Two baroque altars for private devotion made of coral, mother of pearl, and ivory, in Italy and South Germany (17th century)

Micro-carving of a walnut, Renaissance pendant, crab’s eye holder and pommader, Northern Germany or Denmark, ca. 1650, walnut, carved, fire-gilt

This glass cabinet gives an insight into the variety of exotic materials in the Baroque era: Bezoar in its silver capsule, a mounted emu egg, a thin-walled rhinoceros-horn cup, several powder flasks made of water-buffalo horn, ray skin, turban snail, and tortoise carapace

Kunstkammer tortoise, around 1620, shell of an Indian tortoise, silver, fire-gilt, tortoise shell

Nautilus cup used at court, goldsmiths’ work, around 1670, black engravings on ca. 1660, silver, partially fire-gilt, chased, engraved, worked in repoussé, polished nautilus shell (nautilus pompilius), partially carved, engraved and blackened

Nut flask used at court, around 1860, coquilla nut, turned and carved, wood

Nut box with erotic representations, probably Dutch, around 1620, coquilla nut carved, polished and carved stag horn

The Humboldt Chalice, Dutch, 1620-1640, made for Johann Maurits of Nassau, owned by Alexander von Humboldt, coconut carved, silver, chased. The coconut is carved with scenes representing Brazilian cannibals.

This glass cabinet is dedicated to precious art works made for a Renaissance and Baroque treasure of various exotic materials like turban snail, coconut shell, rhinoceros horn, the spiny tail of a skate, and soapstone.

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, princes, rulers, and scholars set up their Kunstkammer: collectors’ rooms in which precious artworks (artichalic), rare phenomena of nature (naturla), scientific instruments (scientifica), objects from strange worlds (exota), and inexplicable items (mirabilia) were preserved. They served to demonstrate the wealth and power of the owner and reflect the standard of knowledge and view of the world at that time. Albeit restricted initially to a select circle, in the course of time they became accessible to a wider public. It is known, for example, that the Kunstkammer in Dresden admitted almost 850 visitors in 1648, which is a considerable number for the time. Not only nobles and diplomats travelled from far and wide to behold the Ector of Saxony’s collection, but also artists, tradesmen, students, scholars, craftsmen, and even wedding parties. One of the most important Kunstkammers still exists today in Austria: Archduke Ferdinand II. from the Tyrol extended Castle Ambras above Innsbruck adding another 24,000 preserved specimens of a Nile crocodile and a great blue turaco, or cabinets that only reveal their mysteries to the curious eye.

The quality of the objects, numbering in excess of 250 from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, is unique and makes this Kunstkammer one of the most important private collections of its kind.

The collection places an emphasis on vanitas (“consider the fact that you will die”), itself a thematic strand that permeates the Kunstkammer. In the Baroque period, death was already the foetus can be removed. On the one hand this reflects the medical interest of its owner, on the other it prompts one to indulge in a playful handling of this Kunstkammer object. The notion of vanitas is conveyed in the form of a coquilla; the wealth of the owner— as a trastory as life itself— is represented by the choice of material for the small sculpture: ivory was considered the most precious substance of that era. Kunstkammer objects have the power to astonish, touch, fascinate, and draw the curious mind— captured by the lesson, the individual, encyclopaedic universe— into the Kunst- and Wunderkammer.

Quiet admiration of extraordinary art objects and natural phenomena is not the sole aim here. Sheer astonishment is the forerun of a visit to Wunderkammers. Indeed, since the 16th century, it has been considered the first step towards gaining knowledge and insight.

Astonishment, discovery, understanding. The programme of Renaissance collections still obtains five hundred years later in our Kunstkammer.

The hour-long tour with our audioguide offers you a detailed insight into the general principles behind a Wunderkammer (cabinet of curiosities), as well as into key, individual exhibits.
**Wunderkammer Olbricht**

### Room I

1. Unicorn, task of a narwhal, 18th century, height with pedestal, 215 cm
2. Anatomical teaching models, Nuremberg, around 1680, Stephan Zick (1639–1721). The ivory models show the body of a pregnant woman, a man, and skulls representing different illnesses.
3. Amber altar for private devotion, Gdansk around 1650
4. Pair of turned wooden cups in the original case, Nuremberg or Berchtesgaden, 17th century, linewood or nutwood, turned 5. Rock crystal bowl of the landgrave Carl von Hessen-Kassel, Kassel, dated 1618, Christoph Labhart (1644–1695), rock crystal, silver, fire-gilt. A comparable rock crystal bowl of the same master has merely survived in the treasury of castle Rosenberg in Copenhagen (Inv. No N 1066/23, silver-gilt).
6. This glass cabinet shows scientifica of different epochs: 9. Clock with crucifixion in its original case, Augsburg, around 1720, master Nikolaus Schmidt the Elder (1550–1630), monogrammed.
7. Vanitas Pipe Bowl, German, 18th century, boxwood and silver. Case of a pipe with erotic illustrations, 1700, wood, modern iron base.
8. Courtyard mirror in its original case, Gdansk, around 1670.
9. Royal amber box in original case, Kassel, ca. 1720, reddish, clear amber, gold mounting, original leather case. Amber treasures of comparable quality and significance are kept merely in the Green Vault in Dresden and in the Museum degli Argenti in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.
10. This glass cabinet shows naturalia of different materials: 11. Chamos horn cup, Salzburg, around 1700, mounted by Matthias Unverdorben, city and maker's mark, silver, fire-gilt.
12. Amber rosary with skull, North East German, 18th century. Coral crucifix on alabaster pedestal with a cross made of scagliola, Trapani, South Italy, around 1720.
13. Warthog task with gold filigree mounts, Goa or Lisbon, around 1580
14. Renaissance shell spoon, South German, around 1620, spiny oyster, cowrie shell, silver, fire-gilt and engraved.
15. Folding shell spoon combined with fork, Dutch, around 1650.
16. Porcupine fish (Disdon), preparation, around 1680.
17. Tortoise (Testudinata), preparation, around 1800.
18. Vertebral bone of a whale.
20. This glass cabinet shows medical historical objects from the 16th – 17th century:
21. Monk and Death, South German, around 1740, linewood.
22. Male ivory skeleton, German, 19th century.
23. Set of court surgical instruments, German or French, around 1600, provenance: Bucinghamhoven, Mentmore Towers, collection of the 6th Earl of Rosebery.
24. Sleeping mother with child, South German, around 1640, circle of Leonhard Kern (1588–1662), ivory.
25. Bronze with anatomical theory of Dr Gall, French, around 1810, rootwood, tortoiseshell. Miniature skull from a cherry stone, removable calotte, German, 19th century.
26. Death and the cripple, Mathew Weir (1797, Great Britain), 2009, oil on canvas.
27. Monk and Death, South German, around 1520, linewood with original polychromy.
28. Antinous with attributes of vanity. Also the naked Putto is represented.
29. Large Wunderkammer cupboard with collection objects of the 16th – 20th century. The order is a reconstruction after the 1666 dated Kunstkammer in Munich, on castle Skokloster in Sweden, and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.
30. Sleeping Jesus, Spain, 17th century, wood, original polychromy.

### Room II

1. Torcuato Ruiz del Peral, Head of Saint John the Baptist in Charger, around 1760, terracotta.
3. Amber altar for private devotion, Gdansk around 1650.
4. Pair of turned wooden cups in the original case, Nuremberg or Berchtesgaden, 17th century, linewood or nutwood, turned.
5. Flora and Bacchus, Dresden, around 1720, circle of Balthasar Permoser (1651–1733), boxwood.
6. Small death, South German, around 1650, boxwood, provenance: Paris, collection Yves Saint Laurent. Chronos with skull and sickle, German, around 1650, boxwood.
7. Vanitas Pipe Bowl, German, 18th century, boxwood and silver. Case of a pipe with erotic illustrations, 1700, wood, modern iron base.
8. Courtyard mirror in its original case, Gdansk, around 1670.
9. Royal amber box in original case, Kassel, ca. 1720, reddish, clear amber, gold mounting, original leather case. Amber treasures of comparable quality and significance are kept merely in the Green Vault in Dresden and in the Museum degli Argenti in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.
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