

Collecting Nature and Displaying Authority: The Evolution of Scientific Enquiry in Early-Modern Europe



HIST 259
Darin Hayton
Hall 103
Office Hours: TBA

Athanasius Kircher's Museum at the Collegio Romano. From Giorgio de Sepibus's *Romanii Colegii Societatis Iesu Musaeum Celeberrimum* (Amsterdam, 1678)

DESCRIPTION

It is widely held that scientific enquiry changed radically between the 15th and the 18th centuries, the period regularly associated with the Scientific Revolution. There is less agreement on how to account for that change. Without trying to explain why or even if the Scientific Revolution occurred, this course assumes that historians can learn a lot about the period by studying the changes that occurred in collecting and displaying nature.

Collecting and displaying natural and artificial artefacts have always been entwined with a host of political, social, and intellectual motivations and goals. By focusing on the interplay of these different contexts and competing interests, we will begin to appreciate the development of public museums; how that relates to the rise of experimental science; the emergence of public institutions devoted to science and the study of nature. In short, the fortunes of *Kunstammer* and Cabinets of Curiosity are intimately related to the rise of modern science culture and for that reason merit our attention.

In addition to textual sources, we will exploit a wide range of visual sources, from paintings and woodcut illustrations to building plans and the arrangement of rooms and collections. Our goal is to understand these diverse sources within their original contexts, in order to understand the social as well as the intellectual developments that occurred in early-modern attempts to understand and control the natural world.

EVALUATION

All students are expected to attend classes and contribute discussions. The key here is not simply quantity, but quality. You need to show that you have read and understood the assigned material and have arrived prepared to raise interesting issues/questions for discussion.

There will be three primary written exercises: 1) a mid-term essay exam; 2) a short analysis of a collection; 3) a research paper based on substantial original research on a topic approved by the professor.

MATERIALS

Required Texts:

Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

Useful Texts:

Pamela Smith and Paula Findlen, *Merchants and Marvels*

Nicholas Jardine et al., *Cultures of Natural History*

All of the readings will be on Blackboard and will, when possible, also be placed on reserve in Magill Library.

SYLLABUS

Week 1: Introduction and Theory

J. Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting"

S. Bedini, "The Evolution of Science Museums"

S. Macdonald, "Exhibitions of Power and Powers of exhibition. An Introduction to

the Politics of Display"

P. Findlen, "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy"

E. Hooper-Greenhill, "What is a Museum?" to *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*

S. Moser, "Introduction" to *Wondrous Curiosities*

Week 2: Classical and Humanist Antecedents

Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, Intro & Chaps. 1-3

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Intro & Chaps. 1-3

Excerpts from Cicero, Pliny, Petrarch, Pontano, and Machiavelli

Week 3: Early Collections and Museums

E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, Chaps. 2-3

Collections of Duke Jean de Berry and Montefeltro's Urbino, and the Medicis

Week 4: Nature, Politics, and Science in the Habsburgs' *Kunstkammer*

T. Kaufmann, "From Mastery of the World to Mastery of Nature: The *Kunstkammer*, Politics, and Science"

M. Meadow, "Merchants and Marvels. Hans Jakob Fugger and the Origins of the *Wunderkammer*"

E. Scheicher, "The Collection of Archduke Ferdinand II at Schloss Ambras: Its Purpose, Composition, and Evolution"

E. Fucikova, "The Collection of Rudolf II at Prague: Cabinet of Curiosities or Scientific Museum?"

Inventories and plans from different Habsburg collections; Woodcuts and Paintings of various Habsburg emperors and their *Kunstkammer*.

Week 5: *Kunstkammer* and *Wunderkammer* of Other Northern Princes

J. Menzhhausen, "Elector Augustus' *Kunstkammer*: An Analysis of the Inventory of 1587"

F. Dreier, "The *Kunstkammer* of the Hessian Landgraves in Kassel"

B. Moran, "German Prince-Practitioners: Aspects in the Development of Courtly Science, Technology, and Procedures in the Renaissance"

A Descriptive Catalogue of the Green Vaults

Excerpts from G. Agricola *De re metalica*

Week 6: Italian Cultures of Collecting I

Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, Chaps 4-5

G. Olmi, "Science, Honour, Metaphor: Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries"

Plans, Inventories and illustrations from Ferdinand Cospi's Museo and excerpts from Ferrante Imperato's Dell'istoria naturale

Week 7: Italian Cultures of Collecting II

Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, Chaps 7-8, and Epilogue

P. Findlen, "Inventing Nature. Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosity"

Galleria Settala

Week 8: Textual Collections I: Natural Histories and the Classification of Nature

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Chaps 4-5

A. Johns, "Natural history as print culture"

A. Ophir, "A Place of Knowledge Re-Created: The Library of Michel de Montaigne"

W. Ashworth, "Emblematic Natural History"

Ulisse Aldrovandi

Conrad Gessner

John Gerard

Week 9: Collections and the New World

A. Shelton, "Cabinets of Transgression: Renaissance Collections and the Incorporation of the New World"

C. Feest, "Mexico and South America in the European Wunderkammer"

M. Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries"

W. Eisler, "The Wunderkammer of Charles V: The Emperor, Science, Technology and the Expanding World"

Inventory of goods given to Charles V;

Excerpts from Columbus's Four Voyages & Cortez and Montezuma

Week 10: Collecting and the New Science

Pamela Smith, "Science and Taste: Painting, Passions, and the New Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Leiden"

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Chap 6

L. Daston, "Baconian Facts, Academic Civility and the Prehistory of Objectivity"

Excerpts from Bacon's *Gesta grayorum*, *Novum organum*, and *The Advancement of Learning*

Week 11: Protestant Cabinets and the Museum Wormianum

H. Schepelern, "Natural Philosophers and Princely Collectors: Worm, Paludanus,

and the Gottorp and Copenhagen Collections”
Inventories and Illustrations from the Wormianum

Week 12: Catholic Museums: Francesca Calzolari & Athanasius Kircher's
Museum Kircherianum

N. Malcolm, “Private and Public Knowledge: Kircher, Esotericism, and the
Republic of Letters”

Excerpts from Kircher’s *The Great Art of Knowing*;

Illustrations from the Kircherianum

Illustrations from Calzolari’s museum

Week 13: Medical Collections and *materia medica*

H. Cook, "Times Bodies. Crafting the Preparation and Preservation of naturalia"

H. Cook, "Physicians and natural history" in *Cultures of Natural History*

Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, Chap. 6

Renaissance editions of Dioscorides & Renaissance Herbals

Week 14: Cabinets of Curiosity and Experimental Science

Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, Chap. 6

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Chap 7

M. Hunter, "The Cabinet Institutionalized: The Royal Society's 'Repository' and its
Background"

S. Shapin, “The House of Experiment”

Week 15: From Private Collections to Public Museums

T. Kaufmann, "From Treasury to Museum"

Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, Chap. 7-8

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Chap. 10