

ART KETTLE'S YARD

Much more than a gallery

With its eclectic artworks amid sofas and tables, Kettle's Yard first charmed me as a teenager, and every year since. Now, after refurbishment, it has re-opened – and it's better than ever

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Wed 21	NORWICH	Theatre Royal	01603 630 000
Fri 23	LEICESTER	De Montfort Hall	01533 311 111
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Tue 27	HARROGATE	Royal Hall	01423 602 116
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Sat 31	EDINBURGH	Queen's Hall	0131 668 2019

APRIL 2018

Sun 01	INVERNESS	Eden Court Theatre	01463 234 234
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Thu 05	LIVERPOOL	Philharmonia Hall	0151 709 3789
Fri 06	BUXTON	Orestes House	01298 72190
Sun 08	TUNBRIDGE WELLS	Assembly Hall	01892 539 613
Mon 09	SHREWSBURY	Theatre Severn	01743 281 281
Tue 10	SOUTHEND	Castle Pavilion	01702 351 135
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Fri 13	SCARBOROUGH	Grand Hall	01723 821 888
Sun 15	CHILTERNHAM	Town Hall	0444 578 2210
Tue 17	AVESBURY	Wessex Theatre	0844 671 7607
Wed 18	CAMBRIDGE	Com Exchange	01223 357 851
Fri 19	CHICHESTER	Lyceum	01203 368 242
Sat 20	SALISBURY	City Hall	01722 424 424
Sun 22	NORTHAMPTON	The De Montfort	01604 454 511
Mon 23	CARDIFF	St David's Hall	029 2087 8444
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MAY 2018

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Sun 06	HASTINGS	White Rock Theatre	01424 482 288
Mon 07	DARTFORD	Octagon Theatre	01222 220 000
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A CHAS COLE FOR C&M ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTATION



ROOM WITH A VIEW
Kettle's Yard today, in which hangs *Louder* by David Jones (1928), below



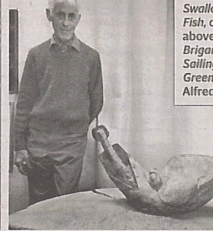
EDMUND DE WAAL

Kettle's Yard, four workman's cottages knocked together to make one house, straggling up a hill in Cambridge, is a secret passed on to friends, talked about in slightly cabalistic ways. It is a place of pilgrimage, a haven of plain wood and white walls. Slightly battered, filled with paintings, pots and sculpture, it has fired many to think about how they can live with art without living in an art gallery. It was created in 1956 by the Tate curator Jim Ede and his wife Helen, an art teacher, as a place for them to live, and it is still, at root, a house rather than a gallery: the accumulation of a life spent in the company of artists. To enter, you pull a bell rope and go into a hallway overshadowed by a staircase. The house is folded in on itself, offering glimpses of other rooms, a sense of changing levels. Inside, there are many moments of pleasure – the play of a lemon's acid hue on a pitted pewter dish, a Brancusi head pivoting on the ellipse of a grand piano, a sgraffito bowl by Lucie Rie full of pebbles. You can sit and read, work at the table, meet friends, listen to music. It allows for a kind of

contemplation, for watching the light change through the slatted blinds over the windows. Over the years, Kettle's Yard has grown. In 1966, the Edes gave the house and everything in it to the University of Cambridge; in 1970, an extension was added, which became a gallery. But as more people came, it started to creak. The question of how to cherish the calm atmosphere everyone loved while putting on exhibitions, sculpture classes for children, music series and symposia became more and more vexed. Now, after a two-year redevelopment, Kettle's Yard is on the cusp of a new life: the house left untouched, but the gallery extension gloriously rebuilt by the

architect Jamie Fobert with a new four-storey wing, entrance and café. Ede's mission – to make "a living place where works of art could be enjoyed... where young people could be at home unhampered by the greater austerity of the museum or public art gallery" – can be pursued with fresh vigour. Ede was a passionate communicator about art. He was also a collector to his fingertips: of seed pods and pebbles as well as paintings. His memoir, *A Way of Life* (1984), is a litany of finds. But what was so rare about Ede was his lack of triumphalism. He propped a Ben Nicholson linocut against the plug sockets; a vortex of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's bronze discs on a mantelpiece next to a cracked plate. On inheriting an indifferent Rembrandt, he gave away the sketch, preferring to keep its warped and whimsical Renaissance frame instead. You soon realise that Kettle's Yard is not about isolated and

STILL LIFE
Jim Ede with Brzeska's *Bird Swallowing Fish*, c1913-14; above right, *Brigitte* by Green Fields by Alfred Wallis



expensive trophy art, not really about good taste at all, more an astringent exercise in balancing objects and sight lines; an attempt to find correspondences between the made and the found. This can be seen in the tabletop arrangements of which Ede was so



fond: condensed still lifes that have been imitated so painfully and unsuccessfully elsewhere. He put feathers in a glass bowl and picked up stones, turning his house into the "Louvre of pebbles", in the words of the poet and artist Ian Hamilton Finlay. His career reads like a series of epiphanies: meeting Nicholson when the abstract artist was virtually unknown; buying the paintings of the Cornish naïf Alfred Wallis when they cost two or three shillings each; forging friendships with the painter Christopher Wood and the poet and artist David Jones, who shared Ede's love of "things known and handled".

Most extraordinary of all was his purchase of the estate of the young Vorticist sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska, which was dumped on the Tate boardroom table and rejected when Ede was a junior curator

there. It would become the cornerstone of his life. Under an almost evangelical imperative to bring Gaudier-Brzeska into the public eye, he bartered casts and drawings with museums; in the Thirties, he wrote a monograph on him, *Savage Messiah*, which was filmed by Ken Russell in 1972 with suitable excess. Consequently, the attic rooms of Kettle's Yard are an eccentric archive of Gaudier-Brzeska drawings, banked up into

the eaves like an upturned portfolio. Wherever you sit in the house, you seem to be close to one of his bronzes or marbles. It might seem ironic to find the work of this quintessentially fierce, iconoclastic friend of Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound next to Ede's comfortable, linen-covered armchairs. But this is the thing: the house doesn't domesticate modernism so much as let you experience modernism's love affair with domestic space. You'll also find plenty of Ben and Winifred Nicholson's still lifes and David Jones's window-framed scenes. Ede's real vocation, though, seems to have been talk: he kept open house, giving tea to innumerable undergraduates, often sending them away with a lent picture or book. Kettle's Yard continued this tradition after he left, and you could spend a term with a Wallis or a Nicholson on your college bedroom wall for a £2 deposit. You still can (though it costs a bit more). Kettle's Yard will always be one of my favourite places. I first visited as a teenager, apprenticed as a potter, surreptitiously running my hand over a tall jar made in the Twenties by William Stait Murray, broken by Jones and mended with a sinuous line of gold. Later, as a student, I used the library table to try to write essays, distracted by

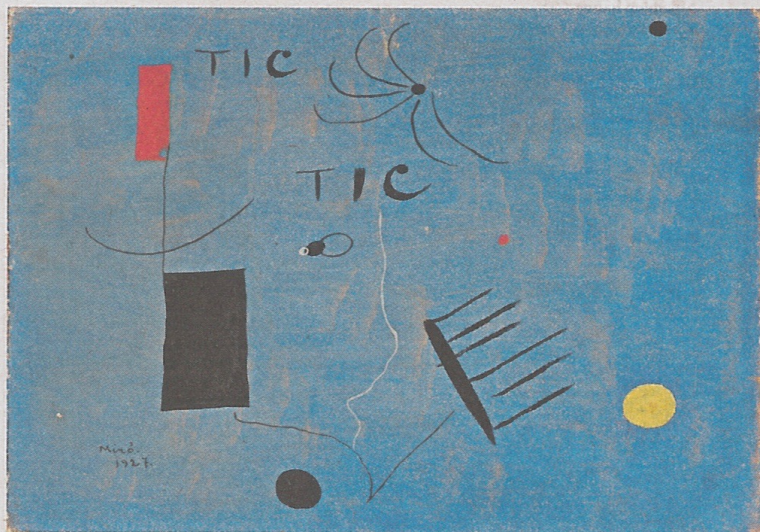
Jim Ede often sent undergraduates away with the loan of a picture or a book

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ART KETTLE'S YARD



→ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

the armada of Alfred Wallis paintings sailing along the wall nearby. I've returned to it in every season to see exhibitions or just to sit. And I've exhibited there myself – placing pots where my favourite poetry was shelved, making works for crevices, tables, cupboards – all the creaturely places of a house.

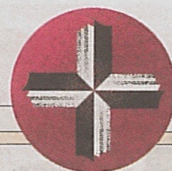
I wrote a letter to Ede when I was 16, gauche and earnest, making pots and writing poetry. By then, he had retired to a small

SIGHT LINES

Ede enjoyed the yellow dot in Joan Miro's *Tic Tic* (1927), which echoes a lemon he placed on a pewter dish in the same room

flat in Edinburgh, but he was still aware of everything that was happening at Kettle's Yard. (It was said that he used to check weekly through an elderly friend that a lemon was still placed where he had left it.) I received a long letter back, exhorting me to read Jones and the mystics and telling me that a potter was a very good thing to be. It is that spirit – generous and generative – that continues to make Kettle's Yard so special.

Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, reopens next Saturday (kettlesyard.co.uk)



THE POETRY PHARMACY CONDITION: LOSS OF ZEST FOR LIFE

*Also suitable for loss of motivation ·
loss of passion · need for self-care*

IRONING BY VICKI FEAVER

It's the story of so many of our lives: we begin with a great enthusiasm, a great passion, but all too often we end up giving up on it – and the world – for one reason or another. Maybe we've been disappointed by those around us; maybe we've lost our self-belief.

No matter the reason, there's something deeply dispiriting about having to persevere without whatever it was that used to animate us. In Vicki Feaver's poem "Ironing", that passion isn't something grand and overbearing. Instead, it's a simple task that – like it or not – we have all had to perform at some point. It shows us that the things that bring us pleasure, that motivate us to get out of bed, don't have to be huge. And often, when something goes wrong, it is these small acts of self-care we abandon first – even when they are the very things that have the power to fix us.

The speaker in the poem rediscovers her passion, and finds it is as strong as ever. Through the ironing we see her life gaining purpose, becoming joyful again, where before it was crumpled and unexciting. She has reclaimed her life along with her ironing, and that passion has nosed its way into every corner until, by the end, we see her ironing her blouse into an airy shape with room for her own body, her own heart: her life is moulded to fit her again, and there is room to breathe.

Whatever passion you have left behind you in life, whatever once gave you joy and meaning, pick it up again, and make your life one that fits you.

William Sieghart

*I used to iron everything:
My iron, flying over sheets and
towels
like a sledge chased by wolves over
snow;*

*the flex twisting and crinkling
until the sheath frayed, exposing
wires like nerves. I stood like a
horse*

*with a smoking hoof,
inviting anyone who dared
to lie on my silver padded board,*

*to be pressed to the thinness
of dolls cut from paper.
I'd have commandeered a crane*

*if I could, got the welders at Jarrow
to heat me an iron the size of a tug
to flatten the house.*

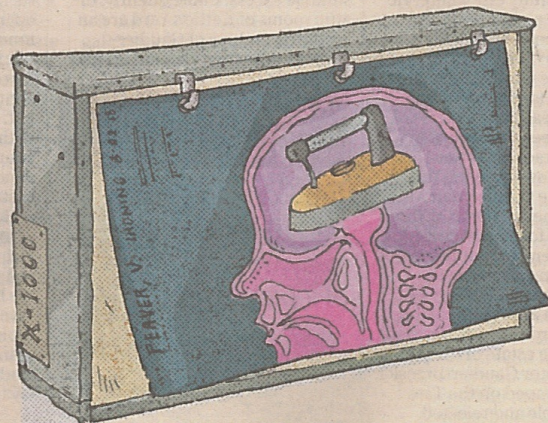
*Then for years I ironed nothing.
I put the iron in a high cupboard.
I converted to crumpledness.*

*And now I iron again: shaking
dark spots of water onto wrinkled
silk, nosing into sleeves, round*

*buttons, breathing the sweet heated
smell
hot metal draws from newly-
washed
cloth, until my blouse dries*

*to a shining, creaseless blue,
an airy shape with room to push
my arms, breasts, lungs, heart into.*

From *The Poetry Pharmacy* by William Sieghart (Particular, £12.99). Poem courtesy of Vicki Feaver and Jonathan Cape



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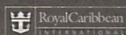
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