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**Malouf Rummaging Imperial Collections**

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## Introduction

### A Journey into Curiosity and Curation: Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf Present

In 2012 the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna [Fig. 1] initiated *Artist's Choice*, a series of artist-curated exhibitions, inviting artists to engage with the museum's extensive holdings and to single out their personal selection. The Kunsthistorisches Museum, a prominent institution within the European context, houses 4.5 million objects across fourteen collections. They are distributed across several houses, deposits, and cities. The inventories span an impressive 6,000-year timeframe, encompassing paintings, antiquities, coins, and Egyptian artifacts among many other categories. The Habsburg cult of collecting was introduced by the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Wunderkammern* at Ambras Castle in Innsbruck and Prague Castle.



Fig. 1: Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, opened in 1891.

The third and presumably last installment of *Artist's Choice* resulted from a collaboration with the American filmmaker Wes Anderson and his partner, writer and illustrator Juman Malouf [Fig. 2]. Together, they conceived the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, which was open to the public from November 6, 2018, to April 28, 2019, at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The show featured 423 exhibits, primarily sourced from the storages of all fourteen Kunsthistorisches' collections and from the neighboring twin building, the Naturhistorisches Museum. This dissertation aims to provide an in-depth analysis of this exhibition, as it represents an outstanding approach and dimension within the institution's curatorial concept.

As especially Wes Anderson is renowned for his distinctive aesthetic in terms of color and symmetry, the approach applied by the two guest curators was necessarily a more visual than conventional one. They set apart traditional art historical criteria like provenance, origin, or stylistic affiliations. Instead, they organized the exhibits based on affinities such as function, color, dimension, or material. One section, for example, displayed solely green-colored objects, while another contained only wooden artifacts. This approach garnered interest but also faced incomprehension and criticism from conventionally trained curators. Nevertheless, Anderson's and Malouf's methodology aligned more with the ethos of the *Wunderkammer*, and therefore updates the early days of the Kunsthistorisches' collection. In this context, this thesis seeks to examine this evolution and its suitability as a curatorial approach in the contemporary age.

The exhibition design was a collaborative effort between the curators and Margula Architects. Located in the *Goldener Saal* of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, different rooms were inserted to house the various sections of the exhibition. The displays were characterized by distinct colors and materials, with numerous recessed boxes holding the exhibits. This design drew parallels not only to the display cabinets of the *Wunderkammer* but also to the cinematic style of Wes Anderson.

Another significant aspect of the exhibition was its transfer to the Podium of the Fondazione Prada in Milan. Renamed *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, the sequel ran from September 20, 2019, to January 13, 2020. The exhibition almost doubled in dimension compared to the Vienna installment. Therefore, the show had to be updated in terms of content and design, resulting in two additional sections and a total of 583 objects. The project was completed by an artist's book published by Fondazione Prada. The relocation certainly added to and transformed the exhibition's dynamics and expression. The interplay of meanings between the two installments of the *Spitzmaus* show invites a purposeful examination to delve deeper into its essence.

The exhibition serves as a "clear example of how a show curated by artists can contribute to the open debate over the role of museums, the rules of their organization and the customs that determine each exhibition. [...] A constructive criticism on the rigidity of divisions in knowledge, and a playful, democratic proposal to enjoy a princely *Wunderkammer* today."<sup>1</sup>

In summary, it is necessary to contextualize the *Spitzmaus* exhibition within a broader framework, drawing parallels with the *Wunderkammer* but also with contemporary art. The perception, utilization, and appropriation of a given collection must be evaluated within the

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<sup>1</sup> Miuccia Prada, Patrizio Bertelli, "Foreword," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 6.

context of common curating practices. This approach allows to recognize the innovations and potential weaknesses in the strategy employed by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf. Given the strong aesthetic presence of the show, the exhibition design allows grasp the intention of the project to a greater extent, as visual parallels will prove to add to the meaning. An analysis of the audience feedback will be fundamental in assessing the effectiveness of these efforts.

### **Applied Methodology of Research**

My interest for the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* stemmed from my familiarity with the Kunsthistorisches Museum, wherefore it was a rather atypical show, which is why it left a lasting impression on me. My research was carried out in an interdisciplinary manner, encompassing sources from different art-historical expressions from Early Modern times up to the contemporary, as from curatorial studies and film studies.

For starters, I inevitably delved into the base for the exhibition: the Habsburg collections from its emergence to the present day. Valuable insights were gleaned from publications by Kunsthistorisches Museum experts like director Sabine Haag and curator Franz Kirchweyer. Once the essence and origin of these collections was grasped, I shifted the focus to the *Wunderkammer* format, which gave rise not only to the collections but also the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Since the *Wunderkammer* was a mainly northern alpine phenomenon,<sup>2</sup> I tried to internalize the view of the research in the corresponding area, which prominently shaped the starting point for the *Spitzmaus* show. Works by Horst Bredekamp, Krzysztof Pomian, Barbara Stafford, and Robert Felfe formed the basis, later extended to the Italian state of research with publications by Adalgisa Lugli, Giuseppe Olmi, and Salvatore Settis. This helped grasp the significance of the exhibition's later installment at Fondazione Prada. Gabriele Beßler's contributions furthered my understanding of the evolution of the *Wunderkammer* to related contemporary art expressions.

To explore the connection between the collection and the curators, I investigated the concept of the artist-as-curator, leading to necessary in-depth studies of the figures of the archivist, the collector, and the scientist. Furthermore, the cinematic production of Wes Anderson was approached especially through Donna Kornhaber and Nathan Ian.

My firsthand literary encounter with the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* itself were the publications by the Kunsthistorisches Museum and Fondazione Prada. Luckily, I had the chance to visit the exhibition myself back in 2018 in Vienna, what

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dora Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 18.



aided in the rather complex reconstruction of the various sections and the corresponding spatial layout. The communication from the Kunsthistorisches Museum, consisting of the published catalogue, the exhibition booklet, and several explanatory videos, was helpful for a preliminary understanding of the project, but remained somewhat superficial. In this regard, the artist's book published by Fondazione Prada offered much deeper insights and various perspectives. Scholarly articles and reviews, such as those by Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl or Lina Patmali, allowed for the exhibition's insertion in a broader art-historical, cultural, and curatorial context.

A special insight to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was gained through the conducted interviews, that allowed for a much more personal impression by individuals directly involved in the conception process. As the exhibition itself was inverting the logics of conventional curating and displaying, I tried to detect interviewees outside the spotlight. Therefore, the correspondence of the Kunsthistorisches Museum was taken over by curatorial assistant Judith Bradlwarter. She specified the process of familiarizing Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf with the collections, the practical handling of the selection of exhibits, and the aesthetic principles of the show. Here I must add, that Bradlwarter herself is now known as digital creator with a dedication to eccentric fashion styles, and therefore had her personal aesthetic access to the exhibition, which was very fascinating to follow. Another valuable occasion has been the interview I conducted with Itai Margula, the exhibition designer. During my visit to his studio in Vienna, he showed me some original display elements and provided all the explanation about the required technical functionalities of the showcases. Furthermore, detailed information about the whole conception and construction process for the exhibition design was given. The third interview to Mario Mainetti, curator of Fondazione Prada, elucidated the significance of the exhibition's transfer to its Milan venue.

Finally, I investigated the exhibition's reception by the audience. I was able to detect a number of reviews for both institutions published on Google Maps and TripAdvisor, which offer insights on the perception of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Feedback was also found in a rather visual form, as personal photographs published on Instagram. They allow for interpretation by unveiling different layers of comprehension or showing the visitors' behavior in space. Therefore, the posts reveal the efficiency of communication with and within the exhibition.

### **Chapter Synopsis: Archive – Design – Content**

The present dissertation is carried out in three chapters, each addressing key aspects of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*.

The first chapter delves into the historical context, taking up the *Wunderkammer* as early form of collecting and displaying, which gave rise to the Habsburg collections now pertaining to the Kunsthistorisches Museum. As the *Spitzmaus* exhibition drew exhibits from the storage spaces, understanding the collection's origins intrigued Anderson and Malouf. Their efforts sought to update the *Wunderkammer* format to contemporary times, thus an examination of the model's progression is required. Followingly, the exhibition's inclusion in the series *Artist's Choice*, which was based on invited artists curating exhibitions from the museum's inventories, is explored and differences and commonalities are pointed out. The treatment of the archive's contents and Anderson's and Malouf's role as artist-curators are analyzed, emphasizing their personal way of appropriating the collection and the extent of agency granted to the archive.

The second chapter examines the refined exhibition design, a collaboration between Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, and Margula Architects. The analysis of the exhibition design centers on materials, colors, and the features to shape the specific thematic rooms. Since Anderson and Malouf predominantly acted on a visual level, the significance of the display must not be underestimated. A comparison to the cinematic work of Anderson will thus reveal key parallels, favoring a better overall comprehension of the exhibition. The curators' personal aesthetics are marked by a distinct symmetry, a recurring frontality, and the use of specific colors to mark corresponding phenomena. References to film stills extracted from Anderson's movies create a visual continuation to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. The recurring use of recessed boxes within the display further connects to the early days of the display cabinets to be found in the *Wunderkammer*. Therefore, the chapter is concluded with an exploration of the evolution of the *Kunstschränk* to the glass vitrine, supported by contemporary artistic reflections on the emerged forms of display furniture.

The final chapter delves into the exhibition's content. To grasp the thematic essence, a detailed analysis of the selected exhibits is necessary to assess their interrelations, which may not seem obvious at first. Motivations for object selection, whether thematic, personal, aesthetic, or phenomenological, are assessed. Further, the audience's understanding of the content and the exhibition itself is to be examined. Public and professional reception, including audience reviews and critiques, shed light on the exhibition's understanding. Attention then shifts to the exhibition's second installment at Fondazione Prada in Milan, emphasizing thematic and aesthetic nuances. All in all, the examination of the Milanese show deepens the comprehension of the first presentation in Vienna. Especially the artist's book by Fondazione Prada turns out to be a relevant contribution, as it compresses the notions of archive, content, personal expression, and collection value, which were inherent of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition.



Fig. 2: Juman Malouf (left) and Wes Anderson (right) in the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 2018.

## 1. From the *Wunderkammer* to the Archive to the Exhibition

At the core of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* was an intense examination of the imperial collections, now held by the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, from which the content was to be extracted. The invited curators Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf were granted access to all fourteen historical collections to select the exhibits for display. Consequently, they paid special attention to the museum's depots and storage facilities.

The *Wunderkammer* format manifests a particular significance for the Habsburg collection, as it incorporates the fundamental holdings of Ambras Castle in Innsbruck and the collection of Rudolf II in Prague, both following the model of the cabinet of curiosities. In this regard, the principles of the *Wunderkammer* served as fundamental inspiration for Anderson and Malouf, who sought to align the archive's historical origin with their personal curatorial approach.

To begin with, it is essential to explore the conception of such cabinets, which reached their heyday between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. With their disappearance came a decrease in appreciation and comprehension for this early form of private collectionism and display. Instead, it was replaced by a rather negative misinterpretation and accusations of lacking scientific criteria. However, from the 1970s onward, there has been a renewed interest in the wondrous nature of the *Wunderkammer* and its qualities. In this regard, it is crucial to examine its relevance to the contemporary age in terms of applied criteria and potential possibilities for revising prevailing methods of classification in art history and beyond. Scholarly engagement with the cabinet of curiosities quickly found its successors in artistic practice and curatorial approaches. Therefore, the significance of the *Kunstkammer* format is relevant to Anderson and Malouf not only due to the collection's origin but also because of its potential alignment with current tendencies within the art world.

The *Spitzmaus* exhibition constitutes the third installment of the series *Artist's Choice* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, where artists were invited to take on the role of the curator and create an exhibition using the museum's archival holdings. The preceding exhibitions in the exhibition series, namely *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas* (2012) curated by Ed Ruscha and *During the Night* (2016-17) by Edmund de Waal, are referenced to assess the different approaches taken in utilizing the available contents. Notions of collecting and archiving embodied crucial aspects for the invited artists and are equally essential for analyzing and contextualizing the exhibitions.

The chapter concludes with an examination of Anderson's and Malouf's strategy in exploring and utilizing the given collection. The inherent subjectivity in their choices is questioned in terms of appropriation and the potential gain of agency for the archive.

### 1.1 The *Wunderkammer* and Its Postmodern Revival

The common place and format for presenting private collections from the 15<sup>th</sup> up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century were *Kunst-* or *Wunderkammern*.<sup>3</sup> These cabinets aimed to showcase an interplay of natural and human work, guided by the presence of *artificialia*, *naturalia*, *scientifica*, *exotica*, and *mirabilia*. The cabinets of curiosities served as containers for artificial and natural wonders – like an “absolute instrument”<sup>4</sup> which aspires to register everything with a propensity for universal completeness.

The *Wunderkammern* were composed by antique statuettes, paintings, precious stones, shells, animals, scientific instruments, watches, automata, and further categories of all kinds. Some of the listed categories are to be seen in the frontispiece of the *Museum Wormianum* [Fig. 3], published in 1655, which depicts a *Wunderkammer*'s setting.

Generally, there were no limits on the possible content of these cabinets, if not a sense of exceptionality. This form of collecting was driven by a vast interest in the multitude of things, which are characterized by their curious character. The multitude of artifacts, whose origin is beyond any logics of common time and place of creation, is then held together by the mere existence of the collection. In other words, the content belongs together because of their affiliation to a specific collection. These cabinets intermingled a so-called “encyclopedic collectivism”<sup>5</sup> and largely disregarded spatio-temporal criteria in their display. The aim of the collections was to achieve a narration of the macro- and microcosmos through rare and curious objects, the *mirabilia*.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the *Wunderkammer* became a place of intense densification of art and objects, characterized by asystemic accumulation, where the display mirrored the content by initiating a wondrous journey of individual discovery. The idea and

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), pp. 78-79. According to Beßler, the terms *Wunderkammer* and *Kunstkammer* will be used as synonyms in the present paper. Both terms, for sure, experienced inflationary usage, and I would therefore propose to solely relate them to the cabinets that are to be found in the north alpine area.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Stafford, “Künstliche Intensität – Bilder, Instrumente und die Technologie der Verdichtung,” in *Kunstkammer – Laboratorium – Bühne. Schauplätze des Wissens im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), p. 344.

<sup>5</sup> Giuseppe Olmi, *L'Inventario del mondo. Catalogazione della natura e luoghi del sapere nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Società Editrice Il Mulino, 1992), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ivi, pp. 184-185.

identity of the collection thus appeared superior to the actual content, while the demand of exclusivity, curiosity, and uniqueness remained essential.

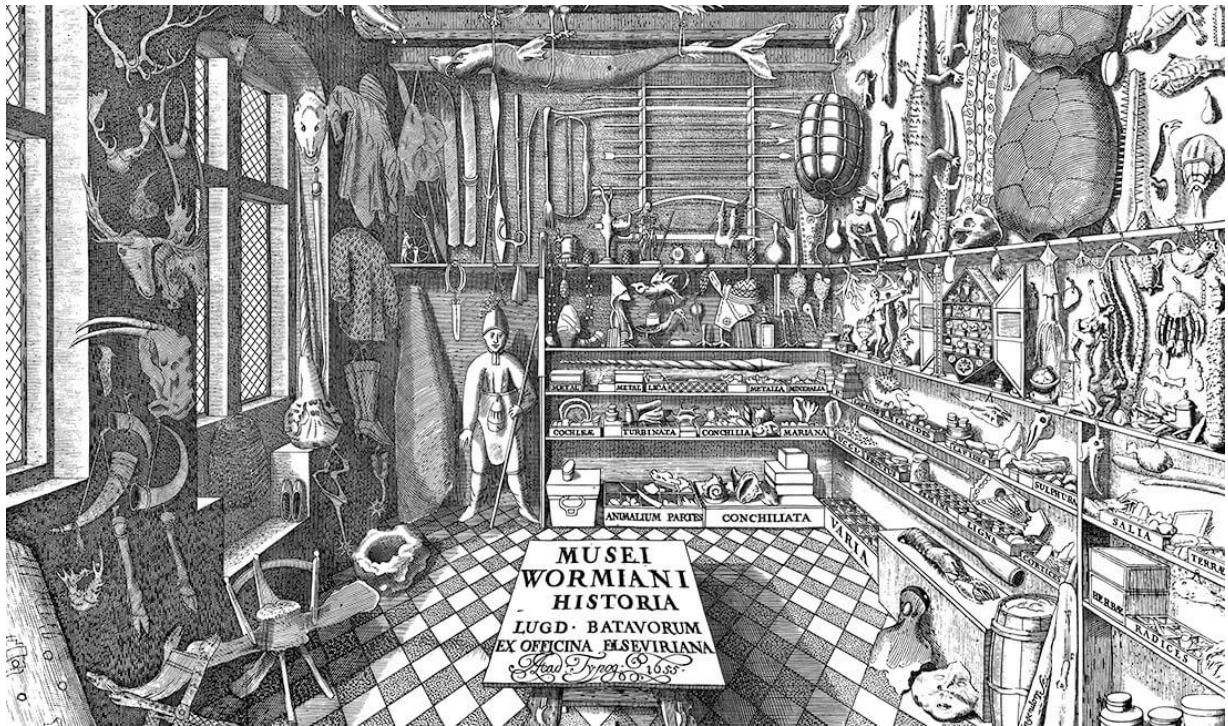


Fig. 3: Olaus Worm, *Museum Wormianum*, 1655, frontispiece, engraving, 34 x 38 cm.

According to Lugli, the “mechanisms of knowledge are strongly shaped by the idea of wonder and the procedures connected to a form of knowing that allows numerous contaminations with mental schemes that traditionally pertain to art.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the *Wunderkammer* represents an expression of the inherent cognitive perception of reality during that period.

The heterogeneity of art and nature in the *Kunstammern* was not only expressed by their content,<sup>8</sup> but especially through their display, which as well followed the negation of space and time as traditional criteria for categorization. However, this does not imply that the positioning within the *Wunderkammer* did follow the notion of chaos. Quite the opposite: instead of scientific classification, a visual logic appeared to determine the arrangement of the cabinets. The ideal encyclopedic criteria aimed for a display which desires to accumulate the knowledge of the world. The *mirabilia*-character of the collected artifacts – which were supposed to be wonders of nature and art – gave rise to subtle and overlapping classifications. For instance, antique sculpture could be grouped together with fossils, based on their shared

<sup>7</sup> Adalgisa Lugli, *Wunderkammer. La stanza delle meraviglie* (Venice: Electa Editrice, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben. Die Geschichte der Kunstammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993), pp. 63-76, esp. pp. 70-74.

origin from the soil.<sup>9</sup> In this case, the logic of positioning followed the criterion of coexistence which superseded the original historical or temporal context of the objects. This criterion can be observed in representations of *Wunderkammer* displays, such as in the painting by Frans II. Francken [Fig. 4]. The painted display perfectly embodies the encyclopedic character of the *Kunstkammer*. It features shells and porcelain – deriving from and across the ocean – miniatures and coins – which both bear portraits. Also, statuettes and paintings are shown, but no category of objects appeared to be hierarchically higher placed than another.



Fig. 4: Frans II Francken, *Cabinet of Curiosities*, 1620-1625, oil on panel, 74 x 78 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

However, this type of classification resulted from the lack of historical and scientific information about the objects. Knowledge regarding the artifacts' previous existence appeared to be speculative, and therefore started to be developed upon their inclusion in the collection. So, this approach to classification could very likely not be sustained globally. According to Ritter, this pivotal limitation contributed to the eventual displacement and decline of the *Wunderkammer* format toward the late 18<sup>th</sup> century:

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Henning Ritter, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunstkammer. Über Kunst und Künstler* (Berlin: Hanser, 2014), p. 332.

Above all, in general it was not at all possible to provide the objects of the collection with a time index: They belonged to a diffuse ‘antiquity’, either to history or to nature. In the latter case, there was no geological chronology that would have provided time indices. Geological time was largely unknown until the second half of the eighteenth century, and similarly, many art objects lacked reasonably precise time indications, unless inscriptions appeared to provide them.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, stylistic, geographic, and utilitarian commonalities could not be applied since they were not at disposal. So, the point of departure for the *Wunderkammer* was based on its wondrous, miraculous character, which showcases its unique feature and could not have emerged if the scientific information had been accessible. “If we depart from use alone, all useless things are overlooked, but if we take the desirableness of things as our point of departure, then useful objects are properly seen as things we value more or less dearly.”<sup>11</sup> This approach activates and encourages the viewer to engage, discover, admire, and observe the exhibits and their miraculously displayed characteristics. The role of the viewer was further reinforced by the systematic praxis of enclosing and isolating rarities in a confined space, which intensified the objects’ uniqueness and strangeness.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the objects in the *Wunderkammer* did not tend to self-explanation. The understanding of the single object was crucial, the collection was not only to be conceived as a whole, encompassing entity. Hence, the curious spectator had to gain knowledge about the history of individual pieces, including their rarity, value, and the adventurous paths they undertook to reach their current position.<sup>13</sup> Not to forget, the *Wunderkammern* were in no place public, but instead gathered under the will of private collectors with noble or scientific backgrounds. In this regard, the likewise elite audience for these collections was limited and precisely selected. In other words, “The public and the *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammern* did not get along.”<sup>14</sup> The spaces were signed by exclusiveness, elitist confrontation, and private admiration.

The notion of *naturalis historia* did not always encompass the study of the developments of objects and species of nature as it does today. Initially shaped by Plinius the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Barbara Stafford, “Künstliche Intensität – Bilder, Instrumente und die Technologie der Verdichtung,” in *Kunstkammer – Laboratorium – Bühne. Schauplätze des Wissens im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), p. 346.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Henning Ritter, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunstkammer. Über Kunst und Künstler* (Berlin: Hanser, 2014), p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Ivi, p. 333.



Elder, the term intended to describe their given condition. Nature did not have a history, but a physiognomy.<sup>15</sup> In the context of the *Wunderkammer*, this notion of natural history proves relevance, as the collectability of an object often relied on visual and aesthetic criteria. In this sense, the development introduced by Francis Bacon in 1605,<sup>16</sup> dividing the history of nature in three categories, appears to be crucial when examining the progress of *Wunderkammern*'s content.

The first is the history of course: being normally formed and ongoing it comprises all creatures. It includes all the components in flawless condition from all classifications of nature, such as animals, minerals, and vegetation.



Fig. 5: Left: Anonymous, *Hirsute Man Petrus Gonsalvus*, 1580, oil on canvas, 190 x 80 cm; Right: Anonymous, *Madeleine Gonsalvus*, 1580, oil on canvas, 123 x 86 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben. Die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993), p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 1973), pp. 114-115.

The next category, the history of erring and varying, consists in deviations from the norm, which he later defined as “strange and monstrous objects in which nature deviates and turns from her natural course.”<sup>17</sup> In connection to the *Wunderkammer*’s content, this category of nature is very well represented. For example, the collection of Ambras Castle contains portraits of the hirsute family Gonsalvus<sup>18</sup> [Fig. 5], which were objectified as curiosities and align with Bacon’s definition of monstrous alteration. Additionally, *exotica* constituted a proper section of *Kunstkammern*, reflecting the enthusiasm for foreign, unknown, and bizarre objects as synonymous with wonders and curiosities.<sup>19</sup>

The third category coined by Bacon relates to the history of nature altered or wrought, which pertains to the processing of raw material. According to Bredekamp, “when Bacon places human *ars* within natural history, it is not in order to let nature find its goal, but to recognize the essence of nature through artistry.”<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the arts are laid out as integral to the decoration of the history of nature, which results in the impossibility of separation. Art appears as integral part of the history of nature. At this point, Bacon’s categorization reveals its importance of the *Wunderkammer*’s structuring. *Artificialia* and *naturalia* were not regarded as opposing elements but heterogeneous pieces that represent the dynamics and presences throughout the cosmos. On that account, the notion of authorship was not of significant interest. There was no intent to differentiate between an object of natural or artistic origin – not to mention individual authorship. This continuity was then not measured in temporal terms, but rather in relation to visual appearance and familiarity.

In this regard, the criteria for categorization in the *Kunstkammern* were not applied with the aim to reach universality in these kinds of displays. They are of much more individual character according to the specific decision-making processes, regarding the collection and contents that were to be displayed.

Another criterion for grouping within the displays was to order objects according to their material. Within the sequence, the categories were meant to follow the hierarchy of materials and their refinement: from precious metals to gemstones, and then to stone and iron

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum. True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature*, trans. Joseph Devey (New York: Collier, 1902), pp. 179-180.

<sup>18</sup> First documented in Ambras in 1621. The collection, which now is part of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, holds three portraits of the hirsute family: father, daughter, and son.

<sup>19</sup> Along with this, there go many problematics in terms of colonialism and cultural appropriation. Both topics seem to be hidden behind the mystic atmosphere of the *Wunderkammer*. Since the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* also appears to be significant in these terms, I will come back on this topic later.

<sup>20</sup> Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben. Die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993), p. 65.

pieces. On the other hand, the level of processing of a certain material was not significant: objects fabricated in raw material, or in the same material but modified to a high artistic extent were no reason for distinction. This approach can be observed in both Habsburg collections – in the *Kunstammer* of Ambras Castle, as well as in that of Prague by Rudolf II.<sup>21</sup>

Due to the seemingly simplified structuring manner within the *Wunderkammer*, the format was inseparably linked to the critique of the non-scientific and the lack of knowledge as soon as it disappeared. But as discussed above, the particular property of the collections emerged precisely from this unscientific approach. The initial impossibility to attribute objects with scientific information led to the awakening of curiosity and the acceleration of academic cognizance.

The first to break with this connotation of missing comprehension for art-historical and natural criteria was Julius von Schlosser.<sup>22</sup> He understood the rise of the museums – which eventually introduced the tendency towards universal and scientific norms of collecting – not as opposed to the *Wunderkammer*, but as a fluid development grounded in the system of miraculous collectionism. On this matter, Bredekamp argues that historization of nature was already embedded in the horizon of *Kunstammern* of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> As the significance of human *ars* grew constantly, it resulted in a rise in thinking about the history of nature, which in turn led to new scientific possibilities of definition and classification.

The replacement of the *Wunderkammer* in favor of a more scientifically grounded approach in art history, and thus the subsequent rise of the museum was brought to the point by Ritter as follows:

The seemingly obvious expansion of art history into a general *Bildwissenschaft*, however, is, historically speaking, a dramatic change of orientation. We take the founding of the modern art museum since the mid-eighteenth century for granted today, as an innovation that entered the world more or less without tension. In truth, it was a cultural revolution that had its opponents and victims. The main victim of this innovation was the old *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*, which since the beginning of modern times had been the leading organ of dealing with pictures, with art objects and with natural things,

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Franz Kirchweger, “Die Schätze des Hauses Habsburg und die Kunstammer. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bestände,” in *Die Kunstammer. Die Schätze der Habsburger*, ed. Sabine Haag, Franz Kirchweger (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2012), p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammer der Spätrenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelwesens* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1908).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben. Die Geschichte der Kunstammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993), p. 17.

especially *mirabilia*. To the *Wunderkammer* belonged a world of scholarship and immersion in lore and nature, which, with the dissolution of the *Kunst- and Wunderkammern*, became once and for all scientifically obsolete and institutionally liquidated.<sup>24</sup>

On this matter, not only did the construct of the *Wunderkammer* and therefore the first attempt of putting a collection on display dwindle. Also, the wondrous characteristic was forced into disappearance – the applied science of art and nature substituted the place of curiosity and mysterious confrontation. What had previously been characterized by an atmosphere of astonishment had now taken the dimension of expertise. The emergence of new scientific criteria has shaped numerous disciplines up to the present. Consequently, art history is now classified according to schools, style, and genre, while other fields – like anthropology and archeology – utilize the category of use, by dividing things and ideas, or material and mental culture.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the passage from the private *Kunst- and Wunderkammer* to museums must be considered a development with inherent roots in the former which was aptly designated as “a transition from treasure house to public collection, from learned immersion to public display, from world models to art worlds.”<sup>26</sup> By having gained a certain level of access to scientific studies and information, partly deriving from the studies of the *Wunderkammern*’ contents, its model had become outdated and no longer viable or adaptable.

With the rise of the museological institution, not only did the matters of selection, classification and collection evolve in a new shape, but also the archive as a field of study received a growing attention. An increasing number of publications in archival studies must be noted since the 1980s, which can be observed as reaching out across disciplines such as art, history, and anthropology. This resulted in the coinage of the term ‘archival turn’,<sup>27</sup> which focuses on a shift from the archive-as-source to the archive-as-subject.<sup>28</sup> This interest is backed

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<sup>24</sup> Henning Ritter, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunstskammer. Über Kunst und Künstler* (Berlin: Hanser, 2014), p. 330.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Henning Ritter, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunstskammer. Über Kunst und Künstler* (Berlin: Hanser, 2014), p. 331.

<sup>27</sup> For backgrounds on the different interdisciplinary approaches confront: Louise Craven, *What are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 12-17; Eric Ketelaar, “Archival Turns and Returns,” in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, Andrew J. Lau (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2017), pp. 228-68; Peter Lester, *Exhibiting the Archive. Space, Encounter, and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 44-45.

up by the core influence of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who opened up and stimulated new ways of archival thinking.<sup>29</sup>

Around the same time, since the 1990s, publications regarding the history of collecting have gained increasing popularity.<sup>30</sup> In this connection, exhibitions and artworks started to be connected to the notion of collecting and archiving, with an extended interest in a revival of the *Kunst- and Wunderkammer*, which was conceived as a historic phenomenon.<sup>31</sup> So, the research on collecting forms of the past has rooted also in art practice and curating tendencies. In front of the backdrop of the simultaneously increased interest in archival studies, a transdisciplinary approach was reinforced. As Craven adds, “the study of archive, like the study of history, is coming to be recognized as a dialogue between the present and the past.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1972, with the capture of the *Blue Marble* [Fig. 6], showing planet earth in its entirety, there was support for the development of the comprehension of the togetherness of objects and organisms inhabiting the world. This perception then assisted in the coining of the term Anthropocene<sup>33</sup> to describe the present epoch as a geological unit in which control has been taken over by humans. In terms of the renaissance of the *Wunderkammer*, the conception of Anthropocene may serve as a decisive backdrop for the newly developed interdisciplinary interest in *naturalia* and *artificialia*.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” trans. Eric Prenowitz. *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 9-63; Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. Alan Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). All the previously mentioned sources on archival studies (Craven 2008, Ketelaar 2017, Stoler 2009) cannot do without quoting Foucault and Derrida as their starting point.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Oliver Impey, Arthur MacGregor Arthur (eds.), *The Origins of Museums. The Cabinet of Curiosities in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Cf. Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben. Die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993); Cf. Krzysztof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993); Cf. Adalgisa Lugli, *Naturalia et Mirabilia. Il collezionismo enciclopedico nelle Wunderkammern d'Europa* (Milano: G. Mazzotta, 1983).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Robert Felfe, “Die Kunstkammer – und warum ihre Zeit erst kommen wird,” *Kunstchronik* 67, no. 7 (2014), p. 343.

<sup>32</sup> Luise Craven, “From the Archivist’s Cardigan to the Very Dead Sheep: What are Archives? What are Archivists? What do They Do?” in *What are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader*, ed. Louise Craven, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Crutzen, Paul, Stoermer, Eugene, “The ‘Anthropocene’,” *IGBP Global Change Newsletter* 41 (May 2000): pp. 17-18.



Fig. 6: Apollo 17 Crew, *Blue Marble*, 1972.

The typus of the *Wunderkammer* has experienced a return to curatorial praxis, while a connection to a certain historical collection was not often foreseen. This corresponds to the strategy adapted by Adalgisa Lugli, who curated the section entitled *Wunderkammer* of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale in 1986 which followed the main topic *Arte e Scienza* under the direction of Maurizio Calvesi. The exhibition was supposed to demonstrate the continuity of the *Kunstkammer* principles and their possibility to be carried on to the contemporary. As background for Lugli's inspiration for the exhibition, it is inevitable to consider the recently before published translation of the aforementioned publication by von Schlosser into Italian in 1974,<sup>34</sup> which appears to have caused a new interest in extending the encyclopedic collectionism to the present. Lugli brought together artworks from the Early Modern Age, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the contemporary. The aim was to favor a confrontation and dialogue between them by uniting them under the topic of *mirabilia*.<sup>35</sup> Among the exhibited artists – to name just a few – Andre Breton, Marcel Broodthaers, Agostino Carracci, Giuseppe Crespi, Rebecca Horn, Athanasius Kircher, Mario Merz and Kurt Schwitters were included. The exhibition apparently underlay an asystemic approach, abandoning the sense of temporal order – what Lugli addresses as “atemporality”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Julius von Schlosser, *Raccolte d'arte e di meraviglie del tardo Rinascimento*, trans. Paola di Paolo (Florence: Sansoni, 1974).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Adalgisa Lugli, *Wunderkammer. La stanza delle meraviglie* (Venice: Electa Editrice, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

This appears to contribute to the reinforcement of continuity, wherein the contemporary is now integrated and accommodated. In this regard, Jenkins' consideration on antiquity further underlines the signification of the act of establishing a dialogue: "At its best this fracturing of antiquity allows for a progressive dialogue between antiquity and modernity, between constructions of the past and our ever-morphing aspirations for the future."<sup>37</sup> Even if he focuses mainly on antiquity, his approach can be adapted to the importance of the *Wunderkammer* for the contemporary age: the record of history split up into pieces, which are then united in a new composition and allow to make sense of the past – now.

More significance is dedicated to the accumulation of objects, as it was characteristic for the *Wunderkammer*. The material is considered an important criterion: natural material, which leads to its artistic transformation and imitation. What is to be noticed between the exhibits is the sheer difference in their scale: for example, Pino Pascali's *Dinosaur* (1966) of a length of 12 meters is backed up by a *naturalia* of a monstrous fish head which is a tenth as long and the drawing *Fish Head* (1963) by René Magritte of even smaller dimensions. [Fig. 7].

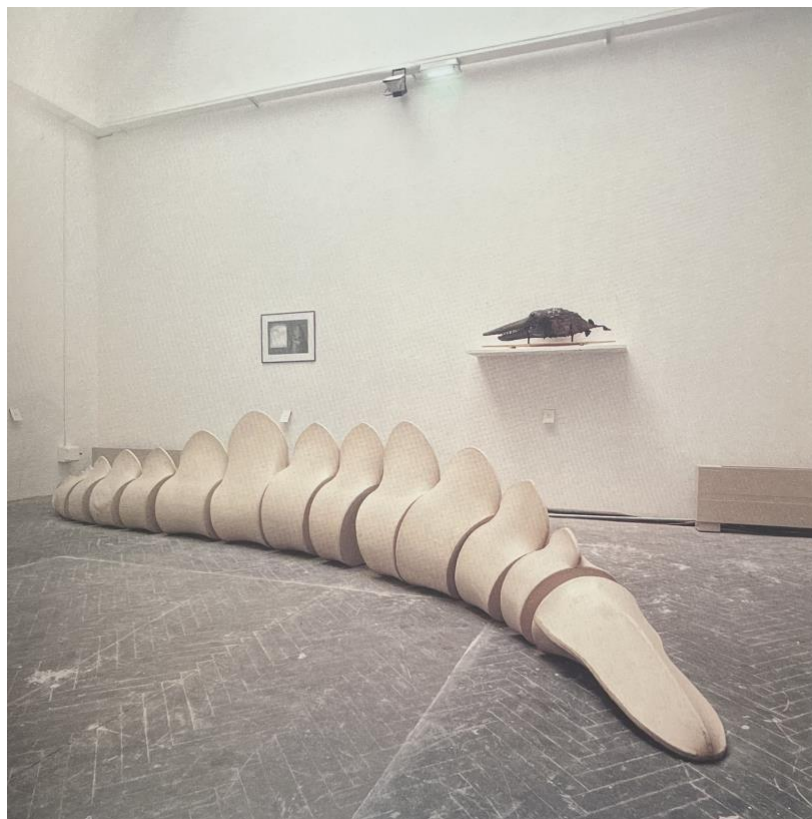


Fig. 7: *Wunderkammer*, 1986, curated by Adalgisa Lugli, XLII Biennale. Front: Pino Pascali, *Dinosaur*, 1966, 80 x 1200 x 70 cm. Upper left: René Magritte, *Fish Head*, 1963, 37 x 50 cm, drawing for *La Recherche de la Vérité*. Upper right: *Monstrous Fish*, 18<sup>th</sup> century, 40 x 125 x 22 cm, Musei Civici, Reggio Emilia.

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Jenkins, *Antiquity Now. The Classical World in the Contemporary American Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 224.

To the viewer this concept might appear in a postmodern surrealist dimension because the reasoning behind the specific groupings in the displays appear without any profound explanation of these choices. To argue in terms of *Kunstkammer* logics, though, Lugli operated according to a certain methodology that was never meant to be visible and traceable to the spectator. The atmosphere was primarily marked by a marvelous character. The difference between the exhibition and the former *Wunderkammer* is for sure to be seen in the fact that Lugli selected predominantly well-established artists and only a few *naturalia*, which are mostly decisive inventories of influential collections. She flattened the logics of time but not the hierarchy of the arts and authorship. It is worth criticizing the division of the catalogue, which lists the exhibited artworks again in the seemingly overcome epochal logics and divides them in pre-modern, modern, and contemporary.

A different approach to these ends can be observed in the work of Mark Dion. The artist fascinatingly explores a vast range of topics – such as archeology, archives, the history and conception of nature – and treats them in his installations. A meaningful approach accompanied his exhibition *Theatre of the Natural World* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2018. It contained many of the artists' most important works created in Great Britain, and he permitted them to coexist next to each other for the first time. One of the works, entitled *The Library for the Birds of London* [Fig. 8], consists in an aviary full of birds, which lived the institution's space together with the viewer.<sup>38</sup> The exhibition itself embodied the act of merging the natural and artistic world to favor a more enthusiastic spectator and is regarded as a means of creating new meanings and methodologies.



Fig. 8: Mark Dion, *The Library for the Birds of London* (center), view of the exhibition *Theatre of the Natural World*, 2018, Whitechapel Gallery, London.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Richard Hamblin, "Between extinction and myth: Birds, books and the Great Chain of Being: Mark Dion's natural preoccupations." *TLS. Times Literary Supplement*, no. 5999, March 23, 2018, p. 18.



By considering another of his exhibitions, this same characteristic was put in explicit relation with the *Kunstkammer*. In 2001 Dion collaborated with the University of Minnesota for the exhibition *Cabinet of Curiosities* [Fig. 9] at the Weisman Art Museum. Together with the students, 701 exhibits deriving from five different collections were assembled, transforming the collection into the essential point of departure. Starting off with class meetings, the cabinet topics were collectively decided and elaborated. Furthermore, there was an effort to reflect the critique of official historical narrative in the shape of the cabinets. The visual impact was crucial for enhancing a pleasuring encounter of wonderment – the informational function was placed on a secondary level, as there were no direct labels and descriptions, but lists that contained titles and names.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the pure observation and discovery of the object were not related to a single fixed meaning. This becomes evident through the comment of a participating student: “We found ourselves frequently in a state of wonder (‘wow’ was a common reaction) inspired by the objects we discovered in our own backyards.”<sup>40</sup> By overturning prevailing comforting disciplinary arrangements, Dion managed to bring the worldliness of collections back to light and allow the audience to discover new connections thanks to unusual settings.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Colleen J. Sheehy, “A Walrus Head in the Art Museum: Mark Dion Digs into the University of Minnesota,” in *Cabinet of Curiosities. Mark Dion and the University as Installation*, ed. Colleen J. Sheehy (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp. 16-22.

<sup>40</sup> *Ivi*, p. 16.



Fig. 9: Mark Dion, *Cabinet of Curiosities*, 2001, Exhibition View, Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis.

These progresses and examples expose appropriately the backdrop of the exhibition that is to be treated in the core of this thesis, namely the *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna in 2018. Thus, it was the very character of the *Wunderkammer*, with its collocation in a mysterious and extraordinarily fascinating sphere, that inspired the curators. As they were supposed to choose objects from the whole collection of the museum – the notion of archives took over a crucial role in the compilation of their task. On the contrary to the examples of Dion and Lugli, in this case also the original destiny of the collection they dealt with must be taken in consideration: Ambras Castle [Fig. 10], which constitutes an essential part of the Kunsthistorisches' collection, is nowadays the single preserved *Kunstkammer* structured in an encyclopedic manner.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 10: Matthäus Merian, *The Princely Castle Ombras*, in: *Topographia Provinciarum Austriacarum*, 1649, engraving, 19 x 30.5 cm.

Therefore, the rise in research in the previous decades that revalues the notion of the *Kunstkammer* served as a meaningful inspiration for the exhibition. It was retaken as a contemporary possibility to provide the archive with a wondrous identity and to display the

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Silvia Müllegger, "Der Tod in der Kunstkammer der frühen Neuzeit." (MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2011), p. 10.

means of interobjectivity in an encyclopedic way without the need to show it in its entity. The heterogeneous ensembles from early modern times constitute fascinating ways to draw a meaningful curatorial model from them.<sup>42</sup> The relevance of the *Wunderkammer* as an applied curatorial format is pertinent in parallel to the theoretical attempts in visual studies to reunite the pictorial worlds of nature and arts. The single objects claim individual authority in their brilliance and newly gain significance in previously unseen assemblies. In this way, “it [the *Bildwissenschaft*] enters a world of wonders, of the rare and the mirabile, of elemental astonishment, such as is also stimulated by the electronic imagery of the present, a world of surprises and sensations.”<sup>43</sup> Concerning this matter, Stafford also addresses similar observations: “The pattern of reality intensification and the practice of stockpiling the world visually or virtually in a box that encloses it links a wide range of apparatuses from the late Renaissance to the twenty-first century.”<sup>44</sup> These references lead to digital devices, comparable as boxes to the manner of *Wunderkammer* rooms, granting access to online gaming that is full of fascination and fantasy. With this newly gained visual capabilities, the contemporary spectators are vital agents in this chain of comprehension, as they may be the only ones who really comprehend the urge to bring order into disparate fields of knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

All in all, the update of the *Kunstkammer* construct by Anderson and Malouf followed the postmodernist logics that can be similarly observed in Anderson’s movies. The seemingly disconnected fusion of objects from different stylistic, epochal, and geographical origins was united under the occasion of the exhibition to favor an individual contemporary reevaluation and differentiated perception.

## 1.2 *Artist’s Choice: Dealing with the Archive*

Soon after the introduction of Jasper Sharp as the new adjunct curator for modern and contemporary art at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 2011, also his proposal for the exhibition series *Artist’s Choice* was announced. It is based on the idea to invite artists and have them step into the role of the curator. They are granted access to the entire collections belonging to the Kunsthistorisches and are responsible for gathering objects from the archives for the sake of an

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Robert Felfe, “Die Kunstkammer – und warum ihre Zeit erst kommen wird,” *Kunstchronik* 67, no. 7 (2014): p. 348.

<sup>43</sup> Henning Ritter, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunstkammer. Über Kunst und Künstler* (Berlin: Hanser, 2014), p. 334.

<sup>44</sup> Barbara Stafford, “Künstliche Intensität – Bilder, Instrumente und die Technologie der Verdichtung,” in *Kunstkammer – Laboratorium – Bühne. Schauplätze des Wissens im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), p. 356.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 343.

exhibition. “The invitation is always the same: to spend an extended period of time with the museum’s historical collections, in the company of our curators and conservators, with the purpose of making a personal selection of objects for public display in the form of an exhibition.”<sup>46</sup> The invited artists should be able to extract forgotten objects from the archive and assign new meaning to the supposedly known in order to present their own interpretation of the museum and its collection. Sharp himself explained the role of the artists invited in this series as follows:

His [De Waal’s] role would not be that of a museum curator, tasked with identifying, studying, presenting, and contextualizing works of art that are accomplished in their kind, for their time, or within a particular style. Nor would it be that of a contemporary artist invited by a museum to make connections between the past and the present. His role would be different: to select familiar and lesser-known objects and arrange them in a way that is detached from the constraints of conventional forms of museum presentation, so that a change in their location and context might stimulate a new reading and understanding of the objects, as well as establish new intellectual connections within and across the past.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, what was to be expected were exhibitions that mirror the very point of view of the chosen artist. The viewers’ task is to empathize with the artist in his or her new role – which, in these cases, may not be seen as the creator of the works – and approach them with an individual approach of sense-making. Since the artist as curator will very likely not be equipped with the conventionally requested strategies to manage an archive like the ones normally applied by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the understanding of the curator personas will be much more decisive for the comprehensibility of the respective exhibition. So, the use of the archive will not happen in a ‘neutral’ way but will always involve a matter of personalization and individual taste.

The initial inspiration for the series *Artist’s Choice* was explicitly drawn by the exhibition *Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol*, which was held in 1969 at the Rhode Island School of Design [Fig. 11]. Later that year, the exhibition was then re-presented at the Rice University’s Institute for the Arts in Houston and moved to the Isaac Delgado Museum in New

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<sup>46</sup> Jasper Sharp, “A Spitzmaus Moves Into The Spotlight. On Preparing an Exhibition with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf,” in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Jasper Sharp, “Mit Dichtern und Künstlern. Über die Arbeit mit Edmund de Waal,” in *Edmund de Waal. During the Night*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2016), unpaginated.

Orleans in 1970. For the initial choice, Warhol was invited to rummage through the depots in order to unify and select pieces for his exhibition. The “eclectic and typically irreverent selection of objects hand-picked by Warhol”<sup>48</sup> contained different categories like shoes, headboxes, chairs and many more. His choice was predominantly quantitative, ignoring the concept of artistic quality and eliminating the hierarchy between high art and everyday objects. Nevertheless, the seemingly ignorant comprehension of selection criteria is in any case congruent with Warhol’s preference for the everyday life of consumption in his artistic practice. The exhibition display did not differ much from the one in the depot – Warhol’s intervention consisted solely in the selection and transition of dusty objects. Once again, curating was brought on the level of an artistic act. “The selection of objects from the museum’s storage that Warhol made and the methods that he chose to present them were provocative and unconventional, assaulting the principles of connoisseurship and established institutional yardsticks for considering the relative value of objects.”<sup>49</sup> In this regard, *Raid the Icebox I* was commonly inserted in the context of institutional critique, since it did not respect the toolkit used when operating within the museum.

On the other hand, Warhol tried to value what was normally overlooked, drawing attention to art-historic constructs of hierarchy, but not by criticizing the museum itself as an institution. In this context, Huberman claims that “*Raid the Icebox* should not be filed under what would later be called ‘institutional critique’ because it didn’t criticize what a museum does and how it works, but happily celebrated it for what it is: a great place for great stuff, just like (and truly no different from) the thrift shop, the suburban garage, or the corner deli. Warhol valued each of those equally, and, therefore, behaved in one just as he would in another.”<sup>50</sup> Considering the times and circumstances under which Warhol conceived the exhibition, as well as his own artistic production, a certain institutional critique did nevertheless resonate in the final show. However, Huberman’s interpretation is suitable in terms of the evaluation of a museum’s archive and depot objects. For sure, this direction is more in line with what Sharp’s idea foresaw for the series *Artist’s Choice*.

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<sup>48</sup> Jasper Sharp, “An Ephemeral Collection,” in *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas. Ed Ruscha im Kunsthistorischen Museum*, ed. Sabine Haag (Cologne: Walther König, 2012), unpagged.

<sup>49</sup> Jasper Sharp, “A Spitzmaus Moves Into The Spotlight. On Preparing an Exhibition with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf,” in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Anthony Huberman, “Andy Warhol. *Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol. 1969*,” *The Artist as Curator 7, Mousse Magazine* 48 (August 25, 2015): p. 13.



Fig. 11: *Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol*, 1969, Exhibition View, Rhode Island School Of Design, Providence.

Warhol's exhibition did not remain without successors. The significance of the archive being newly interpreted by contemporary artists was repeatedly valued within the series *The Artist's Eye* hosted by the National Gallery London starting from 1977. Until 1990 eight exhibitions were carried out by invitation to Francis Bacon, David Hockney, Lucian Freud, Bridget Riley and others. Even though the exhibitions were intended to include paintings only, the use of the archive was made in a very similar way to what had been conceived for the *Kunsthistorisches'* series. A single individual artist was meant to create a bond with an existing collection of sheer dimensions, providing a new perspective on the archival content which must be read through his or her very own conception. In every case, the compilation is to be seen as a personal interpretation of the museum's past.

For sure, in all the mentioned exhibitions, the popularity level of the invited curator-to-be appears to be a crucial reason to call them to life. The presence of a contemporary artist whose name also implies brand value can undoubtedly entail positive effects in terms of new audiences and economic compensation. The audience will be extended to new visitors who

arrive because of their familiarity with the curating artist. At the same time, the ‘usual’ visitors will gain a new perspective on what they – partly – already know. Due to the use of big names in the museum industry, the traditional logics of organization and presentation in scientific and cultural institutions can be inverted.<sup>51</sup> In terms of the driving aim to make objects hidden in the depots more accessible, the enlargement of the audience must be positively valued. However, the favorable aspect of a reinforced accessibility can easily tip into a growing attention economy around the artist’s name instead of the archival content. The collection to be exhibited is the cause of inviting a certain artist, but often less the reason to visit the exhibition.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, due to the appearance of a certain name, archival exhibitions of this style often achieve blockbuster status. This helps to nevertheless anchor museums without modern or contemporary art in their actual collection within the contemporary art world – and of course, in the art market.

The series *Artist’s Choice* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna was then introduced in 2012 with the exhibition *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Idea* conceived by Ed Ruscha. Unlike from what was announced,<sup>53</sup> the series was not presented yearly, but found its second conception in 2016 with Edmund de Waal presenting *During the Night*.<sup>54</sup>

In all cases, the greatest difficulty was undoubtedly represented by the vastness of the collection to be browsed. After a short investigation on the collective starting point, the single exhibitions from the series *Artist’s Choice* will be analyzed in the following, focusing on the respective treatment of the available archival content.

What counts for the exhibitions – that is, the eye of the artist that connects the objects – does also count for the original collection itself: it was the eye of the collector that provided the numerous objects with the notion of affiliation and coherence.

The collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna is now composed of around 4.5 million objects spanning 6,000 years<sup>55</sup> divided into fourteen different collections. Among them, the renowned Picture Gallery, the Collection of Roman and Greek Antiquities, the

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Thomas Mießgang, “Auf der goldenen Schildkröte reiten,” *Die Zeit* 46, November 8, 2018, p. 50.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ibidem.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Sabine Haag, ed., *Präsentation des neuen Programmes zum Dialog mit Moderner und Zeitgenössischer Kunst im Kunsthistorischen Museum* (Vienna: KHM, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> After the third exhibition, *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* in 2018, the series has not been continued. Probably, it has even come to an end, since Jasper Sharp stepped down from his position as adjunct curator for the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 2021. Should the series continue, it would therefore require entrusting it to a new coordinator.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Maya Jaggi, “Wes Anderson’s Grand Vienna Exhibition,” *The Financial Time Limited*, November 16, 2018, p. 10.



Kunstkammer, the Imperial Treasury Vienna, and the collection of Ambras Castle in Innsbruck.<sup>56</sup>

The *Kunstkammer* in Ambras was meticulously gathered through Archduke Ferdinand II and represented along a rigid program that had not only the aim of teachability, but mainly of representation.<sup>57</sup> The remodeling of the Ambras complex starting from 1564 into a Renaissance castle led to the final glory of the culture of *Wunderkammern*.<sup>58</sup> Slightly offset in time, Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, nephew of Ferdinand II, created a similarly favoring climate for artists and scientists with his collection at the castle in Prague.<sup>59</sup> The aim appears to be less representational and much more geared to be an instrument of studies. Against the careful presentation in Ambras, where objects were displayed in specifically designed closets [Fig. 12], the display in Prague was organized among cases, boxes, or chests.<sup>60</sup>



Fig. 12: Current Display in the *Wunderkammer* of Ambras Castle, Innsbruck.

<sup>56</sup> All the collections listed: Picture Gallery, Kunstkammer Vienna, Roman and Greek Antiquity Collection, Egyptian and Near Eastern Collection, Coin Collection, Imperial Treasury Vienna, Imperial Armoury, Collection of Historical Music Instruments, Ambras Castle Innsbruck, Imperial Carriage Museum, Theseus Temple, Theater Museum, Weltmuseum Vienna, Ephesos Museum.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Beket Bukovinská, “Bekannter – unbekannter Raum: Die Kunstkammer Rudolphs II. in Prag,” in *Kunstkammer – Laboratorium – Bühne. Schauplätze des Wissens im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), p. 214.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), p. 89.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Beket Bukovinská, “Bekannter – unbekannter Raum: Die Kunstkammer Rudolphs II. in Prag,” in *Kunstkammer – Laboratorium – Bühne. Schauplätze des Wissens im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), p. 205; Cf. Giuseppe Olmi, *L’Inventario del mondo. Catalogazione della natura e luoghi del sapere nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Società editrice il mulino, 1992), p. 154.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 214.

Due to the lack of cultural sensibility shown by Ferdinand II's successor, his son Charles, the Ambras Castle collection was sold to Rudolf II in 1606.<sup>61</sup> The importance of the Prague *Kunstkammer*, which nowadays is no longer preserved, lies in its detailed inventory that registers present exhibits from 1607 to 1611. Today, the holdings of the two collections are distributed among Ambras Castle and the Kunstkammer Wien<sup>62</sup> and constitute the cornerstones of the Habsburg collections. A real shift in the attitude and focus of the Habsburg collection occurred in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, when Leopold Wilhelm of Austria developed his interest in painting.<sup>63</sup> In the end, the “core collection was fixed by around 1800, and the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed exactly a century ago, [what] makes this a unique time capsule, and a pan-European, pre-nationalist one.”<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider suggestions about the archival destiny as being “shaped and controlled for specific political, historical and social purposes”<sup>65</sup> in the case of the Habsburg collections. From a contemporary perspective, each object's destiny was to end up either in a permanent exhibition view or in the archive for most of its existence. The need to draw attention to the storage is therefore also an urge to newly unveil the representational dimension and the logics of power under which the collection was gathered. Of course, also the possibility of broadening the socio-cultural discourse of the past by exhibiting contents from the storage must be considered.

The invitation of Ed Ruscha to the Kunsthistorisches Museum took place exactly 50 years after his first visit to Vienna. In 2012, after 18 months of preparation, the exhibition *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas* [Fig. 13] containing 37 objects – among them one drawing by Ruscha himself – was assembled. Ruscha's choice revealed an interest in art and nature and, therefore, the original place of their encounter: the *Wunderkammer*. Flower and animal paintings, as also their natural counterparts such as stuffed animals and precious stones awaited the spectators.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Franz Kirchweger, “Die Schätze des Hauses Habsburg und die Kunstkammer. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bestände,” in *Die Kunstkammer. Die Schätze der Habsburger*, ed. Sabine Haag, Franz Kirchweger (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2012), p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Ivi, pp. 24-25.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ivi, pp. 40-41.

<sup>64</sup> Maya Jaggi, “Wes Anderson's Grand Vienna Exhibition,” *The Financial Time Limited*, November 16, 2018, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Lester, *Exhibiting the Archive. Space, Encounter, and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 28.



Fig. 13: *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas*, 2012, Exhibition View, Curated by Ed Ruscha, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

The exhibits mainly derived from two collections: the Picture Gallery and the *Kunstkammer* itself. Additionally, some were borrowed from the opposite *Naturhistorisches Museum Wien*. The choice of displaying a personal reinterpretation of the *Wunderkammer* thus claims continuity between the collection and Ruscha's selection. In this regard, Haag underlined the capability of Archduke Ferdinand II and Emperor Rudolf II, who "placed enormous value on man's ability to classify systematically the artistic and natural worlds around"<sup>66</sup> them. This fascination for the macro- and microcosmos was certainly carried on by Ruscha. By uniting well-known exhibits – such as the various paintings by Jan and Pieter Brueghel – with some that are rarely shown – like precious stones, since they are some of the many in the collection – Ruscha both recovered equal importance and added new narratives to their previous history as collection pieces.

However, it must be emphasized, that nearly half of the objects in Ruscha's exhibition are permanently exhibited in the *Kunsthistorisches*, while others are part of a category that is

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<sup>66</sup> Sabine Haag, "Foreword," in *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas. Ed Ruscha im Kunsthistorischen Museum*, ed. Sabine Haag (Cologne: Walther König, 2012), unpagged; Cf. Rachel Spence, "Catalogue of chaos: One of America's superstar artists turns curator: Ed Ruscha talks to Rachel Spence about making a big show in Vienna," *Financial Times Limited* (September 12, 2012): pp. 18-19.

exposed as well.<sup>67</sup> This likely indicates a rather superficial engagement between the artist and the depot contents. Nevertheless, viewing the objects in newly constructed surroundings and comprehending them with new meanings did reinforce the bond between the institution and the public.<sup>68</sup> The fact that the artist takes on the role of the institution is nevertheless unusual for the Kunsthistorisches Museum, but, as mentioned earlier, does have its precedents.

The catalogue presents each object with a description and offers essential insights from Ruscha himself regarding the motivations behind his selection of the specific piece. Through a playful language and audible astonishment, he explored the continuity between the past and the present even in the descriptions, attempting to make references between the objects. The choice was sometimes based on simple reasons: for example, the Danube Salmon made Ruscha recall of Harpo Marx pulling out a fish from his overcoat at an exhibition. Other objects were included because of personal connections: the coyote and the rattlesnake were felt right to be added since they are native to the western US – just as Ruscha himself. So, the overall choice for the exhibitions followed very personal means and references or immediate connections he drew in his head. For that reason, the viewer must adapt and look through the eyes of the artist-curator to comprehend the exhibition, otherwise it would appear as a meaningless compilation of objects. Also, the insertion of his own work *Wanze*, which needed to be borrowed from a private collection in the US,<sup>69</sup> displays Ruscha's appropriation of the collection to his own extent. This was further reinforced by the general atmosphere of the exhibition. Visitors already familiar with Ruscha's own work were able to observe parallels with the exhibition itself: the bird's eye perspective is also found in Pieter Bruegel's paintings, the widescreen formats are revisited in the choice of the showcases, the interest in text and printing could be noted in some of the chosen exhibits. This shows Ruscha's success in inserting and naturalizing himself, along with his own work, into the extensive collection history of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

The revival of the series *Artist's Choice* occurred in 2016 with the presentation of *During the Night* curated by ceramic artist and author Edmund de Waal [Fig. 14]. He knew that he “must just choose and, when done, find a presentation form.”<sup>70</sup> Hence, he had a very clear

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<sup>67</sup> Out of the 37 exhibits, 14 are currently included in the permanent display according to the museum's online collection. 7 are for sure not exhibited, while another 7 are not listed online, leaving their display status unclear. 8 objects derive from the Naturhistorisches Museum, which does not indicate if the objects are currently on view. One drawing is by Ruscha himself, borrowed from a US private collection.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Sabine Haag, “Foreword,” in *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas. Ed Ruscha im Kunsthistorischen Museum*, ed. Sabine Haag (Cologne: Walther König, 2012), unpagged.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Ibidem. The significance of *Wanze* lies in its intended purpose as a gift for someone the artist met during his first visit Vienna in 1961. Additionally, it is the only German-titled drawing in his oeuvre. So, the painting has come home after 50 years.

<sup>70</sup> Edmund de Waal, “During the Night,” in *Edmund de Waal. During the Night*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2016), unpagged.

idea about his assignment to create a personal selection from given material. The choice derived from seven collections and contains 60 objects, which are again freed from any type of art-historical categorization.



Fig. 14: *During the Night*, Exhibition View, 2016, Curated by Edmund de Waal, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

The quintessence of the exhibition was embodied by Dürer's *Traumgesicht* [Fig. 15], contained in the artist's book, which dates back to 1525. It is a watercolor painting illustrating Dürer's dream of the apocalypse and comes along with a handwritten note: "[...] in the night when I was asleep, I had this vision, and saw how many great waters fell from heaven [...]"<sup>71</sup> As soon as the painting was presented to de Waal, he immediately expressed great fascination and decided to have it as the central piece for the exhibition.<sup>72</sup> All the other objects were chosen in accordance to model a story around the apocalyptic dream.

<sup>71</sup> Original note: "[...] in der nacht im schlaff hab ich dis gesicht gesehen wy fill großer wassern vom himell fillen [...]"

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Edmund de Waal, "During the Night," in *Edmund de Waal. During the Night*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2016), unpaginated.

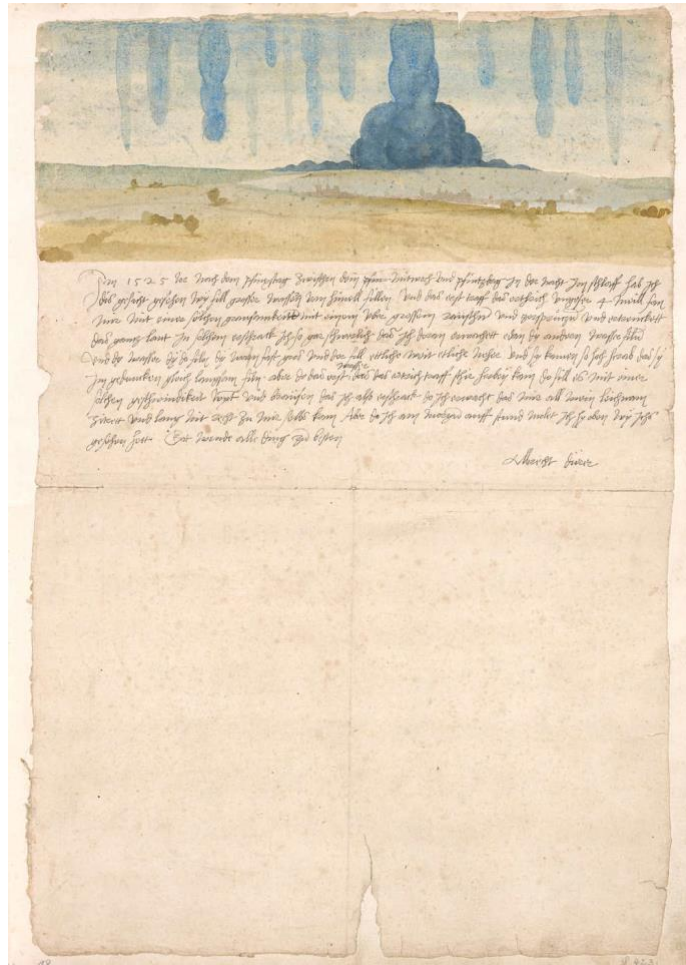


Fig. 15: Albrecht Dürer, *Traumgesicht*, in the artist's book of Dürer, 1525, watercolor and ink on paper, 30 x 42,5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

In *During the Night*, the exhibits were not a means to merely follow an artist's selection and comprehend it through the adaption of the artist's vision. De Waal selected the objects not to gather them as a personal choice, but rather to narrate a story that transcends over from one object to the next. The exhibits were therefore unified in the first place through the narration, and secondly, through the creator of that story. The occupation of de Waal as an author and his literary reference becomes very evident and fundamental for the comprehension of the exhibition. De Waal followed the thoughts of Dürer, the being alone and exposed was what fascinated him.<sup>73</sup> Then, he connected the *Schüttelkasten* (late 16<sup>th</sup> century), a box containing a microcosmos of flora and fauna. The connection of different materials and techniques provides it with its mysterious identity.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.

This impermanence of things is my orientation plan for the *Kunstkammer*. This may seem bizarre. Room after room of golden artistry arguably speaks to domination over the world, to collecting as power. Collecting is an attempt to map something, a tracing of what one knows. But there, travelers bring objects and materials, and you just don't know what they are, whether what you hold in your hand comes from an animal or a plant, what part of creation it belongs to, how old it is, what its properties may be.<sup>74</sup>

So, de Waal's consciousness toward the act of selecting was very distinct. With this expression it becomes apparent that he referred to the initial collection which was gathered under the means of power and representation. As he stepped into the role of the curator, the selector of things, he took over the responsibility of narrating the archive in a new way and to inevitably revive these power structures of collecting and exposing. The showcases assumed an important role for the presentation, as they increased the desirability of the objects while they were deprived from being touched, but therefore also protected.<sup>75</sup> The chosen exhibits were located between uncontested exclusiveness and mass existence. There were unique objects like the mentioned *Schüttelkasten*, but then there are corals, which are available in heaps within the collection. Some of the choices – such as the *Schüttelkasten*, the bezoars or the stone slab with fish – must be considered as part of the core objects of the *Kunstkammer* collection,<sup>76</sup> which is why the innovativeness of their election for the exhibition is not at all attributable. They are not the praised forgotten or never seen objects which were meant to find their place in front of the public. Nevertheless, all these objects were equally significant for the means of the exhibition, as each tells a fundamental part of the narration around Dürer's *Traumgesicht*.

In terms of the archive, it is interesting to note that the objects were grouped up into categories – such as the eight pieces of corals or the two bezoars – which derive from different collections. So, they are unified under the same imperial collection, but are – against expectation – not to be found in the same collocations or lists of inventories, as they are located in different cities and buildings. Therefore, without the intervention and effort of De Waal, they probably would never have collided. He managed to bring the enormous collection together under the dreamlike spotlight of *During the Night*. The notion of darkness in the chosen narration and exhibition display did at any time mirror the imagined mysterious darkness of the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Lisa Appignanesi, "Lacrimae Rerum," in *Edmund de Waal. During the Night*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2016), unpaginated.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Franz Kirchweber, "Die Schätze des Hauses Habsburg und die *Kunstkammer*. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bestände," in *Die Kunstkammer. Die Schätze der Habsburger*, ed. Sabine Haag, Franz Kirchweber (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2012), p. 32, p. 35.

depots, archives, and storages de Waal gathered the exhibits from. The exhibition was concluded by a work specifically made by de Waal for the exhibition, also bearing the same title, which consists of broken porcelain pieces of his own works, calling for emotional involvement. Such as Ed Ruscha, Edmund de Waal equally managed to set his own roots in the Kunsthistorisches' collection.



Fig. 16: *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, 2018, Exhibition View, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

With the third installment of the series *Artist's Choice* under the coordination of Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf [Fig. 16], initially, similar considerations regarding the archive can be observed. They tried as well to grasp the sense of the archive's content, which was expressed through a manifold selection of exhibits in terms of time-bound qualities and provenance. The incorporation of different collections by Anderson and Malouf, though, took place in a much more encompassing way: all of the 14 collections of the Kunsthistorisches and that of the neighboring twin building, the Naturhistorisches Museum, found their place in the exhibition. Therefore, also the dimension of the exhibition massively increased compared to the previous exhibitions. With the inclusion of 423 objects, the ungraspable size of the collection is mirrored and emphasizes the difficulty of the act of attributing a new meaning and



personal narration within this vast sphere of potential exhibits. In all three exhibitions, the relations between institutions, artists and curators are rewritten, as none of the nominated artists focused on just one genre of objects. All of them selected far from the conventional logics of categorization – much more in the dynamics of a *Wunderkammer*, even if not always explicitly expressed. Therefore, in no case, the assignment was approached with the methodology a professional curator would apply. *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* was perhaps even more “a clear act of decentering. Both its curatorial process and the resulting exhibition vastly undermined the typical expectations of museum staff and visitors.”<sup>77</sup> This is for sure connected to the variety of objects, which assume an expanded form and thus engender a much more intense confrontation with the depots from the part of the museum’s staff.

While Ruscha and de Waal tried to move on along personal justifications, reasonings or narrations, Anderson and Malouf “selected instinctively, without any detailed or scientific rarity, provenance or exhibition history.”<sup>78</sup> This approach aligns more closely with Warhol’s method, as it practices resistance against curatorial selection principles. Warhol exchanged objects with exhibition value for everyday objects, which is in consonance to his artistic practice. In contrast, Anderson and Malouf employed these principles in support of the imperial collection.

The significance of the archive is further specified by Lester, as “sites of narrative and story, focusing on the specific and the individual: the personal, often everyday histories that reference and point to the bigger narratives of the past. In this sense, the archive is a fragment that both articulates and represents the past.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the archive constitutes a site of information and knowledge that Anderson and Malouf expanded upon to create a wondrous experience, encouraging reflection and the production of meaning.

For the whole series *Artist’s Choice* and other exhibitions dealing with deposits, the notion of presence is central. Exhibiting the archive is a delicate process: by temporarily taking objects out of place, their meaning and past may be altered. Lester questions if the archives are even supposed to be exhibited, as their informational capacity may diminish when they are displayed in showcases.<sup>80</sup> The essence of the archive is therefore partly lost as soon as the objects exchange their shelves with the showcases, implying new individual or collective status.

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<sup>77</sup> Csilla E. Ariese, Mariana Françaço, “Completeness: How the Lack of a Mouse in a Box Revisits the Spectacle of the *Kunstammer*,” *Curator. The Museum Journal* 62, no. 4 (October 2019): p. 58.

<sup>78</sup> Jasper Sharp, “A Spitzmaus Moves Into The Spotlight. On Preparing an Exhibition with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf,” in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Lester, *Exhibiting the Archive. Space, Encounter, and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 105.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 25.

As long as they are present in the archive, one needs to believe – but cannot know – that they are actually present there. When they are exhibited, their presence is confirmed but an absence at their habitual secure place is left. Being exposed functions as a synonym to being out of place. These conditions represented for example a fascination for de Waal, as he always showed a great interest in the lives of the objects that have been removed and deprived from their original place and function.<sup>81</sup> The exhibits of all three exhibitions fluctuate between presence and absence. This consideration must be seen in connection to Groys' conviction that artworks terminate their identification as such from the moment they are not exhibited anymore. In this regard, an unexhibited artwork cannot exist. "As long as an object is not yet exhibited and as soon as it is no longer exhibited, it can no longer be considered an artwork. It is either a memory of past art or a promise of future art, but from either perspective it is simply art documentation."<sup>82</sup> The significance of exhibited archive content must therefore be regarded within its capacity to transform the logics of presence, status, and informational value.

Considering Benjamin,<sup>83</sup> the authenticity of every work of art is rooted in the here and now – therefore, by changing the *here*, the nature of objects also changes within their existence. This becomes also relevant in terms of reproduction: in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, one could find a copy of Dürer – yet the fact that it was a copy was just not relevant for the viewer. Meanwhile, the exhibits taken from the permanent display in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, were substituted by drawings of the original work made by Malouf. Therefore, during the exhibition, the collection altered its inner compilation.

To summarize the notion of presence and art status regarding the archive, Derrida draws the line even further by locating the archive's main focus in anticipation of the future:

This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might already be at our disposal or not at our disposal, an archivable concept of the archive. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, "Mit Dichtern und Künstlern. Über die Arbeit mit Edmund de Waal," in *Edmund de Waal. During the Night*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2016), unpagged.

<sup>82</sup> Boris Groys, "Multiple Authorship," in *The Manifesta Decade. Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Barbara Vanderlinden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 98.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility," trans. Michael W. Jennings, *Grey Room* 39 (2010): p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): p. 27.

### 1.3 Anderson's & Malouf's Appropriation of the Archive to Personal Extents

By taking on the task of curators, Anderson and Malouf necessarily faced the challenge by applying their knowledge of the artistic fields to new extents. The logics adopted within the process fundamentally differed from that of a trained curator. Therefore, the outcome was expected to surpass and subvert the already established methodologies, ultimately prompting a change in the curatorial system. By employing interdisciplinary working strategies and pursuing an authentic exhibition, they needed to approach the existing collections with a highly personal perspective, seeking to highlight new interpretations. In other words, by composing an archival exhibition, Anderson and Malouf were faced with questions on possible presentation, unfolding, or even critique of the archive – and they necessarily addressed them by leveraging their own resources. Thus, their role resulted in finding a way to harness the potential of exhibitions to reshape new understandings and experiences of the archive.

In the exhibition catalogue, Anderson claims: “While Juman Malouf and I can take no credit for the conception and creation of any of the works of art included in this exhibition, we do harbor the humble aspiration that the unconventional groupings and arrangement of the works on display may influence the study of art and antiquity in minor, even trivial, but nevertheless detectable ways for many future generations to come.”<sup>85</sup> This statement reinforces the significance of their personal contribution and partial appropriation of the archive. The display did not consist of newly made objects, but the exhibition itself became the artistic medium of creative expression. Eventually, each object on display – so, an enormous number of exhibits – will be forever associated with this act of personal selection through Anderson and Malouf.

These considerations lead back to a Duchampian notion of art production, which was shifted to be synonymous with selection. In a similar way, the curators' task in the case of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was to select and not to produce, which was not considered as artistic expression. According to von Hantelmann, Duchamp incorporated what she defines as “curatorial paradigm”,<sup>86</sup> even if the actual subjectivation of the curator's tasks took place only in the 1960s. So, Duchamp never defined himself as a curator, but established essential standards for that practice: “Duchamp turned the act of choosing into a new paradigm of creativity. Or, rather, he sharpened a practice that had always existed into something like a paradigm. He recognized and anticipated the slightly shifting accentuation from the former to

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<sup>85</sup> Wes Anderson, “Introduction,” in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), S.19.

<sup>86</sup> Dorothea Von Hantelman, “The Curatorial Paradigm,” *The Exhibitionist. Journal on Exhibition Making* 4 (June 2011): p. 11.

the latter, a shift that would gain significance in the decades to follow in culture and society, and, consequently, as an artistic strategy.”<sup>87</sup> With the emergence of the figure of the curator and the status of the exhibition becoming the utilized medium, the curator must be considered as a generator of meaning. The exhibition is understood as place and act where new meaning is to be generated – and is therefore not merely a matter of selection but also of creation.



Fig. 17: Charles Thurston Thompson, *Fireman's Station. Paris Universal Exhibition, 1855*, albumen print, Victoria and Albert Museum. Background: entrance to Courbet's Pavilion of Realism.

However, the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* must be seen within the category of the artist as curator. This does not correspond to a new curatorial model but dates back to the rise of museums. In 1855 Gustave Courbet took an essential step by organizing an exhibition as an artist and setting up the *Pavillon du Réalisme* [Fig. 17] in Paris. Courbet had the freedom to choose the place of the exhibition himself, as he also made the selection of artworks autonomously and handled the related hanging. On one hand, this must be considered as an expression of artistic autonomy, while on the other hand, it served as a social critique to the totalitarian Salon system.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ivi, p. 12.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Elena Filipovic, “Introduction (When Exhibition Becomes Form: On the History of the Artist as Curator),” in *The Artist as Curator. An Anthology*, ed. Elena Filipovic (Milan: Mousse Publishing, London: Koenig Books, 2017), p. 7; Cf. Emily Zimmermann, “Displays of Power: Courbet as Exhibition Maker,” in *At The Source: A*

Another expression of the phenomenon of the artist-curator can be observed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century among artist groups. This was a leading model also for non-profit and artist-run spaces in the second half of the last century. Noteworthy are two exhibitions held in 1980 organized by the collective Colab in New York City. Both, *The Real Estate Show* [Fig. 18] and *The Times Square Show* [Fig. 19], represented democratic attempts in terms of participation, production and exhibiting. A leading principle of *The Real Estate Show* was the democratic approach toward curating: everyone was free to hang their works, rearrange or remove the ones of others.<sup>89</sup> Both shows did not have a specific list of curators but entrusted the curatorial choices to the artists who wished to exhibit.

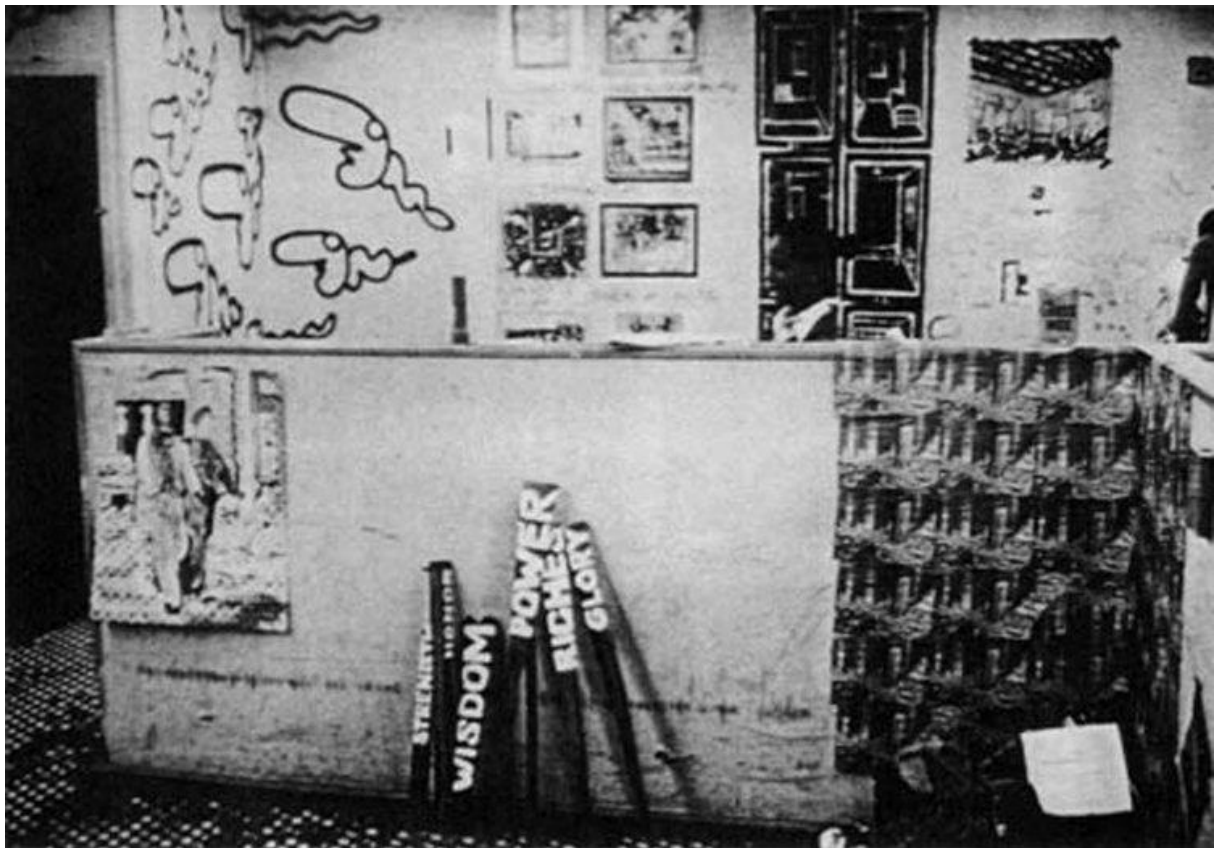


Fig. 18: *The Real Estate Show*, 1980, Exhibition View, New York City. Upper left: Mike Glier, *Values* and Peggy Katz. Wall pieces: Scott Miller, Edit deAk, Jane Dickson and Cara Perlman.

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*Courbet Landscape Rediscovered*, ed. Lynn Marsden-Atlass, André Dombrowski (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023), p. 75.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Alhena Katsos, "Collaborative Inc. (Colab). 'Times Square Show,'" in *The Artist as Curator. An Anthology*, ed. Elena Filipovic (Milan: Mousse Publishing, London: Koenig Books, 2017), pp. 144-145, pp. 156-157.



Fig. 19: *The Times Square Show*, 1980, Exhibition View of the *Money, Love, Death Room*, New York City.

Of course, also the previous exhibition *Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol* in 1969 falls under the same category. In comparison to Colab's projects, the decisive difference – which also applies for Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf – is that the initiative for the exhibition was still taken by an institution, while the assigned artists took control over the curatorial choices and had no right of authorship for the exhibits themselves.

Anderson and Malouf may have approached the task of curating the archive without the methods a trained curator would deploy. Still, their personal vision and artistry is intrinsically connected to the categorization within the exhibition's selection.<sup>90</sup> Each of the seven rooms set up in one spacious architectural hall followed a specific theme that facilitated transdisciplinary encounter: there were portraits, green objects, animal related exhibits, miniatures, boxes and cases, wooden objects, and child portraits.

It is important to acknowledge that for Wes Anderson, his role as filmmaker is inherently a curatorial one, as his movies are themselves to be seen as curatorial acts. "Assembling objects and sets that draw attention to themselves, rather than blending in."<sup>91</sup> In

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Katherine Lanza, "Moviemaker at the Museum," *The Magazine Antiques* 186, no. 1 (February 2019): p. 69.

<sup>91</sup> Cody Delistraty, "Wes Anderson, Curator? The Filmmaker Gives It a Try," *New York Times*, November 7, 2018, unpaginated. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/arts/design/wes-anderson-vienna-kunsthistorisches-museum.html> (Accessed June 8, 2023)

this regard, Anderson's artistic approach incorporates some curatorial elements, but they derive from another discipline and are therefore not conventional. The same applies to Juman Malouf: as set and costume designer, she creatively and visually approaches the task of the curator. As artists who are also curators, it is crucial to maintain a balance between artistic pursuits and academic necessities. It is worth noting that Malouf possesses a degree in fine arts and art history, which would be an indicator that art-historic methodology and structuring is something she is supposedly familiar with – but there was no trace of it in the *Spitzmaus* show. Therefore, Anderson and Malouf fit into the role of the artist-as-curator, as they apply their practical knowledge on a theoretical base. This notion is further supported by Doubtfire and Ranchetti:

The figure of the artist-curator emerged from the break towards curatorial independence and in the diversification of artistic practice into the realms of research, academia and pedagogy, as well as the curatorial. The artist acting as curator, although temporarily adopting a curatorial mode of practice, is fundamentally an artist. Whilst the work of the artist as curator is indisputably curatorial, this ilk of curatorial practice often exists in a territory of its own, a limbo-like space situated somewhere between curating and art. It is through the work of the artist who acts as curator that we begin to think of the exhibition as art, and see the autonomous curator functioning in some form of artistic capacity.<sup>92</sup>

In these terms, even if the artist operates on behalf of the curator, he or she will never cease to act like an artist. This is another decisive aspect that allows the exhibition itself to be considered as a medium. Here lies the very significance of Anderson's and Malouf's task to articulate themselves artistically without taking over the means of production: they started from the archive and transformed it creatively to personal extents, as their medium of expression happened to be the exhibition. By maintaining their position as artists, all applied criteria were necessarily tied to personal preferences and visually reasoned choices – resulting in a diversity that aims to deconstruct preexisting classification.<sup>93</sup> The whole display of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was situated in an individual atmosphere of presentation, progressing into a personal appropriation of the archive, which was then presented within Anderson's and Malouf's way of storytelling. In this manner, they contributed new forms of organizing the *Kunsthistorisches*'

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<sup>92</sup> Joseph Doubtfire, Giulia Ranchetti, "Curator as Artist as Curator," (April 30, 2015): unpagued. <https://curatingthecontemporary.org/2015/04/30/curator-as-artist-as-curator/> (Accessed June 28, 2023)

<sup>93</sup> Cf. James Putnam, *Art and Artifact. The Museum as Medium* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2001), p. 132.

imperial collection. Additionally, they offered new reading perspectives to the spectators by applying seemingly simple grouping criteria, such as material or color.

The attempt to outsource the curator to extra-institutional figures is meanwhile condemned by Huber and will lead to an “institutional decoupling and autonomization of its own curatorial system. After this point, an exhibition made without the participation of an expertly trained curator can only be an incompetent exhibition, and critics will accuse it of this.”<sup>94</sup> He emphasizes the loss of scholarly rigor in curating with the developing tendency of personalized exhibitions, in which the curators’ distinctive style and approach take precedence over the actual content. This critique is certainly relevant, but only up to a certain extent. As long as a balance is maintained in the curatorial dimension between exhibitions with a higher attention to the curator personas and those that prioritize the exhibition itself, the developments are kept dynamic. The possibility of new interpretation of criteria is essential to preserve the freedom – already subject to questioning – of the arts and its constantly updated significance. A distinctive aesthetic from the curators’ side can certainly represent an accessible way for visitors who are less familiar with the content they see, which was surely the case in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*.

In the end, it presumably is the exhibition itself that allows to fill space and artworks with narrative, representing the true potential for connection and interpretation. On the other hand, this aspect can also be seen as the exact opposite, as “artists and curators working within the context of a museum collection run the risk of emptying objects of their intrinsic meaning in order to satisfy the urge to breathe new life into them.”<sup>95</sup> The constant risk of exploiting individual artworks by overfilling them with meaning and narrative must always be a preoccupation of the curator. Anderson and Malouf did not delve deep into narration but met the Kunsthistorisches’ collection in visual terms. By adapting the form of the *Wunderkammer* for their exhibition, the curators succeeded in grasping the essence and origin of the collection, while refraining from excessive interpretation, which was left up to the individual spectator. The archive was cleverly endowed with a certain amount of agency, as the curators have refrained from any kind of explanation in order to let the content speak on its own. On the contrary, it must be considered that the contribution of Anderson and Malouf was just not conventionally textual and academic but was outstanding due to its striking visual

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<sup>94</sup> Hans Dieter Huber, “Künstler als Kuratoren – Kuratoren als Künstler?” In *Kritische Szenografie: Die Kunstaussstellung im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Kai-Uwe Hemken (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015), p. 202.

<sup>95</sup> Bruce Checefsky, “Erasure: Curator as Artist,” in *Artist as Curator*, ed. Celina Jeffery (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 102.



contextualization of the display, which in the end made a personal interpretation of the archive prevail.

Within the curatorial working method of Anderson and Malouf, trained curators and the museum staff from the Kunsthistorisches Museum were radically challenged, as they had to comply with instructions they never had to follow before, to reach the unchanged target of an exhibition. “Everyone had to shift their positions slightly to find a position between ideal and pragmatic.”<sup>96</sup> By deploying artists as curators, new challenges arose for the well-coordinated staff, revealing the weak points of common archiving and curating strategies. Projects of this kind contribute to an acceleration of processes that rethink current strategies and encourage the solving of tasks and difficulties in an interdisciplinary manner. Ariese addresses appropriately the banality of challenges faced during the conception of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition: “For instance: how to find objects in a specific shade of green when the collection databases do not have color as a search category? How to deal with placing items with vastly different climate control needs in the same display case? How to exhibit an empty historical display case?”<sup>97</sup> Some of the challenges – such as the color filter – may appear to be so simple, yet they have not been considered by anyone before. When observing this from the position of the spectator, it becomes clear that this is not at all trivial: one might remember a green vase from the exhibition, but without being able to search for a specific color in the database, it will be a thing of impossibility to find the precise item again among the thousands of vases held in the collection.

Since also Anderson and Malouf used the online collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum to select some of the exhibits, the problems of the database – which may occur more often for visitors than for the internal museum staff – arose already during the conception of the exhibition. This aspect holds significance for the exhibition: as the main content was the collection itself, the curators also managed to address its increasing digital existence, which is erected in parallel to the physical one. All in all, the museum’s staff was certainly challenged and had to ‘learn to unlearn’ their habitual working methods. By employing artists as curators, trained curators have sometimes benefitted from the impulse to rethink the medium of the exhibition and the possibilities surrounding its conception.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Jasper Sharp, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 28.

<sup>97</sup> Csilla E. Ariese, “Decentering,” in *Practicing Decoloniality in Museums. A Guide with Global Examples*, ed. Csilla E. Ariese, Magdalena Wróblewska (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), p. 59.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Kate Brown, “Wes Anderson’s Offbeat Debut as a Curator Drove a Storied Museum’s Staff Crazy. The Results are Enchanting” (November 7, 2018): unpagged. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/wes-anderson-curator-kunsthistorisches-museum-1387429> (Accessed June 1, 2023); Cf. Elena Filipovic, “Introduction (When

Certainly, proper curators of different collections were involved in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition itself. However, their role was not to aid the artist-curators in their decision-making, as independence in the selections was to be granted. Nevertheless, the Kunsthistorisches' staff did provide Anderson and Malouf with object lists, which contained pre-selections of objects, which was an inevitable process due to the sheer dimension of the museum's depot. Every listed object was accompanied by photographic material because the individual access to the depot material for Anderson and Malouf occurred primarily or even exclusively on a visual level. However, these lists were then increasingly directed by the two curators, who identified their categories of interest by gaining more and more insight into the essence of the collection. During the process of building familiarity with the archive, they managed to find a new expression within the content they faced. By deciding to include over 400 exhibits in the final display, they attempted to convey their initial feeling when approaching the infinite number of inventories to the spectators through an overwhelming impression. But then, when the visitor gets closer, they are supposed to be able to differentiate or connect between the objects – just as Anderson and Malouf did in their process of examination of the collection. Bearing in mind the amount of material they dealt with, the constant tension between negation and approval in the curatorial duty of selection took over an even more fundamental role.

The matter of dealing with an extensive archive was evenly substantial for the post-internet movement. The early 21<sup>st</sup> century is marked by massive possibilities of access to streaming services, papers, and books. The digital age entails free circulation and obliges each user to sort, arrange and store material virtually. This alteration turns many people into amateur archivists or curators.<sup>99</sup> In 2013, the American artist Kenneth Goldsmith presented *Printing Out The Internet* [Fig. 20] at the LABOR Gallery in Mexico City. The attempt was made to materialize the magnitude of material accessible online, which was done by asking people to submit material printed out from the internet to the gallery. This aimed to “concretize digital data into physical objects.”<sup>100</sup> Consequently, many people living the digital age are provided with a different, newfound perception of organizing an inexhaustible archive, which evenly matters for the comprehension of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition in 2018. While post-internet artists tried to materialize the digital dimension of an open archive, Anderson and Malouf started from a physical archive that was ungraspable not in terms of sole digital existence but due to prior

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Exhibition Becomes Form: On the History of the Artist as Curator),” in *The Artist as Curator. An Anthology*, ed. Elena Filipovic (Milan: Mousse Publishing, London: Koenig Books, 2017), p. 13.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Kenneth Goldsmith, *Wasting Time on The Internet* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016), pp. 91-92.

<sup>100</sup> Ivi, p 107.

inaccessibility. On daily base, the online catalogue of the collection represents the most accessible form of the Kunsthistorisches' archive.



Fig. 20: Kenneth Goldsmith, *Printing Out the Internet*, 2013, Exhibition View, LABOR Gallery, Mexico City.

Regarding Anderson's and Malouf's exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, they acted like the organizers of the archival collection content. This role is tied to the initial form of the *Kunstkammer*, which served as the applied model for the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, which has already been further investigated. The tasks that the curators faced were originally performed in a similar manner by the scientist:

The scientist who animates the *Wunderkammer* and organizes his finds in the collection obeys first of all a non-selective criterion of total and uncensored knowledge in which the exception must find its place alongside the rule, on equal basis.

The scholar who has an "astonished" approach, not cold toward nature, is ready to conceive it above all in its dialectic between chaos and order, yet privileging the principle of unlimited variety, for which nature best reveals its

strength in what is singular and unrepeatable. [...] There is something of the *bricoleur* in the scientist [...]<sup>101</sup>

In these terms, by employing the *Wunderkammer* as inherent atmosphere for their exhibition – which is especially in line with the *Kunsthistorisches*' origins – Anderson and Malouf assumed the role of the curious scientist, trying to attribute meaning to the macro- and microcosmos. Through updating this role to the contemporary, their predominant position over the archive becomes even more evident. Also, in terms of conception of time, the artist-curators adopted the atemporal approach of the *Kunstskammer*, as their relation to the archive was not focused on the aim of showing a development. Therefore, the exhibition itself cannot be considered as a means to show a steady progress. The notion of history underlying the *Spitzmaus* exhibition follows the idea of multiplicity coined by Kubler. According to him, there is no single development but several histories of art that evolve simultaneously and collide sometimes. The shape of time is not marked by art-historical chronology but by the interaction of the various developments.<sup>102</sup>

Anderson and Malouf focused on these interactions, themselves defining what they consist of: each of the set categories for the exhibition can be regarded as an interpreted collision – objects met because of their material, color, or size. By not assuming art history as chronological they succeeded in uniting different epochs without any regard to art-historical classification. Therefore, they managed to personalize an atemporal history within the archive of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum*. Since the original *Wunderkammer* collections were not striving for universal completeness,<sup>103</sup> this was not a desired fulfillment for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. It was not intended to display the archive as a whole – which would have been a matter of impossibility – but to transmit a sense of vastness. During the conceptual process of Anderson and Malouf, the extraneous juxtaposition of *artificialia* and *naturalia* within this multitude was much more of a focal point. The impossibility of displaying the archive as a whole is tied to the inevitability of choice and selection, which, as analyzed previously, in the case of the artist-curator is necessarily of a personal manner.

In this regard, the selected core object, the *Coffin of a Shrew* (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) [Fig. 21] originating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, appropriately addresses some characteristics of the

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<sup>101</sup> Adalgisa Lugli, *Naturalia et Mirabilia. Il collezionismo enciclopedico nelle Wunderkammern d'Europa* (Milano: G. Mazzotta, 1983), p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), esp. p. 72; Cf. David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (London: Phaidon, 2003), p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Robert Felfe, "Die Kunstskammer – und warum ihre Zeit erst kommen wird," *Kunstchronik* 67, no. 7 (2014): p. 346.

imperial collection. It conveys the feeling of curiosity, which constitutes a pivotal interest during the accumulation of the collection. This notion is even reinforced by the choice of adopting the German designation *Spitzmaus* for the title in each language.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, the actually never aspired totality is summarized by the incompleteness<sup>105</sup> of the coffin, since its actual content – the shrew mummy – was not present.



Fig. 21: *Coffin of a Shrew*, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, colored wood, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

Moreover, the role of the artist-as-archivist, theorized by Hal Foster, is applicable to Anderson and Malouf. Foster defines its focus on the collection, distinguishing it from the museum. Even if Anderson and Malouf were strictly connected to the Kunsthistorisches, their responsibility over the collection went beyond the walls of the museum. They reached out to other houses like the theater museum or the Weltmuseum, in order to primarily treat the collection rightfully as a whole. Also, the differentiation between *naturalia* and *artificialia* was not an actual concern for them, since all were absorbed into the diverse, but nevertheless unified

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<sup>104</sup> The *Spitzmaus* coffin was one of the last objects selected for the exhibition. Upon discovery, Anderson expressed great fascination, not only for the object itself but also for the German term *Spitzmaus*, which is why it was decided to maintain the German designation for the exhibition's title. Cf. Judith Bradlwarter, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, June 21, 2023, pp. 171-172.

<sup>105</sup> Critics (Cf. Dath 2019, Mießgang 2018, Tschetschik-Hammerl 2019) did not address this condition as incompleteness but as emptiness which mirrors the exhibition's blank content. For a detailed analysis consult chapter 3.

imperial collection. Therefore, each object experienced equal treatment by Anderson and Malouf. Foster exclusively attributes the definition of the artist-as-archivist to artists working with archival content.<sup>106</sup> A crucial artist to consider in these terms is Douglas Gordon, who works with different modes of editing and reworking found footage. *24 Hour Psycho* [Fig. 22] from 1993 is known as one of his greatest masterpieces, in which he engaged with Hitchcock's movie in an archival way by extending the given footage to 24 hours. The outcome is certainly of artistic nature, to be presented in an exhibition space and not in a movie theater.



Fig. 22: Douglas Gordon, *24 Hour Psycho*, 1993, Exhibition View.

Therefore, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition would actually not fall into the task of what Foster defines as artist-as-archivist. Considering the previous reflections on the exhibition having become a medium itself, it is very possible though to grasp the exhibition as artistic product, wherefore Anderson and Malouf did incorporate and fluctuate between both: the figure of artist-as-curator and of the artist-as-archivist.

Even though they approached the archive on an equal footing, the final act of selection transposed Anderson and Malouf in a hierarchically powerful position, as they restored the objects' original purpose of being seen – or newly assign this function, as some objects had never been publicly displayed. This relates back to the previous consideration of Groys' reflections on the artwork's status, that is exclusively maintained in the moment an object is

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Autumn 2010): pp. 4-5.

exhibited – making it “either a memory of past art or a promise of future art.”<sup>107</sup> In the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, the validation of the archive newly arose and objects with an extraordinary, but ungraspable (exhibition) value took their place as artworks in the display. So, not the function of the individual object itself was treated in the first place, but the object being part of a specific collection. Following the arguments of the artist-as-curator and artist-as-archivist it is now possible to reexamine the role of authorship within the exhibition. That was manifested in the newly valued exhibited pieces – as Anderson and Malouf did not claim to be authors of any of the exhibits, and therefore authorship was multiplied to further extent by the gathering for the means of the exhibition. Therefore, each piece in the exhibition, even now that they found their way back to the depot, is now inseparably linked to the names of the curators. The consideration of multiple authorship is crucial to consider, as Anderson – and Malouf to certain extents – comes from to the movie industry, where this collectivity is much more acknowledged and evident than in the practice of art curating.

Similar methods of rendering material accessible can be observed in filmmaking or film archiving. “A process that starts with acquiring the material, through to recognising and cataloguing it, restoring it when needed, and only later setting it aside for potential exhibitions.”<sup>108</sup> Assumably, Anderson is still familiar with the procedure of re-evaluating archives, even if he does not explicitly occupy himself with film archives. By following the mentioned process, it is to keep in motion the dynamics of the archive,<sup>109</sup> which was also intended through the curatorial decisions in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. In this sense, the exhibition served as a means of outreach, aiming to endorse the archive’s value and intent.

Due to postmodernist thinking it became possible to perceive the archive as a site of interpretation, which was a fundamental passage for Anderson’s and Malouf’s exhibition to be conceived. The archive, instead of being “the source of truth but, rather, a site open to many interpretations of the past, one in which use becomes increasingly important”,<sup>110</sup> constitutes a significant understanding for the curators, but also for the spectators. This allows for interpretation according to changing social and cultural frameworks. Therefore, it was in the curators’ hands to infuse the archive with contemporary spirit. The role of the archivist, or better, artist-as-archivist, bears similarities with the *Wunderkammer*’s scientist, and is not

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<sup>107</sup> Boris Groys, “Multiple Authorship,” in *The Manifesta Decade. Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Barbara Vanderlinden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 97.

<sup>108</sup> Francesco Federici, “Archive, Found Footage, Exhibition. The Process of Reusing,” in *Art and Cinema as Archive: Form, Medium, Memory*, ed. Francesco Federici, Cosetta G. Saba (Milan: Mimesis International, 2014), p. 110.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 111.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Lester, *Exhibiting the Archive. Space, Encounter, and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 27.

always driven by purely objective motivations. The considerations by Derrida regarding the figure of the archivist are useful to further elaborate the dynamic persistence of the archive:

By incorporating the knowledge which is deployed in reference to it, the archive augments itself, engrosses itself, it gains in *auctoritas*. But in the same stroke it loses the absolute and meta-textual authority it might claim to have. One will never be able to objectivize it while leaving no remainder. The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future.<sup>111</sup>

In this regard, the role of Anderson and Malouf proves to be a significant contribution to the archive itself, without actually adding any additional physical object to it. By conceiving the exhibition for the Kunsthistorisches Museum, they created an additional piece for the archive – which is to be the exhibition itself. The exhibits may have been dispersed again to different depots and exhibitions, but the invisible bond between them is kept upright. Therefore, the collection transformed its essence through participation in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Without the act of creating new interrelations within the archive, it would not be capable of providing information about itself.<sup>112</sup>

Considering the inexhaustible dimension of the Kunsthistorisches' imperial collections, it is impossible to reinforce the single affiliation of the collection through further interpretations. New partly compilations on the inside though enable the dynamic renewal of the archival bond within the collection as a whole. Anderson's and Malouf's role in this regard was to reinvent the archive to keep it vibrant. Regardless, their contribution and authorship in the context of the exhibition cannot be freed from objectification. The additional bond created through *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* inevitably carries the stamp of its artist-curators for all its future reference and history. Even if they managed to breathe new agency and dignity into the archive, it experienced a personal appropriation for individual preferences. However, the archive remained subordinated to Anderson and Malouf, who have skillfully immortalized themselves in the archive.

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<sup>111</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): p. 45.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), p. 25; Cf. Katie Rudolph, "Separated at Appraisal: Maintaining the Archival Bond between Archives Collections and Museum Objects," *Archival Issues* 33, no. 1 (2011): p. 28.



## 2. Spatial Expressions: Inside the Shadow Box

The reflections made in the first chapter already demonstrated the significance of the *Wunderkammer* format, and especially the obligatory association with the figure of the collector, scientist, and archivist has proven to have a significant impact on the inventory itself. Since Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf followed the inspiration of this exhibition format, their function was necessarily subject to their individual vision – which was not that of a professional curator. Since both of them are much more trained on a visual level, the final exhibition design was surely charged with the message desired to convey.

For an accurate examination of the exhibition as a whole, it is therefore unavoidable to examine the exhibition display conceived for *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. A first impression of the exhibition being self-reflective in every possible aspect is given by the architectural space in which it is situated. Following this, a structural analysis will be conducted to grasp the provided spatial support for the spectator when wandering through the several inserted spaces. Since every room erected for the exhibition is unique, it is essential to investigate the correlation of the exhibition design with the content each space was going to hold, and to what extent this personalized character was skillfully indicating – more or less visibly – its embedded logic.

Subsequently, it remains to assess the affiliation between the display design and the personal aesthetics of Anderson and Malouf. These are best expressed in Anderson's movies, which will be compared to the different sections of the exhibition display. According to the extremely high extent of visual communication through different modes of symmetrical framings or the recurring use of specific colors, it is possible to prove underlying narratives according to elements drawn from the movies. Moreover, references between film stills and the positioning of exhibits within the display will prove the fluent evolution and update of specific settings. Regarding the modes of framing, an attempt is made to substantiate my consideration about the exhibition being constructed of multiple film stills: instead of the movie running on its own, the activation of the sequence is up to the spectator moving through the space.

Lastly, an examination of the box as container and medium for display remains to be carried out. The importance of the box for the *Spitzmaus* display appears evident due to its multiple insertions; and also in Anderson's movies, it frequently occurs. Naturally, the research led back to the original *Wunderkammer* cabinet as a first form of display furniture. Its evolution up to the glass vitrine will be examined according to several artistic confrontations and other display designs. Alongside Damien Hirst, Hermann Distel, Tilda Swinton, and others, it is possible to follow this evolution up to the purest form: the empty vitrine.

## 2.1 Analyzing the Exhibition Design

The exhibition design of *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* assumed crucial importance for conveying the contents to the viewers. Situated in a single hall, the Gallery XIX or *Goldener Saal* of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the exhibition spanned 265 m<sup>2</sup>. The architectural unit was then subdivided and structured by an installation of showcases, which resulted in the generation of eight different rooms.<sup>113</sup> The challenge was to strategically position each exhibit in a way that permits it to function visually as a cohesive whole while also captivating the curiosity of the spectator in the single piece. The exhibition design has been conceived with a high range of sensitivity aiming the intimate engagement for the visitor while also allowing the single object to “speak for itself” in space.”<sup>114</sup>

A decisive choice must be acknowledged regarding the room for the exhibition. Although the *Goldener Saal* is for sure one of the largest spaces in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, it was by far not of sufficient size to accommodate all the chosen exhibits. The museum was willing to provide a larger number of rooms and even tried to push Anderson and Malouf towards the upper floor, where temporary exhibition galleries are located, or to neighboring buildings.<sup>115</sup> These attempts were linked to the difficulties for the museum staff in liberating and dealing with this space. However, the curators insisted on their choice, as they “wanted to ‘experiment’ with the construction of different little worlds into one room. In the exhibition, one went from room to room, but architecturally always being in only one space. The idea was to dive into different worlds that were connected but different.”<sup>116</sup> This approach of utilizing a single architectural space to house a multifaceted exhibition is to be equated with the imperial collection, unifying the macro- and microcosmos under a single property. In other words, the exhibition encapsulated multiple existences within a single space. This concept relates to Massey’s theory on globalization and spatialization in modernity: by revealing manifold spatialities there is no more definite geography on the terrestrial unit – which leads to the point that no story is left the same due to infinite possibilities of intersection.<sup>117</sup> These reflections were condensed and translated into the exhibition unit, by saturating it with a number of now overlapping spatialities that created new encounters. Especially, also the will to remain

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<sup>113</sup> The eight different architectural rooms are often identified as seven since the content of the first and last room belongs to the same thematic category. Cf. Katherine Lanza, “Moviemaker at the Museum,” *The Magazine Antiques* 186, no. 1 (February 2019): 68-69.

<sup>114</sup> Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design* (Lausanne: AVA Publishing, 2011), p. 30.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 28; Cf. Judith Bradlwarter, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, June 21, 2023, p. 170.

<sup>116</sup> Judith Bradlwarter, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, June 21, 2023, p. 170.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London/Los Angeles/New Delhi: Sage, 2005), p. 64.

in the main building of the Kunsthistorisches Museum was significant as it expresses the museum's identity at most.

By siting the exhibition in the *Goldener Saal*, which connects the *Kunstkammer* directly to the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Anderson and Malouf managed to physically position their exhibition at the core of the museum's collection and to strengthen the contents' connection to the original *Wunderkammer* format. This return to the cabinets of curiosities, also expressed in physical proximity, appeared appropriate since they represent "the very earliest strategies of display, systems of order and organization, and play of relationships between objects."<sup>118</sup>

The connection is further enhanced by the fresco on the vaulted ceiling of the longitudinal room, titled *Patrons of the House of Habsburg* [see Fig. 16]. Painted by Julius Victor Berger, the fresco depicts the most outstanding Habsburg patrons and *connoisseurs*, including Archduke Ferdinand and Emperor Rudolf II which were decisive for the accumulation of the imperial *Wunderkammern*. Additionally, they are accompanied by their court artists which bear a selection of artifacts from the Habsburg collections.<sup>119</sup> Further than the reference to the *Kunstkammer* format in general, an intensification of the connection between the *Spitzmaus* exhibition and the Habsburg interpretation of this format took place. By installing the exhibition beneath the fresco, Anderson and Malouf established a relation to the House of Habsburg and its collection, but essentially also with the figure of the artist and the collector, which are both embodied by the two of them. Due to the application of very personal and visual selection criteria with a certain admiration, the before discussed parallels of the curators with the roles of the artist or archivist can now definitely be further extended to the one of the collector.

At first, the idea for the display was to recreate a storage set-up, as it was done by Andy Warhol for *Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol* in 1969. Jasper Sharp, the Kunsthistorisches' curator, had handed over that exhibition catalogue to Anderson and Malouf. As two-thirds of the exhibits chosen for the Kunsthistorisches derived from its deposits, the storeroom idea could have been suitably adapted in terms of content relation. An essential aspect in favor of that

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<sup>118</sup> Jasper Sharp, "A Spitzmaus Moves Into The Spotlight. On Preparing an Exhibition with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf," in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), p. 13.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Franz Kirchweber, "Die Schätze des Hauses Habsburg und die *Kunstkammer*. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Bestände," in *Die *Kunstkammer*. Die Schätze der Habsburger*, ed. Sabine Haag, Franz Kirchweber (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2012), p. 12; Cf. Cornelia Mattiacci, "Notes on Display," in "Exhibition Display Guide," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), unpagged.

model is that the majority of people had never seen a museum's storage space before.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, Anderson and Malouf showed great fascination for the presentation of the inventories, which appeared "like sleeping objects"<sup>121</sup> in the high-security depot of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Himeg. Initially, the visionary idea of Anderson foresaw the fragmentation of space into two horizontal stories which were to be connected by a staircase and equipped with a depot-like setting of a shadow box system.<sup>122</sup> The storage model was then discarded for the reason of lacking possibilities of compliance with safety and conservational measures. Mainetti expressed himself on the matter as follows:

I thought it was a shame to give up on the storeroom idea. But now I think that when they decided to abandon this idea, they put this collecting experience to good use by moving toward the idea of a show divided into rooms Wes and Juman had designed, which is the very same approach a collector would have, someone who immediately thinks where and how to display the things he or she is acquiring. In a sense, it was mandatory for them to create their own modern Wunderkammer.<sup>123</sup>

In this regard, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition took its final character in merit of the *Kunstkammer* through its display. By adapting the storage set-up, the character of the cabinets of curiosities would not have been appropriately addressed, as they had their very own specific principles of classification and display, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. Therefore, the structure of the *Wunderkammer* differs necessarily from that of a storage space. Probably, it would have been of little benefit to combine both models and Anderson's and Malouf's relation to the *Wunderkammer* format grew with the awareness of the needed rejection of the storage set-up. In the end, abandoning Warhol's inspiration in terms of display, the curatorial approach took a much clearer shape for the exhibition, as it was put in line with the early days of the Habsburg collection by bringing the *Wunderkammer* back.

The final display for the exhibition was conceived by Anderson and Malouf in close collaboration with Itai Margula and his team. Margula leads an architectural studio in Vienna and has designed displays for several renown museums in Vienna, like the MAK, the Secession,

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 20-21.

<sup>121</sup> Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 174.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Ibidem; Cf. Judith Bradlwarter, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, June 21, 2023, p. 168.

<sup>123</sup> Mario Mainetti, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 20.

or the Jewish Museum. He was invited by Sharp several months after the conception of the exhibition started to take its shape, when around half of the exhibits were selected.<sup>124</sup>

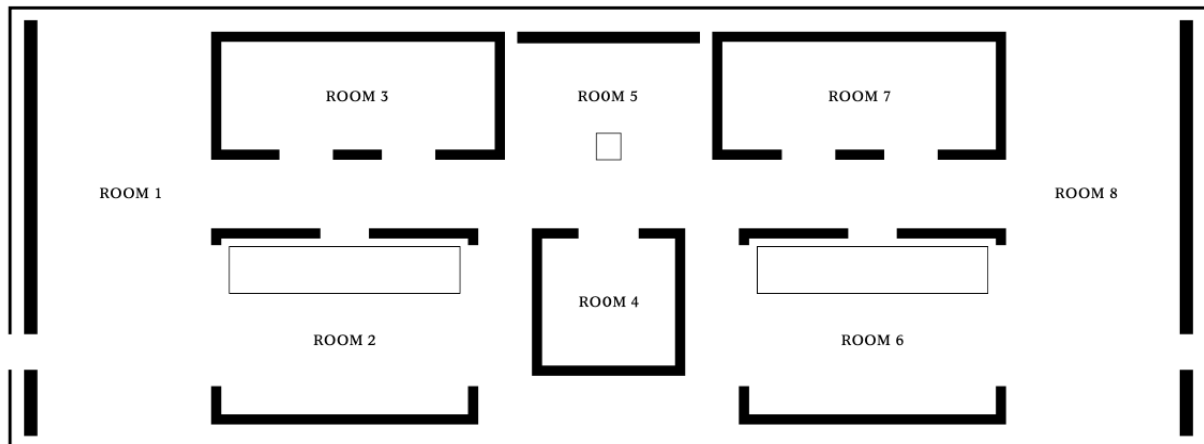


Fig. 23: Floor Plan *Spitzmaus in a Coffin and other Treasures*, 2018-19, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

With the installation of temporary walls, the eight different rooms [Fig. 23] were inserted in the *Goldener Saal*. While the first and last room appeared to be rather open in plan and eventually limited by the walls that are required to structure the adjacent spaces. There was a corridor connecting the first and last room, which allowed for all the other spaces along it. Further, the hallway was laid out along the ceiling fresco and did therefore keep the view of the fresco free. Along the corridor, there were no exhibits installed but several openings allowed direct access or insights to some of the rooms.

The spaces were of different size, while the first and last room of each side of the corridor were equally structured.<sup>125</sup> Access occurred in an alternating manner: while Room 2 held a large aperture directly toward Room 1, Room 3 was accessed through two openings from the corridor. The same distribution applied to Room 6 and 7. The central rooms appeared to be smaller in dimension. While Room 5 was profiting from the side walls of the adjacent spaces, it did not need its own limitations and was set free against the corridor. The wall that would have delimited the space from the hallway dwindled and was substituted by the only freestanding showcase in the whole exhibition. It was of rather small dimension and held one single object: the eponym of the exhibition, the *Coffin of a Shrew* (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) [see Fig. 21]. The access to the opposite Room 4 was set perfectly in line with the showcase. The room seemed like the negative of Room 5, as if the free space around the showcase would have been

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 173.

<sup>125</sup> The applied numeration of the rooms follows the floor plan depicted in Figure 23, which was included in the accompanying exhibition booklet. The exhibition catalogue by the Kunsthistorisches Museum numbers the spaces differently.

filled with walls and mirrored on the other side. Therefore, it appeared itself as a little box to hold numerous objects. Among all the rectangular spaces, Room 4 was the only one to take a square shape. This type of clear structuring within the whole exhibition did allow alternation in spatial experience but still helped to guide and accompany the viewer instead of transmitting confusion through a labyrinthic exhibition architecture. The simplicity of the display helped to



Fig. 24: Showcase Detail, Room 4.

not overwhelm the spectator and fostered attention in order to allow an enduring confrontation with the vast number of exhibits. According to Margula, it is always necessary to “prioritize the objects over the exhibition architecture”<sup>126</sup> to favor the audience’s engagement with the individual objects.

Each of the rooms held a specific section of the exhibition, but there were no labels or titles provided. The general lighting was dimmed, while the display cases were equipped with spotlights, which allowed the audience to focus more on the objects than the design. The atmosphere was characterized by an interplay with the employed cotton fabric, which takes

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<sup>126</sup> Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 174.

characteristics of felt and velvet, creating an atmosphere of intimate, homey experience. The textile was realized by Kvadrat, who provided 500 meters of Divina 3 fabric to cover some of the exhibition walls in a selection of colors. The inner vitrines were clad in Velos II, an unusual matte and short napped velvety fabric by Création Baumann that is extremely difficult to handle due to its tendency to develop directional incongruencies [Fig. 24].<sup>127</sup> Room 2 was entirely covered in green [Fig. 25], while the adjacent Room 4 shined in red [Fig. 26] – both of them had walls and floors clothed.

The green room was especially significant to Anderson due to the impression provided by its color. The central object, an *Emerald Vessel* (1641) [see Fig. 50], was positioned on a free-standing pedestal covered in the same fabric. The color shade of the emerald material is said to improve eyesight if one looks into it for a long time. Moreover, it contributed to the softening of the atmosphere, as the emerald is to serve as an absorbent.<sup>128</sup> Meanwhile, in Room 3 and 6, just carpeted floor in ochre and yellowish color was inserted. In these rooms, as also in Room 1, 3, 5 and 8, the color of the walls was adapted in shades varying from ochre to beige.



Fig. 25: Room 2, Exhibition View.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, “A Walk Through the Exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 6.



Fig. 26: Room 4, Exhibition View.



Fig. 27: Room 7, Exhibition View.



An outstanding exception in terms of spatial design was to be found in Room 7 [Fig. 27], which was clad with grained wood arranged in squared panels and covered by a red ceiling. The wooden wall paneling mirrors the commonality of the contained exhibits, which share their existence in wooden material. Even if it was not evident to Anderson and Malouf at the beginning, both confirmed the stylistic parallels to the Loos Bar in Vienna,<sup>129</sup> which is decorated by backlit onyx marble panels that evoke parallels with the characteristics of wood as they shine in a brownish color and reveal a type of grained texture. The ceiling of the Loos Bar is shaped by its coffering, which can also be traced in Room 7 in a highly reduced manner.

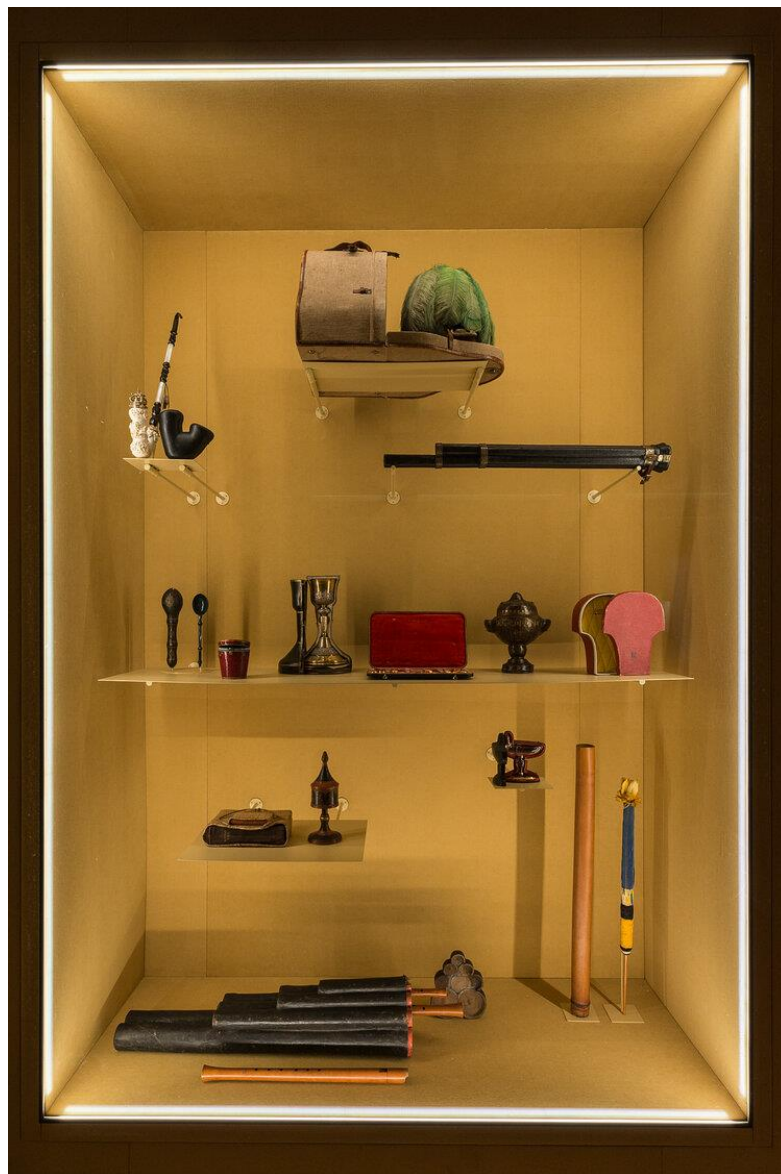


Fig. 28: Showcase Detail, Room 6.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Wes Anderson, Jasper Sharp, “A Walk Through the Exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 6-7.

Most of the exhibits were positioned in recessed boxes enclosed by glass to be flush with the walls. The objects are therefore not hung or positioned *on* the walls but included within them. Sometimes, the recessed boxes held just one specific exhibit – this is true especially for paintings – while others contained a larger group of objects. Furthermore, Rooms 2 and 6 contained a historic showcase<sup>130</sup> each, the second of these being completely empty and standing in its own regard. The unfilled showcase expresses the content-related essence of Room 6 [Fig. 28], which is dedicated to boxes and cases. This section revealed a certain self-referentiality – which may be critically assessed – toward the museum as an institution: the empty cases positioned in showcases designed again as boxes, included in the museum architecture which can again be laid out as box or container.

In this manner, each of the created spaces was provided with its very own, personalized character. Furthermore, the ensemble of the exhibits and the environment in which they were positioned functioned as a skillful indicator of the logic embedded in the exhibition narrative. The architect commented this as follows: “The spatial atmosphere – in some cases also created by density – should allow visitors a clear assignment: portraits, children’s portraits, zoo, wood, green objects, miniatures, cases and boxes.”<sup>131</sup> Therefore, even if the displays strived for simplicity, they bore specific differentiations that allowed the viewers to engage with the exhibits in an autonomous way – they were mostly set free from decoration and capable of transmitting the character of the content each space was holding. The visitors were subtly guided through the exhibition design, which allowed to notice the various sections due to the visual differentiation.<sup>132</sup>

The format of the white cube has been a fundamental fascination for Margula,<sup>133</sup> which was strived to overcome with the display for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. In this regard, they created narrative and engaging settings which were not to deny but enhance the preexisting architecture of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.<sup>134</sup> This was the exact aim of Margula Architects, as they wanted to “create a place for aesthetic viewing experiences based on the socio-historic

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<sup>130</sup> The insertion of the showcases can be considered in parallel to the *Kunstkammerschränke*, the closets positioned in the cabinets of curiosities, which were regarded themselves as *artificialia*. This will be further examined later in this chapter (see Chapter 2.3).

<sup>131</sup> Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 173.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Lina Patmali, “Rethinking Museum Practice Through Exhibitions: The Case of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria,” in *Studying Museums in Qatar and Beyond*, ed. Alexandra Bounia, Catharina Hendrick (Doha: UCL Qatar, 2020), p. 85.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Itai Margula, Interview conducted by Matthias Klapper, in “A Lapidarium of Things – Origins und Replicas am Beispiel eines Lapidariums,” by Klapper, Matthias (Diss., TU Vienna, 2023), p. 89; Cf. Itai Margula, Philipp W. A. Schnell, “Spatial Collage and the Viewers’ Gaze – An (Un)Pleasant Journey. The Life of Stefan Edlis after HIM,” *UXUC Journal* 4, no. 2 (2022): p. 36.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Itai Margula, Philipp W. A. Schnell, “Spatial Collage and the Viewers’ Gaze – An (Un)Pleasant Journey. The Life of Stefan Edlis after HIM,” *UXUC Journal* 4, no. 2 (2022): p. 36.

context of the artworks, the curatorial narrative, and the exhibition space, by guiding the viewers gaze through the exhibition.”<sup>135</sup> Moreover, this aim was essential to permit the overcoming of the white cube, as the architectural space was freed from being a neutral container and charged with experience that can be reached through the created potential of engagement.

To the creation of different worlds of experience, the statement of Locker on themed environments can be compared. As themed environments she understands constructs that aim to convey specific messages clearly to the audience, often through the application of theatrical effects and immersive strategies. These types of environments are not restricted to exhibitions or art installations but can be applied to any space. Therefore, amusement parks like Disneyland or Hollywood can be taken as examples. Locker states as follows: “Like film sets, themed environments are not ‘real’ but recreate narrative experiences that seem familiar to their audiences and fulfil visitor expectation. They can be immersive and offer a temporary escape from reality, a ‘suspension of disbelief’, enabling visitors to journey into imaginary worlds.”<sup>136</sup> Anderson, Malouf, and Margula conceived the *Spitzmaus* exhibition in favor of a breakout from reality pro tempore. The targeted individual confrontation with the exhibits was intended to introduce this suspension and allow the visitors to explore new narratives.

According to the central interest of the exhibition, namely the fascination for the curiosities of the *Kunstkammer*, it finds its aftermath in terms of spatial vision in modern art. One reference can be seen in the *Proun Room* (1923) by El Lissitzky [Fig. 29], which embodied the culmination of the artist’s *Proun*-production, containing paintings, drawings, and prints. The creation of the *Proun Room* allowed Lissitzky to make the transition from paintings to three-dimensional, architectural space, as he projected the geometric elements from his paintings into space. His conception of the interior must be seen in line with the Soviet propagandistic vision, which was to lay out a vision of utopian nature, existing autonomously from everyday life. Therefore, for El Lissitzky the following notion of utopian must be applied:

‘Utopian’ was already the idea of an interior that, reinventing its traditional cultural figures – boudoir, atelier, *wunderkammer*, scientific cabinet, chapel, gallery, operating room, kitchen, etc. – could provide the promise of a new existential framework, the bet of being able to initialise the social destinies

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<sup>135</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>136</sup> Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design* (Lausanne: AVA Publishing, 2011), p. 33.

over again, thus overcoming, with a single jump, all the conflicts and miseries of the space as it is actually experienced.<sup>137</sup>

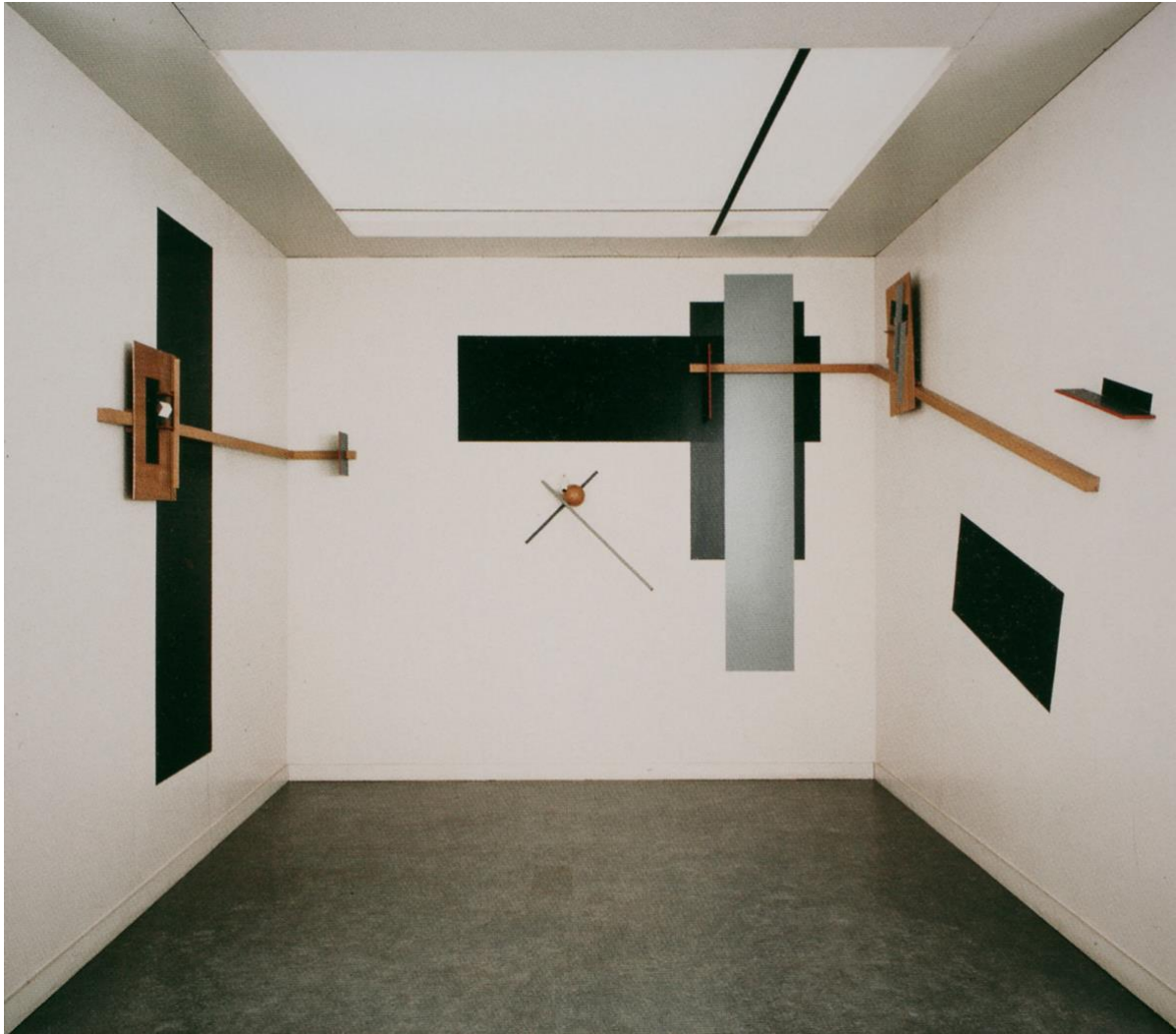


Fig. 29: El Lissitzky, *Proun Room*, 1923, installation, for the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung, Berlin. Reconstruction of the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1965.

Another example for spatial exploration of the room as a vision is to be found in Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau* (1923) [Fig. 30]. He transformed his own house into a total environment of painting, collage and sculpture which was supposed to grow unstoppably. It was an interplay of casual encounter and achieved unconventional compositions of content and meaning.<sup>138</sup> The logics of positioning are located out of the box – something that can be observed also in Anderson's and Malouf's strategy of organization within the exhibition display.

<sup>137</sup> Irene Cazzaro, Fabrizio Gay, "Topography and Topology of the Interior: Lissitzky vs. Florenskij," in *Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Image and Imagination (IMG 2019)*, ed. Enrico Cicalò (Chum: Springer Nature, 2020), p. 823.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Astrid Legge, "Museen der anderen 'Art'. Künstlermuseen als Versuche einer alternativen Museumspraxis" (PhD Diss., RWTH Aachen University, 2000), pp. 38-39.



Fig. 30: Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, 1923, mixed media installation, Hanover, destroyed in 1943.

The exhibition display of *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* needs to be located between Lissitzky's utopian approach and Schwitter's attempt of uncommon grouping. Furthermore, it was not meant to reconstruct the traditional *Kunstkammer* display – as it is sought in the exhibition of Ambras Castle – which positioned objects very close to each other and often took on an overcrowded character. Instead, Anderson, Malouf, and Margula Architects strived for the opulent effect that was found in the original *Wunderkammer*.<sup>139</sup> A characteristic of the *Kunstkammer* was the covering of the walls with objects from floor to ceiling, which aimed to translate into a contemporary incorporation. Some of the objects are grouped closely together, while others were placed in low showcases, forcing visitors to bend

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<sup>139</sup> Cf. Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, "Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstkammer," *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): p. 562.

down. For example, in Room 4, there were minuscule exhibits set at a very low level, making it necessary for the viewer to crouch down to observe them properly. This physical effort required for viewing aligned with the demand of the *Wunderkammer*.<sup>140</sup> Such a spatial strategy reinforced the extraordinary intimacy and closeness between the spectator and the exhibits. Most of the display cases were symmetrically arranged, suggesting rather than dictating the directions for reading. Thus, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition reached an “astonishingly sensory illusionary effect of a *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammer* that followed Mannerist formal principles of overwhelming and overcrowding.”<sup>141</sup> It should be noted that the display was not a result of crowdedness, but it uniquely maintained a clear structure by providing each exhibit with space to breathe and ensuring autonomy evenly throughout.

The *Spitzmaus* exhibition design adopted a theatrical approach, dividing the space into a series of rooms that can be likened to ‘sets’ which allowed the spectators to move. Additionally, the spatial atmosphere served as a backdrop to the narrative.<sup>142</sup> Crawley delved deeper into this approach by considering its impact on the audience:

When these designers make reference to theatre it is to the artificiality of the arrangements and the choice of clearly identifiable illusions and props. It is important for the audience to be made aware that they are in a theatrical space, looking at staged objects. A certain expectation is created in the spectator by the framing of the spectacle and the act of looking becomes performative. In these installations the spectator becomes explorer, flaneur, actor, director, performer, witness.<sup>143</sup>

The role of the spectator within the *Spitzmaus* exhibition is, therefore, multiplied and not predetermined or imposed by the exhibition design. Like the actor moves through the props during a performance, the viewer moved through the installed spaces during his visit to the exhibition. Moreover, Stanislavski even reflects on the presence of the prop “as something more than a theatrical object, by suggesting that it gives the actor a means of obtaining a ‘state of

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Lina Patmali, “Rethinking Museum Practice Through Exhibitions: The Case of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria,” in *Studying Museums in Qatar and Beyond*, ed. Alexandra Bounia, Catharina Hendrick (Doha: UCL Qatar, 2020), p. 86.

<sup>141</sup> Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, “Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstammer,” *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): p. 564.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design* (Lausanne: AVA Publishing, 2011), p. 87.

<sup>143</sup> Greer Crawley, “Staging Exhibitions: Atmospheres of Imagination,” in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. Jonathan Hale, Laura Hourston Hanks, Suzanne Macleod (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), p. 16.

concentration’.”<sup>144</sup> Therefore, the comprehension of the exhibition’s narrative necessarily relied on the spatial construction around the content.

There were two fundamental aspects of the exhibition design that call for further examination: the lighting design of the space and the glazing of the showcases.

The lighting was executed through different sources and was rather unusual for an exhibition in a historical building, as the general atmosphere was quite dark due to the deliberate suppression of natural light. Margula collaborated with the lighting technician from the Kunsthistorisches Museum for the distribution of ambient light within the exhibition room. All the other types of lighting were calibrated in coordination with the general museum lights. The accent lights for the exhibits were planned together with an external lighting specialist and installed in the form of spotlights or fixed components within the display cases. For the showcase lighting, “one condition was that the light had to be integrated outside of the glazing to avoid temperature differences on the inside and to maintain the closed system of the showcase. Thus, the lights were installed in the frame of the showcase in front of the glazing.”<sup>145</sup> The positioning of the lights within the frame was individually set for every object, aiming to avoid the spectator looking directly into the light. Therefore, objects positioned on a lower level are lit from above, while the ones in the upper area are illuminated from below. In other words, the source of light should correspond with the approaching direction of the visitors’ eye.

Undoubtedly, the range of different exhibits also presented an enormous challenge for the lighting design, as the relationship between light and materials must be carefully examined. Since every shape, surface treatment and material does contribute to a different absorption and reflection of light, the illumination had to be calculated individually for each object. Furthermore, the intensity of the lights had to adhere to the object’s conservation requirements.<sup>146</sup> According to the vast number of exhibits, lighting had to be treated very carefully, as there was a constant risk of miscalculation for the general atmosphere.

The somewhat dimmed atmosphere can be considered a cinematic approach to lighting, creating a rather dark mood where the eye must adjust itself to the focus points predetermined by the illumination. The adjustment allowed for perceiving subtle differentiations between various exhibits. When spotlights are used as emphasis, “light loses its association with

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<sup>144</sup> Ivi, p. 18; Cf. Constantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds (London: Eyre Methuen, 1917), p. 87-88.

<sup>145</sup> Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 176.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design* (Lausanne: AVA Publishing, 2011), p. 91; Cf. Philip Hughes, *Exhibition Design. An Introduction* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2015), p. 147.

functionality and becomes a theatric agent.”<sup>147</sup> In the design for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, a theatrical guidance through the installation was surely present, as the illumination evoked certain points of interest and emphasized the individual discovery of exhibits. On this matter, Ariese and Françoze identified the exhibition as “a cinematographic feast for the eyes, in which the aesthetic qualities of the objects are emphasized through their layout within the rooms.”<sup>148</sup> Moreover, the dimmed environment with spotlights on the exhibits is metaphorical for the exhibition’s content: the objects, normally ‘in the dark’ to the audience as they are inaccessibly stored in the depots, were awakened in the light again – or even for the first time.

Already when Anderson and Malouf were putting together their selection, Sharp drew attention to the fact that the insertion of barriers in the exhibition would be unavoidable. The two curators for the exhibition were immediately convinced to find a way to proceed without barriers.<sup>149</sup> Especially for the prior storeroom concept this aspect represented a difficulty, as the storage in Himberg is already equipped with the highest conservation standards and, therefore, does not require the enclosure of objects. For this matter, it would have been impossible to simply relocate this visual appearance to the museum’s exhibition space. Therefore, Anderson’s and Malouf’s desire to “replicate their own experience of walking around the storerooms, seeing, touching, choosing the objects”<sup>150</sup> could at most have been visually suggested and was therefore superseded.

The final solution nevertheless attempted to integrate the approach of proximity between visitors and exhibits. The several display cases were combined into an exhibition wall composed of numerous recessed boxes, all enclosed by glazing. Contrary to expectations, the insertion of glass opened the possibility for spectators to approach the exhibits as closely as possible. Even for paintings, which would not require to be enclosed under high-end museum glass for conservational requirements, it allowed for closer viewing, as otherwise, compliance with the safety distances would have been mandatory. Of course, more delicate objects required positioning within a showcase which functions as a self-contained system in order to control matters of access, humidity, lighting and temperature according to individual needs.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Greer Crawley, “Staging Exhibitions: Atmospheres of Imagination,” in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. Jonathan Hale, Laura Hourston Hanks, Suzanne Macleod (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>148</sup> Csilla E. Ariese, Mariana Françoze, “Completeness: How the Lack of a Mouse in a Box Revisits the Spectacle of the *Kunstammer*,” *Curator. The Museum Journal* 62, no. 4 (October 2019): p. 655.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 22-23.

<sup>150</sup> Mario Mainetti, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 21-22.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 175; Cf. Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design* (Lausanne: AVA Publishing, 2011), p. 102.



After the termination of the exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in April 2019, the installation started to be adapted for its relocation to Fondazione Prada in Milan [Fig. 31]. The exhibition was moved to the ground level of the Podium, resulting in a doubling of the surface compared to its first installation in Vienna. Therefore, two additional sections had to be designed for Milan.<sup>152</sup> Since not all the exhibits in Vienna were approved for transport, some of the preexisting showcases had to be adapted for new objects in terms of conservation measures. Even if the transfer to Fondazione Prada was a decided deal from the beginning, it did not influence the conception progress for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition design in Vienna. However, considerations for the eventual relocation were made in a second moment,<sup>153</sup> which is why the Milan installation is considered as the “Italian sequel of the Viennese exhibition.”<sup>154</sup> What adds to the presentation at Fondazione Prada is certainly the orange-colored curtain concealing the glazed walls of the exhibition space. The curtain contributes to the theatrical and cinematographic overall effect of the exhibition and reinforces the presence of the exhibition design.



Fig. 31: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, 2019-20, Exhibition View, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Fondazione Prada, Milan.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Cornelia Mattiacci, “Notes on Display,” in “Exhibition Display Guide,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), unpagged.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 176.

<sup>154</sup> Cornelia Mattiacci, “Notes on Display,” in “Exhibition Display Guide,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), unpagged; Fondazione Prada soon began to speak about a sequel titled in Italian “Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori”, a term usually used for movies and literature, but not for art shows. This brings the exhibition another step closer to the invited curators’ real area of expertise: the movie industry.

## 2.2 Display Dynamics between Film Stills and Shadow Boxes

As a film producer, Wes Anderson is known for his distinct and ever-recurring visual aesthetics: a striking frontality and centralization in his shots and the play with colorful moods are undoubtedly the most prominent characteristics. Through the developed visual language, Anderson succeeds in providing narrations with further details and infusing them with emotions. His movies appear like collections on their own behalf,<sup>155</sup> always equipped with an enormous dedication to self-referential details, nevertheless they only rarely create other interrelated connections except the visual signature style of their producer. According to Cateforis, “in true transmedia fashion, Anderson has built his world not only across multiple movies but also through forays into television advertising and as a guest curator at the Viennese Kunsthistorisches Museum.”<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the incarnation of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition must be considered in line with Anderson’s movie aesthetics. As previously analyzed, the exhibition design of several sections included in the show aided the comprehension of the presented object category. As no labels for the sections and exhibits were provided, the visual attempts to mark the differentiation of content must be acknowledged. Similar to the storytelling in Anderson’s movies, the use of words appears to be reduced and transformed into aesthetic means in order to reinforce the logics of narration. The audience is therefore supported in building individual narratives which are inseparably echoing the imagination not only of Wes Anderson but also of Juman Malouf.<sup>157</sup> It appears rather difficult to trace back the aesthetic style of Malouf, except in form of drawings dispersed in the museum in order to substitute the objects which have been moved to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition or the ones included in the exhibition catalogue. It must be noted that she contributed to the stage and costume design in various films produced by Anderson, such as *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) or *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014). Therefore, the two of them do surely demonstrate parallels in their preferences and stylistic features, developed through their shared life. Within the exhibition, both their individual as well as their common aesthetic were perfectly united, so that they appeared very homogeneous.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, the following analysis will predominantly refer to Anderson’s aesthetics, being partly co-constructed by Malouf.

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Kim Wilkins, “Assembled Worlds: Intertextuality and Sincerity in the Films of Wes Anderson,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 60, no. 2 (2018): p. 153.

<sup>156</sup> Theo Cateforis, “The world of Wes Anderson and Mark Mothersbaugh: Between childhood and adulthood in *The Royal Tenenbaums*,” in *Transmedia Directors: Artistry, Industry and New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, ed. Lisa Perrot, Holly Rogers, Carol Vernallis (New York: Bloomsbury USA Academic, 2020), p. 35.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Miuccia Prada, Patrizio Bertelli, “Foreword,” in *Il Sarcophago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 6.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcophago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 25-26.

The previously described cinematic atmosphere constitutes the most obvious indicator for the curators' field of expertise and allows for the perception that "here one enters in a film, in which the museum is transfigured with reason being lost in the emotion, in the astonishment you will find in what you, the viewer, choose to look at. The script is offered by the free associations between things, traveling through time subjugated by aesthetic pleasure."<sup>159</sup> During movie production, Anderson and Malouf are used to creating sets that evoke emotions in the audience. Therefore, it is possible to consider movies as curatorial acts themselves – the difference is that as exhibition curators they would not have been supposed to dictate the viewer's perceived feelings, while for movies the transmission of moods and emotions through the artificial construction of different moods can take on greater extents.<sup>160</sup>

In this regard, the understanding of Anderson's cinematic style allowed for a certain key for reading the exhibition in the curators' terms. Therefore, further parallels between his movies and the *Spitzmaus* exhibition must be examined – perhaps the exhibition even needs to be read and conceived as a film sequence in order to increase its understanding. In most of his movies he makes the spectator feel the presence of the filmic medium as it is possible to explore the often dreamlike worlds but without complete identification with the characters being sought. As in the exhibition, the aspiration for the spectator to actively think along instead of surrendering to the narration is a distinct feature in his filmic storytelling strategy. A sense of intimacy is often transmitted and was also recognized in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition:

The exhibition rooms have their own family feeling. Wes and Juman gave them a domestic size. While in the exhibition space, you almost feel like being invited into a wonderful private house where you can wander around, look at the furniture, check books in the bookshelves, indulge your curiosity. The whole show arouses curiosity. As you said, there is a lot to do and you have to find your own way.<sup>161</sup>

Visually, Anderson employs an enormous degree of constructedness, along with the meticulous treatment of details, which are inserted in a highly symmetrical and aestheticized framing. Instead of distributing proportions according to the golden ratio, Anderson's movies

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<sup>159</sup> Jaqueline Ceresoli, "Wes Anderson e il Kunsthistorisches alla Fondazione Prada" (September 29, 2019): unpagated. <https://www.exibart.com/arte-contemporanea/wes-anderson-porta-un-immaginario-kunsthistorisches-museum-alla-fondazione-prada/> (Accessed June 1, 2023)

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Cody Delistraty, "Wes Anderson, Curator? The Filmmaker Gives It a Try," *New York Times*, November 7, 2018, unpagated. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/arts/design/wes-anderson-vienna-kunsthistorisches-museum.html> (Accessed June 8, 2023)

<sup>161</sup> Mario Mainetti, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 24-25.

are characterized by employing a frontal view of the subjects. The applied frontality contributes to the exposure of the staged nature of the scenes that play in front of the spectator. This effect is reinforced by the editing style and the play with colorful moods, which are matched to specific atmospheres. For example, in *Moonrise Kingdom*, different colors correspond to different worlds of signification: the hue of the children's world is shifted to a yellowish tone, while it is changed to a red shade to characterize the adult world. Therefore, Anderson builds his worlds around color in order to differentiate between them.

According to the prominence of symmetry in Anderson's movies, it is essential to further examine how this characteristic was integrated in the design of the exhibition display. The frontal framing gains its relevance through an intense centralization of the subjects, which were captured in straight-on shots and therefore face the camera in a profile perspective. In these scenes, camera movement is avoided to let the spectator identify the most important elements or characters of a scene.<sup>162</sup> This kind of precise construction of each frame leads to the creation of clear and recurring symmetry axes. For the layout of display cases in the Kunsthistorisches' exhibition, these clear construction principles appeared to be inherent to the geometric patterns of the movies. The most explicit examples are to be found in Room 5 and 7 [Fig. 32], in which two major axes – one horizontally and the other vertically centered – were positioned to ensure the overall symmetry of the display. Further showcases were subsequently distributed outside these axes. It is interesting to note that these additional display cases were not mirrored between left and right side of the central axis – neither in positioning nor in number. In the illustrated example, the bigger exhibit in the created upper left space is balanced out by two smaller inserts on the corresponding part on the right.

This symmetric pattern is repeatedly applied in Anderson's movie frames, in which the protagonist constitutes the central axis ensuring frontal symmetry, permitting to structure the left and right sides in a differentiated matter. The distribution of elements does nevertheless strikingly expose symmetry as a means of harmony and balance and enables the transmission of tension and a sense of connection. In his movies, Anderson reinforces the appearance of geometric construction through the editing technique by compiling the sequences as shot/reverse shot. This technique is often used for showing dialogue scenes: instead of combining two people in the same sequence, there is an alternation by showing always only the talking person in the frame but embedded in the same structure.<sup>163</sup> For Anderson this means that both alternating sequences would be set into the same symmetric frame in order to enhance

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Ian Nathan, *Wes Anderson: The Iconic Filmmaker and his Work* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2020), p. 72.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Mark de Valk, Sarah Arnold, *The Film Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 88.

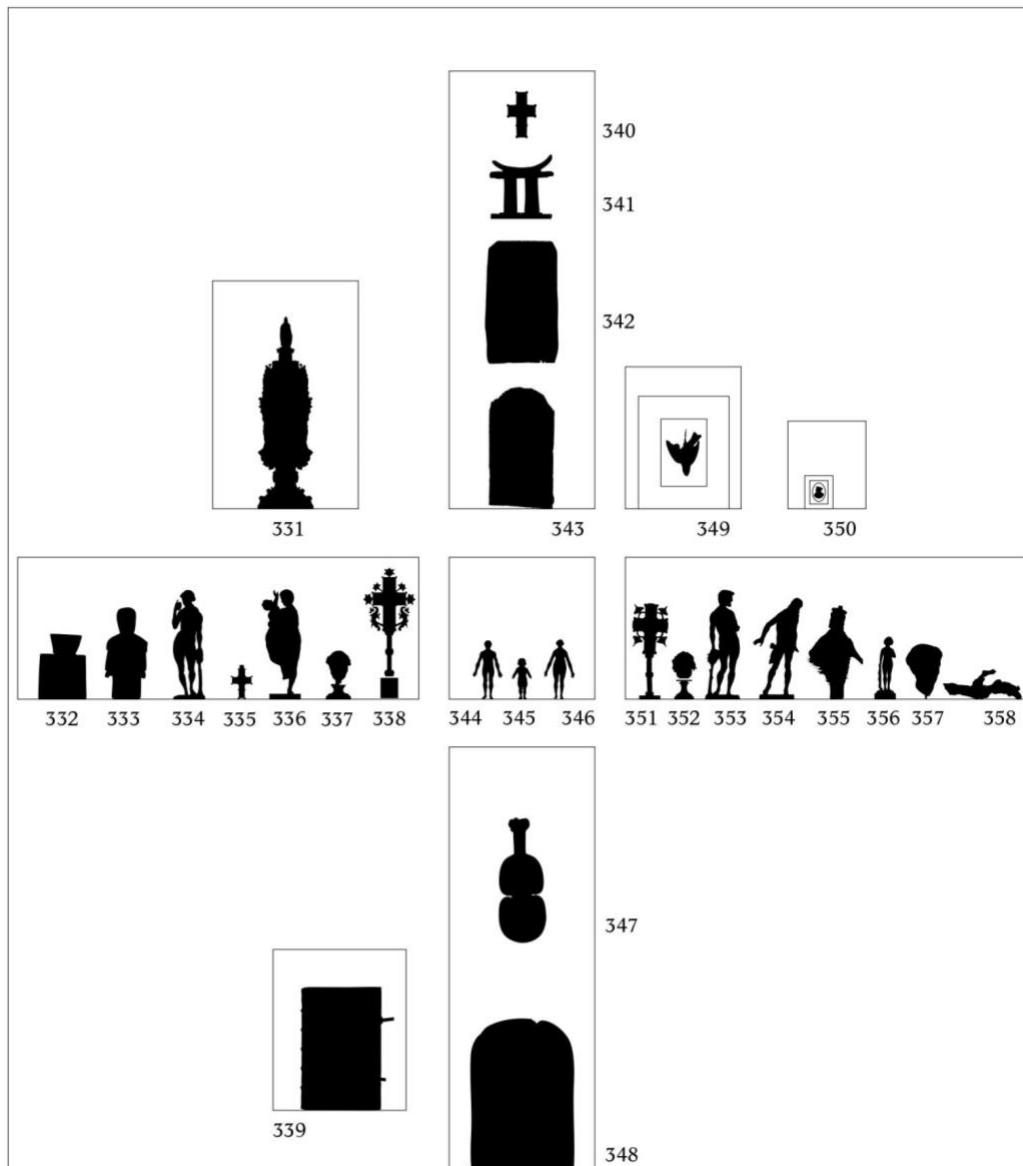


Fig. 32: Display Design, Illustration, Room 7, Central Wall.

the relation of the two persons. As shown through the similarly constructed examples of Room 5 and 7, within the exhibition the recurring symmetric pattern must be considered as a tool to create a similar kind of interrelation as the shot/reverse shot in movies. In the exhibition, this connection might not have been as direct but helped to unite the different sections under their shared relation by being a part of the show. The clearly structured setting did therefore assist in uniting the dissimilar nature of the exhibits it holds and fostered the creation of the exhibition's identity as a whole. In a very similar way, Anderson's films are characterized by "the principle that the unbalanced inner world of the[ir] characters is made both more pronounced and more poignant when set against pure geometry."<sup>164</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Ian Nathan, *Wes Anderson: The Iconic Filmmaker and his Work* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2020), p. 72.

The tendency towards frontality in his cinematic style must be noted as an essential link with theater.<sup>165</sup> While in theater, space influences its reception of a play, the exhibition design which holds the contents also influences the transmission of meaning. In both cases, the environment allows the spectator to focus on specific objects, which may appear in a thoughtful but for the viewer unrecognizable manner. In this regard, Crawley specifies:

Theatricality is particularly well suited to the museum environment; it is a place out of the ordinary. Already a staged environment, it is a cabinet of curiosities, a *Wunderkammer*, a cat-optic theatre, bristling with objects and details, reflections and illusions. In current museum practice, theatricality takes many forms from the use of traditional scenic effects, to digital scenography, to live performance. Designers are changing the visitor's perception and ways of seeing galleries [...].<sup>166</sup>

These reflections can be perfectly aligned to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, as its spatial embodiment communicated on a very theatrical level and was extended over different sets in form of rooms. The setup played with the arrangement of walls in an alternating manner between rather open rooms and enclosed spaces, which echoes reflections on the fourth wall in theater and cinema. In his movies, Anderson often makes the actors directly face the audience due to the frontality employed in the shots. The exhibition achieved a similar effect partly by maintaining the typical frontal presentation but probably even more so due to the division in small, cinematically lit display cases which invite the spectator to get closer and closer to the exhibit and allow for immersion. The obtained effect of involvement can be traced back to a frequently used technique in Anderson's movies, the top shot. This way of shooting refers to a recording from an overhead perspective and allows for revealing key information from above. These framings allow the filmmaker to focus on details like letters, books, or maps<sup>167</sup> and position the spectator very close to the characters – or even permit to see through the character's eyes. Even if the shot allows the spectator to concentrate on details from above, the movie scene is physically positioned vertically and seen in frontal confrontation. The same happens in the

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<sup>165</sup> Cf. Mark Browning, ed., *Wes Anderson. Why His Movies Matter* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2011), p. 146; This link is brought to extremely compelling evidence in the latest Anderson movie, *Asteroid City* (2023) which plays on the aspect of the fourth wall in theater: it shows the behind-the-scenes production of a play merged with its transmission on television.

<sup>166</sup> Greer Crawley, "Staging Exhibitions: Atmospheres of Imagination," in *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, ed. Jonathan Hale, Laura Hourston Hanks, Suzanne Macleod (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), p. 14.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Ian Nathan, *Wes Anderson: The Iconic Filmmaker and his Work* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2020), p. 72.

exhibition display, as the exhibits resembled the movies' framing of a detail in a vertical setting. Some of the exhibits, especially books and documents were presented in a very similar isolated manner and allowed for the same conveyance of details as the overhead shots.

Anderson's meticulous composition and maintenance of symmetry leads to the shots appearing nearly two-dimensional due to the flattening of the backgrounds caused by planimetric composition. Like this he obtains a tableau effect,<sup>168</sup> which applies to shots and framings resembling paintings. Therefore, his movies appear as a series of combined artworks. As this type of composition was applied as well to the exhibition display, the single walls containing the exhibits appeared as tableaux themselves.

In this regard, a specific example must be introduced, since one of the paintings included in the exhibition does also appear in one of Anderson's filmic productions. This is referring to Titian's portrait of *Duke John Frederick, Elector of Saxony* (1550-51), which was meant to be part of the exhibition from the very beginning.<sup>169</sup> A small-dimensional print of the same, presumably a polaroid, constitutes a carefully positioned detail in a close-up shot of the short film *Hotel Chevalier* (2007) [Fig. 33]. The positioning is interesting in comparison to the installation of the original painting in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. There is a blue star-patterned cloth, in front of which there are two male statuettes with another print showing two figures in the between. The reproduced Titian is positioned in the upper right part, half reaching beyond the fabric, whose center remains at sight. In the exhibition, the painting was granted a central position [Fig. 34] in the portrait section and it was surrounded by paintings of the same genre. Therefore, in both settings the center is surrounded by heads and faces, only that the Titian had undergone a shift from the border to the previously empty center. It seems that Anderson commented on his own work by evolving the first setup into a new version.

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. Donna Kornhaber, *Wes Anderson* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2017), p. 20.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, "A Walk Through the Exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018" in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 10.



Fig. 33: Wes Anderson, *Hotel Chevalier*, 2007, Film Still, min. 03:59.



Fig. 34: Room 8, Exhibition View.



As already mentioned, the color-coded worlds assume a characterizing role in Anderson's movies, and these themes are to be put in context of the Kunsthistorisches' exhibition setup. The meanings attributed to each color are of fundamental significance as they span over the entire oeuvre and help the spectator gain greater insights and accelerated knowledge of characters and the plot. The signification of each tone supports the determination of a general mood.<sup>170</sup> In the Andersonian visual language, color does support the defined specification of the narration and atmosphere but is essentially equipped with a psychological power which is "able to convey messages by appealing to emotional and perceptual factors of the audience."<sup>171</sup> Therefore, the use and distribution of colors goes beyond decorative embellishment and supports the meanings of the stories in terms of content. The movies are characterized by the use of primary colors like red and yellow. While the warm shades, from yellow to red, metaphorize life and humanity in a rather joyful perspective, the cold tones oppose this sentiment with the expression of brutality and dehumanization.<sup>172</sup> The color editing mainly works with the hue on the selected primary color which is often increased in saturation to make the colors stand out vividly. The chromatic intensification allows for an immediate match between mood and narration.<sup>173</sup>

The choice of colors within the *Spitzmaus* exhibition is mainly characterized by tones from ochre to yellow, while the red and green rooms represent colorful accents within the space. The general chromatic mood of the exhibition can already be summarized with a frame from *Moonrise Kingdom* [Fig. 35]: the narrator, impersonated by Bob Balaban, is positioned in the lower center of the screen, wearing a glowing red jacket and a green beanie, which nearly blends in with the meadow in the background. The left part of the background is covered by a cornfield in ochre, the strip of sky in the upper area glowing in blue and yellow. By extracting the color palette from the film still, the correspondence of the shades with the ones of the exhibition [Fig. 36] catches the eye.

On the contrary, Arilotti recognizes "traces of the Andersonian aesthetic: the different rooms are covered with colorful carpeting, colors with a retro taste that are closer to the melancholic and nostalgic atmosphere of *The Tenenbaums* (Anderson, 2001) than to that of

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. Ian Nathan, *Wes Anderson: The Iconic Filmmaker and his Work* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2020), p. 72.

<sup>171</sup> Greta Attademo, "Colore e'è narrazione. Il ruolo narrativo del colore nelle immagini filmiche di Wes Anderson," in *Colore e Colorimetria. Contributi Multidisciplinari, Vol. XVII*, ed. Veronica Marchiafava, Marcello Picollo (Milan: Gruppo del Colore, 2020), p. 329.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 334.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 332.



Fig. 35: Wes Anderson, *Moonrise Kingdom*, 2012, Film Still, min. 01:24:52. Color Palette Extraction.

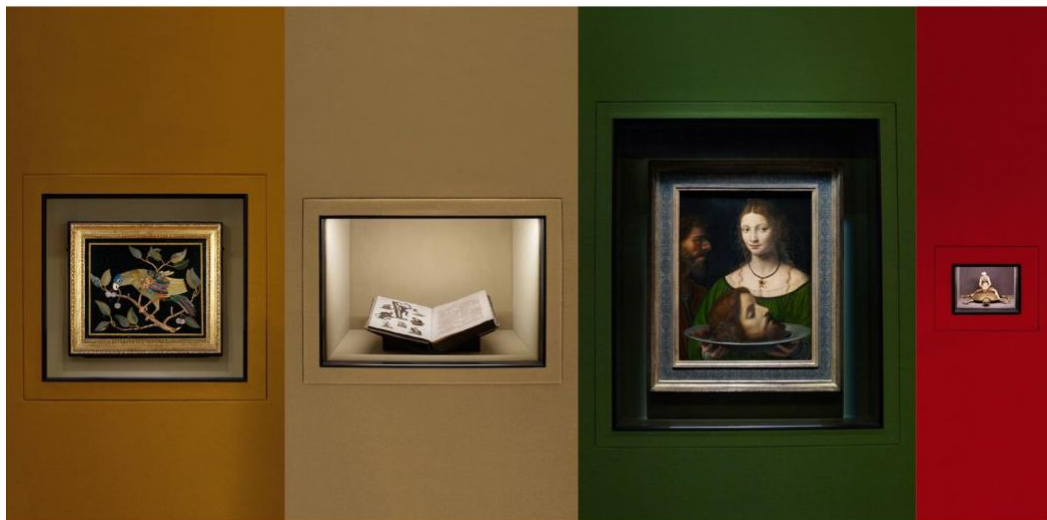


Fig. 36: Exhibition Details. Color Palette Extraction.

more recent films”.<sup>174</sup> For sure, the atmosphere does not correspond to the typical increased brightness which characterizes the movies of the 2010s, like *Moonrise Kingdom* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, but also the newest entry in the Anderson collection, *Asteroid City* (2023). It

<sup>174</sup> Simona Arilotti, “Attraverso la camera delle meraviglie” (January 13, 2020.) <https://www.fatamorganaweb.it/il-sarcofago-di-spitzmaus-e-altri-tesori-wes-anderson-juman-malouf/> (Accessed June 9, 2023)

is much more in line with the mentioned example, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, as the general cozy and homey mood is evoked through the laying of moquette which also appropriately matches the postmodern retro nostalgia. On the other hand, the color choices within the exhibition design are very well represented in the more recent movies which will be analyzed in the following.

The predominant color applied in the exhibition design for *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* are for sure the different shades of ochre, which range from a tendency of yellow to brown. In parallel, it is possible to trace these tones back to some movies in which they significantly characterize the major atmosphere. For example, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) is washed in a distinctive, orange-based color palette for almost its entire length. The sky always turns yellow or orange as soon as the foxes are happy.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, *Isle of Dogs* (2018), which was produced simultaneously to the preparation of the exhibition, is characterized by a beige to brown leading color, which also match the chromatic scheme of the exhibition. Furthermore, the wood-cladded Room 7, which was said to have found inspiration in the Viennese Loos Bar, does find much more suitable precedents in Anderson's own repertoire. The wood paneling [see Fig. 27] does match the lobby setting of the 1960s version of the Grand Budapest Hotel [Fig. 37], which is likewise executed in two different types of wood – one being slightly darker than the other.



Fig. 37: Set Design, Hotel Lobby, in: Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Greta Attademo, “Colore e/è narrazione. Il ruolo narrativo del colore nelle immagini filmiche di Wes Anderson,” in *Colore e Colorimetria. Contributi Multidisciplinari*, Vol. XVII, ed. Veronica Marchiafava, Marcello Picollo (Milan: Gruppo del Colore, 2020), p. 335.

Another always recurring color is red, but rather than characterizing the entire atmosphere, it is more used for tinting specific details. From Max' hat in *Rushmore* (1998) over the red beanies worn by the crew in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), Chas' and his sons' red tracksuits in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, to the father's red car in *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007). The red detail appears to be connected to the male characters' conflicts with their paternal figure.<sup>176</sup> They all seem to have a sort of trauma to elaborate, which is why they have regressed to a child-like status again. As this is a recurring phenomenon in Anderson's movies, he does repeatedly mark it with the color red. Within the *Spitzmaus* exhibition it is seemingly difficult to attribute this connotation to Room 4, which is entirely overcovered with red fabric and holds the miniature section of the show. Nevertheless, one possible interpretation on the connection between the significance of the color red in the movie and the exhibition can be aspired. A key component of the movies is the confusion of childhood and adulthood,<sup>177</sup> as children often act very adult, while adults behave like children. This characteristic does not necessarily overlap with the red-marked presence of trauma, but in some cases, the two phenomena are very well combined. As already mentioned, the exhibition display was designed to sometimes force the audience to kneel on the floor to encourage the child-like ability of enthusiastic exploration. Two spaces provoked this aim the most, as they held an increased number of comparatively small exhibits on very low level. These were the entirely red Room 4, and the wooden Room 7 which is, however, closed off by a red ceiling. If the distribution of the color red is connected to its chromatic significance in Anderson's previous work remains nevertheless unclear.

However, what catches the eye are the parallels between some movie scenes and the setup of Room 4 in terms of color and symmetry. The most evident comparison is a film still from *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, in which Monsieur Gustave, dressed in his purple suit, is positioned centrally in front of a red key cabinet [Fig. 38.]. In terms of the insertion of horizontal and vertical symmetry axes, the parallels to the exhibition design are evident. Furthermore, the interior of the vitrines in Room 4 are clad in the same lilac shade of Monsieur Gustave's suit.<sup>178</sup> In both settings, red appears as the more prominent color, which was physically shifted from the background to the foreground.

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Theo Cateforis, "The world of Wes Anderson and Mark Mothersbaugh: Between childhood and adulthood in *The Royal Tenenbaums*," in *Transmedia Directors: Artistry, Industry and New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, ed. Lisa Perrot, Holly Rogers, Carol Vernallis (New York: Bloomsbury USA Academic, 2020), p. 36.

<sup>178</sup> Also in *The Darjeeling Limited* there is a frame that plays on the same logic of symmetry and color. From minute 1:25:09 to 1:26:23 the Whitman brothers sit in their train compartment clad in red fabric and structured according to Andersonian symmetry. In the upper area there is a painting whose background is purple as well.



Fig. 38: Monsieur Gustave in Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014.

For sure, an extremely salient chromatic accent was embodied in Room 2, holding the section of green objects and being entirely green itself. Therefore, the exhibition design absorbed its content in color. The color green is very well present in Anderson's movies, but much more in natural setting or as greenish hue – so, in confrontation to the artificial setting of the exhibition, there is no tendency in his movies to employ an intense green shade to create such a strong symbolic atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw a connection to the production of *Isle of Dogs*, which took place in the same period as the selection process for the exhibition. Considering the fact that it is a stop-motion film leads to the evidence that every single frame was shot in front of the green screen and digitally retouched afterwards. This means that even if the spectator does not face striking green settings, Anderson was intensively confronted with the color green during the production period. Therefore, this kind of exposure might have been a subconscious inspiration that leaned toward the tendency of the selection of green objects.

In his movies, Anderson shows the ability to create entire worlds to an extremely detailed extent, and presenting these worlds in a microcosm – or in other words, by constructing

miniature worlds within those worlds.<sup>179</sup> This phenomenon was further specified by Chabon, stating that “Wes Anderson’s films readily, even eagerly, concede the ‘miniature’ quality of the worlds he builds in their set design and camera-work, in their use of stop-motion, maps, and models. And yet these miniatures span continents and decades.”<sup>180</sup> In the same way he transmitted the exhibition’s sections as compressed microcosm through a spatially subdivided way, each of them displaying the characteristic meticulous and peculiar treatment of details and miniatures.

A commonality between movies and the exhibition is therefore to be seen in the skill of charging each detail with significance and shifting it to the attention of the viewer’s eye, which is embodied by the exhibition design due to the spatial definition and symmetric distribution of showcases. The precise limitation between the different spaces within the exhibition appears to be in line with the distinct structuring of worlds within Anderson’s movies. For example, *Isle of Dogs* is located on trash island which is divided into zones that are navigated throughout the movie.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, the spectator traversed the *Spitzmaus* exhibition from one space to another, experiencing changing atmospheres and settings. Therefore, Joseph’s observation on Anderson’s visual constructions is equally applicable to the mood transmitted by the exhibition design: “Each framed moment in Anderson’s films presents itself like a miniature stage pressed under glass and preserved as if it were some kind of childhood butterfly collection.”<sup>182</sup>

The visual narration and stylistic differentiation in Anderson’s movies are often laid out in a Russian-doll structure which interleaves several narratives in one another.<sup>183</sup> This is the case for *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, where the narration was not carried out linearly, but dispersed over different periods of time. The narration starts by revealing a book, does then unveil the author’s experience while being narrated the content and finally pass over to the actual plot. The Russian-doll quality is capable to unveil the film’s stage-like quality.<sup>184</sup> Also,

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. Matt Zoller Seitz, ed., *The Wes Anderson Collection: The Grand Budapest Hotel* (New York: Abrams & Chronicle Books, 2015), p. 101; Cf. Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Wes Anderson. Bringing Nostalgia to Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 211; Cf. Thomas Marks, “Making hay,” *Apollo* 25 (October 2018): p. 25.

<sup>180</sup> Michael Chabon, “Wes Anderson’s Worlds.” *The New York Review of Books* (January 31, 2013). <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2013/01/31/wes-anderson-worlds/> (Accessed July 21, 2023)

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Ian Nathan, *Wes Anderson: The Iconic Filmmaker and his Work* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2020), p. 87.

<sup>182</sup> Rachel Joseph, “‘Max Fischer Presents’: Wes Anderson and the Theatricality of Mourning,” in *The Films of Wes Anderson. Critical Essays on an Indiewood Icon*, ed. Peter C. Kunze (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 51.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Matt Zoller Seitz, ed., *The Wes Anderson Collection: The Grand Budapest Hotel* (New York: Abrams & Chronicle Books, 2015), p. 249; Cf. Wes Anderson, “Wes Anderson interviewed by Tilda Swinton,” interview by Tilda Swinton, *Sight & Sound* 31, no. 8 (October 2021): p. 30.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Kim Wilkins, “Assembled Worlds: Intertextuality and Sincerity in the Films of Wes Anderson,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 60, no. 2 (2018): p. 158; Similar attempts of storytelling through multiple

Sharp mentioned this kind of storytelling, but not to refer to the narration, but rather to the museum as institution and the exhibition design itself: “there was a room inside the museum, a case inside the room and a box inside the case.”<sup>185</sup> Therefore, Anderson and Malouf together with Margula Architects were capable of translating the characteristic type of intertwined narration to spatial terms.

Actually, also in Anderson’s films there occurs a transition from storytelling to structural settings – to be recognized in form of boxes. In *The Grand Budapest Hotel* this is even metaphorically illustrated through the recurring presence of boxes: “The Grand Budapest Hotel is a confection – it contains a confection (Mendl’s pastries), it exhibits a confection (the hotel’s beautiful exterior), and, finally, it is as ephemeral as a confection – light, airy, soon to disappear.”<sup>186</sup> In confrontation to Sharp’s statement above, the exhibition design appeared to connect the Russian-doll structure applied to guide the narrations to the actual presence of the box. Therefore, the phenomenon of the box must be considered as a visual counterpart in order to complement the principle of storytelling and to favor the revelation of the filmic medium. The box, or better, a sort of shadow box system, is recognizable as a filmic tool in the shooting style of Anderson which allows the spectator to gain a more complete insight in spatial settings.

A striking example is the cutaway shot in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, with the camera traveling beyond the walls of the *Belafonte* in order to grant a cutaway view on the single spaces of the ship [Fig. 39].<sup>187</sup> Similarly, the official poster for *The French Dispatch* (2021) by Javi Aznarez illustrates a dollhouse-view of different rooms occupied by the involved actors. Due to its highly aestheticized set design, Anderson runs the risk of losing the significance in his interlacings which sometimes appear merely as a storage room for an accumulation of details. The impression of experiencing a wholesome experience of a single architectural unit through the exploration of its individual holdings does appropriately match the one the spectator could obtain in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Instead of the camera moving out of the single spaces, it is the viewers themselves who explore the setting through their own individual movement to gain a spatial overview.

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narrations can be observed in *Rushmore*, which is introduced by opening theater curtains, and in *Asteroid City*, whose plot jumps between the production and staging of a theater play.

<sup>185</sup> Audio Guide A, narrated by Jasper Sharp. Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 2018. (Accessed July 25, 2023)

<sup>186</sup> Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Wes Anderson. Bringing Nostalgia to Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 184.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Donna Kornhaber, *Wes Anderson* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2017), p. 31; Cf. Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Wes Anderson. Bringing Nostalgia to Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 210.



Fig. 39: Wes Anderson, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, 2004, Film Still, min. 00:15:16.

In order to properly match the movies' cutaway effect with the exhibition design at the Kunsthistorisches, another example must be further examined. Towards the end of *The Darjeeling Limited*, there is a sequence in which the camera captures the cross-section of a train in the ubiquitous Andersonian frontality.<sup>188</sup> The camera moves in the same direction of the train and surpasses it at a higher speed. Due to the lateral dolly movement, an intimate insight in various railroad cars is granted, showing several members of the cast within their spatially limited personal spaces in the middle of their own activities.<sup>189</sup> The exact same visual logic could be physically followed in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. The lateral tracking of the train helps to understand the function of the corridor that longitudinally crossed the exhibition in the center. By walking straight along the corridor, the spectator was granted insights into the several rooms through wall cutouts or openings granting access to the spaces. Therefore, the corridor already granted a preliminary visual admission to the single rooms. The difference between the film sequence and the display setting is that the exhibition allowed the spectator to break through the fourth wall and get much closer to those intimate spaces. This way, one could pursue individual curiosity and satisfy the urge to explore the scenic space.

All in all, the exhibition for sure inserts itself in the highly complex and elaborate frames as one is used to from Anderson. It appeared like a single shot for a stop-motion movie, in which every arrangement had to be perfectly positioned. The visual language shaped the

<sup>188</sup> For more precise reference see *The Darjeeling Limited*, directed by Wes Anderson, 2007, min. 1:18:23-1:19:30.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Wes Anderson. Bringing Nostalgia to Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 149; Cf. Donna Kornhaber, *Wes Anderson* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2017), p. 31.



exhibition design by providing and reinforcing meaning through color, symmetry, and the overall spatial conception. Anderson's aesthetic makes seemingly normal happenings and things appear visible and significant. Through the insertion of his aesthetics in the exhibition display, Anderson proved that in his role as a curator he equally sought to make the invisible – in this case the storage and archive pieces – visible by weaving in his very own nostalgic aesthetic manner that held the exhibition together.

### 2.3 The Box as Medium: The *Kunstammerschrank*'s Evolution

The previous considerations pointed out the significance of using of the box as a visual medium in displays. Nevertheless, the recessed boxes are not only deriving from the recurring framing approach in Anderson's movies but also embrace parallels with the furniture used for display in the traditional spaces of the *Wunderkammer*: the *Kunstschrank*.<sup>190</sup> This piece of furniture evolved over time for museological display and developed into the display case. In this context, corresponding reflections can be identified in contemporary art, which provides the artistic backdrop for the exhibition display conceptualized for *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*.

To contextualize these parallels, it is necessary to begin with an analysis of the cabinet as furniture. The cabinet has always functioned as a storage place for collected items and things and "is always space within a space that surrounds it; it represents a room in miniature for things."<sup>191</sup> As such, it reflects the urge of sorting things according to a specific order, transforming them into a space that can be surveyed. In its role as an autonomous container, it asserts its presence within the room it occupies. Through its boundary-defining nature, the cabinet establishes its own right to exist, claiming for fulfillment or transgression.<sup>192</sup> Despite its fixed material and spatial localization, the cabinet is characterized by performativity, as its purpose is tied to the required gesture of opening and closing. According to te Heesen and Michels, the cabinet is subdivided into three categories according to their specific function. As a locking furniture piece, it serves the role of safeguarding objects, involving restricted access and viewing. On the other hand, the cabinet as a representational furniture item can be freed of content, existing independently for the sole purpose of representation. The third category refers

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<sup>190</sup> In the literature it is synonymously referred to as *Wunderkammerschrank*, *Kunstammerschrank*, Cotton-reel Cabinet, Cabinet of Wonder, *Stipo d'Ambra*, *Armadio della Meraviglia*.

<sup>191</sup> Stefan Laube, *Von der Reliquie zum Ding. Heiliger Ort – Wunderkammer – Museum* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), p. 357.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Anke te Heesen, Anette Michels, "Der Schrank als wissenschaftlicher Apparat," in *auf/zu. Der Schrank in den Wissenschaften*, ed. Anke te Heesen, Anette Michels (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), pp. 9-10.

to the cabinet as showing furniture, specially designed for the aim of presentation. Consequently, these cabinets occupy prominent positions within a space and strive to create optimal conditions for showcasing their content.<sup>193</sup> With this attributed function, cabinets align with the obligations of a showcase or display cabinet.

Functioning according to the third category, the cabinet constituted a central piece of furniture within the *Wunderkammer*, primarily serving as a furniture for showing or organizing. Around 1600, the *Kunstkammerschrank* gained popularity in different forms and sizes, primarily holding small-scale inventory. The cabinet as furniture began to be seen as equivalent to the cabinet as chamber. In other words, the *Kunstschränk* represented a miniature version of the *Wunderkammer* in terms of spatial volume and storage function. These popular cabinets represented the positive counterpart to the surrounding negative space. Both entities followed the logics of compressing the macrocosmos into an independent microcosmos.<sup>194</sup>

The cabinet facilitated material systematization and incorporated the order of the collection and its different sections within its compartments. The assorted boxes aided the collector and the scientist throughout their research, as they supported the inherent order from the initial gathering to final presentation.<sup>195</sup> As a furniture piece, the cabinet embodied the concept of the universe-in-a-box, thereby expressing a radical naturalism or hyperreal realism. In this regard, the world was contained within a box, which led to a cohesion of content and ordering medium in favor of a specific representation of knowledge. For instance, in the Ambras *Wunderkammer*, the various cabinets, referred to as *casten*, were differentiated by colors [see Fig. 12] to signify their inventory: green was reserved for silver objects, blue for crystal vases, red for stones.<sup>196</sup> This approach allowed for a specific categorization of the collected inventory by integrating the objects into a framework of correspondences and meanings.

Thus, the *Kunstschränke* embodied a medium of order and enabled the harmonization of the contained objects. In this regard, spectators were encouraged to engage with the inherent classification structures within the collection, while the contents necessarily relied on the user for activation. The *Kunstschränk* depended on dynamic opening and closing, facilitating change

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<sup>193</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 11.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), p. 116; Cf. Virginie Spenlé, “Der Kabinettschrank und seine Bedeutung für die Kunst- und Wunderkammer des 17. Jahrhunderts,” in *Möbel als Medien. Beiträge zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Dinge*, ed. Sebastian Hackenschmidt, Klaus Engelhorn (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011), p. 72.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Anke te Heesen, *The World in a Box: The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Picture Encyclopedia*, transl. Ann M. Hentschel (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 149.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, “Eingesagt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstammer,” *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): pp. 561-562; Cf. Patrick Mauriès, *Das Kuriositätenkabinett* (Cologne: DuMont Literatur und Kunst, 2002), p. 25.

and positioning it as a performative device that triggered discovery and exploration.<sup>197</sup> The cabinet as container artificially reinforced the generation of wonder intended in the *Wunderkammer* and mediated interferences before the eyes of the spectator. As a result, display and furniture assumed a crucial position in conveying the collection and reinforcing its identity through mediation. A similar effect was achieved through the design of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition: objects were brought close to the viewer, who had to navigate through different spaces to activate the display through discovery.

The performative aspect of display underwent a drastic transformation during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where the notion of wonder was substituted by the scientific rule and categorization. Consequently, the furniture for display also underwent changes: the cabinets were progressively enclosed with glass, reducing the necessity to open them and physically handle the objects for demonstration. The mobility of the content diminished due to the introduction of glass; the arrangement of things became transparent. The exhibits turned nearly immovable, while newly added objects could be effortlessly integrated.<sup>198</sup> In other words, this transformation shifted from a “closed container whose interior pieces could only be reached with the help of visual and haptic sense” to a “transparent depot whose object orders could be recognized by an overhead view.”<sup>199</sup> The incorporation of glass into the showcases of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition generated a fixed arrangement reminiscent of the glass-enclosed cabinets that emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Up until the end, Anderson and Malouf kept on swapping objects between different showcase boxes. Ultimately, the exhibits were firmly located in the exhibition and demonstrated a rigid system of classification. The contemporary form of the glass display case can be traced back to the format of the *Kunstschränk*, which underwent constant evolution as furniture for organization and presentation. The recessed boxes characterizing the exhibition display aimed to evoke the *casten* of the *Wunderkammer*, thus connecting with the initial medium of display but updated in a contemporary manner. The inclusion of numerous glazed boxes served to bridge the *Kunstschränk* with current framing practices, reflecting on the white cube as exhibition format. The empty showcase situated in Room 6 should be further interpreted as an emblem of the evolution of display furniture from its inception up to the present day.

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. Barbara Stafford, “Revealing Technologies/Magical Domains,” in *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, ed. Barbara Maria Stafford, Frances Terpak (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001), p. 7, pp. 11-12.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Anke te Heesen, “Vom Einräumen der Erkenntnis,” in *auf / zu. Der Schränk in den Wissenschaften*, ed. Anke te Heesen, Anette Michels (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), pp. 93-95.

<sup>199</sup> Anke te Heesen, “Geschlossene und transparente Ordnungen. Sammlungsmöbel und ihre Wahrnehmung in der Aufklärungszeit,” in *Möbel als Medien. Beiträge zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Dinge*, ed. Sebastian Hackenschmidt, Klaus Engelhorn (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011), p. 90.

The approach of the *Spitzmaus* display is backed up by artistic tendencies in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries that explore the box as artistic medium and often contemplate the role of the museum as institutional container. Joseph Cornell is a notable example in this context, having pioneered his unique genre known as *box assemblage*. Starting in the 1930's, Cornell crafted three-dimensional collages by arranging items he had collected within small boxes.<sup>200</sup> These objects varied greatly in nature and, similar to the items found in the *Wunderkammer*, were united by the collector's selection and perspective. Due to their deeply personal nature, Cornell's boxes fit into the category of the personal museum, with their predecessor undeniably being the *Kunstzimmer*.<sup>201</sup> An inherent effect shared between Cornell's work, traditional *Kunstzimmern*, and the *Spitzmaus* exhibition is the targeted activation of viewers, prompting them to form their own associations and interpretations while observing the arrangement.

An exemplary illustration of a Cornell box is undoubtedly the artwork *Soap Bubble Set* (1936) [Fig. 40], featuring engravings, a doll head, a wine glass, a clay pipe, an egg, all backed up by a map. Many of these elements would reappear in subsequent box assemblages. The central aspect that emanated from such an artwork is primarily Cornell's keen sense of collecting.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, the box is characterized by the excessive urge to collect objects and assemble them in novel configurations that often diverge from their original purposes. The accumulated objects speak on their own behalf from the artist's – or rather, the collector's – point of view, demanding interpretation of the selection. The content references natural specimens through the inclusion of the egg, while also alluding to ancient sculpture through the doll head.<sup>203</sup> The backdrop of a moon map serves to bind together this unusual, newly formed composition. Nonetheless, what solidifies its autonomous existence is undeniably the framing within a box. The container provides clear demarcation between the interior and the exterior,

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. Patrick Mauriès, *Das Kuriositätenkabinett* (Cologne: DuMont Literatur und Kunst, 2002), p. 227.

<sup>201</sup> In her talk at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna in 2015, Kirsten Hoving rejected the direct inspiration of the *Wunderkammer* format for Cornell. As also noted in Chapter 1.1, the state of research regarding these cabinets appeared to be very limited during Cornell's lifetime. Julius von Schlosser's publication from 1908 was available only in German – a language Cornell did not master – and the newspapers consulted by Cornell only sparingly mentioned the *Wunderkammer*. Nonetheless, there are meaningful parallels between the cabinets of curiosities and Cornell's work. According to Hoving, Cornell's direct inspiration must be seen in a broader attempt of understanding the Age of Discovery, which led him to the urge of collecting and containing. Cf. Kirsten Hoving, "Containing Wonder. Kirsten Hoving on Joseph Cornell and the Legacy of the Cabinet of Curiosities," Talk at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (October 15, 2015). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7AuFLuDSxc> (Accessed August 6, 2023)

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Kynaston McShine, ed., *Joseph Cornell. Firenze, Palazzo Vecchio, Sala d'Arme 6 luglio – 13 settembre 1981* (Florence: Centro Di, 1981), p. 13.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Kirsten Hoving, "Containing Wonder. Kirsten Hoving on Joseph Cornell and the Legacy of the Cabinet of Curiosities," Talk at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (October 15, 2015): min. 22:50-23:32. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7AuFLuDSxc> (Accessed August 6, 2023)

signifying the affiliation of the content by the mere belonging to the box. Chabon further elucidates the framing of the content as follows:

Cornell always took pains to construct his boxes himself; indeed the box is the only part of a Cornell work literally ‘made’ by the artist. The box, to Cornell, is a gesture – it draws a boundary around the things it contains, and forces them into a defined relationship, not merely with one another, but with everything outside the box.<sup>204</sup>



Fig. 40: Joseph Cornell, *Soap Bubble Set*, 1936, wood box construction with glass, found objects, paper, 6.1 x 39.4 x 13.8 cm.

<sup>204</sup> Michael Chabon, “Wes Anderson’s Worlds.” *The New York Review of Books* (January 31, 2013): unpagged. <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2013/01/31/wes-anderson-worlds/> (Accessed July 21, 2023)

According to these considerations, parallels with the *Wunderkammer* cupboard, from the gathering of objects to their manner of presentation, emerge. These connections are further strengthened by Cornell's decision to enclose the assemblages with glass. This aligns *Soap Bubble Set* with the previously mentioned late 18<sup>th</sup> century development of the *Kunstschränk* – an immobilized arrangement resulting from the introduction of glass. Consequently, Cornell's work seems to find clear counterparts in the early forms of display furniture.



Fig. 41: Georg Hinz, *A Collector's Cabinet*, 1664, oil on canvas, 114.5 x 93.3 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

In his later works, Cornell's containers increasingly exhibited a systematized structure due to their uniform subdivision into several cases. This is evident in *Untitled (Dovecote)* (c. 1953), which accommodates diverse objects within grid-like compartments. The repeated presence of a box within the box establishes a connection with the format of the shadow box.

A comparison with Georg Hinz's *A Collector's Cabinet* (1664) [Fig. 41] reveals a similar approach to spatial organization for display purposes. The variety of objects is arranged by an overly symmetrical framing which evenly guides the observation of the content. The design for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition also drew inspiration from the shadow box for the arrangement of showcases.<sup>205</sup> Following an imaginary grid, the individual recessed cases were symmetrically allotted. In Cornell, not every available box was filled, which in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was brought a step further as the complete grid existed solely as a drawing and was physically reduced to the specified boxes. Both, Cornell's *Untitled (Dovecote)* and the exhibition design at the Kunsthistorisches drew from the formal structure of the *Kunstschränk*, employing a gridded distribution system for its geometric simplicity. Building on Chabon's connection between Anderson's movies and the Cornell box, Wilkins asserts that "a Cornelian box is not empty, nor is it merely a storage device. Rather, a Cornell box creates its meaning through the referents and artifacts it assembles within its walls. Anderson's stratified surfaces create film worlds that are recognizable as hermetic cinematic imaginaries."<sup>206</sup> This analogy recalls the deliberate composition of individual framings and should thus be recognized particularly in conjunction with Anderson's tableau effect and the frequent utilization of lateral tracking shots or dollhouse views.

In the following, additional approaches to the *Wunderschränk* in modern and contemporary art will be analyzed for further contextualization. A notable and explicit reference can be observed in the work of Paolo Tessari. In 1979, he first unveiled his *Wunderkammern* at the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Ancona as part of the exhibition *Ipotesi per un Museo*. Later, they were featured in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Biennale as part of the independent section *Gli Armadi delle Meraviglie* curated by Maurizio Calvesi.<sup>207</sup> Tessari's *Armadio Wunderkammer* (1972) [Fig. 42] is a reinterpreted reconstruction of an actual *Kunstschränk*, which had belonged to the artist's ancestor, Gio Domenico Tessari, a professor at the University of Padova in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The exhibition display showcased the original *Wunderkammer Tessari*, a glass-fronted display cabinet housing rare and curious, natural, and artificial specimens. The contained objects are well legible, since there is no tendency to overcrowding; the inventory is displayed in neat, uniform horizontal lines. The conglomerate of objects evokes the concept of

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<sup>205</sup> Cf. Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 174.

<sup>206</sup> Kim Wilkins, "Assembled Worlds: Intertextuality and Sincerity in the Films of Wes Anderson," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 60, no. 2 (2018): p. 154.

<sup>207</sup> *Gli Armadi delle Meraviglie* introduced the section *Wunderkammer* curated by Adalgisa Lugli, which was discussed in Chapter 1. Among the artists selected by Lugli, Joseph Cornell was included, further affirming his later association with the realm of cabinets of curiosity.

a “valuable and provocative encyclopedic museification”,<sup>208</sup> a notion Paolo Tessari aimed to convey. The container was positioned against the wall and flanked by two new additions: the artist crafted two openable cupboards containing a variety of painted objects such as heads, a mannequin, clothes, a bird, a hand, and reliquaries. These extensions appear somewhat flat and stand out due to their vibrant colors, notably red and yellow. They are unmistakably constructed



Fig. 42: Paolo Tessari, *Armadio Wunderkammer*, 1972, mixed media, Exhibition Views of *Gli Armadi delle Meraviglie*, 1986, XLII Biennale, Venice.

and equipped according to the model of the *Wunderkammer*. However, the inspirational format experienced an actualization to the climate of the 1960s, which is characterized by a neo-dadaist and pop influence.<sup>209</sup> From his ancestor, Paolo Tessari inherited “the contagion of the ‘marvelous’ turned surreal, the clattering taste, the archetype of the closet as container of the unconscious, the individualism of the coat of arms as ‘signature’.”<sup>210</sup>

In the same year of the realization of Tessari’s *Armadio Wunderkammer*, in 1972, Herbert Distel presented an alternative conception of the furniture cabinet as container for display with his *Museum of Drawers* (1970-77) [Fig. 43] at the Documenta V – then still a work in progress. Instead of aspiring to create a universal encyclopedia, Distel aimed to establish a

<sup>208</sup> Website of the artist Paolo Tessari: <https://paolotessarivenosta.it> (Accessed August 8, 2023)

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Maurizio Calvesi, “Gli Armadi delle Meraviglie,” in *Wunderkammer. La stanza delle meraviglie*, ed. Adalgisa Lugli (Venice: Electa Editrice, 1986), p. 87.

<sup>210</sup> Ibidem.



multi-drawer cabinet to house an entire museum of modern art. He invited 500 artists, primarily from the 1960s and 1970s, to contribute a miniature-scale artwork each to fit within a tiny compartment. As a result, Distel's artwork took the form of a single container with twenty vertically lined up drawers stacked one above another. Each drawer's interior featured a grid system and resembled a shadow box divided in twenty-five distinct spaces measuring 43 x 57 x 48 cm. Each compartment was supposed to "represent[ed] a 'room' of the museum."<sup>211</sup> For that reason, Distel assumed the dual roles of the museum's creator and its sole curator. Despite the strict division of individual 'rooms', the narrative intention was to mirror the diversity of artistic movements during the 1960s and 1970s. However, some works also derived from artists



Fig. 43: Herbert Distel, *Museum of Drawers*, 1970-77, mixed media, 186 x 37.5 x 38.5 cm, Kunsthau Zürich, Zurich.

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<sup>211</sup> James Putnam, *Art and Artifact. The Museum as Medium* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2001), pp. 19-20.

of the classical avant-garde, such as Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso, who according to Distel established foundations for the art of his contemporaries.<sup>212</sup> The *Museum of Drawers* thus endeavors to encapsulate the artistic production of Distel's era and place it in a contextual framework, allowing the spectator to interactively forge connections among the various miniatures. The boxes serve "like a preserving jar, they all have task of conserving and presenting a subject curdled with time – the artwork."<sup>213</sup> The viewer's activation already takes place with the act of pulling out the drawer. By arranging the shadow case horizontally, Distel metaphorically lifted the roof of his museum, presenting the artworks to the spectator from a bird's-eye view. This arrangement is reminiscent of the cross sections also discernible in Wes Anderson's shot framings or Cornellian boxes. Distel's artistic choice of positioning enables the perception of links between the physically distinct rooms, as they remain contained within the entirety of the furniture piece. From this perspective, the work can be interpreted as *Wunderkammer* in terms of exploration through the medium of the cabinet, albeit with strict criteria for inclusion, as only already pre-established artworks were eligible. It constitutes an encyclopedic collection of artworks, but not of the world in its entirety. This endeavor unveils Distel's understanding of the museum itself as a container and should therefore be viewed as both a confrontation and experimentation with the institution in form of display furniture.

As a further reflection and development of display furniture actively employed for artistic purposes, the work of Damien Hirst requires examination. In the early stages of his career, toward the 1990s, Hirst initiated his series *Medicine Cabinets*. The artist displayed a notable affinity for this mode of presentation, encompassing pharmaceutical packaging, showcases and surgical instruments, which reminded him of the minimalist sculpture from the 1960s.<sup>214</sup> In his piece *Still* (1994) [Fig. 44] Hirst arranged a glass cabinet held together by a steel frame, with a reflective back panel likewise constructed in steel. The interior features a series of horizontal glass shelves juxtaposed by the vertical steel framing, resulting in the emergence of a grid pattern that appears as structuring element. The individual shelves accommodate an array of medical instruments, meticulously arranged based on their uniformity and seriality. The display imparts a store- or depot-character due to the abundance of items, contributing to a heightened extent of aestheticization of the content. Within this context, the positioned instruments simultaneously appear as commodities and museological exhibits. This

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<sup>212</sup> Cf. Herbert Distel, in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), p. 76.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Brian Dillon, "Hässliche Gefühle," in *Damien Hirst. Tate London*, ed. Ann Gallhager (München: Prestel, 2012), p. 25.

arrangement traverses the intended functionality of the instruments and treats them “both as aesthetic objects and as silent accomplices for a medical rescue or agony, if necessary.”<sup>215</sup>



Fig. 44: Damien Hirst, *Still*, 1994, glass, stainless steel, steel, nickel, brass, rubber, and medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment, 195.6 x 251.5 x 50.8 cm.

Hirst demonstrates an acute sense of symmetry, geometric rigor, and an almost compulsive sterility, generating an unwelcoming sensation within the observer. The introduction of glass reinforced this effect – it is transparent yet simultaneously it establishes a barrier between the spectator and the cabinet. The glass amplifies the contradictory array of feelings, conjuring “a sense of alienation and proximity, surprise and familiarity, like the filter of a television screen or a computer system.”<sup>216</sup> Therefore, the glass boxes seemingly “present a portion of reality, and because of their three-dimensional plasticity and the use of found

<sup>215</sup> Andrew Wilson, “Der Glaubende,” in *Damien Hirst. Tate London*, ed. Ann Gallhager (München: Prestel, 2012), p. 213.

<sup>216</sup> Mario Codognato, “Warning Labels,” in *Damien Hirst. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Napoli*, ed. Eduardo Cicelyn, Mario Codognato, Mirta D’Argenzio (Napoli: Electa Napoli, 2004), p. 30.

objects, they offer, along with disorienting and pitiless realism, a sort of enclosure of incommunicability, or suspension of the flow of time and the continuity of space.”<sup>217</sup> This amalgamation of opposing meanings and the usage of solid yet transparent material contribute to isolating the medicine cabinet from its surroundings. The seriality of the autonomous cabinets nurtures the perception of the cabinet as anatomical item and the body as a conglomerate of curiosities, allowing for the metamorphosis of the body into a medical *Wunderkammer* and the cabinet into a portrait.<sup>218</sup>

The realization of glass boxes progressively assumed a prominent role in Hirst’s artistic repertoire. Glass showcases constitute elements of exhibited knowledge and theatricality, emerging from the *Wunderkammer* and its subsequent intellectual curiosity, thereby serving as a simulacrum of the quest for knowledge that fascinated Hirst.<sup>219</sup> The display case has the capacity to house subjects that cannot be actually encompassed and therefore expresses a state of impossibility.<sup>220</sup> The physical impossibility of representation manifests in Hirst’s animal installations. As in *Away from the Flock* (1994) [Fig. 45], it is possible to identify numerous works wherein Hirst preserved cadavers of diverse animals in glass boxes filled with formaldehyde – a majority of these pieces belonging to the series entitled *Natural History*. In each installation, the featured animal appears extracted from its natural habitat and situated within a foreign, isolated realm of representation and display. This act of displacement is often indicated in the attributed title – as in the aforementioned example, the sheep literally appears to be ‘away from the flock’, and equally distant from living things. Hirst drew inspiration from the fragility of life, urging him “to make a sculpture where the fragility was encased. Where it exists in its own space. The sculpture is spatially contained.”<sup>221</sup> The spectator and the artwork get close to each other, while maintaining the distance due to the glass case. The resulting attention is characterized by curiosity and even a degree of sensationalism, as the intimacy to the animal is heightened.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ivi, pp. 30-31.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Brian Dillon, “Hässliche Gefühle,” in *Damien Hirst. Tate London*, ed. Ann Gallhager (München: Prestel, 2012), p. 25.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Ivi, pp. 23-24.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Andrew Wilson, “Der Glaubende,” in *Damien Hirst. Tate London*, ed. Ann Gallhager (München: Prestel, 2012), pp. 207-208.

<sup>221</sup> Damien Hirst, “Damien Hirst”, interview by Carl Freedman, *Minky Manky (South London Gallery 12 April – 14 May 1995)*, unpagged.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Brian Dillon, “Hässliche Gefühle,” in *Damien Hirst. Tate London*, ed. Ann Gallhager (München: Prestel, 2012), p. 24; Cf. Christian Spies, “Vor Augen Stellen. Vitrinen und Schaufenster bei Edgar Degas, Eugène Atget, Damien Hirst und Louise Lawler,” in *Zeigen. Die Rhetorik des Sichtbaren*, ed. Gottfried Boehm, Sebastian Engenhofer, Christian Spies (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2010), p. 282.



Fig. 45: Damien Hirst, *Away From The Flock*, 1994, glass, stainless steel, perspex, acrylic paint, lamb, and formaldehyde solution, 96 x 149 x 51 cm, Tate Britain, London.

The manner in which Hirst frames natural objects invokes parallels with the presentation of zoological or archeological collections, which are now examined for contextualization. In general, natural history museums appear to offer a more beneficent and fitting comparison for Hirst's work than art museums. A relevant permanent exhibition display can be found at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, which was first opened in 1887 [Fig. 46]. It is divided into nine display rooms, each equipped with permanently built-in display cases, along with storage drawers beneath.<sup>223</sup> Objects are grouped according to cultural or geographical origins. At times, the cases appear densely crowded, given that a substantial portion of the collection is on show. Spectators are encouraged to open the drawers themselves, fostering an interactive engagement with the exhibits that conveys the concept of the typically concealed world of the museum storage.<sup>224</sup>

The display cases are structured in a simple manner: an upper glass vitrine is held together by a black frame on top of a wooden base. Similar to Hirst's tanks, the use of glass

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. Peter Saunders, "'The Choicest, Best-Arranged Museums I Have Ever Seen': The Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset, 1880s-1970s," *Museum History Journal* 7, no. 2 (July 2014): p. 208.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Stefan Lubar, *Inside the Lost Museum. Curating, Past and Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 206; Cf. Sandra Dudley, "What's in the Drawer? Surprise and Proprioceptivity in the Pitt Rivers Museum," *The Senses of Society* 9, no. 3 (April 16, 2015): pp. 296-298.

allows for a heightened proximity while simultaneously enforcing a rigid division between the container and its surrounding.<sup>225</sup> In the context of the Pitt Rivers Museum, numerous exhibits carry traces of their colonialist nature, thereby emphasizing cultural distinctions and rigid boundaries through their confinement within glass boxes. This matter was pointed out by Lothar Baumgarten through the exhibition *Unsettled Objects* held in 1968-69. He composed eighty-one slides featuring artifacts from the Pitt Rivers Museum and highlighted the collection's issues through a synergy of text and image. The artist underscored that the objects' "true aura, appropriate to their application and meaning, is seldom allowed in this new existence."<sup>226</sup>

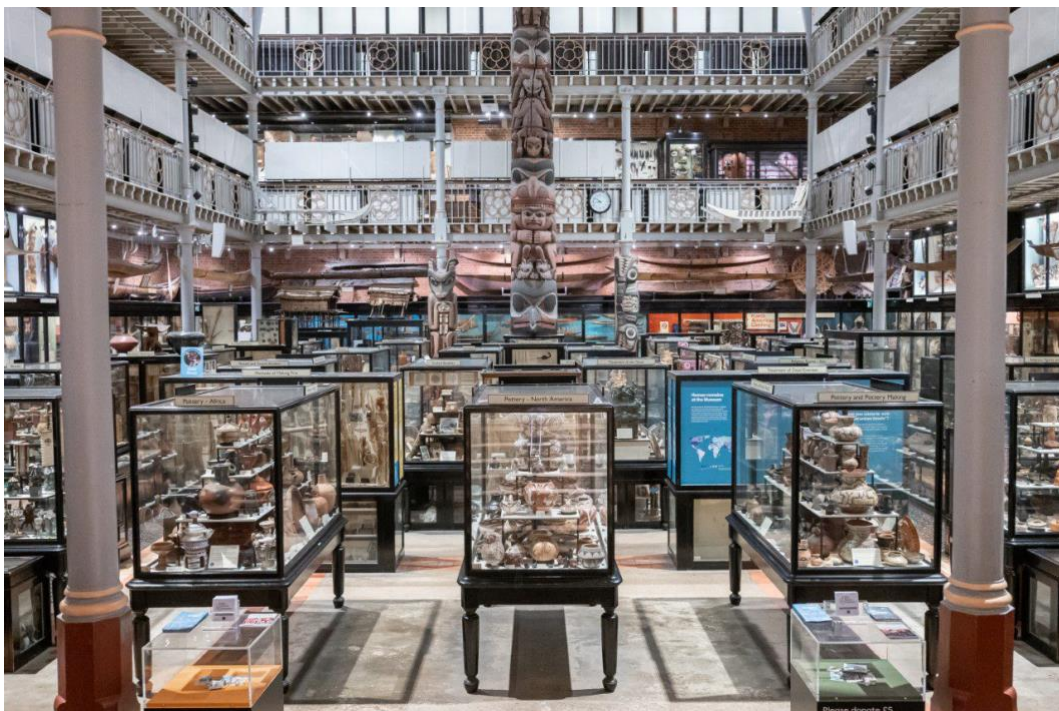


Fig. 46: Pitt Rivers Museum, first opened in 1887, Exhibition View, Oxford.

To substantiate the contemporary relevance of Hirst's boxes in the context of museum display, it is essential to reference another example. In 2009, the Great North Museum, formerly known as Hancock Museum, reopened following a significant extension, featuring a new exhibition design conceived by Casson Mann [Fig. 47]. Within this concept, the evolution of the traditional glass showcase played a pivotal role. The exhibition arranges mounted animals

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<sup>225</sup> It is no coincidence that Damien Hirst's renowned *Cain and Abel* (1994) was showcased in the exhibition *Meat the Future* (2021-22) at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, situated under the same roof as the Pitt Rivers Museum. To me, Hirst's approach to dealing with deceased animals appears significantly less harsh in the habitat of a Museum of Natural History, even though the intent behind preserving the animal differs between the two displays.

<sup>226</sup> Lothar Baumgarten, in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), p. 94.

within and outside glass-fronted boxes. As only the front and back of the containers offer a view, with walls forming the remaining parts, a sense of confinement is conveyed – urging the spectator to engage with the case and its contents from the front. According to Palmer, this “striking construction of display cases and lightboxes suggests a layering of the living world; from birds flying above, a selection of land animals in the central spaces and finally the creatures of the sea below. An imaginative use of lighting and projection techniques adds colour and atmosphere to the finished story.”<sup>227</sup>



Fig. 47: Great North Museum, Exhibition View, Exhibition Design conceived by Casson Mann, 2009, New Castle upon Tyne.

An intriguing artistic exploration of performance in relation to the use of the showcase was undertaken by Tilda Swinton with *The Maybe* (Serpentine Gallery, 1995/MoMA, 2013) [Fig. 48]. Initially conceived as part of an exhibition by Cornelia Parker, the performance involved Swinton laying asleep in a glass vitrine positioned at the center of the exhibition space. Visitors gathering around the installation were doubting her real presence – some “thought she was an imposter or a waxwork but she was really ‘there’, as a non-performing performer, a sort of absent presence.”<sup>228</sup> The box appeared to protect the sleeping actress within, and at the same time a palpable sense of fragility arose by exposing her in such an intimate and vulnerable state. Hence, the role of the case extended beyond containment, oscillating between protection and exposure.

Following these considerations, it can be asserted that the vitrine possesses the ability to confer a delimiting essence to an exhibit. Therefore, the display case itself encapsulates institutional credibility. In 1981, O’Doherty already contemplated the agency of the showcase: “The double mechanism of display (gallery and case) reciprocally replaces the missing art with

<sup>227</sup> Pam Locker, *Exhibition Design* (Lausanne: AVA Publishing, 2011), p. 151.

<sup>228</sup> Cornelia Parker, “A Strange Alchemy: Cornelia Parker,” interview by Lisa Tickner, *Art History* 26, no. 3 (June 2003): p. 384.

itself. To insert art into gallery or case puts the art in ‘quotation marks.’”<sup>229</sup> In this regard, the empty display case emerges as the purest means of marking institutional correlation. This notion was reflected by Reinhard Mucha in his work *Treysa* (1993), which ironically comments on the agency of the empty vitrine, showcasing nothing but itself: “a container without content.”<sup>230</sup> The interior of the display case is covered with grey felt, alluding to a sense of coziness and comfort, which is to be critically read as a commodification of artworks within the institutional context.



Fig. 48: Tilda Swinton/Cornelia Parker, *The Maybe*, 1995, Exhibition View, Serpentine Gallery, London.

Returning to the utilization of showcases for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, it becomes evident that the display design was well-grounded in the evolution of the box as medium. It embraced the arrangement employed in the traditional *Wunderkammer*, reflecting on the *Kunstschränk* through the incorporation of glass. This enabled proximity and enhanced an

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<sup>229</sup> Brian O’Doherty, “The Gallery As A Gesture,” *Artforum* 20, no. 4, December 1981, p. 27.

<sup>230</sup> James Putnam, *Art and Artifact. The Museum as Medium* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2001), p. 45.



acquainted confrontation. However, this assimilation took into account the progressive development of the original display cabinet. The visual effect has been minimized in terms of decoration to emphasize the content. The nature of the content was certainly taken into consideration when determining the distribution of the display cases. As the exhibition prominently featured *naturalia*, the exhibition design also leaned towards the layout of natural history museums. Following the examples provided above, the utilization of boxes to showcase natural artifacts is quite prevalent and has repeatedly undergone updates. On the whole, the *Spitzmaus* display positioned itself in a particularly expressive position, encapsulating multifaceted reflections on different stages of the box's evolution as exhibition furniture.

### 3. *Spitzmaus* and Beyond: Content – Meaning – Relocation

The analysis of the exhibition design conducted in the second chapter has already enabled the inclusion of various thematic sections and their visual representation. The subsequent chapter aims to accurately examine the contents of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition – to the largest extent possible, considering the extension of exhibits. The aim of this analysis is to trace the motivations and processes behind the selection of the items. Additionally, the thematic dynamics within the exhibition will be evaluated, exploring the creation of new meanings due to the juxtaposition of objects deriving from different collections of the Kunsthistorisches, that in most cases had never met each other previously. While the primary curatorial intention appeared to be of visual nature, now, thematic connections will be tried to establish. In comparison to Anderson's and Malouf's private encounters with some of the exhibits, personal motivations for specific selections will be identified. Speaking of Anderson's movies, specific objects and shapes and their related meanings should be investigated as they seem to have reappeared in the *Spitzmaus* show. Furthermore, the filmic productions reveal a treatment of the artistic sphere, repeatedly featuring museum interiors and artworks that aid to comprehend the curatorial approach behind the exhibition.

Followingly, the focus shifts to the public's reaction. Audience feedback can be traced online through reviews and posts on social media. Therefore, the target of the examination will be to determine the institutions' efficiency in mediation. The spectators' behavior within the exhibition can be captured through photographs and will aid in determining if the overall concept of the show was effectively conveyed to the audience. Public feedback will then be compared with the critics' comments printed in newspapers and journals to assess whether the general understanding resulted in similar reactions in both professional and non-professional circles. Finally, the exhibition must be observed through the lens of cultural appropriation.

The final part of this chapter concentrates on the transfer of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition to Fondazione Prada in Milan. Motivations behind the choice of institution as a suitable host for the Kunsthistorisches' collections and an artist-curated show with Anderson and Malouf will be determined. Due to the expanded space for the second installment and restrictions on the transfer of some objects, the exhibits were varied and extended. Consequently, connections between the content itself and its Italian counterpart are to be identified, such as the *Wunderkammer* format which was then adapted for comparison to the Italian *studiolo*. Another noteworthy contribution by Fondazione Prada is their publication of an artist's box in limited edition, which appeared to mirror the exhibition *en miniature* and will be analyzed in detail.

### 3.1 Content's Coverage of the Archive – And in Reverse: New Meanings through New Arrangement?

As the selection of the exhibits was largely made instinctively – especially by not considering the objects' scientific criteria regarding their provenance, rarity, or background<sup>231</sup> – a closer examination of the content for a better understanding of eventual processes and motivations for their inclusion is necessary. In total, the show comprised 423 individual objects, with over 350 selected from the depots.<sup>232</sup> The exhibits were drawn from all fourteen historic collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, along with some pieces deriving from the Naturhistorisches Museum. In this way, Anderson and Malouf delved into the entire legacy of the former Habsburg property. The exhibition did not proportionally reflect each collection's size. The Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities contributed forty-two pieces out of 28,000, while the Kunstammer & Imperial Treasury<sup>233</sup> handed over around one hundred eighty items out of 11,600. From the library instead, only two books were taken, “but good books!”<sup>234</sup> – as the director of the Museum Library added. Hence, the individual quality and specificity of each exhibit played a central role in their selection.

Throughout the whole process, constant exchange with the twenty-three responsible curators of the Kunsthistorisches and Naturhistorisches Museum was essential, involving discussions on conservational measures and the provision of specific information. While some of the selected items had never been exhibited before, others were normally prominently displayed in autonomy but found themselves collectively grouped behind museum glass in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Undoubtedly, the aesthetic and visual appeal held greater sway over Anderson and Malouf than the creator of a specific object. Reflecting on the selection process, Anderson stated that he and Malouf believed “it would be easy because our tastes and interests – in colors and shapes, in light and shadows, in art – were so similar as to be almost interchangeable, and that we would briskly choose a handful of pieces we both love, and that would be that. Of course, we were wrong, but I think we expected to be wrong. We didn't, however, expect to be so wrong for so long.”<sup>235</sup> The extensive effort was surely due to the

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<sup>231</sup> Cf. Giorgia Losio, “Wes Anderson curatore al Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.” *Artribune* (November 24, 2018): unpagged. <https://www.artribune.com/dal-mondo/2018/11/mostra-wes-anderson-curatore-museum-vienna/> (Accessed June 1, 2023)

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, “A Spitzmaus Moves Into The Spotlight. On Preparing an Exhibition with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf,” in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf*, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), p. 13.

<sup>233</sup> At this point, it should be noted, that the Kunstammer & Imperial Treasury was for sure the collection most integrated into the exhibition.

<sup>234</sup> Beatrix Kriller-Erdrich, “8 Questions to 23 Curators,” questionnaire by Cornelia Mattiacci, in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 63.

<sup>235</sup> Wes Anderson, “A Note from Wes Anderson,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 7.

vastness of the collection, necessitating repeated creation of object lists to identify potential sections and themes for the exhibition. In the end, the content was organized in seven different sections, each housed within a dedicated exhibition room. Just the first thematic part was split between Room 1 and Room 8. The accompanying exhibition catalogue by the Kunsthistorisches Museum features drawings by Malouf introducing each section by capturing their essence.

The sections were generally categorized by type, color, size, or shape.<sup>236</sup> Another decisive criterion, identified just once in the literature regarding the exhibition, was material, which appears to be crucial for the composition of Room 6.<sup>237</sup> Subsequently, an in-depth examination of each exhibition room will be conducted to discern thematic continuity and evaluate the coherence of compilations. This analysis will proceed in the order of the installed rooms.

The first section, presented across Room 1 and 8, gathered a series of portraits. Consequently, the nature of each included object was uniform, as all were paintings on canvas or panel surfaces – all sourced from the Picture Gallery of the Kunsthistorisches. The division of this category into two parts underscores that the exhibits in Room 1 did not inherently manifest a clear existence as portraits. The first painting, the *Cabinet of Curiosities* by Francken (1620-25) [see Fig. 4], is followed by two paintings, each depicting a figure gazing out of a window. This combination might have served as an introduction to the exhibition itself: the *Wunderkammer*, where active observation was integral and essential, akin to the contemplation demanded by the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Furthermore, two banquet paintings from the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were incorporated. To bridge these with the genre of the portrait, a series of three portraits depicting members of the *Gonsalvus Family* [see Fig. 5] was inserted. The ‘hirsute’ family was renowned as an attraction in their time, which was perpetuated through their portraits, once housed at Ambras Castle. The second part of the section, displayed in Room 8, aligned with the category more cohesively, as all exhibits were portraits. In line with the European representation logics of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which predominantly featured noble people, seven out of the thirteen portraits in the exhibition represented members of ruling dynasties.

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<sup>236</sup> Cf. Max L. Feldman, “Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf’s Curatorial Debut in Vienna Relives the Moment of First Love,” *Frieze*, November 15, 2018, unpaginated. <https://www.frieze.com/article/wes-anderson-and-juman-maloufs-curatorial-debut-vienna-relives-moment-first-love> (Accessed June 1, 2023): mentions all four criteria; Cf. Katherine Lanza, “Moviemaker at the Museum,” *The Magazine Antiques* 186, no. 1 (February 2019): p69: mentions style, color and type; Cf. Lina Patmali, “Rethinking Museum Practice Through Exhibitions: The Case of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria,” in *Studying Museums in Qatar and Beyond*, ed. Alexandra Bounia, Catharina Hendrick (Doha: UCL Qatar, 2020), p. 88: mentions shape and size.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, “Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstskammer,” *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): p. 561.

Most of these portraits belonged to the House of Habsburg or the Dukes of Burgundy, who were allied through the marriage of Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy. However, the inclusion of the three outstanding portraits of noblemen not associated with these dynasties requires considerations beyond power structures. One such portrait is that of *Duke John Frederick, Elector of Saxony*, strategically placed at the center of a grouping [see Fig. 34]. The decision to include it stemmed from Anderson's and Malouf's personal preferences, having encountered this painting repeatedly even prior the conception of the exhibition. Anderson emphasized this feeling, stating: "This Titan: I have always loved. [...] I have so many pictures of this man, and I have so many photographs of him. And maybe the one thing that right at the beginning, for me, I thought, well, that's certainly going to be right in the middle of the room when we do this."<sup>238</sup> Thus, the curators constructed their own narratives and desired arrangement around this painting – even in the absence of historical justification.

The remaining portraits out of the Habsburg and Burgundy line depict *Emperor Sigismund* (c. 1600) and *Emperor Charlemagne* (c. 1600) [see Fig. 34], flanking the discussed portrait of *Duke John Frederick* laterally. The positioning facilitated the explanation of selection, accentuating their visual communalities and the same stylistic manner. Both are copies after Dürer and visually catch the eye due to their crowns which are set off in color, rendered partly in a gold-glowing shade. This insertion of the two portraits was very likely motivated by aesthetics, as indicated by their symmetric positioning and visual unity within the display. Additionally, the ceiling fresco of the architectural frame for the exhibition unveils some parallels with the portrait section. Emperor Charlemagne and artist Hans Burgkmair – who is depicted in a portrait of Room 8 – are featured in the fresco. Notably, among the Habsburg family members, Titian and Dürer are depicted, artists who themselves contributed portraits to the exhibition. Thus, the portrait section fostered an atmosphere of camaraderie between esteemed artists and noblemen, despite the disposition of the portraits being driven more by aesthetics than by an accurate representation of power dynamics.

Room 2 is thematically devoted to a singular aesthetic criterion: the common color green. According to Delistraty, this room was "the only area in the exhibition that plays no games of mood or feeling. It is the only room in which Mr. Anderson and Ms. Malouf have decided they could not fully control the objects" and therefore "the aesthetic has to stand on its

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<sup>238</sup> Wes Anderson, "A Walk Through the Exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018" in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 10.

own.”<sup>239</sup> This notion of the visual agency of this section is pivotal for the understanding of the content included. While all the eighty-nine exhibits in Room 2 were selected based on their color, distinct sub-categories can still be discerned within the selection. A significant portion consisted by malachites, totaling thirty-eight pieces sourced from diverse locations spanning Russia, Romania, and Arizona. Despite their varied origin, all of them derived from the Mineral Collection of the Naturhistorisches Museum. Furthermore, twelve miniature busts or statuettes were included – except two animalesque figures, all were of human nature. These come from various sources, including Egypt, Rome, and China, dating primarily between the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. The tonality of these objects noticeably tends toward a very grayish shade of green. Another detected sub-category comprised eight objects related to clothing, such as the *Hedda Gabler* (1978) costume dress, footgear, and paintings featuring green outfits. All these objects were unified by their leaf-green color. Further categories could be found in containers. There were six green vases, originating from Imperial Rome and the Chinese Quing Dynasty, characterized by their long-necked vase form [Fig. 49].



Fig. 49: Selection of Vases for Room 2 of the exhibition  
*Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures.*

<sup>239</sup> Cody Delistraty, “Wes Anderson, Curator? The Filmmaker Gives It a Try,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2018, unpaginated. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/arts/design/wes-anderson-vienna-kunsthistorisches-museum.html> (Accessed June 8, 2023)



Fig. 50: Exhibition View *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Foreground: Dionysio Miseroni, *Emerald Vessel*, 1641, emerald, gold, enamel, 8.5 x 7.2 x 10.9 cm, Kunstkammer, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Background: *Costume Dress for Hedda Gabler*, 1978, Shantung, applications, partly painted, wearer: Erika Pluhar as Hedda, Theatermuseum, Vienna.

Another group of six boxes, vessels and containers with varying shapes share a common Mexican origin and the same surface treatment, as all of them were green glazed ceramics. Additionally, five vessels and bowls captivated by their glowing emerald-green hues and individual gold decorations. All of them originate from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one from a Southern German context, while the rest were crafted by Italian artists Ottavio Miseroni and his son Dionysio Miseroni [Fig. 50]. A final grouping of five exhibits revolves around birds: two bird paintings, bird specimens, a feather skirt, and a necked bowl lute. The inclusion of the latter may conceptually symbolize the harmony between bird calls and musical instruments.<sup>240</sup> Notably, each sub-category shared a distinct tonality, allowing them to be identified as autonomous groupings within the room. The fact that these subdivisions are still identifiable points again to the vastness of the collection, since it is feasible to find numerous similar pieces of the same shape, technique, or origin all of the same color.

Aesthetically, the display was very harmonious [see Fig. 25], with shared and repeated characteristics reinforcing a balanced, symmetrical arrangement. Some placements within the display were rationally and strategically designed to evoke specific parallels. As Anderson asserted empathically, they situated “the seventeenth century emerald vessel in a confined space opposite the bright green costume from a 1978 production of *Hedda Gabler* in order to call attention to the molecular similarities between hexagonal crystal and Shantung silk.”<sup>241</sup> To the spectator, this connection probably did not appear apparent, since visually, the two objects differed widely in texture, creating a striking juxtaposition. However, without additional provided information, recognizing this parallel would have been impossible.

In Room 3, nineteen children’s portraits and pieces of a boy’s armor were displayed. A total of fifteen exhibits were specific to or associated with noble children, out of which twelve were Habsburg descendants. Notably, various generations, encompassing parents as children and then also their children, were included. For instance, a portrait of *Archduke Charles of Inner-Austria as Child* (after 1545) was exhibited alongside portraits of his daughters, *Archduchess Christina Renata* (1578) and *Archduchess Gregoria Maximiliane* (1581). The same applies for *Emperor Franz I (II)* (1768) and his following generation, *Archduchess Maria Anna* (early 19<sup>th</sup> cent.) and *Archduke Franz Karl* (19<sup>th</sup> cent., 1<sup>st</sup> third). This arrangement led to a complex and confusing understanding of family structures, as family members from different

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<sup>240</sup> Not all the green objects could have been inserted in one of the identified categories. The same applies to the analysis of the following sections.

<sup>241</sup> Wes Anderson, “Introduction,” in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), S.19.



generations were presented in an infantile status, and paintings from different eras were intermixed in the display.

Another segment of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition occupied Room 4, featuring miniatures. Among the one hundred twenty-nine items, the majority displayed a representative character, encompassing busts of influential philosophers and Roman rulers, noblemen portraits, and cameos. Sub-categories included sixteen statuettes, twenty-eight busts and hand masks – mainly of Italian origin from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries –, twenty-seven miniature portraits deriving from Italy, Germany, Austria and France, and seven silver coins. The exhibits spanned a wide timeframe, with the earliest dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and the most recent being from 1963. While most items originated in Europe, twenty-four exhibits derived from various global regions like Egypt, Liberia, China, Japan, North America, and Bolivia. The material variety was notable, encompassing marble, silver, bronze casts, glazed faiences, wood, and paper drawings. The display united the different sub-categories: for instance, the busts were horizontally aligned, while the miniature portraits were positioned above them. Both rows expose the tiniest objects at the sides, then the dimension increases toward the center. So, they were not organized “by chronology or context, but by size”<sup>242</sup> [see Fig. 26]. Other objects were grouped according to their functions and shapes. One vitrine held four exhibits: a bronze arm, hand and finger, and a Jewish Amulet Plate with a hand. Another showcase displayed two drinking cups. Some groupings were driven by necessary conservation measures; for example, bronze pieces must be separated from paper drawings. Some placements were surely unconventional, as acknowledged by Paulus Rainer, the curator of the *Kunstkammer* and Imperial Treasury, who noted a juxtaposition of a touching Chinese figurine from the *Weltmuseum Vienna* alongside a figure of Christ from the *Kunstkammer*. “The Chinese figure has a strong impact on the Christ, as they stand next to one another in the show: this special object changed its meaning, its ‘behavior’ and its message in the exhibition.”<sup>243</sup>

In Room 5, a selection of animal-related objects was showcased [Fig. 51]. This collection encompassed animal paintings, sculptures, mounted animals, book illustrations, animal reconstructions, and models. Within the forty-three exhibits, several sub-categories emerged. The major part – fifteen objects – represented creeping and crawling animals such as turtles, crabs, frogs, and mice. Fourteen items showed animals on all fours, including a leopard, dogs, and wolves. Nine objects pertained to birds, either in the form of paintings, mounted

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<sup>242</sup> Kate Brown, “Wes Anderson’s Offbeat Debut as a Curator Drove a Storied Museum’s Staff Crazy. The Results are Enchanting” (November 7, 2018): unpagged. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/wes-anderson-curator-kunsthistorisches-museum-1387429> (Accessed June 1, 2023)

<sup>243</sup> Paulus Rainer, “8 Questions to 23 Curators,” questionnaire by Cornelia Mattiacci, in *Il Sarcophago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 82.

animals, or real emu eggs. Additionally, two aquatic animals were presented: a glass model of a jellyfish and a wooden blowfish. The exhibits had diverse origins, hailing from Asia, Europe, Australia, or Egypt. Although spanning from 2000 BC to 1980, the majority of the objects dated from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 51: Room 5, Exhibition View.

Room 6 showcased forty objects focusing on the subject of boxes and containers [see Fig. 28]. Thirteen exhibits were cases or bags in the same shape as the object: a *Chalice with Case* (1835), *Napoleon's Glass with Case* (1804), a *Hatbox* (19<sup>th</sup> century), or the *Case of the Imperial Orb* (undated) among others. Another subset included twelve square-shaped boxes that concealed their contents, serving as non-specific, unbiased containers. Eleven objects fell under the category of cases for longitudinal objects like swords or flutes, shaped to match the negative space of the specific items. The majority of the exhibits in this rooms – twenty-eight pieces out of thirty-nine – were of European origin. Others derived from Egypt, Tahiti, Indonesia, Brazil, and various other countries. The time span covered periods from 2000 BC to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The sixty-six objects housed in Room 7 [see Fig. 27] shared a common material: wood. By utilizing wood as a cohesive, organizing criteria, “a material becomes a lens on the evolution of art – from the functional and artless, to the artful pretending toward authenticity, to the

decadently useless.”<sup>244</sup> To dissect the quoted statement, the contents of this section warrant examination. In quantity, wooden reliefs stand out for sure, as twenty-nine of such were included – all hail from Southern Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, it must be considered that except for one bust relief of *Emperor Ferdinand I* (1540), all others served as matching game pieces for a board game, thereby necessarily linking their area and time of origin. Additionally, thirteen sculptures and statuettes were featured, predominantly of German origin, along others from Austria, Flanders, France or China. These exhibits largely date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although some extend to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another, quantitatively small, sub-category encompassed four paintings. Among them, two were of Egyptian origins, while the others were of French and German provenance.

As seen in other categories of the exhibition, intercontinental provenance was connected to temporally differentiated origin, with non-European items often pre-dating European counterparts significantly. In this instance, the European exhibits were from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the Egyptian panels were painted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Additionally, this section included four crucifixes as a grouping. Two derived from Italy, and the other two from Greece, all dating between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Wooden crucifixes held a noteworthy place in the Kunsthistorisches’ collection, as they were extremely common sculptural elements during that era. Beyond church interiors, they were essential in Catholic households, evoking a sense of familiarity and connection to both domestic spaces and religious education. The original positioning of a crucifix at the upper corner of a peasant’s living room<sup>245</sup> – with wood paneling, such as the exhibition room itself – was no longer evident in the symmetrically aestheticized arrangement within the *Spitzmaus* exhibition.

Another identifiable sub-category comprised two elements of similar shape yet vastly divergent function. One was the *patu kotiate* (1858), an instrument serving the Maori as hand weapon. The other was a *Violin* (20<sup>th</sup> century), which referred to the *Wunderkammer* of Ambras Castle. One of the Ambras display cabinets predominantly featured wooden objects – containing mostly music instruments, which were a novel inclusion in collecting practices.<sup>246</sup> It is surely possible to trace some relevant parallels between the contents within this room. Inserted in a highly aesthetic context they appeared not ‘decadently useless’, as per Delistraty’s statement, but rather deprived of their original use and function.

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<sup>244</sup> Cody Delistraty, “Wes Anderson, Curator? The Filmmaker Gives It a Try,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2018, unpaginated. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/arts/design/wes-anderson-vienna-kunsthistorisches-museum.html> (Accessed June 8, 2023)

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Kurt Müller, “Was ist der Herrgottswinkel?” *Villingen im Wandel der Zeit* 42 (2019): pp. 142-143.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), p. 95.

All in all, three main themes, as outlined by Patmali, can be discerned: “a contemporary take of the *Kunstkammer*; a story about insignificant and overlooked objects; and, a personal understanding of curating museum collections.”<sup>247</sup> By taking a closer look to the depots, Anderson and Malouf mastered the exploration and understanding of the present items which allowed for the revival of the unusual in a deeply personal manner. According to Mainetti, the responsible curator for Fondazione Prada, the contents unveiled Anderson’s and Malouf’s world with a great sense for intimacy.<sup>248</sup> References to their creative output were evident and invited for further exploration. Some connections were directed at specific objects, while others related to overarching topics presented in the different rooms.



Fig. 52: Michael Taylor, *Boy with Apple*, 2012, oil on canvas, made-for-film creation.

<sup>247</sup> Lina Patmali, “Rethinking Museum Practice Through Exhibitions: The Case of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria,” in *Studying Museums in Qatar and Beyond*, ed. Alexandra Bounia, Catharina Hendrick (Doha: UCL Qatar, 2020), p. 89.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Mario Mainetti, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcophago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 24-25.

In this regard, the sections of portraits put in exchange the depictions of adults and children. This confrontation highlighted the typically Andersonian phenomenon of familial dysfunction, as in his movies, adults “are always wrangling disappointment and nursing damaged dreams while wishing for an idyll, or longing for a panacea. Often the children act with more maturity than the adults (as in *Moonrise Kingdom*).”<sup>249</sup> Especially the children’s portraits express an unexpected adult sovereignty and rigor, contrasting the notion of a carefree childhood. Again, this perspective reinforces the childish manner of collecting. Losio also points out the parallels between the portraits of noble infants and the painting *Boy with Apple* [Fig. 52], created as Renaissance caricature for *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.<sup>250</sup>

The miniature section included in Room 4 mirrored Anderson’s penchant for meticulous details in his films, often lending significance to the minutiae.

Additionally, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition reflected the prominent role animals play in movies directed by Anderson, where they frequently assume pivotal roles. Movies like *Fantastic Mr. Fox* and *Isle of Dogs* emphasize animals’ importance, as do pets in *The Royal Tenenbaums* – Chas’ sons’ beagle Buckley and the hawk Mordecai – or Snoopy in *Moonrise Kingdom*. As proposed by Knight, “the point at which characters lose [...] a pet marks the point where they become ready and able to reconnect with their family and community.”<sup>251</sup> This notion similarly applies to the role of the animal section in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, highlighting that “without animals, people lack a meaningful mirror against which they can measure themselves and truthfully reflect upon their own nature as human beings.”<sup>252</sup> Hence, the thematic focus on animals served as a reference to both adult and children portraits, symbolizing the transition from childhood to adulthood and the assumption of responsibility, not only for oneself but also for others, which starts by taking care of pets.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Room 6 showcased boxes and cases, establishing a connection to the Russian doll narratives and lateral track shots featured in the Andersonian cinematic approach.

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<sup>249</sup> Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Wes Anderson. Bringing Nostalgia to Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 43.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Giorgia Losio, “Wes Anderson curatore al Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.” *Artribune* (November 24, 2018): unpagged. <https://www.artribune.com/dal-mondo/2018/11/mostra-wes-anderson-curatore-museum-vienna/> (Accessed June 1, 2023)

<sup>251</sup> C. Ryan Knight, “‘Who’s to say?’: The Role of Pets in Wes Anderson’s Films,” in *The Films of Wes Anderson. Critical Essays on an Indie-wood Icon*, ed. Peter C. Kunze (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 66.

<sup>252</sup> Ivi, p. 67.

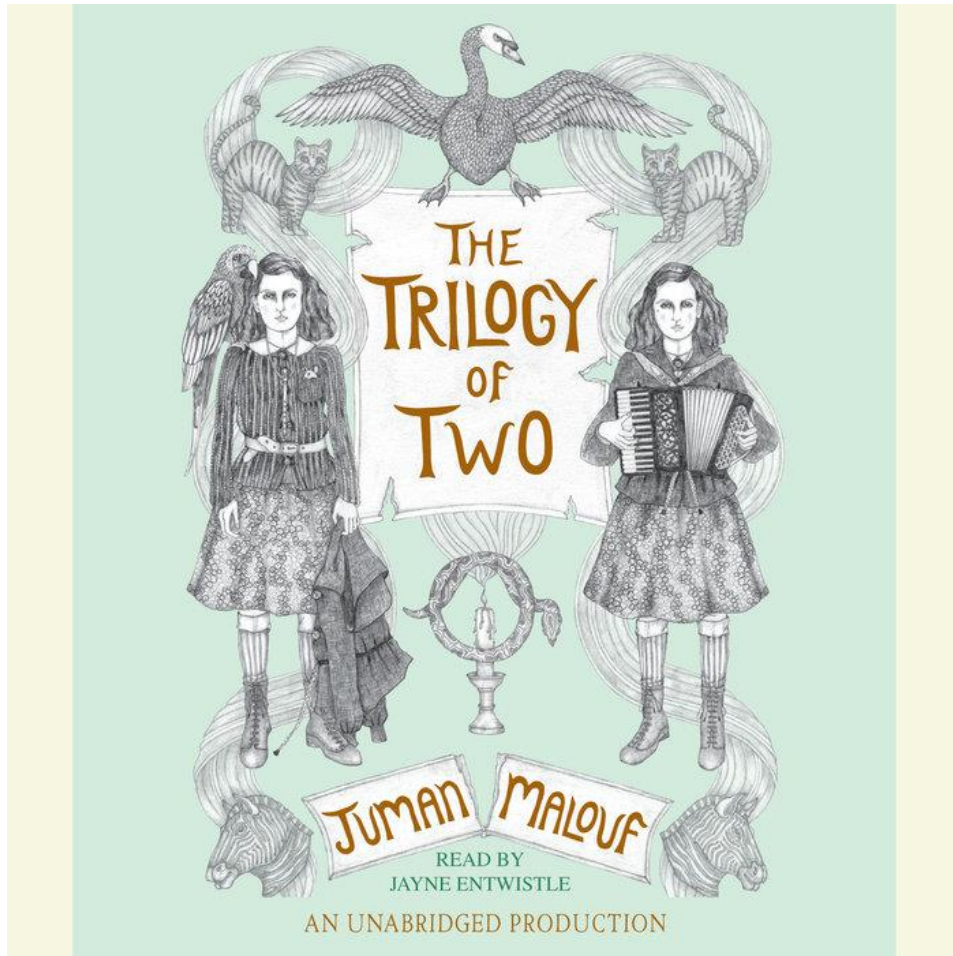


Fig. 53: Juman Malouf, *Trilogy of Two*, book cover, 2015.



Fig. 54: Master of the Furies, *Phoenix*, c. 1610/20, ivory, 23.8 x 32 x 42.5 cm, Kunstkammer, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

To pinpoint specific exhibits that can be attributed to the curators' personal influences, certain items must be pointed out. One prominent reference is the inclusion of Titian's portrait of *Duke John Frederick* which was already featured as decorative reproduction in the short film *Hotel Chevalier* [see Fig. 33]. Another link is evident in the portraits of the *Gonsalvus Family* [see Fig. 5], reminiscent circus-like appeal of the main characters in Malouf's novel *The Trilogy of Two* (2015).<sup>253</sup> The book's cover [Fig. 53] draws another parallel, featuring a swan posed similarly to the ivory *Phoenix* (1610/20) [Fig. 54] displayed in the exhibition. Similarly, the wooden model of a *Blowfish* (before 1935) recalls the movie poster of *The Life Aquatic with Steven Zissou*, depicting a blowfish in front of a submarine with similarly surprised expression as the one in the exhibition.

Many of Anderson's movies express direct references to art, allowing to examine the relationship between the director and precious objects. For instance, in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* and *The French Dispatch*, artists or the act of painting repeatedly appear as central activity of some main characters. Moreover, the most prominent treatment of artworks can be found in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. A crucial scene in this regard is undoubtedly the museum chase,<sup>254</sup> lifted directly from Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* (1966).<sup>255</sup> The first room of the museum is adorned with fully hanged walls, recalling salon-style arrangements that follow Anderson's characteristic rigid planimetry. As the scene transitions to the outside courtyard, statues wrapped in fabric come into view, which truly highlights Anderson's interest in storage aesthetics. Furthermore, the pivotal presence of *Boy with Apple*, an artwork by a fictional Dutch Master, throughout the movie is worth noting. The painting becomes then involved in a theft by Monsieur Gustave and Zero. They replace it with an erotic pseudo-modernist painting imitating the style of Egon Schiele. Upon discovery, Dmitri removes the painting from the wall and smashes it over the head of a sculpture, exclaiming loudly, "What's the meaning of this shit?"<sup>256</sup> The scene portrays a lighthearted and disrespectful approach to presumably valuable objects. This notion is further confirmed by a subsequent frame in which Zero hurls a statue from a sled, causing it to shatter into pieces.<sup>257</sup>

The aforementioned movie sequences indicate that it is not Anderson's custom to deal with precious objects that come with their own specific requirements. Instead, he tends to direct

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<sup>253</sup> Cf. Maya Jaggi, "Wes Anderson's Grand Vienna Exhibition," *The Financial Time Limited*, November 16, 2018, p. 10.

<sup>254</sup> *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, directed by Wes Anderson, 2014, min. 0:53:00-0:55:00.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Kim Wilkins, "Assembled Worlds: Intertextuality and Sincerity in the Films of Wes Anderson," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 60, no. 2 (2018): p. 166.

<sup>256</sup> Adrian Brody as Dmitri in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, directed by Wes Anderson, 2014, min. 1:09:28.

<sup>257</sup> *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, directed by Wes Anderson, 2014, min. 1:17:53-1:17:57.

things as they should be and feels free to treat artworks according to his own will. Nonetheless, this should not be equated with a lack of understanding or appreciation of art in general, as Anderson's aesthetic sensibility is very much present. This, along with the analyzed selection of objects, suggests that some exhibits were likely hesitant to be handed over due to their delicacy from a conservation point of view – as for example the glass *Jellyfish* (1885) or the *Emerald Vessel* (1641) – but were eventually released after persuasion.

Overall, it is possible to assert that the application of individual structuring principles in the compilation of their own collection of objects was evident through the choice of exhibits. This led to a notable interest in enhancing the exhibits by bringing them together within an exhibition. The organization into various sub-categories appears to be closely tied to the concept of collecting, which “for Anderson is thus a question of collectivity, of the groups – familial, communal, or otherwise – into which we might arrange ourselves, the places where we might possibly find our own matched pair or our own complete set.”<sup>258</sup> In this sense, both Anderson and Malouf effectively prevented the fragmentation of objects into isolated destinies and succeeded to establish a certain functional heterogeneity within their compilation. While not all exhibits could be neatly assigned to a sub-category, they still harmonized within the thematic framework of their respective room, and, naturally, within in the broader union of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition.

The organization based on rather simple, yet specific criteria was thus rooted in what the Viennese philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein termed “family resemblances”.<sup>259</sup> This concept relies on the existence of shared similarities that create an indirect relationship among things or, as Wittgenstein put it, among family members. Consequently, each member or object shares common criteria for belonging to a group, albeit fixed or unequivocal. Thus, it is possible to lack a specific similarity and still pertain to a shared context.<sup>260</sup> In this regard, some exhibits within the *Spitzmaus* exhibition shared criteria that allowed for internal groupings, yet their overall commonality stemmed from their inclusion among the curators' selection. The exhibitions united this intricate network of similarities, which, in terms of content, consisted of manifold, unpretentious criteria.

Anderson's and Malouf's oversimplification of thematic categories shed light on the process of gathering and collecting, which is necessarily reliant on classifications pre-stabilized

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<sup>258</sup> Donna Kornhaber, *Wes Anderson* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2017), pp. 12-13.

<sup>259</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations. Second Edition*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1958), p. 32°.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Astrid Legge, “Museen der anderen ‘Art’. Künstlermuseen als Versuche einer alternativen Museumspraxis” (PhD Diss., RWTH Aachen University, 2000), p. 70.



by the curator or collector. In this way, the spectators could acknowledge that an exhibition view is unavoidably a selected view. By employing their own non-academic criteria, Anderson and Malouf potentially inaugurated a reevaluation of already established contemporary art-historical canons. Their approach challenged and inverted the hierarchy of curation by utilizing straightforward starting points. This conception flattened the logic of spatio-temporal continuity, treating the contents as a given collection. However, viewing the collection as provided unity should be approached critically, considering its inevitable incoherencies and the selective perspective of a hierarchically dominant persona. Nevertheless, this arrangement enabled the coverage of a nearly 5,000-year time span and granted the spectators insight to the remarkable complexity of the Habsburg collections within a single exhibition. Ultimately, the major accomplishment of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was undeniably “to transform contents; to activate new meanings and overturn hierarchy among the objects through unexpected juxtapositions.”<sup>261</sup>

### 3.2 Acknowledging Public Perception and Mediation

Subsequently, an analysis of the external perception of the dynamics and contents of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition’s must be undertaken. It is essential to determine whether Anderson and Malouf’s offer of delving into new worlds, a concept also inherent in the imagined realities presented in his films,<sup>262</sup> was effectively conveyed. As previously demonstrated, the connections within the selected content necessitated accurate inspection, yet this alone was insufficient to fully comprehend the motivations for the inclusion of each item. Often, these reasons were rooted in personal associations or visual allure for the curators. It should be noted that visitors familiar with Anderson’s cinematic contributions would unconsciously glean aesthetic hints from the exhibition design. The anticipated expectation for the audience, however, was to discover their own associations, yet the question remains whether the exhibition as a whole achieved this objective. Since putting objects and artworks on display can never be a neutral act, it is always a matter of interpretation. Therefore, it is essential to mediate positions through textual or visual means.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Paulus Rainer, “8 Questions to 23 Curators,” questionnaire by Cornelia Mattiacci, in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 82.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Whitney Crothers Dilley, *The Cinema of Wes Anderson. Bringing Nostalgia to Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 14.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Peter Lester, *Exhibiting the Archive. Space, Encounter, and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 31.

In this context, Patmali reflected on the dynamics established between the content, visitors, and the institution itself:

The objects were decontextualised and introduced into the narratives of the two curators. This had an impact both on the museum and on the visitor. For the museum, it created an inquisitive environment that challenged traditional museum practices such as taxonomy and meaning-making. On the other hand, the visitors were asked to mentally participate in this new way of meaning-making by looking closely at the objects and interpreting them based on their own experience. This engagement created personal meanings of the objects, an act that prompted visitors to think about the museum and its practices.<sup>264</sup>

Consequently, the audience emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping the conception of the exhibition, as their active participation was encouraged. According to Sharp, the exhibition's educational accessibility was notable: "A scholar could go in there, a scientist could go in there, and someone who had literally never set foot in a museum could go in there, a child could go in there, and everybody found something of interest. It didn't patronize anyone."<sup>265</sup> Building on this observation, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition seemingly offered each visitor a unique exploratory experience rooted in the same foundational principles. However, there was an unexpressed yet essential task of aligning visitors with the curator's vision to enhance comprehension. This task, though, appeared more similar to a guessing game.

Sharp further emphasized that it was "not a prescriptive exhibition. It only suggests, it never tells you how to look at something."<sup>266</sup> So, the presumption was that the curios characteristic of the exhibits inserted in the aestheticized display would automatically fuel a sense of exploration in the audience. Similar to the original *Wunderkammer*, "the resonances, interferences and coincidences are in front of the visitor's eyes."<sup>267</sup> This immediacy and intimate relation between exhibit and spectator was accentuated to a significant extent. Therefore, textual explanations, captions, or descriptions of single objects were eliminated to foster a purely visual engagement. That some of the spectators, presumably those less familiar with Anderson's and Malouf's usual creative production, could have needed a little more

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<sup>264</sup> Lina Patmali, "Rethinking Museum Practice Through Exhibitions: The Case of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria," in *Studying Museums in Qatar and Beyond*, ed. Alexandra Bounia, Catharina Hendrick (Doha: UCL Qatar, 2020), p. 93.

<sup>265</sup> Jasper Sharp, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 27-28.

<sup>266</sup> Ivi, p. 23.

<sup>267</sup> Adalgisa Lugli, *Wunderkammer. La stanza delle meraviglie* (Venice: Electa Editrice, 1986) p. 9.

support, was not considered. The sole possibility to eventually raise the visitors' understanding of thematic interrelations was the use of the audio guide. This guide consisted of a seemingly spontaneous conversation between Anderson, Malouf, Sharp, and actor Jason Schwartzman. The group strolled through the different rooms. They highlighted the wide range of included places and times of origin and offered insightful reflections on specific items like the Titian painting, the malachites, and the shrew coffin. The conversation was carried out in an intimate and personal manner, undoubtedly conveying a sense of familiarity, immediacy, and shared involvement to attentive listeners.<sup>268</sup> On the other hand, this subjective approach for the conception of the audio guide once again underscored the deeply personal criteria applied in the selection of the exhibits. While the inspiration drawn from the *Wunderkammer* format evidently aided in defining the individual sections, this aspect was not at all addressed.

The targeted inclusivity of the audience was questioned by Patmali, who expressed doubts about whether this self-reflexive exhibition truly opened up to a broad spectrum of visitors. It appeared more tailored towards museum professionals or scholars who possess the capability to comprehend the displayed dynamics of museum work much better. Ultimately, Patmali identified the primary spectator as the institution itself, enabling critical evaluation and self-reflection of its inherent methodologies.<sup>269</sup> Dengler also recognized an alignment of the language used in the literature provided by the Kunsthistorisches Museum to a scholarly, art-historical view. At the same time, enthusiasts of Anderson's work would find satisfaction in the aesthetic impression of the exhibition.<sup>270</sup>

According to these assertions, the audience that was perhaps most effectively addressed was the one composed of academics. However, even trained curators of the Kunsthistorisches Museum failed to immediately grasp the effort of the exhibition, which points to a potential misinterpretation by Sharp regarding the inclusive effect the *Spitzmaus* show was expected to generate. In the accompanying catalogue by the Kunsthistorisches, a passage indicates the incapability of one of the internal senior curators to detect correspondences which to Anderson

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<sup>268</sup> The discussion was held during Schwartzman's first visit to the exhibition and aimed to convey emotions of surprise and playful discovery in a very spontaneous way. However, upon thorough examination of the exhibition, it became evident that the discussed topics and exhibits appeared to be the most decisive ones. Notably, crucial aspects such as security, the exhibition design featuring recessed boxes, and the exchange with the numerous curators were addressed. Therefore, even though it was Schwartzman's first encounter with the exhibition, he was evidently well briefed on the questions and comments he should pose, which refutes the claimed spontaneity. Cf. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp, "A Walk Through the Exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018" in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019).

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Lina Patmali, "Rethinking Museum Practice Through Exhibitions: The Case of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria," in *Studying Museums in Qatar and Beyond*, ed. Alexandra Bounia, Catharina Hendrick (Doha: UCL Qatar, 2020), pp. 93-94.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Verena Dengler, "Misch-Masch am Karteileichenschmaus. Über Wes Anderson und Juman Malouf im Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* 45, November 11, 2018, p. 44.

and Malouf appeared so evident.<sup>271</sup> Another indication of professional curators' lack of comprehension emerges from the consultation of the artist's book published by Fondazione Prada for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. The publication includes interviews with twenty-three Kunsthistorisches' curators, each responding to eight questions. One of the questions was the following: "Which was your favorite object in the exhibition and why?"<sup>272</sup> Notably, three of the curators' answer consist of just a dash, not offering any comment. This could signify a certain level of disagreement with the curatorial effort undertaken by Anderson and Malouf. That the exhibition had gone beyond any type of scholarly curating has become evident through the analysis of the applied categorization and the aesthetic arrangement and it undoubtedly did not align with everyone's taste or conception of advanced curation.

Hence, efforts were made to reach various audiences, which do not appear as carried out effectively. Principally, I would propose to regard the target groups as threefold: museum scholars, curious yet 'unprepared' visitors, and the Anderson enthusiasts. The scholarly community was targeted through the language used in the catalogue, the accompanying booklet, or press releases. Nevertheless, many felt provoked due to the disregard of their own profession, as Anderson and Malouf ignored common norms of curating. Enhancing mediation could have been beneficial to achieve the aim of freeing new ways of thinking within art history and museum practices. It almost seems as if Anderson would have enjoyed the idea of trained curators feeling somewhat disorientated.<sup>273</sup>

The treatment of the non-professional audience followed a similar pattern. They were supported by the exhibition booklet containing a brief introduction and illustrations of each display case, which bore numerical labels corresponding to the exhibits' captions printed beneath or on the following pages [Fig. 55]. Nevertheless, this assistance has left the visitors down, as the booklet did not always match the physical display due to last-minute repositioning of some exhibits. Additionally, the sections bore no titles, and there were no connections drawn between the objects, which forced the spectators to guess and complicated the comprehension

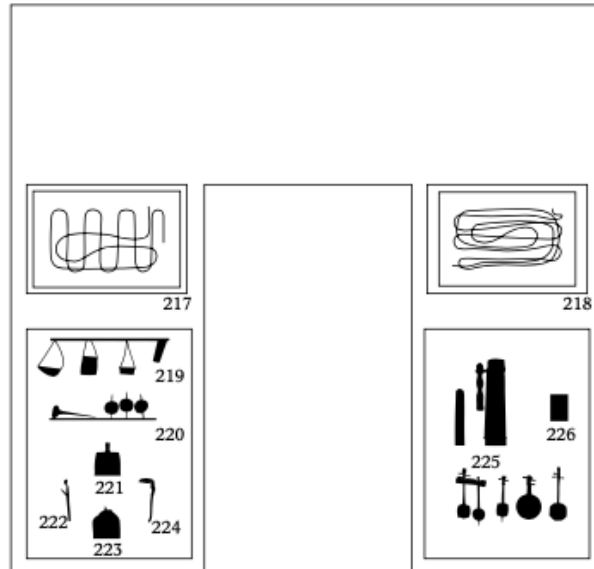
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<sup>271</sup> Cf. Wes Anderson, "Introduction," in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), S.19.

<sup>272</sup> "8 Questions to 23 Curators," in *Il Sarcophago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 103, p. 120, p. 143.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Wes Anderson, "Introduction," in *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf, ed. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), S.19: Anderson mentions one curator of the Kunsthistorisches Museum who struggled to appreciate the categorization of *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. He amusingly underlines that even after receiving some explanation, the doubts persisted.

process. This confusion led to the non-use of the booklet,<sup>274</sup> and certainly discouraged the spectators, as they felt incapable to decode it – not to mention the exhibition itself.



124  
*Bust of Seneca*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent., base  
18th cent.(?)  
Heliotrope, gold  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1977

125  
*Small Head of Cato*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent.  
Soapstone, wood  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1726

126  
*Bust of a Man*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent., base  
18th cent.(?)  
Agate, gold  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1729

127  
*Bust of Agrippa*  
Italian(?), prob. 18th cent.  
Carnelian, wood  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 2149

128  
*Bust of Domitian*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent., base  
18th cent.(?)  
Agate, marble, gold  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1785

129  
*Bust of Plato*  
Italian, 17th cent.  
Marble, alabaster, gilded bronze  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1788

130  
*Bust of Trajan*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent.  
Marble  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1786

131  
*Bust of Julius Caesar*  
Italian(?), 17th cent., 1st half  
Marble, gilded silver  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1782

132  
*Bust of Galba*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent., base  
18th cent.(?)  
Agate, gold  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1795

133  
*Bust of Socrates*  
Italian, 17th cent.  
Marble, alabaster, gilded bronze  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1792

134  
*Bust of Heraclitus*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent.  
Marble, alabaster  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1780

135  
*Egyptian Style Bust*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent.  
Chalcedony, copper  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1796

136  
*Bust of Titus*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent., base  
18th cent.(?)  
Agate, marble, gold  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1783

137  
*Bust of Geta*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent.  
Jasper, marble  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 2046

138  
*Bust of Niobe*  
Italian(?), prob. 17th cent., base  
18th cent.(?)  
Heliotrope, gold  
Kunstammer, inv. no. KK 1738

Fig. 55: Excerpt of the Exhibition Booklet for *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin*, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 2018-19.

<sup>274</sup> It is important to note that many Instagram posts regarding the second edition of the exhibition presented at Fondazione Prada depict visitors strolling through the spaces while focusing on the booklet, attempting to match the object silhouettes to the actual exhibits. This differs from the posts related to the installment at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, suggesting an improvement for the second presentation of the show. The Fondazione Prada booklet provides guidance on how to attribute the numbers of the illustrations with the physical exhibits.

To grasp the deeper logics of the exhibition and to comprehend how to behave within, an awareness of the curator's tasks appeared to be crucial. Furthermore, it is worth noting that even the Kunsthistorisches' exhibition catalogue was poorly equipped with text. It holds only five text pages, containing a preface by the museum's director Sabine Haag, a commentary on the exhibition's preparation by curator Jasper Sharp, and an introduction by Wes Anderson. The support provided by the catalogue was therefore very reduced, but at least it allowed for a better identification of the various sections, which still remained untitled but were introduced through Malouf's drawings expressing their respective essence.<sup>275</sup>

The simplest audience group to captivate and satisfy were undoubtedly the supporters of Anderson's films, who expected a distinctive visual style, a requirement which was indeed met. Perhaps the only delusion to their expectations was the absence of *Boy with Apple* [see Fig. 52] from *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.<sup>276</sup> Nevertheless, with appropriate mediation, a deeper thematic engagement could have been fostered, potentially even expanding the traditional target group of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in the long term. Accepting the audience's satisfaction on a purely aesthetic level does no justice to the exhibits, fails to acknowledge their depth, and urges them toward commodification.

To delve further into the public comprehension of the *Spitzmaus* show, it is necessary to consult the feedback directly provided by the audience itself. Among various social media platforms, Instagram emerges as the primary platform where visitors shared their personal pictures of their experience at the exhibition. While for the Kunsthistorisches over 500 posts appear, the second *Spitzmaus* show presented at Fondazione Prada in Milan is featured with over 1000 posts<sup>277</sup> – also including the ones from the museums themselves or newspapers. Most visitors shared a selection of their personal highlights. Therefore, the objects appeared isolated again, but allowed the spectators to create their own selection and sort of repeat the process through which Anderson and Malouf had gone before: navigating a vast corpus of items that somehow belong together yet possess limited commonalities and to filter out personal favorites.

Due to the absence of additional information about individual pieces, the spectators had no other possibility than picking their favorites based on personal associations and aesthetic preferences, much akin to the approach taken by Anderson and Malouf. Reading the captions

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<sup>275</sup> Cf. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp, eds., *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf* (Cologne: König, 2018).

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Maya Jaggi, "Wes Anderson's Grand Vienna Exhibition," *The Financial Time Limited*, November 16, 2018, p. 10.

<sup>277</sup> It is possible to differentiate between the two, as the posts related to the Kunsthistorisches Museum can be traced with the hashtag of the English exhibition name (#spitzmausmummyinacoffin), whereas those pertaining to Fondazione Prada are labeled with the Italian title (#ilsarcofagodispitzmausealtritesori).

under the posts added by the visitors, most merely offered general information about the exhibition. On the other hand, some expressed admiration for the show, with a direct reference to their fascination with Wes Anderson. Therefore, the explicit appreciation is to be understood in aesthetic and symmetric terms. Few captions highlighted the joyful and exploratory nature of the exhibition, which actively encouraged discovery. Lastly, I was able to identify three posts featuring visitors kneeling down to closely observe lower-placed items – so, the exhibition design effectively fulfills its purpose of activation also in physical terms.

Additional insights into the audience's perception can be found in form of reviews on the Google and TripAdvisor pages of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna and the Fondazione Prada. On Google, the reflections are overly positive regarding both installations of the *Spitzmaus* show. Although these comments are not particularly insightful, as they tend to be brief and lacking in depth. They consistently feature descriptors such as 'stunning,' 'inspiring,' 'astonishing,' and 'highly recommended.' The exhibition was designated as expectedly quirky and visually captivating. The nature of the comments suggests that most of the positively affected visitors appreciated the aesthetic impression to high extents. Interestingly, one comment positively outlines the character of the show as "anti-exhibition,"<sup>278</sup> offering an accurate interpretation of the curatorial dynamics. Only a small number of negative impressions was published, sharing visitors' unimpressed experience and negatively pointing out a chaotic nature. Moreover, a gimmicky character and the exaggerated centering of the curator personas were perceived. Except for the latter critique, these comments seem to reflect a lack of mediation. They fail to address the purposed intent of the exhibition and therefore appear as misunderstandings, as these visitors would probably have required more thematic guidance.

Turning to the TripAdvisor reviews, it stands out that every single one points out the inadequacy of the explanatory booklet for varying reasons. The most mentioned critique regards the absence of captions within the exhibition space, necessitating reliance on the brochure for orientation. This reliance proved challenging due to various obstacles. Some visitors found it difficult to attribute the exhibit to its caption, as there were no numbers assigned in space. Therefore, it was necessary to associate the specific wall or room with the illustrations in the booklet and to single out the object wished to identify. The silhouettes in the booklet were provided with numbers, which then led to the sought caption. However, this process proved laborious, given that the illustration and the corresponding description were often pages apart

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<sup>278</sup> Google Review by Graziano Ciarlini, published three years ago. <https://goo.gl/maps/GtAKqvMYRHkp9e3S6> (Accessed August 26, 2023)

within the booklet. The visitor experience, therefore, was faithful to the exhibition title, as the identification of the single objects resembled a genuine treasure hunt.

This time-consuming process certainly hindered the attributed observation of many exhibits, forcing the spectator to concentrate on a few selected objects or to abandon the booklet and merely appreciate the visual aesthetics. Furthermore, the excessively reduced font size increased the reading difficulty, which was even more reinforced by the subdued lighting casting the space in penumbra. Therefore, the exhibition faced comprehension challenges among visitors. Some reviews even imply that the show appeared geared towards a selected elite audience, hinting a sense of snobbery and arrogance in the exhibition's ambiance. These remarks are noteworthy as they affirm that the targeted audience was questioned by the visitors themselves. This impression appears as an awareness of the dandyism evenly propagated in Anderson's films due to a self-referential attention to detail.<sup>279</sup> Therefore, this perceived elitist approach was seemingly mirrored in the exhibition, as it was even felt by the audience.

All in all, the posted reviews reveal that the substance of the content did not provide abundant insight for the visitors. The complications posed by the booklet surely frustrated part of the audience. However, even if the booklet was used, it mainly fostered the fragmentation of the exhibits into isolated properties, as it did not offer much other information regarding the thematic connections. A single comment mentions the House of Habsburg, while only three – all relating to the installment at Fondazione Prada – point out an assimilation to the traditional *Wunderkammer*. The explanation behind the latter can easily be traced to the institutions' communication: the Fondazione Prada booklet explicitly mentioned the *Wunderkammer* as a leitmotiv for the exhibition and briefly explained the dynamics of private and institutional collecting.

On the contrary, the Kunsthistorisches Museum has never uttered a word about that reference – neither in their press release, nor in the booklet or the exhibition catalogue. Therefore, the audience of the Kunsthistorisches remained unaware about the *Wunderkammer* as crucial predecessor for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. A greater emphasis on this aspect would have improved the visitor experience since a model for observation would have been provided and many parallels could have been discovered: from the removal of art-historical classification in favor of simple criteria to the unbiased contemplation and the role of the personal view of the collector. Likewise, also the audio guide did not mention the *Wunderkammer* but managed to provide a more precise idea of the exhibition's intent, conveying that the focus was not to

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<sup>279</sup> Cf. Verena Dengler, "Misch-Masch am Karteileichenschmaus. Über Wes Anderson und Juman Malouf im Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* 45, November 11, 2018, p. 44.



memorize precise information about each object. The show's enigmatic and explorative character was effectively conveyed. Nevertheless, the glorification and popularization of the guest curators' personas, as also indicated in the reviews, could not be dismissed.

The overall impression gained through the visitor's commentaries "shows that some people found it liberating to explore the exhibition visually and to make their own interpretations of connections, while others found this task daunting and confusing. To Anderson and Malouf, the links were obvious, but not only visitors needed time to decenter their expectations",<sup>280</sup> but also some of the Kunsthistorisches' curators needed time to familiarize with this alienating approach. In general, the audience's response to the exhibition remarkably mirrors the position of the critical literature featured in renowned newspapers. Therefore, a closer look at the academic writings is required.

The subjective criteria of organization were appreciated as a means to favor free and nonjudgmental associations. However, the exhibition's purpose failed to be identified and was left in the dark<sup>281</sup> – also in a literal sense, as penumbra pervades the display. Sharp acknowledged the decision to eliminate all in-space texts and shift them into the booklet as one of the best ones made. Aware of the reactions this decision provoked, he stated: "Unsurprisingly, this really annoyed a few people. It frustrated people who want to know what is what, where it's from, and so on. But the upside was that we all had no choice but to look!"<sup>282</sup> Indeed, the deficiency of comprehension identified in academic literature was consistently linked to the lack of communication concerning the overall concept of the show. The absence of explanatory wall texts and of thematic references within the booklet and the catalogue was frequently pointed out,<sup>283</sup> to the extent that consulting the brochure was considered as completely superfluous.<sup>284</sup> The functionality of the exhibition without appropriate mediation must finally be measured in the audience's experience, which is described by Ariese as follows:

The lack of instruction to the visitors on how to 'read' the exhibition creates interesting visitor dynamics and differing responses. We observed some

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<sup>280</sup> Csilla E. Ariese, "Decentering," in *Practicing Decoloniality in Museums. A Guide with Global Examples*, ed. Csilla E. Ariese, Magdalena Wróblewska (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), p. 60.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, "Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstskammer," *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): p. 564.

<sup>282</sup> Jasper Sharp, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 23.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Katherine Lanza, "Moviemaker at the Museum," *The Magazine Antiques* 186, no. 1 (February 2019): p. 68; Cf. Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, "Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstskammer," *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): p. 565.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Jaqueline Ceresoli, "Wes Anderson e il Kunsthistorisches alla Fondazione Prada" (September 29, 2019), unpagged. <https://www.exibart.com/arte-contemporanea/wes-anderson-porta-un-immaginario-kunsthistorisches-museum-alla-fondazione-prada/> (Accessed June 1, 2023)

visitors sitting or kneeling on the ground, inspecting the objects with guidance from the booklet. Others were listening to the audio tour in solitude or discussing items and relationships between objects or of entire rooms together. Although all the objects were encased behind glass, visitors tended to get intimately close to the objects, pressing up against the glass to view things closely or touching the glass to point out details.<sup>285</sup>

According to these observations, there seems to have occurred an activation of the spectators. Despite the lack of information, visitors managed to find their individual path to understand and appreciate the display. Nonetheless, a reevaluation of the means of mediation might have more effectively engaged a broader segment of the audience. Ariese, however, interpreted the differing positions of the visitors in favor of the curators: “These diverging reactions to the exhibition stem from the fact that Anderson and Malouf have succeeded in creating spaces which evoke visceral responses. The individual rooms that they have so deliberately and exquisitely designed do not only have an aesthetic impact but create palpable moods.”<sup>286</sup>

Another aspect highlighted in critical literature was the perceived emptiness of content. This assertion stemmed from the simplification of common criteria such as color, material, size, or function, which met with complete incomprehension.<sup>287</sup> The *Spitzmaus* exhibition impressed with its striking expansion and visual seduction but failed to crystallize new signification. Even if the thematic sections were not explicitly labeled, they were quickly identified by a scholarly view but considered insufficient to develop any further serious meaning or innovative modes of thinking. Delistraty emphasizes the superficial treatment of content, as exemplified by the children’s portraits, which may have evoked a funny and nostalgic character, “but its significance stops there.”<sup>288</sup> The numerous exhibits appeared just too distant from one another to create harmonious relations and, again, the content of the exhibition as a whole shattered into multiple individual existences. Instead of opening new perspectives, this outcome seemingly

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<sup>285</sup> Csilla E. Ariese, Mariana Françaço, “Completeness: How the Lack of a Mouse in a Box Revisits the Spectacle of the *Kunstammer*,” *Curator. The Museum Journal* 62, no. 4 (October 2019): p. 655.

<sup>286</sup> Ivi, p. 656.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Dietmar Dath, “Der Setzkasten als Grabmal der Kultur,” *FAZ* 25, January 30, 2019, p. 11; Cf. Cody Delistraty, “Wes Anderson, Curator? The Filmmaker Gives It a Try,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2018, unpagged. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/arts/design/wes-anderson-vienna-kunsthistorisches-museum.html> (Accessed June 8, 2023); Cf. Thomas Mießgang, “Auf der goldenen Schildkröte reiten,” *Die Zeit* 46, November 8, 2018, p. 50; Cf. Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, “Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstammer,” *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019).

<sup>288</sup> Cody Delistraty, “Wes Anderson, Curator? The Filmmaker Gives It a Try,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2018, unpagged. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/arts/design/wes-anderson-vienna-kunsthistorisches-museum.html> (Accessed June 8, 2023)

reaffirmed the righteousness of the scientific categories and the division of cultural and natural history established over the last centuries, which the *Spitzmaus* show tried to blur. In the end, an impression of “conceptual indecision and aimlessness”<sup>289</sup> prevailed when closer examining the content. One exhibit stands out as emblem of this critique – namely, the conceptually integrated historic showcase located in Room 6 among the other unfilled boxes and cases. This was even more reinforced by the eponym of the exhibition, the *Coffin of a Shrew* (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) [see Fig. 21]. Contrary to expectations, it does not contain the *Spitzmaus Mummy*, but is empty. The emptiness then functioned as a critical metaphor for the entire exhibition, and by extension, for the overarching myth surrounding the idea of institution. In this respect, Dath expressed himself as follows: “This exhibition not only does not know what it sees, but no longer even what it shows. The tombstone of the idea ‘museum’ will be very small. It only has to say: you are done marveling, Abendland.”<sup>290</sup>

The inability to delve deeper into the content gave rise to a last critique regarding the conception of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. To approach that argument, it is necessary to begin with a statement by Mainetti, who assured that upon accessing the display, “you don’t enter a room trying to understand which is the picture you are supposed to look at. You are free of this cultural imposition.”<sup>291</sup> In other words, Anderson and Malouf positioned themselves far from violent histories of colonialism that shaped the formation of many museum collections. Instead, they aimed to stress universal human creations as equal wonders, independent of the origins of single items.<sup>292</sup> Nevertheless, the act of exhibiting can never be freed from political expression, as it is always linked to institutional power<sup>293</sup> – the same holds true for the collection itself. In this context, criticism about the complete lack of political implication was raised, as conditions of provenance and the objects’ inclusion in the collection was not further questioned but rather hushed up.<sup>294</sup> Just as many *Wunderkammern* strived for a universal appropriation, the objects turned into material witnesses of cultural dispossession. This emerges as extremely relevant,

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<sup>289</sup> Ksenija Tschetschik-Hammerl, “Eingesargt – eine Spitzmaus besucht die Wiener Kunstkammer,” *Kunstchronik* 72, 11 (November 2019): p. 566.

<sup>290</sup> Dietmar Dath, “Der Setzkasten als Grabmal der Kultur,” *FAZ* 25, January 30, 2019, p. 11.

<sup>291</sup> Mario Mainetti, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 23.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Max L. Feldman, “Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf’s Curatorial Debut in Vienna Relives the Moment of First Love,” *Frieze*, November 15, 2018, unpagged. <https://www.frieze.com/article/wes-anderson-and-juman-maloufs-curatorial-debut-vienna-relives-moment-first-love> (Accessed June 1, 2023)

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Peter Lester, *Exhibiting the Archive. Space, Encounter, and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2022), p. 32.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Verena Dengler, “Misch-Masch am Karteileichenschmaus. Über Wes Anderson und Juman Malouf im Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* 45, November 11, 2018, p. 44; Cf. Sandro Weilenmann, “Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures,” *Immediations* 4, no. 4 (2019): unpagged.

especially considering that the collection at Ambras Castle appears to be the oldest one of non-European *exotica*.

Bredenkamp interpreted the juxtaposition of European and non-European artifacts as first testimony for a demonstration of respect toward the foreign.<sup>295</sup> However, caution is required here. The treatment of foreign specimens necessarily underlaid European systems of classification, thereby depriving them of their agency. Consequently, inventory from outside Europe was considered as investment or status symbol – thus, the manner of interacting with it was usually far from respectful.<sup>296</sup> In the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, the colonial origins of the *exotica* were silently overlooked. For instance, the showcasing of Petrus Gonsalvus [see Fig. 5] as a curiosity and the subsequent highly problematic handover of the ‘hirsute man’ as a gift to Alessandro Farnese was neither thematized in the catalogue nor in the booklet. This led to renewed doubts about Anderson’s and Malouf’s effort of restaging the collection, as they missed the opportunity to work through the difficult backgrounds and revalue them with new meaning.<sup>297</sup> In this regard, also the rightfulness of the guest curators’ invitation was critically highlighted, since they “seem predominantly to have focused on how the objects complement their own interests and style.”<sup>298</sup>

Similar concerns about cultural exploitation had been expressed in relation to Anderson’s films – particularly the production that ran contemporaneously with the preparation for the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. *Isle of Dogs*, set in Japan, features Japanese dogs voiced by noted American actors – all communicating in English while human characters speak Japanese. From cherry blossoms to sumo wrestlers – Anderson did not leave out any cliché. The line between enthusiastic homage and cultural appropriation appears to be very thin.<sup>299</sup> Once again, what seemed to have caught Anderson’s interest were probably the aesthetically well-suited surfaces. However, why he had the right to use them as he desired is left open.

This underscores the fact that the Kantian notion of disinterested liking, or *liking without any interest*,<sup>300</sup> faces challenges when applied to the role of the contemporary curator. Placing art at the autonomous forefront comes along with a tabooing of political reality. A disinterested

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<sup>295</sup> Cf. Horst Bredenkamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben. Die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1993), pp. 38-39.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. Maria-Theresia Leuker, “Knowledge Transfer and Cultural Appropriation: Georg Everhard Rumphius’s ‘D’Amboinsche Rariteitkamer’ (1705)” *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* 14 (2010): p. 151, p. 165.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Sandro Weilenmann, “Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures,” *Immediations* 4, no. 4 (2019): unpaginated.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Steve Rose, “Wes Anderson’s *Isle of Dogs*: loving homage to Japan or cultural appropriation?” *The Guardian*, March 26, 2018, p. 21.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, Cambridge: 1987), p. 229.

mode of pleasure thus lost its validity in confrontation with artistic contemplation and fails to address universal dynamics.

Nonetheless, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition did not give the single exhibits a voice but subordinated them to the gaze of the spectators. The otherness of objects was solely approached visually, while no space for explanation was given. Differences were smoothed over or presented as *curiositas* or *exotica* – terms that have proven problematic due to their colonial past. The current challenge is “to provide the artifacts with the stage they deserve, while still telling the story of their colonial appropriation.”<sup>301</sup> Many museums have been experimenting with novel ways to engage with challenging heritage, seeking to provide former naïve and textless displays with appropriate explanations. One example is the Weltmuseum Vienna which was also visited by Anderson and Malouf for the preparation of the exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches. Therefore, they were exposed to adequate solutions for reprocessing colonialism right before their eyes. The absence of verbal communication surrounding the *Spitzmaus* show was in any case coherent with the concept of the *Wunderkammer*, providing generous space for unbiased individual reading and reinterpretation. On the other hand, it remains unacceptable to completely ignore the knowledge amassed over the past centuries and disregard any colonial background. The decision to exclude textual elements from the physical space of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was nevertheless justifiable with the target to evoke a proper *Wunderkammer* experience. However, the problematics of cultural appropriation present also in the Kunsthistorisches’ collection should have been addressed at the latest in the exhibition catalogue.

### **3.3 Transfer to Fondazione Prada: Change of Meaning, Archiving, and Collecting**

In the following, the focus will be put on the second installment of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition at Fondazione Prada in Milan by examining thematic adaptations, its relevance for the institution, and the related publication. The exhibition had been imported to its Milan venue “as a ready-made”<sup>302</sup> and was open to the public from September 20, 2019, to January 13, 2020, under the title *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*. The application of the Italian title was tied to the understanding of the exhibition as a sequel – a term of cinematic nature, which is not

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<sup>301</sup> Karin Cerny, “Postmoderne Wunderkammer,” *Republik*, November 19, 2018, unpagged. <https://www.republik.ch/2018/11/19/postmoderne-wunderkammer> (Accessed August 29, 2023)

<sup>302</sup> Fondazione Prada, “‘Il sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori’, an exhibition by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, at Fondazione Prada in Milan, 20 September 2019-13 January 2020,” press release, 2019, unpagged.

commonly applied to art shows.<sup>303</sup> It was installed at the ground floor of the Podium, doubling the exhibition's size compared to the *Goldener Saal*, where the exhibition was originally located in the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Therefore, the exhibition design and content required a substantial extension. Although the relocation was known from the beginning of the project, the design was initially conceived for the Kunsthistorisches and adapted for Milan only after the termination of the Viennese exhibition.<sup>304</sup> Especially due to the spatial enlargement, the importance of understanding the exhibition as sequel was essential:

A sequel implies the development of a project and the themes it deals with. In our exhibition, we started with the idea of transporting the whole thing to Milan just as it was, like a ready-made composed of walls, display cases and works. We also had to think about how to enlarge it so that it was not just a second presentation, but was representative also of the partnership between our two institutions.<sup>305</sup>

The sections set for the first installment were carried over and subsequently extended by two additional thematic groupings: an allure to the Italian Renaissance garden and the category of timepieces. The idea of the landscape also significantly shaped the supplemental exhibition design.<sup>306</sup> Furthermore, not all exhibits were released for transfer due to conservational conditions, so in all present sections some of them had to be substituted. The Milan version eventually featured a total of 538 exhibits.<sup>307</sup>

Followingly, it remains to assess the relevance of Fondazione Prada as appropriate institution to exhibit the selection of the Kunsthistorisches' collections – as also the relation of the guest curators to the host facility. In this regard, four different key connections could have been identified.

The first and most obvious connection, as even pointed out by the audience in their reviews, relates to Wes Anderson's persona, as Fondazione Prada had already collaborated with him. In 2015, Anderson was commissioned to design the museum café Bar Luce [Fig. 56]. The bar explicitly mirrors his cinematic aesthetics and symmetry while evoking parallels to the set design of his movies and his previous contribution for Prada, the short film *Castello Cavalcanti*

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. Mario Mainetti, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 30.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Itai Margula. Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, July 13, 2023, p. 176.

<sup>305</sup> Mario Mainetti, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 30.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*.

<sup>307</sup> For both exhibitions, a total of 593 objects were displayed due to the required substitution of some initial exhibits.

(2013).<sup>308</sup> Located at the entrance of the Fondazione Prada building, Bar Luce then got to face the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. Therefore, two of the director's visual expressions opposed each other and were able to communicate spatially. Certainly, this aspect stressed the importance of the curators' claimed personality-status and brought the exhibition closer to an accomplished personal appropriation. According to Weilenmann, this correspondence caused rather severe



Fig. 56: Wes Anderson, *Bar Luce*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2015.

consequences: “since the objects have been removed from their initial context in Vienna, questions surrounding their problematic provenance will further fade into the background in favour of the guest curators’ cultivated trademark style.”<sup>309</sup> Therefore, critiques expressed already during the Vienna installation were now even more prominently confirmed, while the status of the curators’ personas gained greater centrality. Recently, Anderson returned again to Fondazione Prada with the exhibition *Wes Anderson – Asteroid City*, inaugurated in September 2023, showcasing original film props, sets, and costumes of his latest production.

Alongside Anderson’s familiarity with Fondazione Prada, Sharp mentioned a second reason that led him to consider the partnership between the two institutions. He saw a potential

<sup>308</sup> Cf. <https://www.fondazioneprada.org/barluce-en/?lang=en> (Accessed August 31, 2023)

<sup>309</sup> Sandro Weilenmann, “Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures,” *Immediations* 4, no. 4 (2019): unpaginated.

interest by Fondazione Prada because they also featured a program of artist-curated exhibitions, so they could likely contribute a different experience.<sup>310</sup> For example, in 2017, Francesco Vezzoli developed the project *TV 70: Francesco Vezzoli guarda la Rai* in collaboration with the broadcast channel Rai, and in 2018, Luc Tuymans presented *Sanguine* as a personal interpretation of the Baroque. With the introduction of this program, Fondazione Prada simply extended its dedication from supporting artistic production to the aspect of curatorship. Such collaborations are intended to foster artistic output not only in terms of creating artworks but also by amplifying this intention through the medium of the exhibition itself. Additionally, the publication of artist's books became more and more central to the institution's focus.<sup>311</sup> These considerations are crucial for understanding Fondazione Prada's idea of cooperation with Anderson and Malouf. An additional focus on these projects was declared by Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli:

Artist-curated projects created for Fondazione Prada transmit the essence of each artist's thinking, and this exhibition is no exception: a clear example of how a show curated by artists can contribute to the open debate over the role of museums, the rules of their organization and the customs that determine each exhibition.<sup>312</sup>

Once again, the personal role of the curators has been prominently emphasized and justified. According to this perspective, the curatorial approach gained significant importance and attention. The format featuring artist-as-curators is approached with admiration and the assumption of artistic freedom. The exhibition is viewed as an act of creative expression that can seemingly take precedence over the thematic relevance of the outcome. Most comments on artist-curated shows include an institutional reflection, crediting them with pertinence, while contents that are problematically treated – as seen in the *Spitzmaus* show – are likely to be dismissed. The format is seemingly valued based on different criteria: the presence of institutional reflection, a distinct aesthetic, and the visual impact over the actual content.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Cf. Jasper Sharp, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 14.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Mario Mainetti, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 11.

<sup>312</sup> Miuccia Prada, Paolo Bertelli, "A Foreword," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 6.

<sup>313</sup> Regarding the exhibition *Sanguine. Luc Tuymans on Baroque*, Luc Tuymans stated that "the process of course [was] made much more on the idea of the impact and the visuals, because, I am, of course, visual artist. So, it is not an art-historical, linear element of thought." Therefore, the treatment of the selected exhibits appears to be primarily aesthetic. Cf. Luc Tuymans, "Fondazione Prada. SANGUINE. Luc Tuymans on Baroque" (January 18, 2019). <https://vimeo.com/312073000> (Accessed August 31, 2023)



Therefore, the *Spitzmaus* exhibition certainly aligns with Prada's and Bertolli's expectation for such projects and should therefore be regarded as suitable for its display at Fondazione Prada.

A third reference that supports the alignment of Anderson's and Malouf's exhibition with Fondazione Prada's program can be identified by comparing it to the institution's exhibition archive. Contrary to expectations, – since the institution is known for its dedication to contemporary art – Fondazione Prada does not hesitate to display historical objects.<sup>314</sup> The fact that this was not mentioned in relation to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition points once more to the predominant focus on the curator personas, the related increase in the attention economy, and the format of artistic curation. One notable example is the exhibition *Serial Classic* [Fig. 57], co-curated by Salvatore Settis and Anna Anguissola, also held at the Podium in 2015. This show predominantly featured antique copies – while their originals were absent but nevertheless preserved and thus present through their reproductions. Therefore, the exhibition turned out to be a testimony to the understanding of seriality in Antiquity, which proved to be an era of artistic repetition and multiples. In this context, the exhibits were not of a particular value individually, but their accumulated juxtaposition allowed to grasp the absent original.<sup>315</sup>



Fig. 57: *Serial Classic*, 2015, Exhibition View, Curated by Salvatore Settis and Anna Anguissola, Fondazione Prada, Milan.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Judith Bradlwarter, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, June 21, 2023, p. 170; Cf. Mario Mainetti, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, September 14, 2023, p. 177.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Christian Toson, "Labirinto Wunderkammer a Milano," *La Rivista di Engramma* 170 (December 2019): p. 137.

This somewhat applied to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition as well: not every object was on display for its intrinsic value, but some were part of the collection solely to be conserved as such. They could only reveal their relationships when seen as a whole – but it had already been detected earlier that this supposed aim was eventually not met. In contrast to the *Spitzmaus* show, Settis managed to place Antiquity in the contemporary world through *Serial Classic*. Or actually, he demonstrated that it had already found its place in the contemporaneity. Furthermore, he aimed to expand our understanding of “the ‘classic’ [which] can and should be the key to an even broader confrontation with ‘other’ cultures in an authentically ‘global’ sense.”<sup>316</sup> This way, it is possible to grasp the solid theoretical foundation on which *Serial Classic* was built, strengthened by shared historical origins that enabled a strong force of communication.<sup>317</sup> This is precisely what appeared to have been dismissed in the exhibition curated by Anderson and Malouf.

A final point to support the relevance of the *Spitzmaus* installment at Fondazione Prada can be drawn directly from one of the additional sections. Therefore, the connection is of thematic nature. The general inspirational format of the *Wunderkammer* was mainly drawn by the Habsburg cabinets at Ambras Castle and Prague – thus, a model traceable primarily in the northern alpine region. The Italian equivalent can be found in the *studiolo*, even though the dynamics within differed. Nevertheless, a substantial connection to nature is still inherent, followingly leading to other models of collecting, comprehending, and showcasing, such as the Renaissance garden. Therefore, it was not only possible to re-locate the entire exhibition but also ground its main aspiration in Italian roots. Followingly, the two newly grouped sections will be examined, conducting a more comprehensive analysis of the parallels between the formats of the *Wunderkammer*, the *studiolo* and the exhibition segment.

The major one of the two added sections is explicitly dedicated to the Italian Renaissance garden [Fig. 58]. This inspiration was drawn from connections that were sought to establish a link to the main source for the exhibition: the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. As confirmed by Mainetti, this decision

stemmed from the conversation we had with Wes and Juman about the relationships between Milan and Vienna, Italy and Austria, and Italian presences within the Kunsthistorisches Museum and Naturhistorisches Museum collections. It was also the result of a site-visit we did at Ambras

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<sup>316</sup> Salvatore Settis, *Futuro del ‘classico’*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2004), p. 119.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. Christian Toson, “Labirinto Wunderkammer a Milano,” *La Rivista di Engramma* 170 (December 2019): p. 144.

Castle, the first home of the Habsburgs' collection. In Innsbruck we discussed the Italian influences abroad and settled on this idea of giving a local taste to the project through the identification of the Viennese rooms with a realm associated in Milan, with a *giardino all'italiana*.<sup>318</sup>



Fig. 58: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, 2019-20, Exhibition View, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Fondazione Prada, Milan.

Therefore, the reference was grounded in deeper historic origins, tracing back to the early days of the Habsburg collection activities. In the following paragraphs, specific Italian examples will be cited to prove the validity of this section. Since Ambras Castle, which housed Archduke Ferdinand II's *Wunderkammer*, was mentioned, it appears fundamental to first assess Italian formats of early structures housing collections. A collecting craze similar to the one in the northern alpine *Wunderkammer* can be observed in the *studiolo*, which served as a secluded refuge in courtly contexts. It was a place of contemplation, artistic representation, and studies. The latter function can be traced back to its Medieval predecessor, the *scriptorium*, primarily found in monasteries for manuscript production.<sup>319</sup> The *studiolo* emerged in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>318</sup> Mario Mainetti, "A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp," in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 30-31.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. Dora Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 18.

and was mainly frequented by scholars, artists, and noblemen. In the following century, the cabinet entered the *studiolo* as display furniture, as was also observed in the *Wunderkammer*. This marked a significant step in shaping and promoting the act of collecting,<sup>320</sup> confirming the centrality of the cabinet's emergence as a widespread phenomenon. At the time, the terms *cabinetto* or *gabinetto* were not common in Italy and were rarely used. Nonetheless, Fiorio underlined the similarities of collections in several European countries: *Schatz-* or *Wunderkammern*, *Naturalien-* or *Raritätenkammern* in German speaking areas, the *cabinet* and *galerie* in France, and the *studiolo* and *camerino* in Italy. All of them gathered collectibles belonging to the categories of *artificialia* and *naturalia*.<sup>321</sup>

Certainly, in all these models, the collector's persona hierarchically shaped the display, aiming to gain prestige through the collection, which served as status symbol. However, an essential difference in content cannot be dismissed. The *studiolo* – in contrast to the *Wunderkammer* – especially focused on antique remains, as the awareness of Antiquity was starting to rise again. Often, it consisted of paintings, marbles, medals, and curious antiquities. The *Wunderkammer*, on the other hand, aimed to cover universality in geographical terms and featured *exotica* and *curiosita* from foreign lands.

The exhibition's content allows for a precise parallel to a specific Italian *studiolo*. Already the Kunsthistorisches' show included five exhibits showing members of the Mantuan d'Este family, all positioned in the miniature section. One of them depicted *Maria Riccarda Beatrix d'Este* (1826), whose marriage marked the beginning of the House of Austria-Este, while two others portrayed Austria-Este members. Therefore, a direct connection between the d'Este dynasty and the House of Habsburg was established. At Fondazione Prada, the relevance of the Mantuan Court was further emphasized and extended to other sections of the exhibition. The number of exhibits was increased to a total of eight portraits, distributed across the miniature section, the portrait section, and the Renaissance garden section itself. A fundamental addition was the portrait of *Isabella d'Este* (1600-1601), which allows to identify her *studiolo* located in Mantua as the intended Italian equivalent to the *Wunderkammer* of Ambras Castle in Innsbruck. Isabelle d'Este, still known as “memorable collector,”<sup>322</sup> began her collecting

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<sup>320</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 8; p.74.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. Maria Teresa Fiorio, *Il museo nella storia. Dallo studiolo alla raccolta pubblica* (Milan and Turin: Pearson Italia, 2018), p. 2.

<sup>322</sup> Dora Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 105.

activity in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, sending out her agents all over Italy to gather a remarkable number of objects from Antiquity.<sup>323</sup>

The collection was located in her renowned *studiolo*, primarily housing mythological paintings, and the *grotta*, which held rarities, gemstones, and cameos. Therefore, the *grotta* drew a strict reference to Medieval treasuries but differed in function due to its strong aesthetic performativity in exhibiting and comparing antique and modern artworks.<sup>324</sup> In 1522, she eventually transferred her collection to her apartment in Palazzo Ducale, further extending her interest to contemporary pieces. The collection was mainly of a profane nature due to its intense desire for Antiquity – a drive that was not followed to this extent in the North Alpine area.<sup>325</sup>

Another significant structure visible from Isabella d'Este's apartment was her secret garden. The rectangular garden measured 80 m<sup>2</sup> and its delimiting walls were characterized by a series of niches holding antique statues. The garden served as *hortus conclusus* for private contemplation, extending the contemplation of the collection from the arts to nature – and nonetheless strictly separating the representative character of the interior spaces from the desire for private seclusion.<sup>326</sup> In the *Spitzmaus* exhibition, the specific reference to Isabella d'Este's collection enabled to bridge the *Wunderkammer* not only to the *studiolo*, but also to the garden as a place for display and contemplation. The section dedicated to the Renaissance garden prominently displayed the intense connection between human creation and nature. The garden symbolized closeness to nature and served as a space to unify flora, fauna, and mankind. Not only the content but also the exhibition design for this category followed the model of the *hortus conclusus*. The section consisted of four wall structures, all forming corners and evoking the impression of a rectangular shape with its wall centerpieces being lifted. Additionally, the wall pieces were noticeably lower than all the others and thus convey a spatial perception of hedges and allegorical pavilions.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Cf. Maria Teresa Fiorio, *Il museo nella storia. Dallo studiolo alla raccolta pubblica* (Milan and Turin: Pearson Italia, 2018), p. 32

<sup>324</sup> Cf. Tiziana Romelli, "Bewegendes Sammeln. Das *studiolo* von Isabella d'Este und das *petit cabinet* von Margarete von Österreich im bildungstheoretischen Vergleich" (Diss., Humboldt-University Berlin, 2008), p. 88; p. 100; p. 135.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), p. 15, pp. 47-48; Cf. Marco Saporiti, "Le Collezioni prima delle Wunderkammern. Gli studioli e il 'desiderio insaziabile di cose antique,'" *La Tigre di Carta* 19 (March 3, 2019): unpagged. <https://www.latigredicarta.it/2019/03/03/studiolo-wunderkammer-museo/> (Accessed September 3, 2023)

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Tiziana Romelli, "Bewegendes Sammeln. Das *studiolo* von Isabella d'Este und das *petit cabinet* von Margarete von Österreich im bildungstheoretischen Vergleich" (Diss., Humboldt-University Berlin, 2008), p. 151.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Fondazione Prada, "'Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori', an exhibition by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, at Fondazione Prada in Milan, 20 September 2019-13 January 2020," press release, 2019, unpagged.



Fig. 59: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, 2019-20, Exhibition View on the Black Pavilion, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Fondazione Prada, Milan.

Interestingly, the *studiolo* was commonly referred to as “place without time,”<sup>328</sup> which reveals a clue about the other section newly added to the exhibition. Positioned at the center of the *hortus conclusus* structure, a black pavilion [Fig. 59] housed exhibits relating to the representation of time. This section featured several clocks, instruments for time measurement, and astronomical devices as its primary objects. The most intriguing exhibit was presumably the portrait of an *Old Woman* (before 1721), which was centrally hung inside the pavilion to be visible from the exterior. Connoisseurs were surely reminded of Giorgione’s *Vecchia* (c. 1506) holding up a note inscribed with the words ‘col tempo’. The essence of this section seemed to have overruled the timelessness of the *studiolo* and the secret garden. Instead, transience and the perception of *vanitas* were brought right before the eyes. Toson recognized a deeper significance in the exhibition, seeing it as “a great device for modulating time,” in which “fossils, minerals, stuffed animals, and everything else begin to make sense. The sarcophagus of the shrew is perfectly placed in the center: a nocturnal, ephemeral animal, short-lived and

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<sup>328</sup> Francesca Meola, “Raccontare gli spazi: epilogo di una Wunderkammer” (May 2, 2018): unpagged. <https://francescameola.art.blog/2018/05/02/raccontare-gli-spazi-epilogo-di-una-wunderkammer/> (Accessed September 3, 2023)

insignificant, measured against the time of eternity destined for pharaohs and gods.”<sup>329</sup> However, whether this theory was the intended interpretation is known only to Anderson and Malouf themselves – but Toson succeeded in attributing his personal sense to the exhibition.



Fig. 60: Charles Willson Peale, *The Artist in His Museum*, oil on canvas, 263.52 x 202.88 cm, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1822.

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<sup>329</sup> Christian Toson, “Labirinto Wunderkammer a Milano,” *La Rivista di Engramma* 170 (December 2019): p. 141.

Another notable addition to the exhibition design at Fondazione Prada was the inclusion of an orange curtain that framed the entire space. Its primary purpose was to control and dim the natural lighting. The presence of curtains in art history dates back to Antiquity, with Pliny the Elder recounting the anecdote of the artists Zeuxis and Parrhasius, the latter of whom deceived with a lifelike painted curtain.<sup>330</sup> Later, curtains assumed an essential role in covering and uncovering artworks for display and contemplation. For instance, Charles Willson Peale created the intriguing painting *The Artist in His Museum* (1822) [Fig. 60] in this regard. The artist himself is lifting a curtain to reveal the space behind him, featuring symmetrically arranged built-in boxes filled with mounted animals. Peale assumed the role of the facilitator, granting the spectator insight into his personal collection. The theatricality of this unveiling gesture was also visible in the *Spitzmaus* exhibition. The installation of the curtain emphasized the cinematic nature of the show and its connection to Anderson's movies, such as *Rushmore*, which starts with the opening and ends with the closing of a curtain. As Bradlwarter pointed out, "that is actually what Wes wanted: that you could dive into another world through the curtain, like in a theater."<sup>331</sup> Therefore, the curtain should be seen as a self-referential medium, presenting even the exhibition space like a stage – which was particularly fitting for the specific location chosen within Fondazione Prada, as already its name suggests: the Podium.

A crucial contribution to the exhibition should be acknowledged in the accompanying publication by Fondazione Prada. Since the official catalogue was published by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, more creative freedom was available. On this occasion, Fondazione Prada released an artist's box with a limited number of 999 copies, each available for 184€ – making it less accessible to a wider audience.<sup>332</sup> It was designed by the New York-based studio 2x4 and had dimensions of 21 x 28 cm. Its purpose was to fully capture the essence and playfulness of the exhibition while providing scientific background information. The box consisted of various components, including a poster, several booklets, an envelope, and postcards. Two main sources of inspiration were cited: Marcel Duchamp's *boîte-en-valise* and

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<sup>330</sup> Cf. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* XXXV, 64.

<sup>331</sup> Judith Bradlwarter, Interview. Conducted by Sophie Olivotto on occasion of this thesis, June 21, 2023, p. 170.

<sup>332</sup> In Italy, the publication is held by two libraries: the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence and the Civica Biblioteca D'Arte in Milan. Accessing it proved to be quite complex. At first, the explicitly possible inter-library loan request was denied. Upon registration in the Florentine library, I was told that borrowing the artist's box should not pose any issue since it is a recent publication, which I already doubted. Once I entered the library, I was read a page-long list of handwritten instructions before being handed over the publication. Throughout the consultation, I stayed in an office together with four library staff members. Additional signatures on a special form were required for the taking of photographs.



family board games.<sup>333</sup> To grasp the significance of the Fondazione Prada publication, it is essential to delve further into Duchamp's work.

In 1934, he created the commonly known *The Green Box* [Fig. 61], a serial production of 320 editions, with ninety-four loose documents containing notes relating to *The Large Glass* (1915-1923). *The Green Box* is considered a precursor to Duchamp's extended production of multiple series of the *boîte-en-valise* from 1935 to 1966 [Fig. 62].<sup>334</sup> Emerged from the desire for a comprehensive documentation of his work, Duchamp created these portable museums in form of suitcases containing replica *en miniature* of his past artworks. Almost his entire oeuvre was included in the form of tiny models, reliefs, or printed replicas. This documentation was contained in a foldable, three-dimensional spatial model, like a miniature exhibition enclosed within a suitcase. Therefore, the suitcase was endowed with the status of a portable museum, which could be presented anywhere and at any desired time.<sup>335</sup> The multi-pieced compositions allow for the spectator to unfold and rearrange the contents of the box in ever-new configurations. This performativity enabled an individual variety of associations and references between the reproduced artworks. The aspired totality of the contained artworks allows for parallels to be drawn with the *Wunderkammer*, which also aimed to encompass the macrocosmos in a minimized environment.<sup>336</sup> While Duchamp played with the loss of aura due to reproduction and the exhibition value by making his work more accessible to the masses,<sup>337</sup> the Fondazione Prada publication inverted these notions, as it stood primarily for exclusivity and its value as collectible.

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<sup>333</sup> Cf. Peach Doble, "A book chronicling tiny, bizarre treasures curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf," *It's Nice That* (November 8, 2019): unpagged. <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/wes-anderson-juman-malouf-michael-rock-il-sarcofago-di-spitzmaus-e-altri-tesori-publication-081119> (Accessed August 30, 2023)

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Astrid Legge, "Museen der anderen 'Art'. Künstlermuseen als Versuche einer alternativen Museumspraxis" (PhD Diss., RWTH Aachen University, 2000), p. 59.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 65.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. Ivi, pp. 66-67; Cf. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), p. 150.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. Ivi, p. 66.



Fig. 60: Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)*, mixed media, Bowdoin College of Art, 1934.



Fig. 61: Marcel Duchamp, *La boîte-en-valise*, mixed media, 40 x 37.5 x 8.2 cm, Centre Pompidou, 1936-41.

In Duchampian terms, the artist's box published by Fondazione Prada [Fig. 63] contains the *Spitzmaus* exhibition in miniature. The choice of the box format likely also reflected the exhibition design with its recessed boxes, carrying an institutional critique inherent in the curatorial approach, since it referred to the museum itself as a containing cube. In the following paragraphs, the eight individual components of the publication, all housed in a box-like orange envelope which evokes the framing effect of the orange curtain, will be further examined.

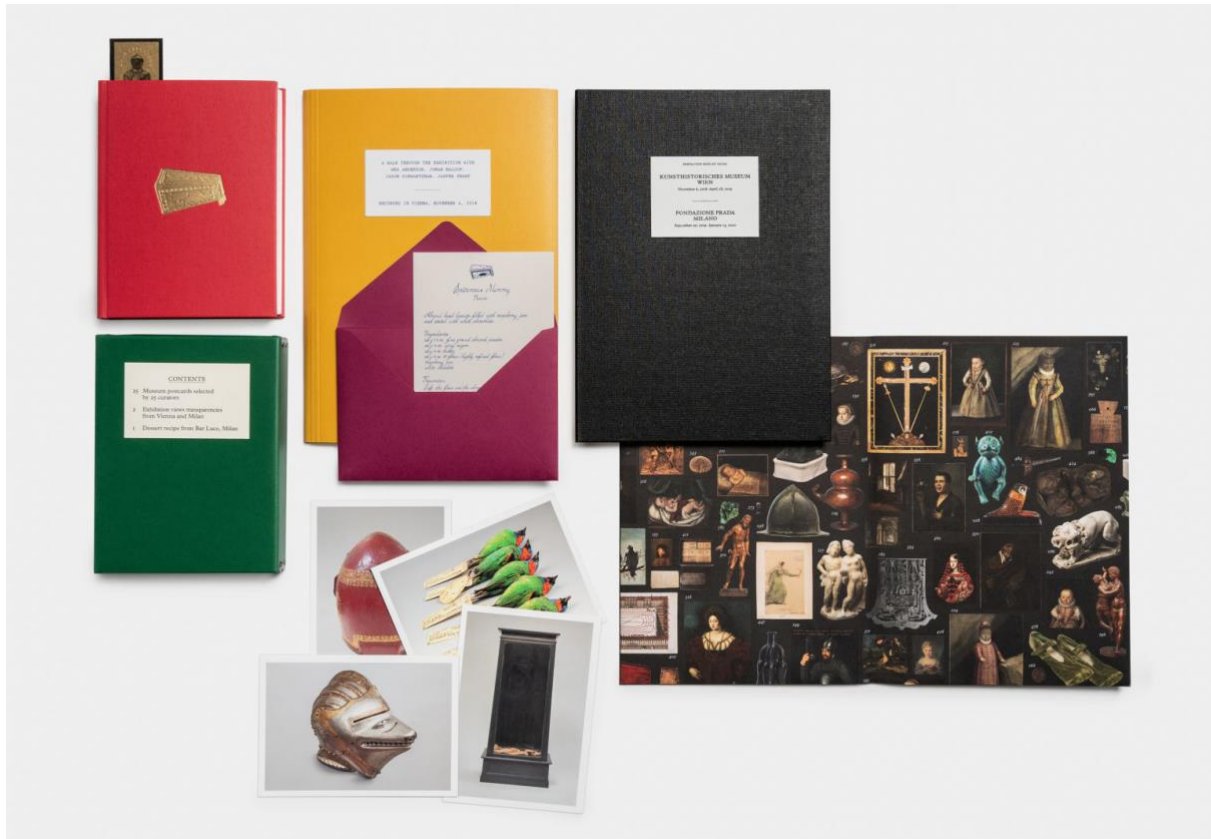


Fig. 63: Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (eds.), *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, designed by 2x4 Studio, published by Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2019.

First of all, it includes a shining golden bookmark. On its back, the integral parts of the box are listed, and the inspiration drawn by the *boîte-en-valise* and board games is confirmed.

The most significant literary contribution is found in a book covered in red cloth embossed with a gold foil shrew on its front. It contains commentaries by Miuccia Prada, Patrizio Bertolli and Wes Anderson. These are followed by a conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp and interviews consisting of eight questions each, posed to twenty-three curators from the Kunsthistorisches and Naturhistorisches Museum. Additionally, there is a list of all exhibits with their corresponding captions, indicating in which installment of the show they were included. Moreover, the last two sections contain various drawings by Malouf.

These illustrations, together with the golden shrew on the cover, contribute to “tiny, bizarre details that weave a playful narrative throughout the book.”<sup>338</sup>

The next component is a yellow file folder, bearing a title in typewriter font: *A Walk through the exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018*. Therefore, the content appears to be the transcription of the Viennese audio guide. Upon unfolding it, one encounters ten loose pages held together by staples, structured like a screenplay, and again formatted in a typewriter style.

Furthermore, the publication includes a black hard cover booklet, titled *Exhibition Display Guide*. Opening the thin booklet reveals that it is an accordion book, unfolding into a single long sheet filled with photographs of each exhibition wall. Besides the floor plan of both installations, it also contains a note on display written by Cornelia Mattiacci.

A comprehensive component of the publication is the poster displaying all 593 *Findings, Artifacts and Artworks selected by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf* [Fig. 64]. Each object on the compilation is provided with a number, which corresponds to the extensive object list included in the red-covered book. Here, a reference to family board games becomes evident: unfolding the poster is reminiscent of unfolding a game board; the eye jumps from one object to the next, similar to moving a play figure across the board. The poster captivates with its immersive effect.

The remaining pieces within the artist’s box are housed in a small green box designated to resemble a green archive box. The color and the multi-piece content draw parallels to the numerous notes contained in Duchamp’s *The Green Box* (1934) [see Fig. 61]. The first component inside consists of twenty-five postcards, each showcasing an exhibition favorite chosen by the institution’s curators. Here, too, a connection to board games can be detected. To fully appreciate the postcards, they must be spread out on a table, and to identify the objects, the cards must be turned over to reveal their captions – reminiscent of playing a memory game.

The second item of the green box are two 35mm diapositives, one showing an exhibition view of the Viennese installment, the other depicting the Milanese display addition.

Finally, a violet envelope is contained in the green archive box. Inside, there is a letterpressed recipe card printed on white paperboard with blue-colored edges. The handwritten-style recipe is for baking special *Spitzmaus Mummy* cookies, which were offered at Bar Luce during the exhibition’s duration. The idea of having an accompanying dessert for

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<sup>338</sup> Peach Doble, “A book chronicling tiny, bizarre treasures curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf,” *It’s Nice That* (November 8, 2019): unpagged. <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/wes-anderson-juman-malouf-michael-rock-il-sarcofago-di-spitzmaus-e-altri-tesori-publication-081119> (Accessed August 30, 2023)

the exhibition initially arose in Vienna, where Demel was supposed to provide a small pastry with tiny shrews in their coffins. In the end, the collaboration did not come to fruition, as there was a suspicion that they had an issue with the word ‘coffin’ in relation to a dessert.<sup>339</sup> Furthermore, the presence of a pastry was also prominent in Anderson’s film *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, where the Courtesan au Chocolat by Mendl’s Bakery appears throughout the movie, wrapped in classic cotton-candy pink patisserie boxes with a blue tie.

The colors used for the various components of the artist’s box were extracted from the exhibition display, while the shapes and layouts refer to the tools of the archive itself and the ordering framework of the objects contained within. Each piece comes with its own specific peculiarities, emphasized by the precisely chosen material. The “various elements are bound or wrapped in materials you would easily recognize in the library: book cloth, oaktag, manila folders, bible paper, etc.”<sup>340</sup>

Overall, the publication emphasizes the notion of the portable exhibition and the personal collection. Just as the exhibition was “open to visitors’ interpretation, the book is open to its readers’ interpretation.”<sup>341</sup> Nevertheless, the audience for this publication is undeniably a very specific one due to the limited number of prints and the elevated purchase price. The publication is tailored for meticulous collectors, satisfying the collector’s delight and their desire for exclusivity. With the artist’s box itself, another collectible was created, which, upon acquisition, entered the exhibition’s place of origin: the archive. In this case, the notion of archive was multiplied and personalized, as each copy found its place in a different private collection. The act of adding meaning to the archive can be equally applied to the curators Anderson and Malouf in their role as archivists. By extracting an exhibition from existing collections, they created another piece worthy of being collected, another piece that adds to the archive – contributing not only with the creation of the artist’s box but also the entire exhibition. This return of significance can again be summarized with a statement by Derrida: “One will never be able to objectivize it [the archive] while leaving no remainder. The archivist produces more archive, and this is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future.”<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Cf. Wes Anderson, Jasper Sharp, “A Walk Through the Exhibition with Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, Jason Schwartzman, Jasper Sharp. Recorded in Vienna, November 4, 2018” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), pp. 2-3.

<sup>340</sup> Michael Rock quoted in: Peach Doble, “A book chronicling tiny, bizarre treasures curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf,” *It’s Nice That* (November 8, 2019): unpagued. <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/wes-anderson-juman-malouf-michael-rock-il-sarcofago-di-spitzmaus-e-altri-tesori-publication-081119> (Accessed August 30, 2023)

<sup>341</sup> Mario Mainetti, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 31.

<sup>342</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): p. 45.

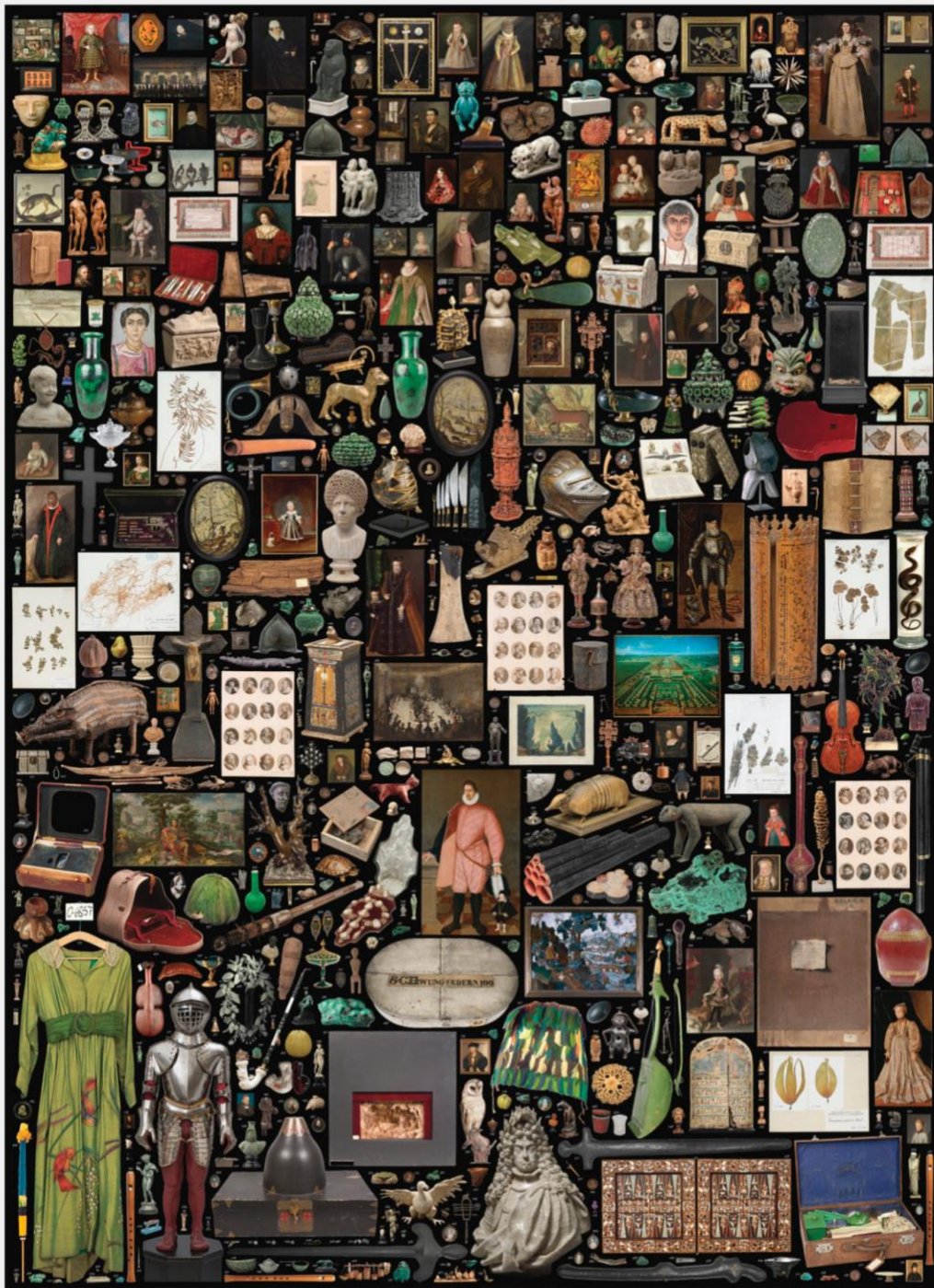


Fig. 64: 593 Findings, Artifacts and Artworks selected by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, in: *Il Sarcophago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, edited by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, designed by 2x4 Studio, published by Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2019.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was driven by the aim to comprehensively examine the influences and characteristics of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Therefore, the focus oscillated between the identity of the Kunsthistorisches Museum's collections and the personas of the guest curators Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf. The utilization of the *Wunderkammer* format proved helpful in tracing various motivations behind the included contents, the exhibition concept, and further backgrounds of the show. Certainly, the employment of the *Kunstkammer* as point of departure cleverly bridged the exhibition to the museum's collections, as they themselves emerged from cabinets of curiosities found in Innsbruck and Prague. The main features characterizing the *Spitzmaus* included a fascination for both the macro- and microcosmos, the representation of the entire world on a small scale, and a remarkable curiosity-driven approach. Additionally, aspects such as the classification criteria and display furniture present in the *Wunderkammer* notably influenced the various sections and the exhibition design.

The *Spitzmaus* exhibition was undoubtedly the most successful embodiment of the series *Artist's Choice* at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, both in terms of public attention and spatial extension. As an artist-curated show, it succeeded in meeting the request to examine the archive – not only concerning the collection as a material entity, but also by delving into its essence. The lengthy process required for the exhibition's conception resulted from numerous visits to the various museum storages and houses and the curators' simultaneous involvement with the colliding film production *Isle of Dogs*. The emergence of the exhibition was therefore marked by a balance between personal and institutional dedication, both of which were ultimately inherent in the show.

The challenge posed to the guest curators by the vastness of the museum's inventories was reflected in their decision to include a substantial number of 423 exhibits. This deliberate choice required the audience to engage with the same task the curators initially grappled with: the need to make sense of the diverse array of items before them. Therefore, the fact that many visitors initially found it challenging to connect with the exhibition can be seen as intentional impact and must be acknowledged as a revealing act of the curatorial undertaking. On the other hand, the lack of clear thematic groupings and the difficulty in obtaining more precise information about individual exhibits proved to be a source of frustration for numerous visitors. Even the overall purpose of the exhibition was often dismissed by the audience. The analysis undertaken in this thesis was more fruitful than expected. Sub-groupings could be identified, and motivations for the selection of some exhibits became apparent. While some artifacts were

selected due to personal preferences and taste, others were directly linked to elements present in Wes Anderson's movies. Furthermore, thematic references to the *Wunderkammer* model could be identified, and certain exhibits revealed power relations.

However, it proved challenging for visitors to grasp these connections within the exhibition the way it was mediated. The conveyance of these connections was lacking, and even though the audience was expected to be manifold – from Wes Anderson fans to the rather traditional visitors of the Kunsthistorisches Museum and a scholarly audience group – no efforts had been made to effectively engage them according to their specific needs. In the context of the entire exhibition series *Artist's Choice*, which sought to attract novel audience groups, there should have been greater awareness of these different groups' requirements. In the execution, the different groups were no longer specifically thought of, since the curators' preferences seemed to overshadow other aspects essential to the conception of an exhibition. While different target groups were addressed, the exhibition failed to clearly include them. Greater reflection on the visitors' needs would have been crucial, as promoting their explorative experience was a fundamental element for the successful functioning of the show. Providing more information and specific references could have improved the audience's understanding. For example, not all visitors were familiar with Wes Anderson's work, and this could have been addressed more explicitly in the exhibition booklet or other accompanying materials. The failure to create familiarity for every viewer often resulted in a sense of being lost or out of place. Certainly, there was an effort to maintain the intended explorative character of the show by avoiding an excessive amount of provided information. However, possibilities to introduce additional information could have been found. Neglecting to address further related backgrounds of the exhibition, such the colonialist nature and the cultural appropriation aspects of many exhibits, is just no longer justifiable in today's context. At the latest in the catalogue, problematic aspects should have been addressed to provide a more comprehensive perspective.

The primary achievement of the exhibition could ultimately be found in its design. The arrangement of the various spaces within a single architectural unit was impressive in its material presence and the spatial affinities provided for each room. Overall, the design was visually captivating, but at first glance, it seemed to place the exhibits in a highly aestheticized environment. Nevertheless, as one delved deeper into the exhibition, the distinct characteristics, chromatic and material variations became apparent. It could have been detected that the design effectively conveyed the essence of each thematic section for those willing to engage with it. Thus, the display design served as a visual metaphor for a precise examination of the relationships between the exhibits and the intended meanings of the groupings. Furthermore,



measures and boundaries imposed by conservational and safety requirements were clearly visible upon examination. Not every exhibit could be placed casually in a single showcase with another due to varying conditions of humidity, temperature, and lighting. This necessarily led to the grouping of objects that shared commonalities in material, technique, or shape. In the end, these obligations had a positive impact on the display, as similar exhibits were positioned together, providing cohesion to the sections they belonged to.

Unlike the previous two exhibitions of *Artist's Choice*, which both included a contemporary artwork by the responsible artist-curator, the *Spitzmaus* show did not feature any physical object by Wes Anderson or Juman Malouf. Consequently, the exhibition design emerged as the primary expression of the curators' individual style, known for its strong aesthetic focus. In this respect, the design not only enhanced the individualization and autonomy of each thematic grouping but also delighted in mirroring of the curators' visual aesthetics. The color scheme, the high extent of symmetry, and the alignment of exhibition views to movie frames filmed as lateral dollhouse views were identified as the most obvious parallels to Wes Anderson's films. Therefore, it was the personal aesthetics of the curators that allowed for a nuanced reading of the exhibition and the conveyance of deeper logics and connections. The curators' personalization of the Kunsthistorisches' collection reigned over the content itself, framing each exhibit with their distinctive signature style. Eventually, the use of recessed boxes, which drew fundamental parallels to the evolution of display cabinets from their origins within the *Wunderkammer* to contemporary times, added another layer of depth to the exhibition. In this context, the *Spitzmaus* display aligned with minimalist museum showcases and the tendencies expressed by contemporary artists working with display cases, such as Hermann Distel or Damien Hirst. These connections effectively positioned the exhibition within a broader artistic context. However, the boxes, as containing and delimiting elements, fragmented the exhibition's destiny into numerous individual components and did not succeed in holding it together as a cohesive whole. Overall, the insertion of the boxes did favor the intensification of the confrontation of the visitor with the single exhibit. The reflection on the evolution of the cabinet as furniture and the exploration of various thematic essences were cleverly interwoven, all enveloped in an Andersonian ambiance.

Throughout the analysis, various aspects accompanying the phenomenon of artists as curators became evident. From the outset, Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf demonstrated an unconventional approach that posed challenges for museum staff and perplexed many seasoned scholars. For instance, their use of the color green as a criterion for a whole section proved to

be much more challenging than expected for such a seemingly simple principle. The artist-curators truly inverted the internal dynamics of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Furthermore, it was possible to extend the role of the artists as curators to other figures, such as the collector, the scientist, or the archivist. The connection to the *Wunderkammer* model was crucial in this regard due to its divergence from current scientific norms. The scientist and archivist thus had to fulfill tasks of necessarily curatorial nature, including determining pre-scientific structuring criteria, selecting and grouping artifacts, and presenting them spatially. Anderson and Malouf operated according to similar logics and merged these different roles with their position at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The selective eye, akin to that of a collector, underpinned the exhibition and was skillfully applied by the curators. This was further confirmed by Mainetti, who aptly stated: “Wes and Juman spoke with us in a way that gave us the impression that the coffin was an absolute masterpiece. That’s another very typical attitude of collectors: they truly love their own objects regardless of their ‘value’.”<sup>343</sup> The fascination for specific exhibits had a contemplative value, captivating the curators in the same way a collector becomes enthralled when acquiring a new piece for their collection. This drive to own particular objects and include them in a personal vision was inherent to the *Spitzmaus* exhibition and evidently reflected the passion that a curator brings. However, this inclination toward an appropriation of the archive for personal selection raised concerns, at times overriding conservation measures and precarious conditions in favor of the curators’ personal will. Some objects were only released for display after persistent insistence by Anderson and Malouf, indicating that internal museological norms were put on hold and set aside in favor for artistic freedom promised by the invitation. The final outcome largely disregarded art-historical methodologies and truly challenged the conventionally trained staff. In this regard, the exhibition display had a highly aestheticizing character, which at times seemed to prioritize a rather superficial treatment of the exhibits.

In the end, what held the exhibition together was the artist’s book published by Fondazione Prada. It addressed aspects related to the portable museum, the exhibition-in-a-box, and the individual explorative character that was also present in the actual exhibition. By containing both theoretical and visual representations, it effectively summarized the show and fostered a similar public experience.

All in all, the examination of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* allowed to unveil many dynamics inherent to the show that were not initially visible.

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<sup>343</sup> Mario Mainetti, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 24.

Certainly, the institutional principles were challenged but also invited the museum staff to reflect and explore of new possibilities in curating. The guest curators' ability to think outside the box marked their two-year collaboration with the Kunsthistorisches Museum, giving the institution some time to become familiar with their approach. Nevertheless, some of their decisions exceeded a respectful and reasonable treatment of valuable objects. Instead, the curators seemed to prioritize these objects for their fascinating aesthetic appearance, much like they would do with film props. As a result, some ethical boundaries and no-goes were crossed – some more consciously than others – in pursuit of the stubborn aim of creating a finally highly personal exhibition.

Moreover, the task of working with a preexisting collection was cleverly fulfilled by referring to the early days of the imperial collections and adapting the *Wunderkammer* model. However, this reference was not effectively communicated, which could have enhanced the audience's experience. Sharp acknowledged the different methodology and the reaction it evoked: “‘Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and Other Treasures’ is completely different [...]. It opens hundreds of doors. It leaves you asking more questions than you had when you went in.”<sup>344</sup> Whether the act of raising questions was a positive outcome is nevertheless ambiguous. The primary question upon exiting the exhibition was undoubtedly about the curators' intention, rather than individual discoveries or connections between sections or specific exhibits. Therefore, the show as a whole, its curators, and the related attention economy appeared to matter more than the individual exhibit or content. The exhibition may have left too many doors open and could have benefited from a more audience-friendly communication and a more elaborate exploration of different groupings and issues, such as colonialist appropriation.

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<sup>344</sup> Jasper Sharp, “A Conversation between Mario Mainetti and Jasper Sharp,” in *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, ed. Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), p. 27.

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## **Sitography**

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Anderson, Wes, director. *Castello Cavalcanti*. 35 mm short film, 8 minutes. Italy/USA: commissioned and distributed by Prada, 2013.

Anderson, Wes, director. *Moonrise Kingdom*. 16 mm film, 94 minutes. USA: Indian Paintbrush/American Empirical Pictures/Scott Rudin Productions (prod.), 2012.

Anderson, Wes, director. *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. 35 mm stop-motion animated film, 83 minutes. USA: Twentieth Century Fox/Indian Paintbrush/American Empirical Pictures (prod.), 2009.

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Anderson, Wes, director. *The Life Aquatic with Steven Zissou*. 35 mm film, 119 minutes. USA: Touchstone Pictures/American Empirical Pictures/et al. (prod.), 2004.

Anderson, Wes, director. *The Royal Tenenbaums*. 35 mm film, 110 minutes. USA: Touchstone Pictures/American Empirical Pictures (prod.), 2001.

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## Appendix – Interviews

### 1. Interview with Judith Bradlwarter (Curatorial Assistant at the KHM 2018-2019)

Judith Bradlwarter is known for being a digital creator and fashion editor with a unique and eccentric dedication to vintage fashion. Previously, she studied art history at the University of Vienna while completing an internship for the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien in the department of communication and marketing. Afterward, she assumed the role of curatorial assistant to adjunct curator for modern and contemporary art, Jasper Sharp. In this role, she assisted in organizing artist's talks and exhibitions, including *The Shape of Time* (2018), *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* (2018) and *Mark Rothko* (2019).

1. What was your role in the overall conception of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition? How did you experience and supervise this process?

I actually started at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 2017 as an intern to get a taste of it. That was in the department of communication and marketing. At that time, the curator Jasper Sharp was already working at the KHM, who was responsible for the modern and contemporary art program, and that had already been a program that I was also very interested in for a few years. So, he contacted me personally after my internship and asked if I would assist him directly with the exhibitions and talks with contemporary artists that he was currently preparing. This started with the exhibition *The Shape of Time* and the second major exhibition I was involved in was *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin* with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf. Since 2012, the KHM has invited different artists and creative minds to come and look at the collections to conceive a new exhibition from those collections. Going into the depots, into the many museum depots, was very fascinating as an experience. I was involved from the beginning in the conception of the whole exhibition, in finding the objects – Wes and his wife Juman Malouf then chose the objects themselves – but to get an overview of the millions of objects that are stored in the museum and in the depots, I created various object lists from the different collections to get an overview. Several museums belong to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, as well as the Schloss Ambras, from which many objects were selected by Wes and Juman. Wes himself said that he was more interested in “green objects,” since he focuses a lot on colors. As a result, I tended to pick out the green objects. Then animal objects were an important topic because he is also very fascinated by the animal world. Mainly, I made object lists and in a second moment I looked for ideas for the exhibition catalogue. Wes was very open in this regard – which was a great experience – and asked for ideas for the design of the catalogue. Of course, he already had his

own ideas, being the creative artist he is. He listened to the ideas and in this regard, I went to several bookshops and collected different books together, to have an inspiration of how the exhibition catalogue could look like.

The next step was putting the objects together and to see in which groups they could best be exhibited. He selected many objects from the archive that were perhaps not in the best condition, that were perhaps so-called “damaged objects”, which then either have a little damage or are very fragile or already somehow bear various traces of time – which interested him much more, because these objects simply tell much more, are more exciting. I was then in contact with the various curators to see if it was possible to have these objects and to minimally repair them – but also not too much, because the idea was that these are not perfect objects. After a long time, everything was put together and then the next step was the realization of the whole exhibition.

At the end, I can still remember, we went through the closed museum again with Wes Anderson and Juman and he got last different inputs. And there he found this coffin of a shrew, which was actually on display in the *Kunstkammer* at the time, but to be honest I had never noticed it personally, because the display case is so small that you might not necessarily look at it. He was then quite fascinated: he saw this small wooden coffin and was totally in love, you can say. He did not want to go any further, he was just with this object. At that moment he also had the idea for the exhibition, that this object would be a great title for the exhibition. The idea was really to find special objects that you do not notice or do not even see anymore, that maybe have been in the depot for years or have never even been shown.

In the end, another big task was the realization of the exhibition itself, of the space. He himself, as a visionary, had very great ideas. Of course, it was not possible to realize everything in a museum, for security reasons, etc. He initially wanted to accommodate different floors in one large space, which would then be connected by a staircase. Safety and security reasons did not allow this implementation.

In the end, I also helped organize the opening: sending out the invitations, that was the last relatively big challenge. Then, in the end, the exhibition traveled on to the *Fondazione Prada*.

2. The process of selection is very central, as is your elaboration of the object lists. Was this exchange tied to Anderson’s ideas and was he granted complete freedom of choice throughout the preparation?

Yes, of course. In the beginning, there was an overall list to filter out different categories. As an example, the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* also includes the *Theater Museum*, which he

himself did not know was part of the museum, and then found some great exhibits there as well. The same goes for the Wagenburg: there he found some old uniforms that were exciting in terms of costumes, because Juman Malouf is mainly known as a costume designer and illustrator. She also does the costumes for some of Wes' costumes. In the process, it was always important to include different categories. So not just paintings or just sculpture. As an example, the green objects: anything enter in there, like objects from the Kunstkammer, different paintings in the color green, or even a beautiful kimono dress. The idea was that a classical museum curator would never show these objects next to each other. That was the exciting thing: that he not only mixed the objects from different epochs, but also from different art genres. He also found some things through the KHM's online catalogue, which contains many objects, or through these object lists. Of course, as a creative person, he chose a lot of exhibits from his own visual perspective. That's why the object lists all had images, for example this one for "broken and repaired objects."

3. In the literature – for example in the annunciations and reviews – as well as in the Kunsthistorisches' presentation of the exhibition, the focus is mostly on Wes Anderson. Where lies Juman's contribution and relevance in this?

The entire selection for every single object was made by the two of them together. Even when he found the coffin, the main object, he asked her if she liked that as well and if the object would fit in. So, in that respect, they worked closely together, even though the focus is really on Wes, you are right. Because of the prominence of his name, one might have him more in mind and associate him with the role of guest curator. It is right that Juman is actually less well known, or less in the spotlight. For her, it was more the objects that were exciting: the ones had to do with, for example, clothing, textiles. Or books, because she herself also illustrates children's books. Specifically, I could not name any objects that only he or only she chose, because the decisions were always made in concordance.

4. To me the exhibition design seems to be very central for the effect of the exhibition. What were the guiding principles for it and how important was it to do justice to the aesthetics of Anderson's movies?

Absolutely, initially his idea was to build a film set, which unfortunately was not realizable. Then, the idea was, as it turned out in the end, to create different rooms and create different small sets in one big room of the museum's Kunstkammer. Therefore, in any case, as you can also see well in his films, it was important for Wes that everything fit together and that there

was harmony between objects, exhibition design and exhibition catalogue. Actually, one can say that everything had a 'green' thread - with him, green is more the favorite color, so it's not a red thread anymore. [laughs]

In terms of exhibition design, it was also exciting that the room itself was not even that big. It's for sure one of the largest rooms in the museum, but the KHM would also have provided him with several rooms, which somehow wasn't as exciting for him anymore, because he wanted to 'experiment' with the construction of different little worlds into one room. In the exhibition, one went from room to room, but architecturally you were always only in one room. The idea was to dive into different worlds that were connected but different.

In the Fondazione Prada, the space was much larger, and the design was actually the same. Because of the larger dimension, it was possible to exhibit more objects. The selection was somewhat reduced in Vienna because it was not possible to fit everything into one room. In Milan there was the first room, which was huge, which was covered with an orange curtain. This gave the overall picture an even more theatrical character. This was less the case in Vienna, where there was no curtain but simply this frescoed room in the *Kunstammer*. That is actually what Wes wanted: that you could dive into another world through the curtain, like in a theater. The exhibition was then actually more complete in Milan.

##### 5. What is the significance of the transfer to the Fondazione Prada?

Specifically in the exact choice of Fondazione Prada, I was not involved. But for me personally it makes perfect sense, because Wes Anderson also designed the Bar Luce in the Fondazione Prada as a museum café. So, he already had a connection and had already worked a lot with the Fondazione Prada for the café. He then actually helped to visually design another area as well. Secondly, it was interesting for the Fondazione Prada because they actually like to show historical objects. You might not suspect this, but I have observed this now at a number of exhibitions. Again and again, they exhibited historical objects, or antique objects, although the museum itself is known for contemporary art. In the end, the exhibition fit in well and had a lot of success. Certainly, there the audience there was different then in Vienna.

##### 6. How was the catalogue production developed? How did the decision come about to keep descriptions so brief and to give little information?

The idea was to not create a classic exhibition catalogue, but rather an artist's book. To not give a precise explanation or a detailed explanation of the objects. But rather to leave the visitor or the reader of the catalogue more like a kind of enigma – that was also Wes's idea – so that they

then ask themselves even more questions and visually engage more with the objects. The idea was to not give a more precise historical explanation, because one already knows this from the classical catalogues.

The catalogue of Vienna lists all the objects, is very enigmatic. The catalogue of the Fondazione Prada, on the other hand, is very special. It is produced in a limited edition and it contains a small book that lists all the objects, but it also small interviews with the different curators of each collection from the Kunsthistorisches Museum. In addition, at the very front there is a note from Wes Anderson, like a little letter: a listing of different thoughts about the exhibition. It is really an artist's book; it is like a little handy cabinet of curiosities. Also present in the catalogue is a selection of objects as postcards, then two diapositives – one from the exhibition in Vienna, the other in Milan –, and additionally a little recipe for *Spitzmaus* cookies. I just remembered, I've never tried to bake these cookies. Also included is a sort of screenplay: this one is a written recording of a dialogue between Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, and Jason Schwartzman, an actor who often appears in Anderson's movies. It is a casual conversation between them. Again, that is quite exciting because it is very atypical to find something like that within a catalogue. It provides a more personal reference and makes the exhibition more intimate when one hears what the curators have to say about it. Last but not least, there is also a large poster with all the objects in the exhibition.

7. Once I read about the fact that the exhibits taken from the permanent exhibition have been replaced by drawings by Juman during the exhibition period, can you confirm?

Yes, that is exactly right, I can confirm. Practically some objects came not from the depot but from the permanent show. So, Juman drew them, and they are also included in the Fondazione Prada catalogue. This is also a link to the previous question about her direct contribution to the exhibition. She not only helped with the selection, but also made these drawings.

8. Last question: what was your favorite item on display?

Difficult question, because there are so many that I liked. If I had to choose now, I would choose the children's portraits as well as the category of damaged objects. But the miniatures were also great.

It is difficult to decide. But if it was about a single object now, I would effectively stay with the coffin of the shrew, the main object. This may be a boring answer now, but I remember walking through the *Kunstkammer* and Wes suddenly seeing this object that never seemed that significant to me. He went there, the description was only in German, so "Sarg einer



Spitzmaus.” He immediately turned around, said how much he liked the object, and that I should now translate this into English. There I was briefly overwhelmed: how could one translate *Spitzmaus*? I looked it up, explained to him that the translation was ‘shrew’. Thereupon he said, this would not please him at all, the word does not please him. Therefore, he wanted to directly adapt the German word. Even in the English title, the *Spitzmaus* always remained *Spitzmaus*. He was just so fascinated by it, and so I was carried away by that, too. The object itself is just very exciting, as is the story about it.

(Interview conducted on June 21, 2023)

## 2. Interview with Itai Margula (Exhibition Design for *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*)

Itai Margula is an architect, exhibition designer and freelance curator who leads the architectural studio Margula Architects in Vienna. Since 2010, he has been working at the office of Michael Embacher, with whom he has realized several exhibition designs for permanent and temporary shows. In 2008, Margula participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale with a project focused on urban realities. Moreover, he has developed and designed mediation concepts for the MAK and the Architekturzentrum Vienna. Notable among his recent projects are the exhibition designs for *An (un)enjoyable Journey. Stefan Edlis' Life after HIM* at the Jewish Museum Vienna and *Dali – Freud. An Obsession* at the Lower Belvedere. Currently, Margula is experimenting with solutions for modular architecture within the exhibition space.

1. How were you introduced to the task of designing the *Spitzmaus* exhibition? Did you start from the overall concept or from individual objects?

The conception of the exhibition had already been going on for many months when I was invited by Jasper Sharp to devise the exhibition design. At that time, around 250 exhibits had been selected, representing about half of the total volume of the final outcome.

The content-related concept of the objects was very clear from the beginning. The selected objects, deriving from a wide variety of the museum's collections, were assigned to categories defined by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf. The spatial atmosphere – in some cases also created by density – should offer the visitors a clear assignment: portraits, children's portraits, zoo, wood, green, miniatures, cases and boxes.

When I subsequently started the conceptualization process, I did not yet know the type of objects I was conceiving the exhibition design for, given the collection's diversity and the then incomplete selection. Initially, I approached the exhibition conceptually through my research and explored various strategies for arrangement and spatial design over time.

In a second stage, I received the object lists, which already provided preliminary categorical information about the individual objects: dimensions, conditions, requirements for transport, presentation, and conservation. These clues were to guide me through the further development of the project. Certainly, Wes Anderson's movies, dominated by the characteristic recurring worlds of symmetry, as well as Juman Malouf's illustrations, served as aesthetic references.

The sheer volume of objects in this exhibition naturally posed a significant challenge, as they corresponded to a wide variety of conservational conditions and requirements. Thus, the grouping and placement of each individual object involved multiple consultations with the

respective curators and conservators. The project began with an examination of the exhibition concept but then also required an intensive familiarization with every single object's requirements. It was essential to me to prioritize the objects over the exhibition architecture.

2. How did the conception process – especially regarding the collaboration with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf in the role of artists-as-curators – for the exhibition design unfold?

At the beginning, the source of inspiration for the exhibition was the Kunsthistorisches' high-security depot in Himberg. Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf showed great enthusiasm for its storage atmosphere – they were fascinated by the presentation of the objects, which looked 'like sleeping objects.' However, since the depot is equipped with all the climatic and conservational conditions needed, it would not have been possible to recreate the original depot in an exhibition space. Nonetheless, it was possible to suggest this atmosphere, which led me to delve into storage research: how did people deal with quantity over the centuries? In the past, people were not afraid to display a large number of objects, but today it would not be possible to consider it as visually appealing.

I developed a shadow box system in which the objects could be placed in a depot-like setup. However, as the project evolved, the storage concept was overcome and replaced with the inspiration from the *Kunstkammer*, which calls more for a cozy atmosphere. As in the traditional form of the *Kunstkammer*, the decision was made to have the exhibition exist without labels. Nevertheless, booklets containing object information were available – the idea was to let this information appear by choice.

In terms of object placement, the clear axes of symmetry deriving from Wes Anderson's cinematic aesthetic were prominent. It was a visual process about layout, material, color, and light guided by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf. For the grouping of the objects, we created visual chart systems based on conservational conditions – such as humidity resistance and material – indicating which objects could be grouped together. Our collaboration with Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf was based on constant exchange. They often expressed direct requests that we explored and implemented, while other times, suggestions derived directly from our team, and Wes and Juman provided feedback.

3. How did architectural, safety-related, and conservation compromises affect the process? The challenges at the architectural level began with the conditions of the hall: it was necessary to reduce the natural light as much as possible. There is a non-removable painting on the wall,

which had to be concealed by the exhibition equipment. There were pedestals that could be removed, while other objects were enclosed in the architecture and thus not visible. Additionally, there were two display cases that could not be removed and were initially intended to vanish as well but ended up being used as showcases in the exhibition.

In the final exhibition, almost all exhibits – with only a few exceptions – were placed in display cases enclosed with museum glass. From a conservational standpoint, this was not always required, but since Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf made changes in the positioning of the objects up until the end, it was already clear before that each showcase had to be aligned to the highest security standards. These are high-security showcases that were developed after consultations with the Kunsthistorisches' security specialists. They are securely fastened multiple times from the back. Each display case contains a great deal of technology and is a self-contained system: it must be constructed in such a way that it does not attack the object – such as avoiding staining due to the backdrop fabric, which could even contain incompatible chemicals. Climatic and humidity conditions within the showcase are also taken into account. In selected rooms, Kvadrat textile was used to cover the exterior of the display cases. For the interior of the showcases, velvety fabric by Création Baumann was used – a very difficult fabric to work with, as it can quickly develop directional inconsistencies. This meant that each showcase had to be uniformly brushed from the inside prior to installing the object.

An essential part of the process involved constant exchange with responsible curators and conservators regarding the specific needs of each object – we are talking about a total of about 800 objects. Every single object had to be precisely measured and I drew supports for every single object: for example, it had to be agreed how and where an object could be encased.

The safety precautions imposed limitations on flexibility, as numerous factors had to be considered when repositioning objects, making it nearly impossible in many cases.

4. In this context, I also imagine the lighting placement to be very complex: light interacts with various colors and surfaces that reflect it differently. What can you tell me about the lighting design?

For the lighting, I collaborated with an external lighting technician for the display cases. The lighting design for the exhibition itself was developed in coordination with the museum's lighting technician. Prior to construction, the placement of spotlights was planned, as the corresponding power rails had to be installed. Some paintings could be lit from only one side, while others needed two spotlights to create a nice effect. I was very pleased by the final result; it was amazingly well lit – like some sort of light spectacle.

The lights were all carefully matched to the light from the museum spotlights, so the visitor often did not immediately discern the source of the light.

Additionally, each showcase was individually illuminated, with the lighting adapted to each object. One condition was that the light had to be integrated outside of the glazing to avoid temperature differences on the inside and to maintain the closed system of the showcase. Thus, the lights were installed in the frame of the showcase in front of the glazing. The light was positioned in such a way that the visitor would never look directly into the light, insofar as this was possible. This means that display cases in the upper area were lit from below. If one entered a room from a certain direction, the light came from the same one, so it did not dazzle directly into the eye.

5. Was it considered from the beginning that the design had to be adapted for the Fondazione Prada and how this would be done? Or was this concept only developed after Vienna?

The later relocation of the exhibition to the Fondazione Prada in Milan was known from the beginning. However, this was not a factor considered during the conception phase for Vienna. That is, the exhibition was first planned and conceived for Vienna, and only after the termination of the exhibition, the project was approached for the Milan adaptation. The exhibition design for Milan, for the most part, remained the same, but it could not be adopted one-to-one. Objects that were not transportable had to be replaced with new ones. Moreover, the exhibition area at Prada was much larger, necessitating the addition of two supplementary sections.

(Interview conducted on July 13, 2023)

### 3. Interview with Mario Mainetti (Responsible Curator at Fondazione Prada)

Mario Mainetti is an architect and curator at the Fondazione Prada in Milan, where he also serves as the head of research and publications. For the Milan sequel *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, he was the responsible curator representing the institution alongside Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf. In the artist's book accompanying the exhibition, published by Fondazione Prada, a fruitful conversation between Mainetti and Jasper Sharp delivers further information about the exhibition's emergence and transformation from its first to its second installment.

1. How did the collaboration between the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Fondazione Prada for the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures* come about? At what point was Fondazione Prada actively involved?

The idea for the project and the collaboration originated in Vienna, at the beginning of the collaboration between the Kunsthistorisches Museum and Wes Anderson.

We had already worked with Wes, and the project started with more ambitious ideas than previous artist-curated exhibitions at the Kunsthistorisches. Ideas went beyond the prospect of a temporary exhibition with works from the holdings of a magnificent museum like the Kunsthistorisches.

We were actively involved from the beginning, obviously with less involvement than in the Milan project. In the same way, in our exhibition we actively involved the Kunsthistorisches and Jasper Sharp.

2. How does the exhibition fit into the mission of Fondazione Prada and how has the Kunsthistorisches Museum's collection been accommodated?

With the opening of the Milan venue, we declared our willingness to extend our activities beyond contemporary art into dialogues with the past and with other disciplines. In addition to this, for us the exhibition also corresponded to the line of research on artist-curated exhibitions that we had started before participating in the project.

3. What was the motivation behind adding thematic sections in Milan?

Both exhibitions were designed for the space that housed them, and ours is larger in size. The larger space was an opportunity for an extension of the sections and the inclusion of additional works.

4. Where do you identify key features in the exhibition design after adaptation for Fondazione Prada?

The Vienna exhibition in a sense echoed the characteristics of the classical museum, divided into rooms. It was essentially an exhibition of interiors of rooms that were accessible and visible only from one side. The one in Milan was an exhibition of pavilions and showcases distributed in space, as it developed the idea of the garden, which was also the theme of the new section. Our layout was inspired by Ambras Castle, which first housed the Habsburg collection.

5. What kind of audience was the exhibition intended for? Did you expect a different audience from Vienna? Could you report on the public's perception and understanding and how they received the foreign collection?

Our exhibitions do not target a specific audience, but it is undeniable that each of them ultimately has a target audience. The audience of the *Spitzmaus* exhibition was diverse and symptomatic of a project with different levels of enjoyment and consequently attracting a large audience.

We expected a diverse audience because the Kunsthistorisches is a major museum in a European capital. It has permanent collections full of masterpieces. That is why it has an international audience, with many tourists ensuring continuity in visitor numbers. Our audience, on the other hand, is more connected to the activities we offer.

6. What was the concept and motivation behind the conception of the artist book published by Fondazione Prada?

The publication is an artist's book inspired by Marcel Duchamp's *boîte-en-valise*. It is a portable museum that narrates the Habsburg exhibition and collections through various media and documents. It has something cinematic about it and certainly testifies to Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf's passion for books.

(Interview conducted on September 14, 2023)

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### Introduction

Fig. 1: Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, opened in 1891. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband 2022.

Fig. 2: Juman Malouf (left) and Wes Anderson (right) in the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 2018. © Rafaela Pröll.

### Chapter 1

Fig. 3: Olaus Worm, *Museum Wormianum*, 1655, frontispiece, engraving, 34 x 38 cm. Norbert Schneider, *Stilleben. Realität und Symbolik der Dinge – Die Stilleben der Frühen Neuzeit*, Cologne: Taschen, 1994, p. 159.

Fig. 4: Frans II Francken, *Cabinet of Curiosities*, 1620-1625, oil on panel, 74 x 78 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy Picture Gallery, KHM Vienna.

Fig. 5: Left: Anonymous, *Hirsute Man Petrus Gonsalvus*, 1580, oil on canvas, 190 x 80 cm; Right: Anonymous, *Madeleine Gonsalvus*, 1580, oil on canvas, 123 x 86 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy Picture Gallery, KHM Vienna.

Fig. 6: Apollo 17 Crew, *Blue Marble*, 1972. © NASA.

Fig. 7: *Wunderkammer*, 1986, curated by Adalgisa Lugli, XLII Biennale. Front: Pino Pascali, *Dinosaur*, 1966, 80 x 1200 x 70 cm. Upper left: René Magritte, *Fish Head*, 1963, 37 x 50 cm, drawing for *La Recherche de la Vérité*. Upper right: *Monstrous Fish*, 18<sup>th</sup> century, 40 x 125 x 22 cm, Musei Civici, Reggio Emilia. Lugli, Adalgisa. *Wunderkammer. La stanza delle meraviglie*. Venice: Electa Editrice, 1986, p. 41.



Fig. 8: Mark Dion, *The Library for the Birds of London* (center), view of the exhibition *Theatre of the Natural World*, 2018, Whitechapel Gallery, London. Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery. <https://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/exhibitions/304-mark-dion-theatre-of-the-natural-world-whitechapel-gallery-london/> (Accessed September 10, 2023)

Fig. 9: Mark Dion, *Cabinet of Curiosities*, 2001, Exhibition View, Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis. Joanna Marsh, "Fieldwork. A Conversation with Mark Dion," in: *American Art* 23, 2 (Summer 2009): p. 32.

Fig. 10: Matthäus Merian, *The Princely Castle Ombras*, in: *Topographia Provinciarum Austriacarum*, 1649, engraving, 19 x 30.5 cm. Gabriele Beßler, *Wunderkammern: Weltmodelle von der Renaissance bis zur Kunst der Gegenwart*. Berlin: Reimer, 2009, p. 90.

Fig. 11: *Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol*, 1969, Exhibition View, Rhode Island School Of Design, Providence. Courtesy RISD Museum. <https://risdmuseum.org/exhibitions-events/exhibitions/raid-icebox-1-andy-warhol> (Accessed September 10, 2023)

Fig. 12: Current Display in the *Wunderkammer* of Ambras Castle, Innsbruck. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 13: *The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas*, 2012, Exhibition View, Curated by Ed Ruscha, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 14: *During the Night*, Exhibition View, 2016, Curated by Edmund de Waal, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 15: Albrecht Dürer, *Traumgesicht*, in the artist's book of Dürer, 1525, watercolor and ink on paper, 30 x 42,5 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Calendar: 175 Years Stadtparkasse Nürnberg, May 1, 1997.

Fig. 16: *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*, 2018, Exhibition View, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 17: Charles Thurston Thompson, *Fireman's Station. Paris Universal Exhibition, 1855*, albumen print, Victoria and Albert Museum. Background: entrance to Courbet's Pavilion of Realism.

Fig. 18: *The Real Estate Show, 1980*, Exhibition View, New York City. Upper left: Mike Glier, *Values* and Peggy Katz. Wall pieces: Scott Miller, Edit deAk, Jane Dickson and Cara Perlman. Photo Credit: Christof Kohlhofer.

Fig. 19: *The Times Square Show, 1980*, Exhibition View of the *Money, Love, Death Room*, New York City. Photo Credit: Andrea Callard.

Fig. 20: Kenneth Goldsmith, *Printing Out the Internet, 2013*, Exhibition View, LABOR Gallery, Mexico City. Courtesy The Washington Post. Photo Credit: Janet Jarman.

Fig. 21: *Coffin of a Shrew*, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, colored wood, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy KHM Vienna, Egyptian and Near Eastern Collection.

Fig. 22: Douglas Gordon, *24 Hour Psycho, 1993*, Exhibition View. Hal Foster et al., eds., *Art Since 1900*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 657.

## Chapter 2

Fig. 23: Floor Plan *Spitzmaus in a Coffin and other Treasures, 2018-19*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Exhibition Booklet. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 24: Showcase Detail, Room 4. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

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Fig. 29: El Lissitzky, *Proun Room*, 1923, installation, for the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung, Berlin. Reconstruction of the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1965. Christopher Wilk (ed.), *Modernism designing a new World. 1914-1939*. London: Victoria & Albert Publishing, 2006, p. 38.

Fig. 30: Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau*, 1923, mixed media installation, Hanover, destroyed in 1943. Guido Magnaguagno, Karin Orchard, Beat Wyss et al., *Kurt Schwitters. Merz – Ein Gesamtweltbild. Museum Tinguely 01.05.-22.08.2004*, Bern: Benteli, 2004, p. 4.

Fig. 31: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, 2019-20, Exhibition View, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Fondazione Prada, Milan. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Andrea Rossetti.

Fig. 32: Display Design, Illustration, Room 7, Central Wall. Exhibition Booklet. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 33: Wes Anderson, *Hotel Chevalier*, 2007, Film Still, min. 03:59. © American Empirical Pictures.

Fig. 34: Room 8, Exhibition View. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 35: Wes Anderson, *Moonrise Kingdom*, 2012, Film Still, min. 01:24:52. Color Palette Extraction. © American Empirical Pictures / Indian Paintbrush.

Fig. 36: Exhibition Details. Color Palette Extraction. Courtesy Fondazione Prada.

Fig. 37: Set Design, Hotel Lobby, in: Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014. © American Empirical Pictures / Indian Paintbrush / Babelsberg Film Studio.

Fig. 38: Monsieur Gustave in Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014. © American Empirical Pictures / Indian Paintbrush / Babelsberg Film Studio.

Fig. 39: Wes Anderson, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, 2004, Film Still, min. 00:15:16. © American Empirical Pictures.

Fig. 40: Joseph Cornell, *Soap Bubble Set*, 1936, wood box construction with glass, found objects, paper, 6.1 x 39.4 x 13.8 cm. Kirsten Hoving, "The Surreal Science of Soap: Joseph Cornell's First Soap Bubble Set," *American Art* 20, 1 (2006): p. 14.

Fig. 41: Georg Hinz, *A Collector's Cabinet*, 1664, oil on canvas, 114.5 x 93.3 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg. Adriani Götz, *Deutsche Malerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, Köln: Dumont 1977, p. 55.

Fig. 42: Paolo Tessari, *Armadio Wunderkammer*, 1972, mixed media, Exhibition Views of *Gli Armadi delle Meraviglie*, 1986, XLII Biennale, Venice. © Paolo Tessari Venosta. <https://paolotessarivenosta.it/wunderkammer/> (Accessed September 10, 2023)

Fig. 43: Herbert Distel, *Museum of Drawers*, 1970-77, mixed media, 186 x 37.5 x 38.5 cm, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich. © ProLitteris, Zurich, 2023.

Fig. 44: Damien Hirst, *Still*, 1994, glass, stainless steel, steel, nickel, brass, rubber, and medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment, 195.6 x 251.5 x 50.8 cm. Ann Gallagher (ed.), *Damien Hirst*. München: Prestel, 2012, p. 129.

Fig. 45: Damien Hirst, *Away From The Flock*, 1994, glass, stainless steel, perspex, acrylic paint, lamb, and formaldehyde solution, 96 x 149 x 51 cm, Tate Britain, London. Ann Gallagher (ed.), *Damien Hirst*. München: Prestel, 2012, pp. 50-51.

Fig. 46: Pitt Rivers Museum, first opened in 1887, Exhibition View, Oxford. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum.

Fig. 47: Great North Museum, Exhibition View, Exhibition Design conceived by Casson Mann, 2009, New Castle upon Tyne. © Casson Mann.

Fig. 48: Tilda Swinton/Cornelia Parker, *The Maybe*, 1995, Exhibition View, Serpentine Gallery, London. Photo Credit: Hugo Glendinning.

### Chapter 3

Fig. 49: Selection of Vases for Room 2 of the exhibition *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Sabine Haag, Jasper Sharp, eds., *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Wes Anderson & Juman Malouf. Cologne: Walther König, 2018, p. 37.

Fig. 50: Exhibition View *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures*. Foreground: Dionysio Miseroni, *Emerald Vessel*, 1641, emerald, gold, enamel, 8.5 x 7.2 x 10.9 cm, Kunstkammer, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Background: *Costume Dress for Hedda Gabler*, 1978, Shantung, applications, partly painted, wearer: Erika Pluhar as Hedda, Theatermuseum, Vienna. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 51: Room 5, Exhibition View. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 52: Michael Taylor, *Boy with Apple*, 2012, oil on canvas, made-for-film creation. Courtesy Michael Taylor.

Fig. 53: Juman Malouf, *Trilogy of Two*, book cover, 2015. © Juman Malouf.

Fig. 54: Master of the Furies, *Phoenix*, c. 1610/20, ivory, 23.8 x 32 x 42.5 cm, Kunstkammer, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Courtesy KHM Vienna, Kunstkammer.

Fig. 55: Excerpt of the Exhibition Booklet for *Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin*, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 2018-19. Exhibition Booklet. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 56: Wes Anderson, *Bar Luce*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2015. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Attilio Maranzano.

Fig. 57: *Serial Classic*, 2015, Exhibition View, Curated by Salvatore Settis and Anna Anguissola, Fondazione Prada, Milan. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Attilio Maranzano.

Fig. 58: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, 2019-20, Exhibition View, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Fondazione Prada, Milan. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Andrea Rossetti.

Fig. 59: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, 2019-20, Exhibition View on the Black Pavilion, Curated by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Fondazione Prada, Milan. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Andrea Rossetti.

Fig. 60: Charles Willson Peale, *The Artist in His Museum*, oil on canvas, 263.52 x 202.88 cm, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1822. Courtesy Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Fig. 61: Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)*, mixed media, Bowdoin College of Art, 1934. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Association Marcel Duchamp.

Fig. 62: Marcel Duchamp, *La boîte-en-valise*, mixed media, 40 x 37.5 x 8.2 cm, Centre Pompidou, 1936-41. Didier Ottinger, *Marcel Duchamp dans les collections du Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne*, Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2001, p. 101.

Fig. 63: Wes Anderson, Juman Malouf, eds., *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, designed by 2x4 Studio, published by Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2019. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Delfino Sisto Legnani.

Fig. 64: *593 Findings, Artifacts and Artworks selected by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf*, in: *Il Sarcofago di Spitzmaus e altri tesori*, edited by Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, designed by 2x4 Studio, published by Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2019. Courtesy Fondazione Prada. Photo Credit: Delfino Sisto Legnani.