

KETTLE'S YARD

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND PLAN 2025 – 2030

**Approved by Kettle's Yard Committee: November 2025
Due for review: 2030**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 History

Kettle's Yard is a house with a collection of fine and decorative art, books and natural objects that was established in 1957 and given to the University of Cambridge by the curator and collector H.S. 'Jim' Ede in 1966. Since 1970, Kettle's Yard is also Cambridge's foremost modern and contemporary art gallery.

1.2 Kettle's Yard mission and values

Our mission is to contribute to society by inspiring and engaging audiences through art, learning and research of the highest quality. Our [values](#) are: Openness, Creativity, Collaboration, Insight and Sustainability. Our [ambitions](#) 2023-2027 are: (1) to make outstanding exhibitions of contemporary and twentieth-century art and present an acclaimed programme of music concerts; (2) to bring a wide range of perspectives to bear upon the house, collection and archive; (3) to inspire and engage young people, children and local communities; (4) to devise and implement a new research strategy; (5) to implement a major fundraising campaign. Our annual reports can be found [here](#).

1.3 Research at Kettle's Yard

Research at Kettle's Yard is rooted in our organisational objective to preserve and interpret our renowned collection of twentieth century and contemporary artworks, natural objects and decorative arts, and the unique architectural and interior spaces in which they are placed. Our Archive, comprising primarily of the Papers of H.S. Ede and the Records of Kettle's Yard supports this work, as well as being accessible to external researchers. Exhibitions-related research in the field of twentieth century and contemporary art is an important strand of activity and research is also generated through and shapes our innovative community and learning programmes.

Research undertaken at or in partnership with Kettle's Yard is disseminated through exhibitions and displays on site and at other venues, through print publications, in the form of live and hybrid events such as talks, conferences, seminars and workshops, and via our [website](#).

'There should be a Kettle's Yard in every university.'

— Jim Ede, 1984

2 MISSION FOR RESEARCH

To inspire, contribute to and share research of the highest quality and contemporary relevance.

3 VISION FOR RESEARCH 2025 – 2030

Research at Kettle’s Yard underscores our reputation as a centre of excellence for twentieth century and contemporary art and informs and enriches collection and programme activity.

Kettle’s Yard catalyses, enables and nurtures research within Cambridge, nationally and internationally.

Kettle’s Yard supports and provides a platform for research from diverse perspectives.

Kettle’s Yard creates opportunities for everyone in our society to engage with research.

4 RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

Kettle’s Yard will enable, support and undertake original research that seeks to produce new knowledge and aligns with the following principles:

4.1 Focus on art and artists

Kettle’s Yard supports research activity that places art and artists represented in the collection, exhibitions or wider programme at the centre of its enquiry and methodologies.

4.2 Innovative

In its foundation, Kettle’s Yard questioned what a museum was, how a museum collection might be used, and what an encounter with art could look like. We support research that continues this questioning and creative approach today. This includes reflecting upon what comprises research, who can engage with research activity, and the form research outcomes may take.

4.3 Public-facing

Kettle’s Yard prioritises research projects that provide demonstrable benefit to new and existing visitors and audiences.

4.4 Inclusive

Research projects and methodologies at Kettle’s Yard should seek to be inclusive and collaborative, reflecting our organisational [policies](#) on Access and Anti-Racism, as well as the University of Cambridge policies on [freedom of expression](#), [equality and diversity](#), [research ethics](#), [research misconduct](#) and [integrity](#).

4.5 Sustainable

Research projects and methodologies at Kettle’s Yard should consider the impact upon the environment and take steps to minimise any detrimental effects, in accordance with our Environmental Policy: <https://www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk/about-us/#policies> as well as the University of Cambridge’s policy on [sustainability](#).

5 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

‘I cannot imagine an institution that is better equipped to contribute to society in real and meaningful ways. The ideas that change the world, the discoveries that upend conventional wisdom, the solutions to the world’s most intractable problems – those happen at Cambridge.’

— Vice-Chancellor, Professor Deborah Prentice, 2023

5.1 Kettle’s Yard

As stated in Kettle’s Yard’s ambitions 2023 – 2027, a new Kettle’s Yard research strategy is needed to strengthen Kettle’s Yard role as a resource and catalyst for research and insight. Another key ambition is to bring a wide range of perspectives to bear upon the house, collection and archive; commissioning and sharing research, projects and programmes that deepen our understanding and knowledge of Kettle’s Yard and its histories through many voices and stories.

5.2 University of Cambridge

As part of the University of Cambridge, Kettle's Yard contributes to relevant Strategic Research Initiatives (SRIs) and Strategic Research Networks (SRNs) that aim to:

1. address large-scale multi-disciplinary research challenges
2. strengthen research collaborations and knowledge transfer across disciplines
3. increase research capacity and profile by providing a platform for large-scale funding applications, recruitments and international research partnerships
4. enhance our ability to influence national and international research, policy and funding agendas.

These include the [Collections, Connections, Communities](#) SRI and the [Digital Humanities](#) SRN, as well as the [Cambridge Visual Culture](#) (CVC) research centre.

5.3 History of Art Department

Kettle's Yard shares one member of staff with the History of Art Department at the University of Cambridge, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and insight across teaching and public programmes. Other relevant members of staff at Kettle's Yard may also contribute to teaching and assessment when it relates to their specific area of expertise (see section 8).

5.4 Research Excellence Framework

Kettle's Yard's research activity will contribute to the University's research excellence as assessed through the forthcoming 2029 [Research Excellence Framework](#) in a joint Unit of Assessment that includes the History of Art Department and the Fitzwilliam Museum (UoA 32). Kettle's Yard contributed as part of the same joint UoA for REF 2021, for which the outputs of the unit were considered 'to demonstrate research that is predominantly world leading, in terms of originality, significance and rigour, with a high proportion of internationally excellent and some internationally recognised research'. The three case studies submitted by the Unit 'were judged to demonstrate very considerable and outstanding impact in terms of reach and significance', and 'evidenced research impacting on increased cultural participation of marginalised audiences and new ways of thinking.' Specific praise referred to 'links made between research and museum practices' (Feedback on Cambridge 32 - Art and Design History, Practice and Theory, 2021).

5.3 University of Cambridge Museums (UCM)

Kettle's Yard is one of eight University of Cambridge Museums, which together represent the UK's highest concentration of internationally important collections outside London – with more than five million works of art, artefacts, and specimens in our combined institutions. Following the appointment of a Director of Collections Strategy for UCM in 2024, closer working on research and other initiatives is encouraged, e.g., joint submission to HEIF.

Kettle's Yard has a close relationship with the Fitzwilliam Museum, established in the original gift of Kettle's Yard to the University of Cambridge. The Director of the Fitzwilliam is a member of the Kettle's Yard Committee – our governing body, and both Kettle's Yard and the Fitzwilliam Museum are non-school institutions (NSIs). Several artists in the Kettle's Yard collection are also represented in the Fitzwilliam Museum collection, and curatorial research and practice is an area with potential for further cross-institutional collaboration.

5.4 UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

Kettle's Yard receives funding from the UKRI Higher Education Museums, Galleries and Collections (HEMG) Fund, which aims to support higher education museums, galleries and collections so that they can meet the costs of serving the wider research community beyond their own institutions. Our research supports the UKRI [vision](#) for outstanding research and innovation in the UK that gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and to benefit, enriching lives locally, nationally and internationally.

5.5 Arts Council England

As an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, Kettle's Yard's research supports and contributes to Arts Council England's [Let's Create](#) strategy [Investment Principles](#) of Ambition & Quality, Dynamism, Environmental Responsibility and Inclusivity & Relevance. ACE is now undergoing an independent review led by Baroness Hodge of Barking.

6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2030

6.1 Improve documentation and access for researchers

Ensure all object and archive collections at Kettle's Yard are documented, catalogued and physically accessible.

6.2 Embed research across our work

Respond to and create opportunities for research spanning the breadth of museological practice at Kettle's Yard – encompassing visitor studies, gallery education, fundraising and commerce, leadership and curatorial practice – through:

- supporting or initiating research grant applications
- creating opportunities for students to undertake practical research at Kettle's Yard, e.g. in the context of exhibition-making
- creating opportunities for student professional development, e.g. through placements and shadowing.

6.3 Nurture a broad range of research perspectives

Bring a wide range of perspectives to bear upon the Kettle's Yard house, collection and archive through:

- publicising the collection and related-resources to undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University
- supporting teaching at the University on BA, MA and MPhil programmes
- collaborating with Cambridge, UK and international scholars on research and curatorial programmes and on projects with contemporary artists
- working with community and learning colleagues to embed inclusive research practices into our work.

6.4 Publish research

Create new digital and print publishing channels to disseminate research and ensure the broadest possible audience can engage with research at Kettle's Yard.

6.5 Exhibit research

To support Kettle's Yard curatorial staff to develop exhibitions, displays and events that grow out of new research, and to collaborate with external researchers on the development of public programmes.

7 RESEARCH ACTIVITY 2025-2030

The collections and programmes at Kettle's Yard engage the academic disciplines of history of art, contemporary art practice, conservation and conservation science, collections management, education, archives and museology. Where relevant, we will seek to build relationships through research with peer institutions. Subject to schedules and resources, the following areas are considered research priorities at Kettle's Yard 2025 to 2030:

7.1 House, Collection and Archive

- The lives and works of under-researched collection artists.
- Modern architecture and interior design in Britain.
- Histories of collecting modern and contemporary art in Britain.
- Decolonial strategies in museum interpretation.
- Conservation of historic and modern houses.
- Conservation of modern and contemporary art in Britain.

7.2 Exhibitions and Publications

Programmed exhibitions and related publications will prompt research in the following areas:

- Queer histories of art in Britain.
- History of feminist art practice in the UK.
- Intersections between art and craft.
- Curatorial and artistic practices that fosters the transformation of our ways of living required to address climate change.
- Crip aesthetics and disability justice.

7.3 Community and Learning

- Museological and artistic social practice nurturing equity in society.
- Collaborating with our communities, valuing and enabling them to be active agents within Kettle's Yard.
- Embedding quality engagement with art and culture as a life-long habit for children and young people.
- Modern and contemporary art as a means to improve wellbeing for people with physical and/or mental health conditions and/or neurodiversities.
- Exploring the 'Useful Museum' model to think how Kettle's Yard can adapt in response to our local context.

8 STAFF AND RESOURCES

8.1 Research related staff at Kettle's Yard

[Beth Darbyshire](#)

[Dr Inga Fraser](#)

[Karen Thomas](#)

[Professor Amy Tobin](#)

Archivist

Senior Curator, House and Collection

Community Manager

Curator, Contemporary Programmes

/ Professor, Department of History of Art

8.2 Resources

Kettle's Yard collections catalogue online:
<https://www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk/collections/>

Kettle's Yard Archive Catalogue online:
<https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/repositories/5>

Kettle's Yard Research online:
<https://www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk/explore-the-house-and-collection/research/>

Kettle's Yard: a bibliography:
<https://www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk/explore-the-house-and-collection/research/#bibliography>

8.3 Finance

Research activity is primarily funded externally through grants or sponsorship unless it falls under Programme budgets for exhibitions and publications. A small amount of internal funding is managed by the Senior Curator, House and Collection, for the purpose of catalysing research and supporting the delivery of Kettle's Yard's current research objectives.

9 ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	PROGRESS	TIMESCALE
IMPROVE DOCUMENTATION AND ACCESS FOR RESEARCHERS	Complete cataloguing of Kettle's Yard Archive onto ArchivesSpace .	Existing catalogue transferred. New cataloguing ongoing.	<i>Ongoing</i>
Ensure all object and archive collections at Kettle's Yard are documented, catalogued and physically accessible	Catalogue display, library and archive books at Kettle's Yard onto the University Library catalogue.	Appraisal of rare books Apr 2025. Cataloguing pending volunteer from UL.	<i>Complete by Apr 2027</i>
	Compile a bibliography for Kettle's Yard and publish online.	In progress.	<i>Complete by Jul 2026</i>
	Guide and invigilate public and student access to Kettle's Yard art and archive collections.	Pre-booked appointments available weekly on Mondays.	<i>Ongoing</i>

	Guide and invigilate researcher access to Kettle's Yard art and archive collections.	Pre-booked appointments available weekly on Mondays.	<i>Ongoing</i>
	Work with UCM colleagues on the procurement of a new Collections Management System for Kettle's Yard.	Joint meeting with Axiell March 2025. Test database access received. Discussions with UCM colleagues ongoing. UIS allocated time May 2026.	<i>Ongoing, subject to UCM collaboration and funds</i>
	Review and improve records for artworks and other objects in our collection and commission any outstanding collections photography.	Object records currently under review. New photography took place in 2025, currently being uploaded to database.	<i>Complete by Dec 2026</i>
	Work with Communications team and the University Library to improve online collections catalogues and promote researcher access to art and archive items in storage.	Collections catalogue data currently under review. Annual representation at dissertation fair. Website 'stories' on archive and library scheduled regularly.	<i>Complete by 2027</i> <i>Ongoing</i>
	Reduce off-site storage of Archive and Collection objects.	Rationalise storage space and rehouse materials in the Archive and Art Stores at Kettle's Yard. Project to bring back records from Mill Lane in progress.	<i>Complete by April 2027</i>
	Scope possibilities for digitisation of collections.	Past projects include the production of high-resolution images of David Jones artworks and letters at Kettle's Yard as part of a funded joint project with the David Jones Research Centre, the Faculty of English at the University of Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Kettle's Yard and Cambridge Digital Humanities Learning Programme. Artists and archives for potential digitisation currently under review.	<i>2021-2023</i> <i>Ongoing</i>

<p>EMBED RESEARCH ACROSS OUR WORK</p> <p>Respond to and create opportunities for research spanning the breadth of museological practice at Kettle's Yard (encompassing visitor studies, gallery education, fundraising and commerce, leadership and curatorial practice) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support or initiating research grant applications - creating opportunities for students to undertake research at Kettle's Yard, e.g. in the context of exhibition-making - creating opportunities for student professional development, e.g. through placements and shadowing. 	<p>Convene a Kettle's Yard Research Forum to meet twice a year.</p>	<p>Invites to be circulated January 2026 including representatives from History of Art, the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Kettle's Yard Community Panel, Anglia Ruskin University, and two externals.</p>	<p><i>Set up complete by Easter 2026</i></p>
	<p>KY Trusts and Foundations Co-ordinator to identify and draft applications for research funding linked to specific projects and programmes.</p>	<p>T&F Co-ordinator appointed October 2025</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>
	<p>Work in collaboration with colleagues in the University of Cambridge and University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) on shared programmes that support research.</p>	<p>Strategic review of UCM led by Juliette Fritsch underway</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>
	<p>Contribute to and support the work of the Cambridge Visual Culture (CVC) research network.</p>	<p>Case for ongoing support of CVC submitted 2026.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>
	<p>Present papers on aspects of our work at Kettle's Yard at national and international conferences.</p>	<p>Representation at recent conferences organised by the Association for Art History, the Henry Moore Foundation, the Hepworth Wakefield and elsewhere.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>
	<p>Regularly report on research activity at relevant meetings at Kettle's Yard and across the University of Cambridge.</p>	<p>Summarise Research in Annual Report. Research represented on the standing agenda for Kettle's Yard Senior Leadership Team meetings. Research added to agenda of All-Staff meetings. Kettle's Yard research reported on at UoC meetings including, CVC; REF UoA meetings; General Board and others.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>

	Contribute to and support the Collections-Connections-Communities (CCC) strategic research initiative.	Grant from CCC for participatory research received for project with Kettle's Yard community panel 'Garden as Refuge for Repair' led by external curator and researcher Shama Khanna. Grant from CCC for participatory research for <i>Sanctuary</i> with artist Issam Kourbaj at Arbury Court Library; resulting in a paper by Molly Stock-Duerdoth, 'Adopting a Philosophy of Solidarity and Fellowship at Kettle's Yard: A Study of Sanctuary at Arbury Court Library', September 2024.	<i>Completed 2024</i>
	Initiate a CC-EE CDP studentship for a student to work with the Kettle's Yard collections.	Submit proposal in 2026 for studentship to begin Autumn 2027.	<i>Oct 2026</i>
	Work with teaching colleagues to create opportunities for students to contribute to exhibitions research.	Plan research needed on exhibitions further ahead and circulate details with Departmental colleagues	<i>Ongoing</i>
NURTURE A BROAD RANGE OF RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES Bring a wide range of perspectives to bear upon the Kettle's Yard house, collection and archive through: - publicising the collection and related-resources to undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University - supporting teaching at the University on BA, MA and MPhil programmes - collaborating with Cambridge, UK and international scholars on research and curatorial programmes and on	Publicise the collection and related resources	Participate in Fresher's Fair and Dissertation Fair. Continue to publicise Kettle's Yard programmes to students.	<i>Ongoing</i>
	Facilitate and contribute to teaching at the University of Cambridge	Teaching on Kettle's Yard collections and histories for BA History of Art; MSt History of Art and Visual Culture; MPhil Global History of Art; MPhil Film and Screen Studies. Taught sessions for visiting HE Institutions through Learning programme.	<i>Ongoing</i>
	Support students from the University of Cambridge and elsewhere on work placements at Kettle's Yard.	Continue to develop the Trinity Hall internship programme. Respond to requests for placements from Museum Studies courses across the UK.	<i>Ongoing</i>

	As appropriate, publish peer-reviewed essays in exhibition catalogues.	Commissioning in process for catalogues including <i>Christopher Wood: in Love</i> (ed. Inga Fraser) and <i>Miró's Circus</i> (ed. Matthew Gale and Inga Fraser).	2027
	Publish peer-reviewed articles relating to research taking place at Kettle's Yard externally.	Currently exploring possibilities relating to Learning and community and House and collections.	Ongoing
EXHIBIT RESEARCH Promote and create new opportunities for research to inform events, displays and exhibitions at Kettle's Yard	Continue to work with the Community Panel on the research and development of exhibitions and other programmes at Kettle's Yard.	Exhibition planning benefitting from the advice and insights of the Community Panel, e.g. <i>Handpicked: Painting Flowers</i> . Further collaborations to be developed.	Spring 2026 Ongoing
	To begin regular archive show-and-tell sessions led by the Archivist.	First session planned for November 2026	Ongoing
	To host research-based displays in the Edlis Neeson Research Space that showcase research undertaken by curators at Kettle's Yard and colleagues elsewhere in the University.	Displayed scheduled to date include: – <i>Jim Ede and India</i> – <i>Barbara Hepworth: 'a work of mine in your house'</i> – <i>Mari Mahr: Lili Brik</i> – <i>A story to be told: Revisiting Wing Museum</i> – <i>'In the presence of a common object': photography at Kettle's Yard</i> – <i>Kenji Umeda: a journey</i> Others under discussion.	2019-20 2024-25 2025 2025 2025-26 2026 Ongoing
	Create a programme of talks that offer diverse perspectives on the Kettle's Yard house, collection and archive.	Programme lunchtime lectures relating to themes of Research Space displays. Programme an annual lecture in which a scholar or practitioner presents new research or gives a new interpretation on an aspect of Kettle's Yard. Annual participation in the Festival for Art History with a focus on pop-up talks from a range of Kettle's Yard staff offering new perspectives.	Ongoing