

## AUTHENTICITY IN CONTEXT: HISTORIC DISPLAYS AND MODERN MUSEUM PRACTICE

### THE VIENNA *KUNSTKAMMER*

On March 1, 2013 the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna hosted the major cultural event of the season in Austria, the opening of the newly designed *Kunstammer*<sup>1</sup>. The »Kunstammer Opening« was actually a reopening. After more than ten years of refurbishment, the redisplay of the collection was much anticipated, especially with regard to its most famous object, the Cellini Salt Cellar. This richly decorated, partly enamelled gold sculpture was made for the French king Francis I by the Italian goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini in 1543 and was later presented to Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol<sup>2</sup>. According to the museum's website, the board of directors was confident that the »redisplay and modern presentation of the objects will raise awareness of the immense importance of this precious collection«<sup>3</sup> (fig. 1).

In the case of the Vienna *Kunstammer*, »modern presentation« means, among other things, the use of multimedia technology. In some galleries interactive media stations provide additional information or insights concerning specific objects; for example visitors can flip through the late medieval »Vienna Model Book«<sup>4</sup> or they can get an idea of the ingenious mechanisms of the famous early modern automata from short videos filmed during the restoration of these precious objects<sup>5</sup>.

The term »modern« also applies to the lighting and climate control technology and the display case technique, which meets the latest conservation and safety requirements. As part of the overall architectural concept and exhibition design by HG Merz Architects, the showcases and lighting technology were designed to present the exhibits literally in the best possible light<sup>6</sup>.

From more than 6000 objects in the *Kunstammer* collection, the curators had selected around 2200 artefacts that they considered the most beautiful, the most important and the most attractive to a broad public<sup>7</sup>. After it first opened as the »Collection of Arts & Crafts Objects« (»Sammlung kunstindustrieller Gegenstände«) in 1891, the *Kunstammer* was regarded as a supplement to the museum's famous painting galleries. Renamed the »Collection of Sculpture and Decorative Arts« (»Sammlung für Plastik und Kunstgewerbe«) in 1919, the presentation was governed by art-historical principles<sup>8</sup>.

Since the reopening in 2013, the exhibition has continued to follow a more or less chronological order that reflects the development of art history and the history of styles from the Middle Ages to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The arrangement, however, also mirrors the collecting policies of individual members of the Habsburg dynasty who contributed to the present *Kunstammer* collection. Each room or set of rooms is dedicated to a Habsburg prince or princess and his or her interests as a collector. In addition, some galleries focus on certain materials or types of objects that are considered representative of a certain epoch, such as Rudolph II's automata or the *exotica* collected in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, by combining all three narratives – the history of art, the history of the Habsburgs as collectors and the history of collecting in general – the Vienna *Kunstammer* re-enacts the history of princely collecting with the Habsburgs as protagonists.



**Fig. 1** The *Kunstkammer* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna: Hall of automata with bust of Emperor Rudolph II. – (Photo KHM-Museumsverband).

Notwithstanding all the advanced technology, the exhibition evokes a sensation of preciousness and creates an atmosphere of wonder, as if the visitor is really wandering through an early modern princely collection. The layout of some galleries enhances this impression. For instance, in the hall where the automata from the time of Emperor Rudolph II are displayed, the showcases form a circle around the bust of the emperor in the centre. The arrangement alludes to the early modern metaphor of the *Kunstkammer* as a *theatrum mundi*. There is no evidence, however, that Rudolph II or any other Habsburg collector ever had his or her objects displayed in this highly evocative way.

## RECONSTRUCTION AND AUTHENTICITY

This type of display, described by Sabine Haag, director-general of the Kunsthistorisches Museum responsible for the *Kunstkammer* reopening, as a »museum within the museum«, has become increasingly popular in recent years<sup>9</sup>. More and more museums are installing specific galleries that not only exhibit valuable objects from former times but present them as part of a historicising display that in turn becomes a main subject of the presentation. As well as the *Kunstkammer* or »Chamber of curiosities« type of reinstatement, which is by far the most common in a contemporary museum context, there are redisplay of baroque painting galleries or porcelain cabinets<sup>10</sup>.

No premodern cabinet of curiosity or painting gallery has survived in its original state to the present day. All modern *Kunstkammer* exhibitions are reconstructions, although some of the redisplay very closely resem-

ble the original. In many cases, the objects featured in these installations do not originate from the same historic collection. It is even rarer for objects to be reinstalled in their actual historic setting.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the term »authentic« is repeatedly applied to such rearranged displays, especially in journalistic or marketing contexts. By contrast, museum curators and scholars such as Gabriele Beßler in her book on the history of the *Wunderkammer* seem to avoid the notion, pointing to the lack of reliable sources: »Fundamentally though something essential is lacking for understanding or really authentically reconstructing early modern cabinets of curiosity in their representational essence – as an analogy of divine creation, the macrocosm: while there are descriptions and travel accounts which complement core sources like inventories, there are no visual testimonies to the features of a further essential root of early modern *Wunderkammer*: the Italian *studioli* and their variations [...]. Yet even if fairly informative inventory or other archival material should have been preserved which could be related to the spatial arrangement of the *Kunstammer*, a (retrospective) projection can hardly be described as authentic if the former architectural context has disappeared«<sup>11</sup>.

G. Beßler does not give a definition of »authentic« and nor do the other authors who apply the term to exhibition displays. From the etymological viewpoint, the Greek term αὐθεντικός means »author« in the sense of creator or originator<sup>12</sup>. Thus, »authentic« is something related to an author or origin and could therefore be regarded as true, real, original and hence reliable and even authoritative. Notwithstanding the specific meanings of the term in different fields and its semantic shifts over the centuries, the notion of true, both in a material (attested origin) and ethical (trustworthiness) sense, is common to all meanings.

In a quickly changing and increasingly digitised world, the museum is generally regarded as a stronghold of authenticity<sup>13</sup>. As a place where »originals«, both natural and man-made, and »the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment«<sup>14</sup> are collected, conserved, researched, exhibited and communicated, the museum's very basis and legitimacy seem to be in authenticity. As an aesthetic effect, however, authenticity is always a projection and attribution, depending on the recipient's experiences and knowledge<sup>15</sup>. In this sense, the museum is as much a site of authentic objects as an authenticating institution<sup>16</sup>. The objects are collected and exhibited as testimonies to the past or to natural phenomena, although the relevance of the testimony remains a subject for debate.

In consequence, authenticity is always something relative. In her discussion of authenticity as an aesthetic phenomenon, Susanne Knaller refers to George Didi-Huberman's analysis of photographs of gas chambers: »Authenticity lies not in what is represented on pictures, but the way in which it is represented, not the authority of the material evidence, but the historical testimony of the path that leads from that to the current form of appearance, reproduction and reception. What is authentic is its artificial-artistic nature, not the raw state of the data but the successful, that is redemptive form of the presentation [...]«<sup>17</sup>.

From a presentational viewpoint, reproductions and reconstructions can also be »authentic« inasmuch as they bear witness to authenticity. Up to now, the question of reconstruction and authenticity has mainly been raised in the context of preserving cultural heritage and memorials<sup>18</sup>. Although most visitors come to Holocaust memorials, battlegrounds, or revolutionary sites for the sensation of »it happened right here«<sup>19</sup>, almost none of these sites has been preserved in its original, »authentic« form. In many cases, there is an ongoing debate as to which historical moment and thus which memory should be conserved, given that the uses of the buildings and/or landscapes, the material substance, as well as the people concerned and their attitudes underwent continuous changes long before the sites were transformed into memorials<sup>20</sup>.

The issue of (historical) authenticity is fairly similar for all reconstructed ensembles, although the ethical dimension is of course less acute for exhibition reinstallations than for memorials. Thus, the question of modern *Kunstammer* redispays may be considered within the wider theoretical framework of museums and authenticity.



**Fig. 2** Matthäus Merian, Ambras Castle, 1679. – (Photo The Trustees of the British Museum).

## THE KUNSTKAMMER AT AMBRAS CASTLE

The »Chamber of Art and Curiosities« at Ambras Castle, Tyrol, installed in 1974, is probably the earliest example of a historicising display in a modern museum<sup>21</sup>. At Ambras Castle, which is in fact a branch of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, most of the objects come from the collection of Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol (1529-1595), the founder of the Ambras *Kunstkammer* and one of the Habsburg family's most avid collectors<sup>22</sup>. Although Ferdinand's focus lay on precious items created by human hands (*artificialia*), he also collected *naturalia* and possessed a large print collection bound in volumes, as well as a library<sup>23</sup>. Ambras Castle is also famous for its important collection of historic arms and armoury (**fig. 2**)<sup>24</sup>.

Ferdinand II installed both his *Kunstkammer* and the armoury in the so-called Lower Castle, which is considered to be one of the first pre-modern museum buildings in the Western world, although it had some other functions, too. After the Archduke's death in 1595, the collection was acquired by his nephew, Emperor Rudolph II, and other members of the Habsburg family, but remained in Tyrol. Despite some major losses due to wars, theft and neglect, most of the objects were still in Ambras Castle in 1806, when the collections were evacuated to Vienna to prevent looting by Napoleon. The items then entered the imperial collections and, from 1891, formed part of the newly founded Kunsthistorisches Museum. Only a selection of objects was transferred back to Ambras Castle in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively. Masterpieces such as the Cellini Salt Cellar, the print albums and many other items remained in Vienna and are now part of the *Kunstkammer* collection and exhibition.

For the »Chamber of Art and Curiosities« presentation of 1974, objects acquired by Ferdinand II and documented in the 1596 inventory were combined with later acquisitions and other exhibits of Habsburg provenance<sup>25</sup>. Contrary to its original setting, the *Kunstkammer* redisplay was installed in the former library hall, whereas the historical *Kunstkammer* gallery now houses the armoury.

According to the 1596 inventory, Ferdinand II used to keep his objects in 18 floor-to-ceiling cupboards that stood back-to-back in the centre of the room. Each of these cabinets was dedicated to a specific material or type of object<sup>26</sup>. To facilitate orientation and enhance the appearance of the collection items, the Archduke had invented a colour scheme according to which each cupboard was lined in a different colour. For example, objects made of gold were presented against a blue background, and stone items were kept in a red-painted cabinet. Larger items such as the preserved *naturalia* were presented on tables or hung from



**Fig. 3** The »Chamber of Art and Curiosities«, Ambras Castle. – (Photo KHM-Museumsverband).

the ceiling, whereas paintings, among them many portraits, were hung densely on the walls, forming a kind of imaginary audience. Ferdinand II's ordering system was based both on material classification and on aesthetic principles (**fig. 3**).

As it does today, one section of the former library hall contained Ferdinand II's collection of antiquities. The *antiquarium* consisted mostly of busts and statuettes presented in niches, including a considerable number of copies and plaster casts<sup>27</sup>. Ferdinand II also collected contemporary sculptures, such as the 20 bronze busts of Roman emperors that were originally intended for the tomb of his great-grandfather Maximilian I in Innsbruck. The 1974 reinstalation, curated by Elisabeth Scheicher and still on view, aims to recreate Ferdinand II's *Kunstkammer* »in its original appearance«<sup>28</sup>. At first glance, the concept has been successfully implemented. The objects are presented in the original wooden cupboards arranged in a row in the centre of the room. The distribution reflects Ferdinand II's ordering system and colour scheme. Larger exhibits are presented in individual showcases along the walls or hung from the ceiling, like some of the larger preserved specimens, while the walls are used to hang paintings, although most of the paintings collection is exhibited in the Upper Castle as part of the Habsburg Portrait Gallery.

## **AUTHENTICITY RECONSIDERED**

At first sight, the *Kunstkammer* at Ambras Castle and other reinstalations of historical collections, seem to fulfil the requirements of a museum as a stronghold of authenticity in every respect. These all contain original objects from the past, some of which have belonged to a historically documented collection and

are presented in seemingly »authentic« displays, sometimes – as with Ambras, the Francke'sche Stiftungen in Halle or the Uffizi – even in the original buildings or rooms.

The objects are displayed in a two-fold way and can have several meanings. On the one hand, the items are presented as material evidence of a certain time, region, culture, species or the work of an individual artist, specific style, material, technique or iconography, as in any other museum. On the other hand, the objects take part in the recreation of a historical mode of display. They are therefore part of several distinctive narratives; first, their own; second, the art historical or scientific narrative; and, third, the display narrative. In the case of the latter, the individual work of art is at risk of becoming a substitutable element in the framework narrative of the redisplay, inasmuch as it merely illustrates a specific type of object as well as its general role in a specific type of collection or exhibition.

In contrast to »preserved« historical displays (e. g. in the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Galleria Doria Pamphilj in Rome, or the Leinersaal in the Rosgartenmuseum in Konstanz), which, despite some changes, still feature the original, often overfilled display cases and dense hangings of their founders, it becomes obvious that the »reconstructed« historical displays are always ideal-typical displays, adapted to the requirements of the modern museum. Rather than reflecting actual historic modes of display, they merely recreate the outward aspect of a former collection and type of display.

However authentic the historicising museum displays may first appear, a historically »true« form of revival would inevitably clash with the prerequisites of modern museum practice, especially with regard to climate control, lighting, anti-theft measures, barrier-free access, and labelling. Furthermore, pictorial and written sources show that former collections were anything but static. More often than in modern museums, items were constantly (re-)moved, repositioned, given away as presents or added to the display<sup>29</sup>. Visitors were often allowed to pick up objects to look more closely or touch them for inspection. In other cases, collection items were locked away in cupboards, chests or hidden behind curtains, as in the case of paintings. Accordingly, viewing required constant action and interaction between the objects, the owner or the curator and the visitors<sup>30</sup>.

It should be noted, however, that access to a collection usually required permission from the owner, who literally held the key to his collection. Admittance was restricted to a small group of distinguished people of similar social rank to the owner. By guiding a visitor through his collection, the owner or his curator acted as a *cicerone* who proudly presented and narrated his possessions. Today, this situation only applies to private collections, whereas public museums, at least those that have signed the ICOM Code of Ethics, are required to ensure access to the »collections and all relevant information [...] as freely as possible«, naturally »having regard to restraints arising for reasons of confidentiality and security«.<sup>31</sup>

Probably the most fundamental difference between historical collections and their modern reconstructions lies in their respective functions. Whereas the modern redispays are primarily places that are supposed to cause amazement and wonder – both at the objects themselves and at their unusual form of presentation – their historical counterparts were at least as much places of scholarship and knowledge (**fig. 4**)<sup>32</sup>. Very often, either the owner or his curator guided the visitors through the collection and exchanged ideas and expertise with them. Early modern cabinets of curiosity and natural history cabinets were regarded as »theatres of knowledge«, which – besides the mere aesthetic contemplation of the exhibits and the representation of the owner's status, wealth, taste and ambitions – were places of study both with regard to the individual exhibit and to its comparison with other objects.

Today, many museums still are monological institutions inasmuch as they present and distribute existing knowledge among an interested public. Very often, the hanging of the exhibits permits only a partial view and important parts of an object are hidden from the view of visitors, who are forced into the role of mere »beholders«. Usually, it is only permissible to make eye contact with the objects.

**Fig. 4** Jan Luyken, Imperial library and cabinet of curiosities in Vienna: Illustration from E. Brown, *Naauwkeurige en gedenkwaardige reysen* (Amsterdam 1682). – (Photo Rijksmuseum, Rijksstudio).



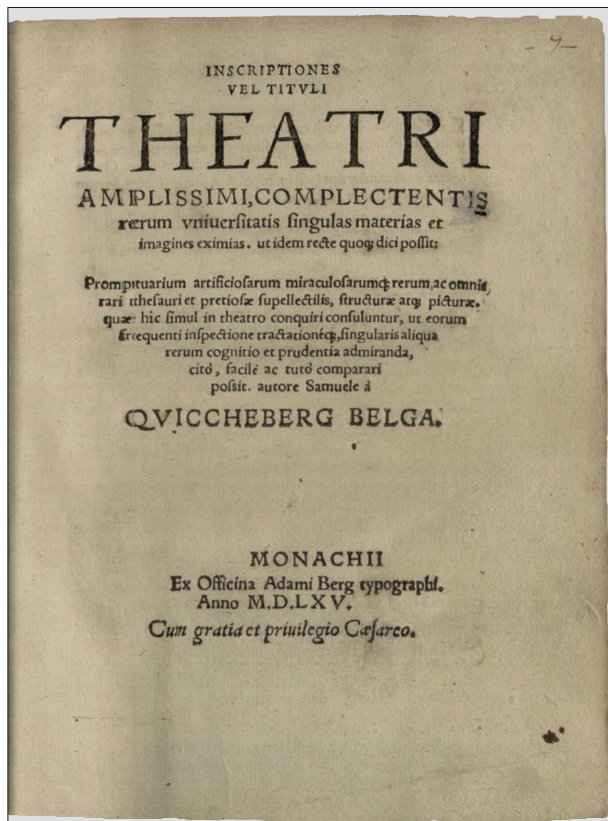
In contrast, early modern collections were places of dialogue, where knowledge was generated and discussed<sup>33</sup>. The collectables were presented as material objects that could be experienced and examined with all the senses. Instead of merely looking at a work of art or a group of works, the overall aim was literally to »grasp« their form and meaning and, by doing so, to understand the world and the cosmic order. As in Ambras Castle, books and prints usually formed an integral part of the collection. However, this form of scientific exchange was restricted to an exclusive circle of »peers« who had access to the collection and who might or might not publish the outcomes of their conversations and research.

Krzysztof Pomian has defined the collectable as a material item that has been taken out of economic circulation and transformed into a »semiophor«, that is, a »carrier of meaning« or sign of something abstract or invisible, like, for instance, the past<sup>34</sup>. In early modern collections, which are based on the cosmological-theological concept of »*macrocosmos in microcosmo*«, the specific arrangement of the objects mirrors God's creation (*cosmos*) and represents the order of the world<sup>35</sup>. Thus, the concept of the collection transcends the single item. It aims at the interrelationship between the objects by which cosmological relations become visible. By picking out objects from the circulation of goods and giving them a place in a collection, the owner acts as a creator of his or her own microcosm, which in turn functions as a means of sensual and intellectual access to the macrocosm<sup>36</sup>.

Despite its importance, this fundamental metaphysical concept usually plays only a marginal role in modern *Kunstkammer* redisplays. In most instances it is referred to as an anachronistic aspect in the history of science. Although in many cases the selection and arrangement of the exhibits are based on historical evidence, they are derived from theories of collection, not actual former displays.

As a matter of fact, early modern collections including cabinets of curiosity were as diverse as modern museums. In contrast, modern reinstallations tend to be curiously similar. Even if they refer back to well-documented collections, such as the *Kunstkammer* at Ambras Castle or the Green Vault in Dresden, the historicising displays are less a re-enactment of actual former presentation modes than an illustration of the theoretical advice given in early modern collection treatises.

The »Bible« of present-day *Kunstkammer* curators and exhibition designers is Samuel Quiccheberg's Latin treatise *Inscriptiones vel Tituli Theatri Amplissimi* (fig. 5)<sup>37</sup>. Published in Munich in 1565, it is the earliest printed treatise on collecting. In his book, Quiccheberg who worked as librarian to Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, proposed a system of five classes – *genealogica*, *naturalia*, *artificialia*, *scientifica*, *mechanica* – each with subcategories, modelled on the holdings of the ducal collection in Munich. Quiccheberg intended his



**Fig. 5** Samuel Quiccheberg, *Inscriptiones vel Tituli Theatri Amplissimi* (Monachii 1565), Title page. – (Photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek).

book as a kind of reference to Albrecht V and as a recommendation of himself as the future curator of the ducal collection.

It is somehow ironic that Quiccheberg's concept of a collection, developed with the Munich *Kunstammer* in mind, was never realised, neither in Munich nor in any other early modern cabinet of curiosity<sup>38</sup>. In contrast, it enjoys great popularity among modern museum curators, who take the theory as a manual for presenting their collections. Some 450 years after Quiccheberg's death, his ideas seem vital as never before.

## CONCLUSION

As the examples discussed have shown, none of the modern reinstallations of former collections is »authentic« in the strict sense of the term, especially in the light of what is known about handling and presenting objects in an early modern collection. Many of these deficiencies are due to the requirements of modern museum practice, especially with regard to conservation, security and barrier-free access. Others,

however, result from misunderstandings concerning former collection practices and modes of display. In view of what has been said about reconstructions and authenticity, the question is whether there are strategies to better frame the authenticising effect of museums with regard to redisplays. Analogous to what musicians designate as »historically informed performance« – instead of the former term »authentic performance« – the term »authentic« should be used more carefully with regard to historicising forms of display. The museum visitor should be aware that he/she is witnessing a modern reinstallation and at best a »historically informed redisplay«, not an »authentic« display. In this respect it would be helpful to exhibit historical documents (e. g. pictures, texts) showing how the collection was or might have been presented in former times in order to allow the visitor to make his own comparisons. If no such documents exist, the museum should at least inform the visitor as to the artificiality of the display and/or on the sources used as a basis for the concept of the presentation.

As to Quiccheberg and other early modern *Kunstammer* treatises, the audience should also be made aware of the difference between museological theory and early modern collection practice. In fact, the ideal *Kunstammer* as described by Quiccheberg only exists in theory. Each cabinet of curiosities or paintings gallery differed both in its range of objects and in their arrangement, which in many cases varied greatly over time. With regard to the theoretical framework of the *Kunstammer*, it seems necessary to inform visitors regarding the philosophical and theological concepts of collecting in early modern times, especially in view of the *macrocosmos/microcosmos* concept and the role of the collection in princely representation in order to prevent people from experiencing former collections merely as something curious and strange. In this respect, it would be beneficial if visitors could touch some of the objects or at least a replica to get an idea of the materiality of the objects and to get more directly involved with the past.



Cabinets of curiosities used to be places where knowledge was produced, exchanged and reflected. Although most modern museums have a strict »silence« policy inside their galleries, it could be important to create ways of initiating new forms of dialogue between visitors, curators and researchers from different fields to facilitate a deeper engagement with the objects and the exhibition, also in accordance with Nina Simon's idea of the »participatory museum«<sup>39</sup>. According to marketing experts, admitting inauthenticity usually has no negative effects<sup>40</sup>. On the contrary: in most cases acknowledging inauthenticity actually enhances the credibility of a person or a product and therefore even helps to increase the effect of authenticity.

## Notes

- 1) <https://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2572979/> (27.07.2020). – <https://www.khm.at/nocache/de/blog/?category=13&cHash=d4f21088ec6cb2699502ee9c0b18498a> (27.07.2020).
- 2) Rainer/Haag 2018.
- 3) history-of-the-collection (27.07.2020).
- 4) Theisen/König 2012.
- 5) <https://www.khm.at/besuchen/sammlungen/kunstkammer-wien/video-channel/> (27.07.2020).
- 6) See [https://press.khm.at/fileadmin/\\_migrated/downloads/KK\\_Architektur\\_dt.pdf](https://press.khm.at/fileadmin/_migrated/downloads/KK_Architektur_dt.pdf) (27.07.2020); <http://hgmerz.com/projekte/kunstkammer> (27.07.2020).
- 7) See Haag 2019, esp. 19.
- 8) See Douglas 2013.
- 9) [https://press.khm.at/fileadmin/\\_migrated/downloads/KK\\_Allg\\_Text\\_engl.pdf](https://press.khm.at/fileadmin/_migrated/downloads/KK_Allg_Text_engl.pdf) (27.07.2020).
- 10) Beßler 2012, esp. 215-232 (»Verzeichnis verlorener und rekonstruierter Kunst- und Wunderkammern [Auswahl]«). For an (incomplete) list of Kunstammer redisplays see <https://www.kunstkammer.com/index.php/kunstkammer-verzeichnis> (27.07.2020).
- 11) Beßler 2012, 16 (translation: S. Leighton and A. Grebe).
- 12) Knaller 2005.
- 13) Korff 2007, esp. 141: »The fascination is based on the authenticity of the things, and it may have a lot for itself, what some present-day museum theory supposes, that in fact it is this very authenticity that has helped the museum to that career of which in recent years the talk was not seldom full of irritation« (translation: S. Leighton).
- 14) ICOM Code of Ethics (Paris 2017). <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf> (27.07.2020).
- 15) Knaller/Müller 2006.
- 16) See Eser et al. 2017.
- 17) Knaller 2006, esp. 54 (translation: S. Leighton).
- 18) Drecoll/Schaarschmidt/Zündorf 2019a.
- 19) Drecoll/Schaarschmidt/Zündorf 2019b, esp. 7.
- 20) Saupe 2019.
- 21) Scheicher 1977.
- 22) Scheicher 1985.
- 23) Parshall 1982.
- 24) Scheicher/Gamber/Auer 1981.
- 25) Auer 1996, esp. 30-62.
- 26) Boeheim 1889.
- 27) Auer 1996, 66.
- 28) Klauner 1977, esp. 8.
- 29) Sauerländer 2008. – On the development of early modern collections in general see the examples in Impey/MacGregor 1985.
- 30) Welzel 2006.
- 31) ICOM 2017, 19 § 3.2.
- 32) Findlen 2008.
- 33) See the examples in Grote 1994.
- 34) Pomian 1998, esp. 46-54.
- 35) Grote 1994.
- 36) Jahn 1994.
- 37) Roth 2000. – Meadow/Robertson 2013.
- 38) Meadow 2013, esp. 1-7.
- 39) Simon 2010. – Gesser et al. 2012.
- 40) Gilmore 2007.

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## *Zusammenfassung / Summary*

### **Authentizität im Kontext: Historische Präsentationsformen und museale Praxis**

In den letzten Jahren richten immer mehr Museen einzelne Räume ihrer Dauerausstellung nach dem Vorbild historischer Präsentationsweisen ein. Auf den ersten Blick scheinen die (Re-)Inszenierungen insbesondere von vormodernen Kunst- und Wunderkammern den Wunsch nach »Museen als Orten des Authentischen« gleich in mehrfacher Weise zu erfüllen. Handelt es sich doch in den meisten Fällen um authentische Objekte, teilweise sogar aus ein und demselben authentischen Sammlungskontext, die in scheinbar authentischer Aufstellungsweise, bisweilen sogar in den ursprünglichen Räumlichkeiten präsentiert werden. Doch so authentisch die Re-Installationen auch erscheinen mögen, so können sie höchstens das äußere Erscheinungsbild einer früheren Sammlungspräsentation vor Augen stellen, während historische Sammlungspraxen im modernen Museumskontext nur schwer wiederhergestellt werden können. Der Beitrag diskutiert die Frage von Authentizität und Rekonstruktion und lotet die Möglichkeiten aus, wie Authentizität im Kontext erfahrbar gemacht werden kann.

### **Authenticity in Context: Historic Displays and Modern Museum Practice**

In recent years, more and more museums have been installing specific galleries that recreate historic displays, including redisplay of early modern cabinets of art and curiosity. Usually, these are artificial assemblies of items with various provenances. In some cases, however, the objects are reinstalled in their actual historical setting (e.g. Ambras Castle). As authentic as the historicising displays may be, they can only recreate the outward aspect of a former collection because they are bound by the requirements of modern museum practice. Very often, the displays do not re-enact former presentation modes but illustrate early modern collection theories. The paper discusses the question of authenticity and reconstruction and explores the possibilities of making authenticity experienceable in a modern museum context.