The first general study of museums created by artists and/or collectors. The Museum as Experience provides fifteen case studies ranging from the turn of 1800 to the present and distributed across the globe. New in form and content, it is written as a correspondence and illustrated with many unpublished documents. Focusing on museums preserving their original installation, it analyses display as a form of expression and raises key issues about the history, geography, anthropology, and aesthetics of art museums at large.

Museums created by artists and/or collectors are a favorite destination of museum lovers and raise important issues in connection with the history and evolution of art museums at large. They have developed in a critical relation to large, collective or 'encyclopaedic' museums, defending a primacy of experience and intimacy. And they remain attached to the persons of their founders, functioning as monuments and even mausoleums. Yet despite their appeal, a recent surge of new creations and a wealth of monographic documentation, no general study of the topic has been attempted. The Museum as Experience describes and analyses the phenomenon as a whole, from its beginnings around 1800 to the present and from its European origin to a worldwide extension. It examines in depth fifteen case studies distributed across the globe and chosen for their representative character and the quality of their original arrangement. In order to do justice to their meaningful relation to the spatial context and to their hospitality towards the subjective visitor, the book is written as a travelogue and organizes a dialogue between two narrators, an architect and an art historian. Richly illustrated with many unpublished documents, it is a scholarly work that can be read like a novel. It argues that artists’ and collectors’ museums are best understood as “author museums” and make it possible to enjoy and study display as a mode of expression and communication, an art of assemblage and installation avant la lettre, and a challenge for interpretation.

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Do 21st-century women and men still believe that museums can, through the way they display art, help shape their visitors’ sense of the dignity of the person? Through the readings of history and the exploration of new methodologies and formats to illuminate its object, museums can, through the way they display art, help shape their visitors’ sense of the dignity of the person. The series is open to monographic and highly specialized studies, this series aims at exploring the ideas and the issues raised by art museums and confronting them, in the past and in the present. The series is open to inquiries into all periods and geographical areas, and especially welcomes proposals and manuscripts that explore new methodologies and formats to illuminate its object. Museums are complex institutions that play an increasingly crucial and multilayered role in cultural, political, economic and diplomatic life of and between societies worldwide. While there exists a vast body of technical literature in the field of museology, and the history of museums is rich in monographs and highly specialized studies, this series aims at exploring the ideas and the issues raised by art museums and confronting them, in the past and in the present.