

From Wunderkammer to Museum: 1565–1865

An exhibition from the collection of Florence Fearrington



Sponsored by the Rare Book Collection
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Melba Remig Saltarelli Exhibit Room
Wilson Special Collections Library
February 20 to April 20, 2014

Exhibition Checklist

I. BEGINNINGS

Konrad Gesner, *De Omni Rerum Fossilium Genere* (Zurich 1565).
Ferrante Imperato, *Dell'istoria naturale...libri xxviii* (Naples 1599). DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES, RBC.
Ferrante Imperato, *Historia naturale* (Venice 1672).
Paul Contant, *Le jardin, et cabinet poétique* (Poitiers 1609).
Basilus Besler, *Fasciculus Rariorum et Aspectu Dignorum Varii Generis* (Nuremberg 1616).
Michael Rupert Besler, *Gazophylacium Rerum Naturalium* (Nuremberg 1642).
Benedetto Ceruti, *Musaeum Francisci Calceolari* (Verona 1622).
Joseph Furttenbach, *Architectura Privata* (Augsburg 1641).
Ole Worm, *Museum Wormianum* (Leiden 1655).

II. INCREASING POPULARITY

Ulisse Aldrovandi, *De Reliquis Animalibus* (Frankfurt-am-Main 1618). DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES, RBC.
Athanasius Kircher, *Romani Collegii Societatis Jesu Musaeum Celeberrimum* (Amsterdam 1678).
Adam Olearius, *Gottorffische Kunst-Kammer* (Schleswig 1674).
Paolo Maria Terzago, *Museo ò galeria ... del Manfredo Settala* (Tortona 1666).

III. TOURISM

Michele Mercati, *Metallotheca* (Rome 1719).
Michael Bernhard Valentini, *Museum Museorum*, volumes 2–3 (Frankfurt-am-Main 1714). VENABLE COLLECTION, RBC.
J. de Later after P. A. Rumpf, Engraved Portrait of Georg Eberhard Rumpf (Amsterdam 1705).
Georg Eberhard Rumpf, *D'Amboinsche Rariteitkamer* (Amsterdam 1705).
Paul Jacob Marperger, *Geöffnete Raritäten-und Naturalien-Kammer* (Hamburg 1707).
Caspar Friedrich Neickel, *Muscographia* (Leipzig 1727).
Nicolas Chevalier, *Recherche curieuse d'antiquités* (Utrecht 1709).
Jacob Spon, *Recherches curieuses d'antiquité* (Lyon 1683).
Claude du Molinet, *Le cabinet de la Bibliothèque de Sainte Geneviève* (Paris 1692).
Gerard Blancken, *Catalogus Antiquarum et Novarum Rerum* (Leiden 1700).

IV. PETER THE GREAT

William Faithorne, Engraved Portrait of Peter the Great (London 1698).
Jacob de Wilde, *Signa Antiqua e Museo Jacobi de Wilde* (Amsterdam 1700).
Frederik Ruysch, *Thesaurus Anatomicus Tertius* (Amsterdam 1744). CARL W. GOTTSCHALK COLLECTION, RBC.
Ivan Danilovich Shumakher, *Palaty Sanktpeterburgskoi* (St. Petersburg 1744).
Johann Samuel Schröter, *Musei Gottwaldiani ...* (Nuremberg 1782).
Jacob Houbraken after J.M. Quinkhard, Engraved Portrait of Albertus Seba (Amsterdam 1731).

Albertus Seba, *Locupletissimi Rerum Naturalium Thesauri Accurata Descriptio*, volumes 1 & 3 (Amsterdam 1734, 1758). DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES, RBC.

V. SCIENCE & SPECIALIZATION

Fabio Colonna, *Fabi Columnae Lyncei Phytobasanos* (Florence 1744).
Johann Christian Kundmann, *Rariora Naturae & Artis* (Breslau 1737).
Laurentius Theodorus Gronovius, *Zoophylacium Gronovianum* (Leiden 1763–1781).
Antonio Parra, *Descripción de diferentes piezas de historia natural* (Havana 1787).
Sekien Toriyama, [Minerals, Fossils, Corals, and Other Strange Stones] (n.p. 1785).

VI. INSTITUTIONALIZATION & COMMERCIALIZATION

Tobias Beutel, *Chur-Fürstlicher Sächsischer stets grünender hoher Cedern-Wald* (Dresden 1671).
Simon Louis du Ry, *Plans et vue perspective du Musée de Cassel* (Kassel 1784).
John Tradescant, *Musaeum Tradescantianum* (London 1656).
John and Andrew Van Rymdsdyk, *Museum Britannicum* (London 1791).
Achille Comté, *Musée d'histoire naturelle* (Paris 1854).
P. T. Barnum, *Barnum's Museum ... November 16th, 1863, ... Anna Swan the Nova Scotia Giant Girl ... with the Giant Boy ... Such Marvellous Wonders* (New York 1863). ROLAND HOLT COLLECTION, RBC.

VII. THE CURIOSITIES CABINET IN THE RARE BOOK COLLECTION

The Rare Book Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill dates its beginnings to 1929 and the establishment of the Hanes Foundation for the Study of the Origin and Development of the Book. The RBC presently numbers close to 200,000 printed volumes and also includes substantial holdings of original graphics, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, and literary and historical papers.



The RBC has its own “Curiosities Cabinet,” which was created to house objects not easily accommodated by traditional shelving. Among its contents are noncodex items of significance for the study of the history of the book, a selection of which are displayed in *Rooms of Wonder*.

Quipu (Peru). PRESENTED BY JOHN WISE. HANES FOUNDATION.
Cuneiform clay cone and tablets (Babylonia).
Papyrus roll (Egypt).
Zulu beadwork love letter (South Africa). PRESENTED BY DANIEL MALCOLM. HANES FOUNDATION.

RELATED EXHIBITIONS AT UNC

Ongoing

Historic Rooms and the History and Culture of the State of North Carolina

NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION GALLERY
WILSON LIBRARY

January 31 to April 13

“The New Found Land”: Engravings by Theodor de Bry from the Collection of Michael N. Joyner

An exhibition of prints from Thomas Harriot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590), enhanced with print materials from Wilson Library's North Carolina Collection

and Native American artifacts from the North Carolina Archaeological Collections in the UNC Research Laboratories of Archaeology.
ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
<http://ackland.org>

February 12 to March 23

The Cabinet of Curiosities: An Installation

An installation of objects from the Ackland's collections, curated by members of the UNC course “Art History 551: Introduction to Museum Studies.”
ACKLAND ART MUSEUM, STUDY GALLERY
SECOND FLOOR

rooms of WONDER

Events

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

The Cabinet of Curiosities in Word and Image: 500 Years of Representation (and Misrepresentation)

Arthur MacGregor, former Curator of Antiquities at Oxford University’s Ashmolean Museum, delivers a lecture to celebrate the opening of *Rooms of Wonder: From Wunderkammer to Museum, 1565–1865*. MacGregor is the author of the landmark book on cabinets of curiosities *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (2008) and the founding editor of the *Journal of the History of Collections*.

5:00 p.m.

Reception and exhibition viewing
MELBA REMIG SALTARELLI EXHIBIT ROOM, WILSON LIBRARY

5:30 p.m.

Program
PLEASANTS FAMILY ASSEMBLY ROOM, WILSON LIBRARY

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library and the Rare Book Collection

SATURDAY, APRIL 5

From Matter to Ideas: Making Natural Knowledge in Early Modern Europe

Pamela H. Smith, Professor of History at Columbia University, delivers the keynote address for the conference “Making Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Literary Culture,” a collaboration between UNC-Chapel Hill and King’s College, London. Smith is the author of *The Body and the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (2004) and co-editor of *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects, and Texts, 1400–1800* (2008).

4:00 p.m.

Viewing of *Rooms of Wonder*
MELBA REMIG SALTARELLI EXHIBIT ROOM, WILSON LIBRARY

5:00 p.m.

Program
PLEASANTS FAMILY ASSEMBLY ROOM, WILSON LIBRARY

Sponsored by the Critical Speaker Series of the Department of English & Comparative Literature and the Rare Book Collection

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

10:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Gallery Tours of *Rooms of Wonder*
MELBA REMIG SALTARELLI EXHIBIT ROOM, WILSON LIBRARY

In conjunction with the UNC Science Expo / North Carolina Science Festival



A Wunderkammer is a room of wondrous things both natural and artificial, a chamber of objects noteworthy for their beauty or rarity, or their artistic, scholarly, or monetary value. In the 16th century, Europeans began to form Wunderkammers, also referred to as cabinets of curiosities, in the quest for encyclopedic knowledge. Their popularity increased throughout the 17th century, along with world travel and discovery, which enriched them with exotica and new rarities. In the 18th century, a more systematic approach to accumulating natural and man-made objects developed, leading to the modern era’s public museums of art and science.

Wunderkammers typically employed every surface, horizontal and vertical, for display purposes. The earliest illustration of a Wunderkammer appears as a woodcut in the 1599 volume devoted to the collection of Italian apothecary Ferrante Imperato, being later reproduced as an engraving in the 1672 edition (see above). Like Imperato, many creators of Wunderkammers were apothecaries or physicians, or professional or amateur students of natural history. Still others were nobility or royalty, such as

Russia’s Peter the Great. Wunderkammers served various purposes for these different individuals, often functioning as microcosms that enabled an understanding of the larger world.

Many private collections were institutionalized in the 18th century, and by its end, great collectors of means often preferred to establish public museums. However, Wunderkammers might also operate as commercial enterprises. England’s Musaeum Tradescantianum is a notable early instance of one open to the public by paid fee, its contents later becoming the foundation of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University. In the USA, most cabinets of curiosities were assembled for paying customers. P. T. Barnum’s Museum, which included living wonders, is an example of how the phenomenon devolved.

Publications that catalogued and publicized Wunderkammer collections began to appear with frequency in the 17th century. The extraordinary books in this exhibition, spanning three hundred years, are all from the collection of alumna Florence Fearrington (A.B. 1958) unless otherwise indicated. The Rare Book Collection (RBC) has also provided books, as well as objects from its own “Curiosities Cabinet.”

Other versions of Rooms of Wonder have appeared previously at Harvard University, The Grolier Club, and Grinnell College. The UNC Rare Book Collection gratefully acknowledges Ms. Fearrington’s generosity in making this exhibition at Chapel Hill possible.

Cabinets, Collections, and Museums at UNC

Museums and libraries have a long and interlinked history at the University. The first individual with librarian duties at UNC, Charles Wilson Harris, also served as its “Keeper of Museum.” Appointed in 1795, he collected artifacts through donations, the first gift being an ostrich egg. Other items in that early “cabinet of curios” included a porcupine skin, a piece of asbestos, a bezoar stone from a deer’s stomach, and Roman coins. A museum continued through the 19th century, residing eventually with the University Library in Smith Hall (old Playmakers Theater).

When the University Library moved to the Carnegie Library (Hill Hall) in 1907 and then opened a new building (Wilson Library) in 1929, it divested itself of museum objects and shifted its display focus to books and manuscripts. From the mid-1930s, the Research Laboratories of Archaeology began collecting artifacts and ethnofacts in its North Carolina Archaeological Collection, which now includes more than seven million specimens from over 7,000 sites. In 1940, Wilson Hall opened, which included a museum of natural history specimens that existed until 2005. 1958 saw the

opening of the Ackland Art Museum, the successor to the Person Hall Art Gallery, established in 1937. Today the Ackland houses over 17,000 works of art from a broad range of time periods and world cultures.

Embracing Harris’s original museum concept, the North Carolina Collection Gallery was created in Wilson Library in 1989 to showcase the state’s history. The Gallery has stewardship of three



Ruyssch, *Thesaurus Anatomicus Tertius* (Amsterdam 1744)

historic rooms and close to 50,000 objects (including 2,000 transferred from Wilson Hall) and offers permanent and temporary displays. Exhibitions from Wilson Library’s other special collections, including the Rare Book Collection, also take place regularly in the Library’s Melba Remig Saltarelli Exhibit Room.

Over 200 years after the establishment of its first “cabinet of curios,” UNC continues to promote wonder and curiosity by sharing its diverse museum and special collections holdings.

Images on verso: crocodile from Seba, *Locupletissimi Rerum Naturalium Thesauri Accurata Descriptio*, volume 1 (Amsterdam 1734); Zulu beadwork love letter; and vessel made from a cut and incised shell from Schröter, *Musei Gottwaldiani* . . . (Nuremberg 1782).