

Geweike

zwoier, im Kampf in einander
verrannter Hirsche, welche in der
Königlichen Kunstammer unter der
No. 387 mit der hier nachfolgenden Un-
terschrift bewahrt wurden.

Einige Personen, welche in das Räumwerk gehen,
sind von dem Herten Ober-Forstmeister von
von Luderitz hier, dem Ober-Forstmeister von
von Hertefeld am 2^{ten} Januar 1720. zu-
gesagt worden, sollen auf Sr. Königl. All-
höchdigsten Spezial- Befehl Allersögst. Herr
Kunstammer confisirt und darselbst
verbleiben.

Berlin am 10^{ten} März 1720.

ganz: von Hertefeld.

The historical paratext of an object from the *Kunstammer* is preserved in duplicate in the archive of the *Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*.¹ Judging from the paper and the writing, these two documents are copies of an eighteenth-century text that were transcribed at different points in time (fig. 1, [◆ Cases, Boxes, fig. 8]).² Both transcriptions were made in the nineteenth century and were part of the holdings of the University of Berlin's Zoological Museum, which had been established in 1810 [■ Golden Plover]. The text describes the antlers "of two stags that had become locked in battle" and that Brandenburg-Prussian Chief Hunting Master Samuel von Hertefeld had sent to the *Kunstammer* at the order of Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I.³ The text is composed in the style of a carrier-plate caption used for trophies in hunting exhibitions and contains information about the animal, the hunter, and the location:

These antlers, which were found in the Neumark and sent to me, Chief Hunt Master Hertefeld, by Chief Forest Master von Lüderitz on the second of February 1720, are to be, by the most gracious special order of His Majesty, conferred on your Royal *Kunstammer* and kept there.⁴

The transcriptions were presumably kept with the object itself and/or together in the inventory, as has been verified in other cases for the *Berlin Kunstammer* [● Around 1600 / ◆ Cases, Boxes]. The presentational character of the more recent copy suggests that it was stored with the object as additional information, whereas the older sheet perhaps served as proof of origin in the files. It remains unclear whether this museum collection practice had been adopted from the *Kunstammer* or was first implemented in the Zoological Museum.

The historical text referred to a spectacle of nature. During the rutting season in the fall, dominant stags attempt to keep rivals away from the herd, and occasionally the antlers of two stags become so entangled that they are unable to free themselves. Such fatal mishaps were depicted on multiple occasions (fig. 2). The antlers of animals who died in this way are displayed as curiosities in hunting collections until today (fig. 3).

There were antlers of this kind in the *Berlin Kunstammer* already in the seventeenth century. The inventory of 1685/1688 notes: "The antlers of two roebucks entangled in each other and almost locked, so that the heads of their skeleton are fixed; they had fought during the rutting and become so caught together that they both died" [Inventar 1685/1688].⁵ One of the two skulls had "fallen apart",⁶ but this damage did not result in it being removed, evidently due to the rarity of the object [◆ Intact and Damaged]. This may have been the reason, however, that Friedrich Wilhelm I decided in 1720 to include another pair of such antlers in his *Kunstammer*. Moreover, antler curiosities and other objects from the hunt were extremely popular in the eighteenth century and were also widespread in visual media, as for example in Johann Elias Ridinger's collection album "Wonderous Deer and Other Special Animals", from which several engravings from the 1730s have also been preserved in the museum archive [◆ Availability].⁷

◀ 1 | Copy of a note on antlers from the *Kunstammer*, nineteenth century, *Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*.

- 1 *Kunstammer-Akte MfN*, fol. 20 (the more recent copy) and 21 (the older version). This set of files, which was compiled at a later date, includes several handwritten documents from various Zoological Museum files that were brought together because of their shared reference to the *Berlin Kunstammer*.
- 2 The word "signed" before the signature also indicates that the document is a transcription.
- 3 On Samuel von Hertefeld, see *Gothaisches genealogisches Taschenbuch 1856*, vol. 6, pp. 301–2.
- 4 *Kunstammer-Akte MfN*, fol. 20; see the slight deviation on fol. 21.
- 5 *Inventar 1685/1688*, fol. 118r.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Ridinger 1768. Twenty of Ridinger's engravings, including several from this album, can be found in *Konvolut ZMB IX/612–629*. We would like to thank archivist Sandra Miehlsbradt for pointing this out. See Schneider 2020b on one of the engravings, the fox with two tails, as an object of the *Berlin Kunstammer* (individually catalogued as *ZMB IX/1277*).

- 8 Although the complete Kunst-kammer inventory of the eighteenth and nineteenth century has not survived, the numbers can be deduced from preserved partial registers; see *Verzeichnis Naturalien 1793*, p. 303.
- 9 See the press release on the clearance sale at the Hunting Museum Spangenberg, *Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, <https://www.hna.de/lokales/melungen/spangenberg-ort86265/spangenberg-jagd-museum-ausverkauf-4748507.html> (accessed 3 March 2022).
- 10 On written addenda to objects in natural history contexts, see Ohl 2019; Ruhland 2018; Schmuck 2018.
- 11 See *Verzeichnis Naturalien 1793*, p. 303. The taxidermy wild boars are noted for the first time in the Inventory of Naturalia from 1735, but without information about date or location; see *Verzeichnis 1735*, fol. 21v.
- 12 On the incorporation of the hunting garden in the building program of Friedrich III/I, see Usenbinz 2021, pp. 234–39. Fights between different animals were held in the hunting garden on occasions such as marriage celebrations; the victorious animal in these battles was ultimately slain by the ruler – or by his wife. See Rutz 2017, pp. 342–43.

None of the entangled antlers from the Kunst-kammer have survived; we know them only from sources. The number 387 noted on the archival sheet refers to the entry in the Naturalia Inventory of the Kunst-kammer from 1793.⁸ The existence of these sheets in the museum archive confirms that the antlers arrived with the other Kunst-kammer naturalia in the Zoological Museum of the university around 1810. It is possible that these antlers, which are not particularly relevant to natural science, were deaccessioned at a later point in time. Even today it is common practice for museum collections to sell antlers that are deemed superfluous to button factories;⁹ there were similar deaccessions [■ Monkey Hand] earlier in the Mammal Collection of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. Written evidence such as the note preserved here as well as inventories and labels are often the only documents providing information about the provenance, value, and type of object [◆ Cases, Boxes], especially when that object has been lost.¹⁰



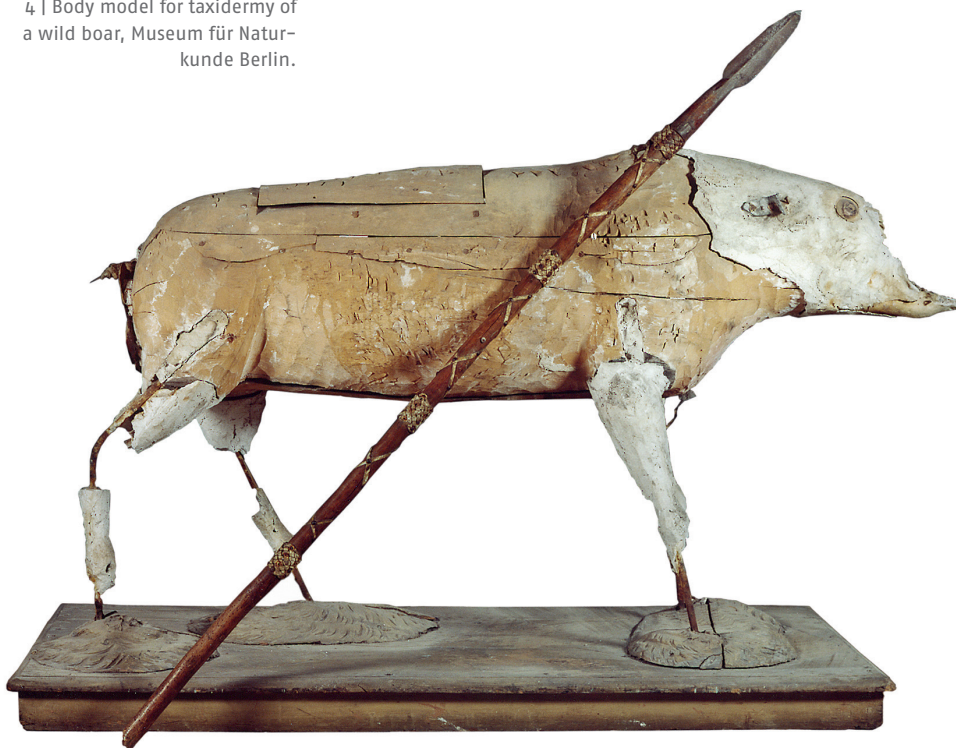
2 | Philipp Christian Seekatz (after Johann Elias Ridinger), *Stags with Entangled Antlers*, 1820, Jagdschloss Kranichstein.

“Felled” or “Found”: Narratives in Collection and Exhibition Practices

While the evidence of origin that accompanied the entangled antlers is unique in this form, additional written information also exists for most *Kunstkammer* objects related to the hunt. Regarding the dozen wild boar killed in the 1720s, for example, the inventory notes the location and the year that Friedrich Wilhelm I had slain them.¹¹ He used neither the hunting garden his father had established in the Berlin residential palace nor the one in Königsberg, where animal fights had been staged during Friedrich III/I’s lifetime.¹² Friedrich Wilhelm I killed these powerful animals on *par force* hunts – endurance hunts over an extensive, specially prepared terrain – on his territorial domain between Kartzig and Schönebeck. One hundred years later, the taxidermy wild boars in the *Kunstkammer* still served as “evidence of the King’s love of hunting” and were presented together with the weapon that Friedrich Wilhelm had used to slay them, a boar spear (fig. 4).¹³ The weight of the animals recorded in the inventories and collection guides – the lightest of the wild boar weighed 235 pounds, the heaviest 350 pounds – underscored the power of a ruler who had succeeded in killing these dangerous animals and in subduing nature.¹⁴

On tours through the *Kunstkammer*, the written addenda and oral explanations ensured that the hunting trophies were perceived as special objects. One visitor in the 1740s, for example, wrote, “3 large wild

4 | Body model for taxidermy of a wild boar, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.



3 | Historical postcard with an illustration of a hunting trophy with entangled antlers displayed in Château Porgès de Rochefort-en-Yvelines in France, early twentieth century.

13 Ledebur 1833, vol. 12, p. 301. For the locations of the kill, see Verzeichnis Naturalien 1793, p. 303; on the representative function of the hunt beyond a pastime, see Rutz 2017, on the era of Friedrich Wilhelm, see especially pp. 346–52.

14 See Verzeichnis Naturalien 1793, p. 303.



5 | Stag antlers in a tree stump, displayed in Königs Wusterhausen Palace, on loan from the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.

boars, next to a small piglet. In addition: many prepared boars' heads", before noting: "These boars were slain by His Majesty Friedrich Wilhelm with his own hands in 1736."¹⁵ Although the taxidermy specimens were formally part of the Naturalia Cabinet, they were not displayed there, but instead in the very first room of the *Kunstkammer*, which contained especially large and important exhibits [■ Wax/■ Cupid].¹⁶ Written information ensured that the connection these objects had to eighteenth-century courtly culture was not lost. Long after these specimens had become part of the Zoological Museum, the description of one of them in the *Generalkatalog Mammalia* – that the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) with inventory number ZMB Mam 1962 had been killed "in 1721 by His Majesty King Wilhelm I" – was supplemented with background information from Leopold von Ledebur's book *Wanderung durch die Königliche Kunst-*
kammer, thereby reactivating the cultural-historical importance of this object after it had become irrelevant to natural science [● Around 1855].¹⁷

Kunstkammer, Hunting Lodge, and Museum: Exhibition Venues for Antlers

When Friedrich Wilhelm I ordered the transfer of almost all *Kunstkammer* naturalia to the Academy of Sciences in 1735 [■ Monkey Hand], his hunting trophies, including the entangled stag antlers, were retained in the *Kunstkammer*. Of the seventy objects selected to remain, a striking number were related to the hunt. In addition to the trophies slain by the king, there were above all curiosities such as a fox pelt with two tails [◆ Availability, fig. 3], a black wolf, and several antlers of extraordinary size as well as the aforementioned entangled roebuck antlers that had been in the *Kunstkammer* since the seventeenth century.¹⁸ This is a clear indication of the influence that the respective actors exert on a collection [◆ Changing Focuses]: through this selection, the naturalia collection of the *Kunstkammer* became in the eighteenth century a collection focused on the hunt and princely memorabilia [■ Pearls]. In this way, Friedrich Wilhelm expanded the display of his hunting passion beyond his own hunting lodges – Jadgsschloss Stern outside of Potsdam and Königs Wusterhausen Palace – to the publicly accessible *Kunstkammer*. As the prerogative of the sovereign, the hunt was one of the highest status symbols of the early modern era. No one but the prince was allowed to hunt animals on the royal hunting grounds without special permission. For physical, psychological, and ethical reasons, the hunt was regarded as presupposition and proof of the ability to rule, since the master of the hunt was able to demonstrate his qualities as a courageous fighter and strategist and to present himself as a ruler.¹⁹

It was customary to display trophies in hunting lodges and collections of royal hunting weapons in remembrance of special animals and hunts and as stately room decoration. Valuable objects with hunting motifs such as powder flasks, hunting cutlery, and composite objects such as cups made from horns were also collected in cabinets of art and wonder alongside curiosities of natural history.²⁰ Since the seventeenth century the Berlin *Kunstkammer* had included hunting objects not in use or no longer in use, made from various materials. These pieces also remained in the



6 | A second specimen of stag antlers grown into a tree stump, in the Ungulates Hall of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.

Kunstkammer when the prepared animal specimens were transferred to the Zoological Museum of the University of Berlin in 1810 [■ Golden Plover]. Over the course of the nineteenth century, many of these objects attracted the interest of art historians due to their qualities as decorative art [■ Nautilus].

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- 15 Anonymus B, fol. 1r. The kill year is perhaps a mistake, as only 1725 and 1726 are noted in the inventory; see *Verzeichnis Naturalien* 1793, p. 303.
 - 16 Ledebur 1833, vol. 12, p. 301.
 - 17 See *Generalkatalog Mammalia*, vol. 1, ZMB Mam 1962 (*Sus scrofa*). On the history of this specimen, see Matzke 2010.
 - 18 See *Verzeichnis Naturalien* 1793, pp. 301–3.
 - 19 See Borggreffe/Bischoff 2021; Laß/Schmidt 1997; Rösener 2004, especially pp. 254–304.
 - 20 See the numerous examples in Höfische Jagd 2017.



7 | Horns of a Banteng bull from the *Kunstammer*, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

The transfer of antlers to zoological collections was by no means the only path, as was repeatedly evident in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One example of this occurred several years after the founding of the museum.²¹ While decades-old taxidermy animals were supposed to be picked up by staff of the Zoological Museum to make room in the *Kunstammer* for new objects from the South Seas [♦ *Canon and Transformation*],²² the appropriate framing and location of two sets of reindeer antlers sparked discussions between the responsible parties of the two collections. The director of the Zoological Museum, Johann Karl Wilhelm Illiger, had the antlers and hooves of two taxidermy reindeer removed in the absence of *Kunstammer* administrator Jean Henry. These reindeer had belonged to an ensemble of figures from the Sámi culture that had been one of the most striking exhibits in the first room of the *Kunstammer* after 1700 and was frequently mentioned as an attraction by visitors: “A reindeer together with a sleigh, in which a Lapland peasant sits beside the magic drum and magic rings that the Lapps use for magic and for good weather.”²³ In this ensemble, the animals functioned as representatives of another culture and not as objects of natural history. Jean Henry thus argued for the return of the antlers to the *Kunstammer*. According to Henry, the one reindeer that had long been a part of the ensemble and the other smaller

reindeer, which had been acquired as a future replacement for the damaged specimen, belonged “to the Lapland sleigh like the reins and straps.”²⁴ Illiger countered that the ensemble was a “worthier piece in the *Kunst-kammer*” without the motheaten reindeer and that the antlers taken from the animals could fill a gap in the “Northern Antlers” series at the Zoological Museum.²⁵

The stag’s antlers grown into a tree stump, which is one of the oldest surviving *Kunst-kammer* objects, has also been classified in different contexts over the course of time. There had been several specimens of this “whim of nature” in the *Kunst-kammer*, two of which made shorter or longer guest appearances during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in palace rooms and university collections as well as in exhibitions on cultural history and the history of science [■ Nautilus, fig. 7].²⁶ In the exhibition *Old Berlin – Foundations of the Metropolis* in the halls of the Berlin Radio Tower in 1930, the oldest antlers in a tree stump from the *Kunst-kammer* – which can be verified as a collection object beginning in the seventeenth century and currently have the inventory number ZMB Mam 88335 – were displayed on an ornate table in an explicit *Kunst-kammer* scene [● 1930]. At this point in time, the exhibit was part of the furnishings of Königs Wusterhausen Palace, which in the nineteenth century had been used once again as a royal hunting lodge. During the Weimar Republic, this lodge was turned into a museum on the cultural history of the courtly hunt.²⁷

The antlers in a tree stump became part of the holdings of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin as a result of the Second World War, after the Red Army seized Königs Wusterhausen Palace in 1945. During the second half of the twentieth century, these antlers were part of the museum collection, the origins of which lay in the *Kunst-kammer*. At beginning of the new millennium, these ties to collection history were explored in the exhibition *Theatrum naturae et artis – Theatre of Nature and Art* in the Martin-Gropius-Bau, where the antlers in a tree stump were once again presented in the context of the *Kunst-kammer*.²⁸ This kind of change in semantic references, oriented around the respective exhibition contexts, also occurred with other *Kunst-kammer* objects, including sculptures from the *Kunst-kammer* [■ Cupid]. Following an interlude as an exhibit at the Klepershagen Manor House of the German Wildlife Foundation, the antlers in a tree stump can now be seen again in Königs Wusterhausen Palace (on loan from the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin), where the hunting lodge once more presents the history of the courtly hunt (fig. 5 [● 1685/1688, fig. 7]).²⁹

The *Kunst-kammer* objects held in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin have been given new *parerga* in the course of the current digitization of the collection. Like the horns of the Bateng cattle, the specimen of stag antlers grown into a tree stump currently in the Mammal Collection has been issued a label that makes it accessible as a digital object (fig. 6). A QR code incorporates historical labels (fig. 7–8), the information noted on the exhibit, as well as catalogue-based entries in the collection databank, thereby connecting the different contexts in which these antlers can be read: as a curiosity in the *Kunst-kammer* and as the furnishings of a hunting lodge, as a museum exhibit and as an object of research.



8 | Fragment of a historical label, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.

- 21 See *Kunst-kammer-Akte MfN*, fols. 9–12.
- 22 *Ibid.*, fol. 13. Approximately twelve taxidermy animals had been formally allocated to the Zoological Museum with the founding of the university; by 1819, there was no interest in them due to their poor condition.
- 23 Anonymus B, fol. 1r. On the same ensemble, see Dolezel 2019, p. 125.
- 24 *Ibid.*, fol. 10r.
- 25 *Kunst-kammer-Akte MfN*, fol. 12. The outcome of this debate is unclear due to the fragmentary nature of the surviving sources.
- 26 Anonimo Veneziano 1999, pp. 122–23, identifies a stag’s antlers in a tree stump; Nicolai 1786a, p. 792, also refers to “another similar whim of nature”.
- 27 MfN, HBSB, uncategorized holdings, correspondence between Landsberg and Königs Wusterhausen Palace, July 2010.
- 28 *Theater der Natur und Kunst 2000*, p. 135.
- 29 MfN, HBSB, uncategorized holdings, correspondence between Landsberg and Königs Wusterhausen Palace, July 2010.

Translated by Tom Lampert