

## Summary

This book is about house museums – museum institutions established in homes. House museums are a subgenre of biographical museums, and as such are a medium for telling the life stories of selected individuals. In their case, the stories are produced through domestic spaces and everyday objects. What changes occur during the process of musealizing a home? What narratives are produced in house museum exhibitions and how? These are the questions I answer in this book. The main examples I analyze are the “Milusin” manor house at the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek, the Anna and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz Museum (Stawisko) in Podkowa Leśna, the St. Maximilian Kolbe Museum in Niepokalanów, the Zofia and Waław Nałkowski Museum in Wołomin, the Władysław Broniewski and Andrzej Strug Museums (both in Warsaw), and the Żabiński Villa in the Warsaw Zoological Garden. In addition to these institutions, I interpret several temporary exhibitions, literary texts, newspaper articles and one theatrical performance.

In my work I use a theoretical framework developed in the field of cultural anthropology and memory studies. I reference the works of Aleida Assmann, especially her concept of cultural memory as well as some of her typologies, such as the division into storage and functional memory. I refer to the concepts of *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora), carriers of historical memory (Marcin Kula) and semiophores (Krzysztof Pomian). I also take up the category of cultural practices, described by Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu and Grzegorz Godlewski, among others. This perspective allows me to map the numerous subjects involved in the production of the meaning of an exhibition in a house museum. The ideas of de Certeau are particularly relevant for my work, touching as they do on cultural practices in the context of space and memory, making them very inspiring for the study of museums created in homes. I also refer de Certeau’s publications about the study of everyday life, which is an important thread in the exhibitions I analyzed. Following the example

of Maria Kobielska, I analyze the museum as a “memory device”, i.e. a tangle of different narratives, objects and material conditions, which are read differently by each “user”. This approach emphasizes both the relationality of the museum institution (its relationship with other forms of memory) and the subjective role of the recipient in shaping the message. In examining how the house museum works as a “memory device” I look at what its mechanisms are, what it is used for, and how. Combining the concepts of de Certeau, Assmann and contemporary museology, I write about museum practices. By this I mean activities such as visiting a museum or giving a tour of the exhibition, but also the various activities that make up the process of turning a home into an exhibition, i.e., the practices of “making unhomely”. Museification is usually understood as the freezing of the practices of everyday life, the end of dynamic change. However, it sets in motion other practices: designing and constructing an exhibition, conservation practices and care of exhibits, guiding tours and conducting workshops for schools, daily work at the institution.

The key theme of the study was exhibitions in house museums, so my main method was to visit them. Some exhibitions can only be visited with a guide, while others can also be visited individually or with an audioguide. In the book, I write about the different modes of visiting exhibitions and how they affect the perceived exhibition narrative. I conducted twenty interviews with people associated with Polish house museums: their directors, employees or people collaborating with them. In addition, I conducted many small, unstructured conversations with museum employees I met while visiting the museums. In my research I was inspired by Barney Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss’ concept of grounded theory, especially in its rendition proposed by Kathy Charmaz. According to Charmaz, theory construction is never linear, and both going into the field and creating a theoretical framework for the work is itself a kind of social action, conducted in collaboration with various social actors.

In sum, in the presented work I analyze how exhibitions in house museums produce meanings, what the status of their exhibits is and how they fit into relevant historical themes. I present house museums as a specific kind of “memory devices”, in which private affects are transferred onto the social plane. On a theoretical level, I develop and test an anthropological understanding of museum practices, which can also be applied to other museum institutions.