep interpretive engagement. In doing so, it broaches some of the longstanding tensions in Australia, around academic readings of historic house museums, and social histories, and the far more populist 'local history group' styles of house presentation.

Overall, I reflect on how my approach as an academic to the more than half dozen properties I took groups through, offered audiences an innovative experience through questioning the standard stories already developed around each house. This paper also reflects on the challenges I faced in engaging diverse audiences, and in conclusion, it reflects on the historiological issues each venue threw up, in terms of interpretation and presentation.

*Dr Georgina Downey is a Visiting Research Fellow in Art History at the University of Adelaide. She has published widely on the domestic interior and her books include: Domestic Interiors: Representing Home from the Victorians to the Moderns, (2013), Designing the French Interior edited with Anca Lasc and Mark Taylor (2015), and, Domesticity under Siege: Threatened Spaces of the Modern Home (2022) co-edited with Mark Taylor and Terry Meade. Her most recent publication includes a chapter on modern architects of the 1950s, and their collaborations with émigré artists and designers for The Adelaide Art Scene: Becoming Contemporary 1939-2000 Wakefield Press (2023). Additionally since 2018 she has offered in-depth small group tours of major South Australian house museums, as 'InteriorAdelaide Tours'.*

## Elizabeth Farm: the challenge of maintaining a ‘no barriers’ house museum

Dr Scott Hill

Curator, Museums of History NSW

Elizabeth Farm, located near Parramatta in Western Sydney, is Australia’s oldest surviving colonial homestead. 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of its opening as a house museum.

First constructed in 1793 on the lands of the Barramadagal, the home of pivotal colonial figures John and Elizabeth Macarthur was opened to the public in June 1984. In deciding how the house museum would be presented a barrier-free, all-access approach was adopted. In interiors often compared to stage sets, the unofficial motto became “please, sit on the furniture!”. While this approach has meant that visitors enjoy a rare freedom in and understanding of the Macarthurs’ private home, it also means that the impact on surfaces (especially the wear and tear of fabrics) is a constant challenge.

In 2023 a programme by Museums of History NSW to reinvigorate and refresh the interiors was begun, replacing soft furnishings including case covers and curtains, and installing new lighting and artworks. Importantly, it also set out a programme for projected replacements of soft furnishings ensuring a high standard of presentation will be maintained over coming decades.

*Dr Scott Hill’s formal studies in architecture, along with travels through Asia and Europe, furthered his interest in colonial building, domestic design, and the intrinsic relationship between architecture and landscape. This culminated in Hill’s PhD ‘Paper Houses’, which examines the significant colonial identity John Macarthur’s interest in architecture, and the design of the Macarthur houses Elizabeth Farm (1793) and Camden Park (1834).*

*In his words: ‘understanding a historic house, an interior or landscape is for me a process of ‘reverse□designing’, about taking the finished product and then going back to find the ‘why’: the reasons, the decisions and the myriad hidden influences that led to its creation’. He has been curator at Elizabeth Bay House and Vaucluse House and most recently at Elizabeth Farm, Rouse Hill Estate (all within greater Sydney) and Meroogal (Nowra, NSW); particular interests in house museum curating include food and dining, and the challenge of interpreting the ephemeral.*

*Hill co-curated the Eat Your History: A Shared Table exhibition; and in 2023-24 he was senior curator for the exhibition ‘The Peoples House: Sydney Opera House at 50’ at the Museum of Sydney.*

## Centering the Residents: How to tell the story of the Isokon Building

Dr Andrew Murray

Research Fellow, University of Melbourne

In 2024 the Isokon building in Hampstead, London celebrated three major milestones. Chiefly, it was 90 years since the building, designed by Canadian architect Wells Coates, first opened. It was also twenty years since the building had been extensively restored having lain derelict and abandoned for decades, and it was ten years since the Isokon Gallery had opened in the building's former garage. This talk examines the history of the Isokon building and the new Isokon gallery - a purpose-built space which acts as both a museum for the building, and an exhibition space with regular rotating exhibitions that celebrate former residents and their broader social circle. The particular focus will be on the way in which the current and former residents support the gallery, and actively participate in telling the story of their building as a kind of living and active house museum.

*Andrew Murray is a Research Fellow in Architectural History at the Australian Centre for Architectural History, Urban and Cultural Heritage (ACAHUH). He completed his doctorate in Architectural History in 2023 at the University of Melbourne. Upon completion of his PhD, he worked as a caseworker for the Twentieth Century Society in London before joining the University of Melbourne. He has lectured nationally and internationally on Australian architectural history and his work has been published in Fabrications, The Journal of Architecture and Historic Environments.*

## Lanyon Homestead: Exploring multiple histories through contemporary art

Dr Anna Wong

Director, ACT Galleries, Museums & Heritage / ACT Historic Places and Canberra Museum & Gallery

Virginia Rigney

Senior Curator, Senior Curator, Visual Arts, ACT Galleries, Museums and Heritage

Curatorship combining contemporary visual arts in historic properties is growing increasingly important as a way of drawing out new and often uncomfortable narratives. Less understood, are the kinds of dialogue and collaboration involved, the trust required and risks and challenges inherent in these approaches.

This paper discusses a case study from 2023, where leading Canberra based artist eX de Medici developed a site-specific installation at Lanyon Homestead in contemporary dialogue with 'the pink bedroom', originally built as an extension to the original Lanyon Homestead property in 1910 for a young bride. A large watercolour tactically camouflaged by the artist into the wallpaper, featured the artists' own gun swathed in pink silk and the bed was bound in pink silk. The work spoke of legacies of gendered containment in colonial society and provoked a robust but ultimately positive and timely debate. Director Dr Anna Wong and Senior Curator Visual Arts Virginia Rigney will reflect on the strategic intent, the curatorial and installation process, and the engagement experiences from this project.

*Dr Anna Wong is the Director of ACT Galleries, Museums and Heritage (Cultural Facilities Corporation), which includes the Canberra Museum and Gallery, Lanyon Homestead, Mugga Mugga Cottage and Calthorpes House – collections and heritage places that showcase Canberra's visual arts, social and cultural history. Anna's practice has centred around storytelling through objects, people and places to present multiple perspectives and experiences.*

*Anna has worked in the museum and cultural heritage management sectors at NSW Government Architect's Office (Public Works Department), NSW Historic Houses Trust, NSW National Trust, University of Sydney, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Office and the National Capital Authority. Her doctoral research examined the Australian heritage conservation movement through the house museum genre.*

*Virginia Rigney is a Curator, Writer and Creative Producer who has worked with artists, designers and collections to develop exhibitions, publications, digital platforms, installations, short films, and public programs within museums for*

over 35 years. Her curatorial practice also embraces the expanded field of temporal and permanent public art.

*She joined CMAG in 2018 in the role of Senior Curator Visual Arts. Her most recent curatorial projects there include Materiality...But not as we Know it, eX de Medici -Sidney Nolan -Guns and Flowers, Mandy Martin :From Queanbeyan to New York 1978-1984 and the co-curation of Canberra/Kamberri Place & People, which was awarded the 2023 AMAGA Award for Best Permanent Collection Exhibition.*

## **Boyd & Japan: activating house and archive**

Josephine Briginshaw

Engagement Manager, Robin Boyd Foundation

The Robin Boyd Foundation is the custodian of the legacy of Australian modernist architect, author, critic, and public educator Robin Boyd and the iconic Walsh Street house he designed and inhabited. In addition to the care and conservation of the residence, the Foundation preserves the Walsh Street Archive - which contains over 4000 documents (manuscripts, architectural drawings, newspaper clippings and correspondences), artefacts (artworks, furniture, library and functional household items) and audiovisual items (animations, records, slides and films).

Walsh Street is both an artefact (house museum) and a vessel (a place for discourse). Boyd & Japan: Activating House and Archive explores how the Foundation's multifaceted 2024 program interpreted Boyd's significant relationship with Japan through house and archive, research and education to develop in-person and online engagement exploring historical and contemporary narratives.

*Based in Naarm/Melbourne, Josephine Briginshaw is the Executive Director at the Robin Boyd Foundation (2024–, Engagement Manager 2022–2024). She holds a MA with Distinction (Arts and Cultural Management), RMIT University, a MFA (Graphic Design) and a BFA (Graphic Design, Art History) from the University of Tasmania.*

*Josephine has over ten years of experience working in engagement and development roles at not-for-profit organisations focusing on art, craft and design. Independently, she has contributed to selection panels and engaged in curatorial projects. Josephine is the recipient of the Gordon Darling Foundation Travel Scholarship 2024, which enabled her to travel to the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Italy to study 20th-century house museums, architecture archives and centres for contemporary design and architecture.*

## SESSION THREE | CONSERVATION CHALLENGES: MATERIAL FABRIC, GARDENS AND INTERIORS

CHAIR: PHILIP GOAD

### NOTES

Suzanne Bravery



Sheridan Burke



Louise Voll Box



Samantha Westbrooke



Louise Honman



## Keeping Her House: Margaret Olley and the Transported Interior

Suzanne Bravery

University of Sydney

Shortly before her death in 2011, Australian painter Margaret Olley determined the working and living rooms of her Duxford Street Paddington house be kept. As the house was to be sold, the rooms needed to be moved. Objects from the oft painted Hat Factory and Yellow Room were photographed, catalogued, conserved and transported from Sydney to form the core of the Margaret Olley Art Centre at Tweed Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah. This purpose built gallery wing houses a recreation of Olley's interiors including original architectural elements such as doors and windows and over 20000 objects collected over many years as subject matter for her paintings. This talk looks at the recreation of this rich and dynamic set of interiors in the context of the work of the Curator and the tradition of the Period Room.

*Suzanne Bravery is a museums and cultural heritage consultant with extensive experience curating and managing museum collections, especially those of historic houses, at a senior level, across all levels of government and the not for profit and tertiary sectors. This includes as a General Manager with Museums and Galleries NSW, a Head Curator at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, Manager, Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne, Curator/Senior Curator at Museums of History NSW, of Elizabeth Farm, Elizabeth Bay House, Vacluse House, Rouse Hill estate and Meroogal, Nowra. She is currently a casual lecturer in house museums at The Johnston Collection and is writing her doctoral thesis on the role of curators in keeping up the (accurate) appearances of interiors in historic house museums.*

## **Building Resilience to Climate Change at Eryldene**

Sheridan Burke

Heritage Consultant, Former Chair Eryldene Trust

The severe heat of 2019, followed by an extremely wet 2020 and Covid closures 2020-21 combined to confront the community trust that manages the historic house and garden of Eryldene with an urgent need to re-build its organisational resilience.

In 2021, the Eryldene Climate Risk Register for the house and garden was initiated by a group of volunteers, with expert advice and international webinars, reflecting with similar historic gardens. The Eryldene Sustainability Action Plan 2022-25 consequently provided a longer-term planning context to improve Eryldene's climate resilience, as well as introducing changes in day-to-day activity and management. The Trust also commissioned an Audience Engagement Report with a focus on youth; aiming to develop links with local school sustainability programs and attract a new cohort of younger volunteers. The Trust began to integrate sustainability measures and climate action messaging in its strategic planning, public events and open garden days. Sustaining these initiatives is a work in progress.

*Sheridan Burke is a heritage consultant, based in Sydney, Australia, trained in planning and architecture. She has worked for government, corporates and NGOs in cultural heritage management for more than 35 years, building extensive experience in developing practical, strategic outcomes for the future of diverse heritage places- from the Eames House in Los Angeles to the Abraj Al Kuwait water towers in Kuwait.*

*Twentieth Century heritage advocacy is her specialist field of interest, publishing widely and contributing to the development and delivery since 2014 of the Keeping It Modern training program for the Getty Conservation Institute and the GCI's Modern Architecture Conservation course since 2023.*

*Burke is a founding president of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage; and has served in many executive roles for ICOMOS international, and has undertaken UNESCO World Heritage missions in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Sheridan is an appointed expert member of several NSW Planning Panels and has been a member of the Sydney Opera House Conservation Council for 16 years, and sits on its Design Advisory Panel. She served as Chair of the Eryldene Trust 2020-2024, initiating its resilience and climate response planning.*

## Curatorial and Collection Management Narratives at The Johnston Collection: Sustenance, Preservation, and Growth

Dr Louise Voll Box

CEO, The Johnston Collection

The Johnston Collection (TJC) is a museum of Georgian, Regency, and Louis XV fine and decorative arts. Housed in an historic townhouse in East Melbourne, TJC is the legacy of antique dealer, collector, and property investor, William Robert Johnston (1911-1986). At its establishment, the museum's Trust Deed stated that objects should be displayed in 'appropriate domestic settings as opposed to gallery-type displays' and that the presentation of the collection 'should be changed from time to time'. TJC opened to the public in 1990, and since then, these guidelines have inspired creative reinvention and enabled engagement with new audiences, but have also posed collection management conundrums.

The Johnston Collection also has a long-standing relationship with Government House, Victoria. Objects from the Collection furnish public reception areas and the State Apartments, where they transition from 'museum objects' to furniture in daily use.

This paper discusses the varied museological and curatorial approaches adopted at TJC over time, and the resultant blurred line between 'house' and 'museum'. What do these reinterpretations reveal about changing public perceptions of historical objects? What are the challenges of caring for objects in semi-residential, dynamic contexts?

*Dr Louise Voll Box is an art historian, arts manager, and educator. Prior to her appointment as CEO of The Johnston Collection in 2023, she taught in the art history, curatorship, and arts management programs at the University of Melbourne. Her research interests focus on the collection and display of eighteenth-century material culture, collecting and exhibiting prints, the English Country House, and juxtapositions of business and the arts. Louise has been awarded several international research scholarships, including the prestigious Harold Wright and Sarah and William Holmes Scholarships at the British Museum. Louise has served on a number of arts boards and committees and is a Trustee for the Colin Holden Charitable Trust which supports exhibitions, scholarship, and research on prints and printmaking.*

## At Home with the Wallers

Samantha Westbrooke

Executive Manager, Conservation & Advocacy, National Trust Of Australia (Victoria)

Louise Honman

Architect, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Volunteer

Louise and Samantha will talk about the joys and challenges of taking on management of Waller House, the State significant residence, studios and collection of artists Christian and Napier Waller, over 20 years after it was bequest to the State of Victoria. They will also discuss the process of preparing a Conservation Management Plan that provides enough guidance for activation in the near future, while still retaining flexibility and openness, as knowledge of the place still evolves.

*Samantha Westbrooke is the Executive Manager of Conservation and Advocacy at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the property co-ordinator for Waller House, which is managed by the National Trust as the Committee of Management on behalf of the Victorian government.*

*A registered architect with over 25 years of experience in the heritage industry in all aspects of professional heritage architecture services including work in State and Local Government and private practice. An experienced heritage advisor for local government, she understands the importance of looking after our heritage at a local level and ensuring that the process for caring for our heritage places is accessible and enjoyable.*

*Samantha advocates for understanding the diverse values of our heritage places and is passionate about nurturing traditional trades, providing conservation in action learning at heritage places and activating heritage places in innovative ways.*

*Louise Honman is an architect with over thirty years experience, specialising in strategic and built heritage, building conservation and residential design.*

*Previously a senior heritage planner and Director of Context Pty Ltd, a multi-disciplinary consultancy based in Brunswick, she undertook a range of heritage projects for Federal, State and Local Government agencies including heritage studies, assessments, conservation management plans and strategies, and worked as a Heritage Advisor for three local government areas for over twenty years. Louise also had a small architectural practice focused on residential alterations and additions, building conservation and heritage consulting.*

*Honman was a member of the Victorian Heritage Council between 2015-2020 and is an active member of the Australian Institute of Architects, serving on*

*their Heritage Committee. She is currently working in a volunteer capacity with the National Trust, preparing a Conservation Management Plan for the Waller House.*

## SESSION FOUR | HOUSE MUSEUMS IN THE SOUTH-EAST ASIAN CONTEXT

CHAIR: SOON-TZU SPEECHLEY

### NOTES

Khoo Salma Nasution



Roger Beeston



Phillipa Hall



## Penang House Museum

Khoo Salma Nasution (Miles Lewis Fellow)

The Sun Yat Sen Museum Penang is a late 19th century Straits townhouse located in the George Town part of the UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca. The curation of this house museum presents a conceptual challenge: How to present an important historical event from 1910 while preserving the 1920s historic interior of a Straits Chinese townhouse?

The building is associated with the important historical figure of Dr Sun Yat Sen, who, as a global revolutionary in exile, held the “Penang Conference” here in 1910 to plan a China uprising, and then became the first President of China in 1912. The house at 120 Armenian Street was then a “reading club”, a cover for revolutionary activities. A frequently asked question is “Did Dr Sun Yat Sen live here?” and the answer is “No”, though it is a house museum, Dr Sun stayed in a bungalow at Dato’ Keramat Road, which was another venue for the Penang Conference, but was demolished decades ago.

The house museum is open daily and the in-house guide takes the visitor from poster to poster telling the story of revolutionary fundraising efforts in Penang, while the furnishings only serve as an aesthetic backdrop.

The Sun Yat Sen Museum presents a different experience to Chinese visitors, who appreciate this obscure part of the history of China’s “Father of the Nation”, to Western visitors – some who have read acclaimed novelist Tan Twan Eng’s historical fiction “House of Doors” – as well as to Malaysian and Singaporean visitors, who have nostalgic feelings for a Peranakan townhouse from their grandparents’ era.

Primarily due to budget constraints, the Sun Yat Sen Museum has been a “work in progress” for more than two decades. As the custodian and manager, I will share some of the problems faced and lessons learnt, while welcoming inputs from all.

*Khoo Salma Nasution (née Khoo Su Nin) has been involved in the heritage conservation movement since 1989, first as Honorary Secretary and then as President of the Penang Heritage Trust until 2015. She is an author of local histories and enjoys making cultural heritage maps. She co-founded Areca Books in 2005, where she works as a publisher and commissioning editor. She is also the custodian of her family’s townhouse, now the Sun Yat Sen Museum, which commemorates the story of the ‘father of modern China’ in exile in Penang. During her short stint as a City Councillor, she spearheaded pedestrian improvements in the George Town World Heritage Site.*

## Three Indian House Museums

Roger Beeston

Founder, RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants

Phillipa Hall

Architecture and Conservation Lead, RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants

By examining three Indian House Museums, this presentation explores contemporary Indian approaches to identifying the tangible and intangible cultural heritage significance of 'Personality House Museums', as well as methods of curating and conserving these places, and the associated narrative presented to visitors. In particular, the paper focusses on the outcomes of museumisation of these houses; the extent of conservation or modification of the significant building and contents, and the potential for the houses to become a memorial (or in some cases a veritable shrine) to the former inhabitants.

The three House Museums were visited and researched by Roger Beeston and Anthony Hemingway of RBA Architects under the auspices of AusHeritage and with assistance from both the Australian and Indian Governments.

Kamarajar Memorial House located in Virudhunagar, southern India, is the birthplace of K. Kamaraj (1903-1975), a highly revered politician of his generation. Kamaraj spent much of his early life in the house and his family continued to live there until it was purchased by the Tamil Nadu State government soon after his death.

The Indira Gandhi Memorial Museum was the residence of the former Prime Minister of India. Following her assassination in the house 1984, it was converted to a museum, and houses a collection of personal items and photographs, as well as more delicate exhibits including the sari she was wearing when she was assassinated.

Acharya Bhaban in Kolkata is the former residence of the polymath Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), and his wife Lady Abala Bose (1864-1951), a social and political reformer in her own right. It is now managed by the Sir J C Bose Trust, who aim to "preserve their legacy and heritage treasured here for posterity" by converting it into a Science Heritage Museum.

*Roger founded RBA 30 years ago in 1994, and the practice has since evolved into a diverse cultural heritage management team consisting of specialist architects, conservation technicians, heritage planners, architectural historians, interpretation professionals and, latterly, digital heritage specialists.*

*Throughout his career Roger has continually engaged with the fields of both contemporary architecture and heritage management. In doing so, he*

*has acquired detailed expertise in traditional and contemporary building technologies, allowing him to develop authentic and sustainable remedial conservation interventions. Where many see a statutory heritage listing as an obstacle or impediment to the pursuit of a contemporary way of life, RBA recognise it as an opportunity to capture social and historical value and to activate deeper cultural potential.*

*Through his exposure to international debate on conservation practice via AusHeritage (Australia's Export Network for Cultural Heritage Services), of which he is Deputy Chair, Roger has also developed a keen grasp of evolving conservation management practice in a broad context, particularly the Asia Pacific region.*

*Roger Beeston is a Registered Architect and an Associate of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) where he has served as a Member and Jury Chair for the AIA Awards, as well as being a past recipient of the AIA Award for Heritage Architecture on multiple occasions. He is also a member of the ACAHUCH Advisory Board.*

*Phillipa Hall is the architecture and conservation lead at RBA Architects. She is a UK registered Architect with a diverse range of experience at international and Australian heritage and conservation practices. Through her work at RBA, Hall strives to make architecture accessible and beneficial to all members of society. She believes that good design should not only enhance the existing and historic environment, but also consider the long-term impact on the users and surroundings of the building - socially, economically, physically, and environmentally.*

## **SITE VISITS**

ACAHUCH recommends site visits to the following accessible house museums in Melbourne:

- Johnston Collection
- Robin Boyd Walsh Street House
- Waller House (National Trust)
- Como House (National Trust)
- Ripponlea (National Trust)
- Duldig Studio
- Lyon Housemuseum
- Heide Museum of Modern Art

Convened by Hannah Lewi, Jarrod Haberfield, Soon-Tzu Speechley and Theo Blankley, under the auspices of the Australian Centre for Architectural History, Urban and Cultural Heritage (ACAHUCH) and the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at The University of Melbourne.

*ACAHUCH acknowledges the generous support of Dr Richard Simmie and the Jock Simmie Architectural History, Urban and Cultural Heritage Research Fund, which assisted in the formation and running of this symposium.*

Further Information: [Email Theo Blankley | ACAHUCH Centre Coordinator](#)

**Cover Images**

Banner Image: Interior of Curtin Family House, National Trust WA (Image Supplied: Hannah Lewi)

Convened by Professor Hannah Lewi, co-Director of the Australian Centre for Architectural History, Urban and Cultural Heritage at the Melbourne School of Design (Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning).



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