

## THE AVAILABILITY OF THINGS: SUBSTITUTING, COPYING, FORGING

Every curiosity cabinet faced limitations: not everything that seemed worthy of collecting could be acquired, and not every object could be stored in collection spaces due to their size. This is where images and copies came into play, which replaced objects and were integrated into collections as their proxies. This media dimension was surprisingly prevalent in cabinets of curiosities and naturalia. It is one aspect of early modern collection culture that has thus far received little study.

From their inception, curiosity cabinets used images to present objects beyond their storage places – whether in the form of freehand drawings [Anteater], pictorial inventories, or collection catalogues. In these paper museums, the individual object became part of the body of knowledge circulating in the scholarly community. In the museum theories of the early modern period, this practice was linked to the utopian vision of a global *musée imaginaire* that united collection-related knowledge.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, such images formed the basis of the culture of expertise that was emerging in curiosity cabinets.<sup>2</sup>

But curiosity cabinets also exhibited three-dimensional copies of ethnographica, medical specimens, and other objects. Unlike two-dimensional images, the copies made it possible to accurately reproduce the shape and size of the objects. They were part of a museological presentation that assigned special importance to the physical presence of objects. In contrast to today's display case museums, they allowed for tactile contact with the exhibits.<sup>3</sup> The boundary between a copy and the representational form of the model, which was often used to depict machines and buildings in collections, was fluid; and although forgery scandals arose in eighteenth-century collection culture, distinguishing between copies and forgeries is also not always an easy task.

The use of images, copies, and models in collection spaces always raises central museological questions. Such media are closely linked to the use to which collections are put and the audiences they address. This becomes clear in the museum theories formulated around 1700. In 1674, for example, Johann Daniel Major regarded images as a way to preserve the taxonomy reflected in the physical organization of collections, and he advocated the use of drawings to duplicate excessively large objects. One example is the crocodile specimens that became icons of early modern collection culture. Major suggested presenting the specimens outside display cabinets while showing drawings of them in the taxonomically prescribed place within.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, in 1727 Kaspar Friedrich Neickel argued for collections of “true originals”.<sup>5</sup> Here the question of original versus copy determined whether the collection addressed natural scientists concerned with proper taxonomic classification or merchants or pharmacists who favoured knowledge of materials.

Eva Dolezel

1. *The Oldenburg Horn*, drawing, c. 1550 (?), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Art Library

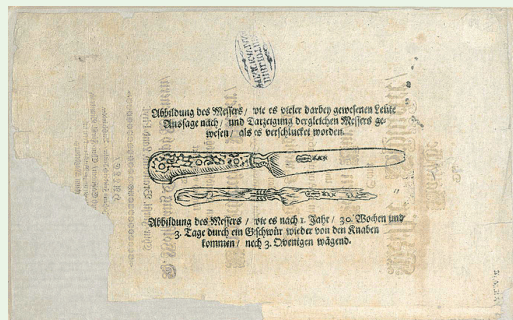
This sixteenth-century drawing shows the Oldenburg Horn, one of the most famous goldsmith's works of the Late Gothic period.<sup>6</sup> In the 1694 inventory of Berlin Kunstkammer, the drawing is listed as “The Oldenburg Magic Horn, gilded . . . in a black frame”.<sup>7</sup> At the time, the depicted object was one of the most spectacular exhibits in the royal curiosity cabinet in Copenhagen.<sup>8</sup> In the Berlin Kunstkammer, the drawing was part of a section devoted to images that was typical of collections of this kind.<sup>9</sup> The drawing, which is mentioned in several descriptions of the collection from the eighteenth century, was thus part of a paper museum; it integrated the Berlin collection into a “Collectors’ Republic” of European curiosity cabinets.<sup>10</sup> ED



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2. *Knife of the Knife Swallower of Halle*, Original and Copy, illustration from Wolfgang Christoph Wesener, *Der Hällische Messer-Schlucker*, 1692

An object listed in the “Rarities and Artworks” section of the 1694 inventory of the Berlin Kunstkammer is connected to the medical history of a sixteen-year-old boy from the vicinity of Halle who swallowed a knife and had it removed in an operation that was a medical sensation at the time. The Kunstkammer displayed a red leather case containing the corroded knife and a model showing it in its original state.<sup>11</sup> The arrangement and comparison of the objects – also



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found in a publication about the case<sup>12</sup> – provides a material foundation for the knife swallower narrative [◆ Changing Focuses / ■ Shattered Die]. ED

3. *Johann Elias Ridinger, Fox with Two Tails*, trimmed print, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

In the eighteenth century, the Berlin Kunstkammer exhibited a rare “fox pelt with two tails” that was handed to visitors so that they could “see whether one was sewn on”.<sup>13</sup> The specimen served as the model for an engraving by the popular animal artist Johann Elias Ridinger. The print shows the fox, which had been killed in 1734, wandering through the heather, and was also held in the collection. It is uncertain whether the engraving and the pelt were exhibited together on a permanent basis, or whether the print, which is now in the archives of the Museum für Naturkunde, served as a proxy after the perishable specimen could no longer be shown. MS

- 1 On paper museums, see Meijers 2005; on the idea of a universal book of rarities in Johann Daniel Major's *Unvorgreifflichem Bedencken*, see *ibid.*, p. 29; on collections of drawings in cabinets of naturalia, see Fischel 2009.
- 2 See Dolezel 2018, p. 23.
- 3 On visits to collections in the early modern period, see Classen (Constance) 2007.
- 4 See Major 1674, unpag., ch. 8, sec. 5; also Sturm 1704, pp. 23–4.
- 5 Neickel/Kanold 1727, p. 420. On the museologies of Major, Sturm, and Neickel, see Dolezel 2022a.
- 6 With regard to its reception in the nineteenth century, see Janzen 2021, pp. 24–5.
- 7 Inventar 1694, p. 251.
- 8 See Jacobaeus 1996, pp. 59–61, as well as plate XVI.
- 9 Inventar 1794, pp. 247–54.
- 10 See Meijers 2005; Quiccheberg 2000, pp. 294–5.
- 11 Inventar 1694, pp. 151–2.
- 12 See Wesener 1692.
- 13 Silbermann 1741, p. 37; on the history of the engraving, see Schneider 2020b.



*Dieser Fuchs mit zwey Schwänzen ist den 24.<sup>ten</sup> Februar 1754. in der  
Hölde bey Oranienburg 4. Meilen von Berlin geschossen und der Balg  
wegen seiner Seltenheit auf der Königl. Kunst und Naturalien  
Kammer auf behalten worden.*

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#### 4. Michael Schödelook, amber model of a cannon, 1660, Westpreußisches Landesmuseum, Warendorf

Models enabled visitors to view miniature versions of buildings, machines, fortresses, and landscapes. With this type of object, the *Kunst-kammer* showed its didactic side; yet many of the models also had an opulent character. Not only did they perform an illustrative function, but were often intricately fabricated from precious materials. Although none of the mechanical models listed in the 1694 inventory have survived,<sup>14</sup> it is likely that the Berlin *Kunst-kammer* held several amber cannon models made by the Danzig-based amber turner Michael Schödelook, like this one from the Westpreußisches Landesmuseum in Warendorf.<sup>15</sup> ED

#### 5. Replica of a bladder stone, mid-seventeenth century, Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein, Gotha

Beginning in the seventeenth century, this replica of a particularly large bladder stone was displayed in the curiosity cabinet in Gotha. It was so deceptively real that it was considered the original until it was examined under a CT scanner in 2007. It is made of wax with a metal core. Not only is it the same size and shape as the original, but also has the same weight, which is known from an engraving.<sup>16</sup> The replica was designed to withstand the scrutiny of visitors who were permitted to touch objects, a common practice in cabinets of curiosities. It referenced the original bladder stone in the curiosity cabinet in Nuremberg, which contemporaries sometimes described as the “model”.<sup>17</sup> ED

#### 6. One of the so-called “Würzburg Lying Stones”, University Library, Würzburg

The “Würzburg Lying Stones” were slightly humorous fake fossils at the centre of a hoax played on the physician and naturalist Johann Beringer,



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who discussed them in his 1726 work *Lithographia Wirceburgensis*. One cannot say with certainty today what role Beringer played in the scandal.<sup>18</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, the Lying Stones were explicitly exhibited as forgeries in the Petrefactengalerie (Fossil Gallery) of the Zwinger complex in Dresden. Here the collection space became a place of discovery where visitors could test their powers of judgement with respect to the discourse on the origin of fossils, which played an important role in the study of natural history in the period [■Monkey Hand].<sup>19</sup> ED

### 7. Preis-Courant nachstehender . . . verkäuflicher Gips-Abgüsse antiker und moderner Sculpturen, 1824, Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Goethe and Schiller Archive

The Berlin Gipsformerei (Replica Workshop) was founded in 1819 to provide a future museum with casts of artworks that could not be purchased in the original. It also created – and still continues to create – reproductions of objects from the Berlin collections.<sup>20</sup> In its oldest surviving price list from 1824, the relief of an “Indian deity” from the Berlin Kunstkammer<sup>21</sup> appears unexpectedly among the casts of ancient and neoclassical sculptures. At a time when the German enthusiasm for Indian antiquity – which was challenging the primacy of classical antiquity<sup>22</sup> – came mainly from the textual sources of Sanskrit philology, the Kunstkammer introduced an example of material culture into the discourse. MB

*III. antike Basreliefs.*

1	Parzen, die drei, E. S. Ex. des St. M. von Humbold zu Tegel	lang	3	4	6	—
2	Latus, Diana, Apollo und Hebe, altgriechischen Styls in der Königlichen Kunst-Kammer zu Berlin	hoch	5	5	6	—
3	Jupiter, Museo Rondanini, Eigenthum S. E. des St. M. v. Humbold zu Tegel	lang	3	2	6	—
4	Vulcan, Museo Rondanini . . . . . desgleichen . . . . .	hoch	2	2	2	—
5	Hierodule Museo Chiaramonti im Vatican . . . . .	breit	1	6	2	—
6	Hierophant . . . . . ebendasselbst . . . . .	hoch	2	2	2	—
7	Busto, Kopf in runder Nische mit 2 Victorien und 2 Adlern umgeben	breit	1	6	2	—
8	Candelabre Fuß dreieckig, altgriechischen Styls mit Basreliefs verziert, von seltener Schönheit, im Augusteum zu Dresden . . . . .	hoch	4	3	27	21
9	Indische Gottheit, Indischer Sculptur Königliche Kunstkammer	breit	2	5	5	—
10	Hercules und Juno, des Florentiner Museums	—	7	—	—	18
11	Weibliches Bildnis wahrscheinlich von Leonardo da Vinci im Augusteum zu Dresden	—	1	6	1	14

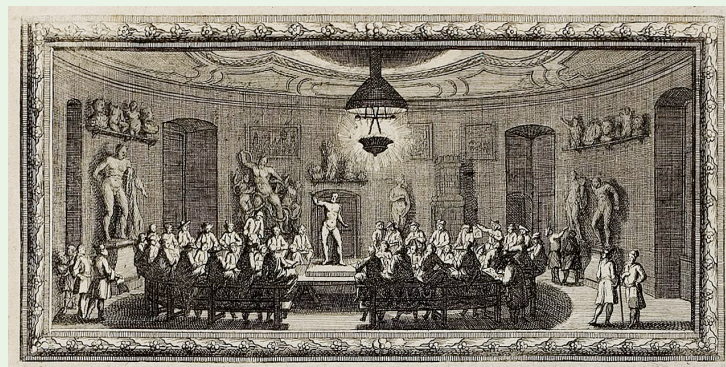
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### 8. Samuel Blesendorf (?), after Augustin Terwesten, *Life Drawing Room at the Academy with a Plaster Cast of the Venus de Medici*, illustration from Lorenz Beger, *Thesaurus Brandenburgicus*, 1701

A plaster cast of the Venus de Medici, the most famous female nude in the canon of antiquity, was available for study at the Academy of Arts, founded in 1696, and was also held – together with a smaller version in bronze – in the Berlin Kunstkammer.<sup>23</sup> Several travel reports mention the cast as one of the notable sights in the city, indicating the high regard in which it was held at the time. These reports also address the ambivalent nature of the reproduction, which served as a proxy for the original: “This Venus, or the original in Florence, is considered the most beautiful of all.” In Friedrich Nicolai’s work, the cast is the first object listed in the section “Statues of Marble, Alabaster, and Gypsum.”<sup>24</sup> MB

Translated by Adam Blauhut

- 14 Inventar 1694, pp. 119–23.
- 15 See museum-digital:westfalen at <https://westfalen.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=objekt&oges=705> (accessed 12 February 2022); Hinrichs 2007, p. 35, note 86.
- 16 See Ruisinger 2008.
- 17 See Keyssler 1741, pp. 1190–1, Ruisinger 2008, p. 161.
- 18 See Reulecke 2003; see also Doll 2012, pp. 77–104.
- 19 See Dolezel 2017a, pp. 221–3.
- 20 See e.g. Hiller von Gaertringen 2019, pp. 216–27.
- 21 Preis-Courant 1824, unpag.
- 22 See e.g. Polaschegg 2008.
- 23 See e.g. Stemmer 1996 or Inventar 1694, pp. 170 and 179.
- 24 Anonymus B, fol. 10v (here considered marble); and Nicolai 1786a, p. 794.



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