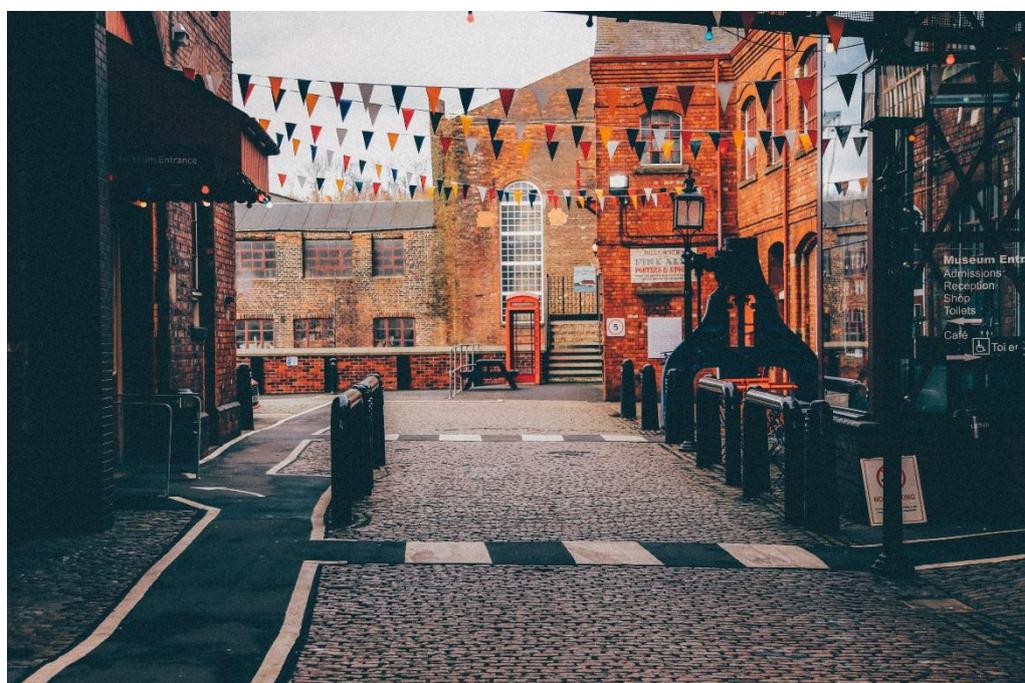


Arts&Heritage

Blue Sky Museums

Blue Sky Museums is an Arts&Heritage project established in 2020 during the Covid-19 crisis, which invites artists to create unusual and ambitious project responses for some of the Meeting Point museums that A&H has worked with since 2016. The project is an opportunity for artists to engage in untethered idea development, without the restrictions of practical delivery or limitation of a budget.

Museum: Kelham Island Museum



Short History

Kelham Island Museum is one of three heritage sites that make up Sheffield Industrial Museum Trust, to tell the story of how Sheffield's craftsmanship and steel making helped build the modern world.

Kelham Island Museum is in one of the oldest industrial districts in Sheffield and sits on a man-made island over 900 years old. It dates back to 1180 when a millrace was created to redirect the River Don to the Town Corn Mill. In 1637 Kellam Homer built a grinding workshop and waterwheel on the site, giving the island its' name. By 1829 an iron foundry was built by John Crowley producing a range of iron goods from bicycles to corn grinders and decorative goods.

The industrial heritage museum was opened in 1982 and the objects and archives encompass the history of making over 200 years. The large ex-industrial buildings and site cover the history of artisan and their workshops; the major impact of the Industrial Revolution and mass industry up to the post-industrial digital age of today.

Visitors are greeted to the site by an original Bessemer Converter; invented by Henry Bessemer, it played a significant role in the advancement of steelmaking in the 19th century. The scale of Bessemer Converter is matched by other machines and engines within the museum, including the Crossley Gas Engine and the River Don Engine. The River Don Engine is a working engine, and whilst in operation the sensory experience of sound, movement and smell dominates the museum experience.

The technical skills and innovation found in the past is evident today in the hand forged surgical instruments made in Sheffield today. The museum makes the connection from past to present with its displays and fully operational Blacksmith, Bladesmith, Pewter and Glass making workshops on site. There is also an open store and Restoration workshop with specialists employed to maintain the engines for future generations.

Location

Kelham Island museum is based in the developing and regenerating area of Sheffield, providing an exciting location for contemporary work and linking the past industrial life of the town to the new urban regeneration. Many of the old workshops and industrial units now house artists' studios, cafes and micro-breweries and apartments. However, the museum believes there is a glaring omission in the museum's story and the importance of contemporary making is not as visible as it could be.

The regenerated area presents an untapped audience of 5000 residents living or working around the museum. Kelham Island Museum wishes to originate its own contemporary programme to engage with the newly identified local audience.

Key words/phrases

- People – rebels, creative thinkers and problem solvers
- Power – steam and electricity,
- Innovation – new ideas, changing the world
- Scale – from the small artisan tool to the giant mechanical engines
- Making – the handmade, artisan to mass produced
- Steel – used for constructions, engines and surgical instruments

Other Resources

Museum website: <http://www.simt.co.uk/kelham-island-museum>

Original Meeting Point commission:

<https://www.artsandheritage.org.uk/projects/mel-brimfield-at-kelham-island-museum/>



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Stand by Mel Brimfield at Kelham Island Museum © Jonathan Turner
A Meeting Point commission for Kelham Island Museum for 2020

Blue Sky Museum Response

Kelham Island Museum presents an exciting opportunity for artists working in all disciplines to respond to its mighty industrial past, with materials and components coming from all over the world to contribute to its impressive manufacturing output. There are hidden stories and narratives that lie within the collection- both personal and collective.

Artists are encouraged to think imaginatively, ambitiously and present ideas that may include reflecting upon manufacturing, global trade, working conditions, mass production and a museum whose strong identity lies within a changing regenerative landscape.

Arts&Heritage look forward to receiving your ideas.