

# WUNDERKAMMER OLBRICHT

Astonishment, discovery, understanding

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, princes, rulers, and scholars set up their Kunst- and Wunderkammer: collectors' rooms in which precious artworks (*artificialia*), rare phenomena of nature (*naturalia*), scientific instruments (*scientifica*), objects from strange worlds (*exotica*), and inexplicable items (*mirabilia*) were preserved. They served to demonstrate the wealth and power of the owner and reflected 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 800 visitors in 1648, which is a considerable number for the time. Not only nobles and diplomats travelled from far and wide to behold the Elector of Saxony's collection, but also artists, tradesmen, students, scholars, craftsmen, and even wedding parties. One of the most important *Kunstkammer* still exists today in Austria: Archduke Ferdinand II. from the Tyrol extended Castle Ambras above Innsbruck adding another complex of buildings to house his collections.

Berlin also had its *Kunstkammer*. Founded by the Elector Joachim II (ruled from 1535–1571), almost completely destroyed during the Thirty Years War, it was rebuilt by Elector Friedrich Wilhelm and eventually found its home under Friedrich III in the newly extended *Stadtschloss* (City Palace). Today the few remaining objects have been distributed around different museums that have become the successors to the chambers of arts and wonders, albeit in a thematically

differentiated way.

Our *Wunderkammer* reanimates this tradition in Berlin once more. It provides an insight into the past and creates the very thing it was able to do some two to five centuries ago: to transport the visitor into a realm of sheer astonishment — whether by means of the legendary unicorn, ultimately exposed as the tusk of a narwhal, an amber mirror flooded with light fashioned from the 'Gold of the North', the coconut chalice that came into the possession of Alexander von Humboldt and which is adorned with images of Brazilian cannibals, 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 200 from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, is unique and makes this *Wunderkammer* 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 Collectors Room. In the Baroque period, death was already being staged with a mixture of devotion, interest, and humour — itself perhaps a form of overcoming the fear of finality?

The scope for interpretation here is as broad as it is inscrutable. This is manifested in particular by an anatomical model dating from the second half of the 17th century featuring the laid out body of a pregnant woman whose organs and the foetus can be removed. On the one hand this reflects the medical interest of its

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 Audio guide for children (in German only)

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 coffin; the wealth of the owner — as transitory 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 — captivated by a small, 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 at the forefront 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 *Wunderkammer*.

The *Kunstkammer* Georg Laue, Munich, is responsible for the conception, the installation and supervision of the *Wunderkammer* Olbricht.



## Room I

- 1 Unicorn, tusk of a narwhale, 18th century, height with pedestal, 235 cm
- 2 Anatomical teaching models, Nuremberg, around 1680, Stephan Zick (1639–1715). The ivory models show the body of pregnant women and a man
- Anatomical models of skulls, ivory carved:
- Skull with fraction, Germany, 17th century
- Skull with akrocephalus (oxycephaly) on ebony pedestal, South Germany, 17th century
- Skull with trigonocephalus on ebony pedestal, South Germany, 17th century
- Skull with syphilis, on ebony pedestal, South Germany, 17th century
- 3 30 *Miniaturen*, Terry Taylor, 2009, oil on canvas
- 4 Courtly drinking vessel, Nuremberg, 1609 - 1632, Esaias zur Linden, silver cast, driven, hallmarked, chiselled and fire-gilt
- 5 Cube as polyhedron, 18th century, burl wood, engraved
- Turned feat with tray and can, Paris, around 1800, Boxwood turned
- Flora and Bacchus, Dresden, around 1720, circle of Balthasar Permoser (1651–1732), boxwood
- Pair of turned wooden cups in the original case, Nuremberg or Berchtesgaden, 17th century, limewood or nutwood, turned
- Case of a pipe with erotic illustrations, around 1700, wood, modern iron base
- Vanitas Pipe Bowl, Germany, 18th century, boxwood and silver
- Johanneskopf, Germany or Flanders, around 1600, boxwood
- Turning piece, 17th century, boxwood
- Small death, South German, around 1650, boxwood, provenance: Paris, collection Yves Saint Laurent
- Chronos with skull and sickle, German, around 1650, boxwood
- 6 Serpentine cup, Dresden / Zöblitz, around 1600, Serpentine, copper
- Minerva-spoon, Prag, around 1600, Jasper, gold, enamel, low-cut enamel
- Courtly amber mirror, Danzig, around 1650, Amber, ivory, mica, metal, faceted mirror
- Royal amber box in original case, Kassel, around 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 Museo degli Argenti in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.
- Big jasper cover bowl, Stuttgart, around 1620, Johann Georg Kobenhaupt, Jasper, silver plated
- 7 Amber rosary with skull, North East Germany, 18th century
- Folding shell spoon combined with fork, Netherlands, around 1650
- Chamois horn cup, Salzburg, around 1700, mounts by Matthias Unverdorben, city and maker's mark, silver fire-gilt
- Warhog tusk with gold filigree mounts, Goa or Lisbon, around 1580
- 4 Renaissance shell spoon, South Germany, around 1600, spiny oyster, cowrie shell, silver, fire-gilt and engraved
- Grimacing Pulcinella, around 1700, red coral, wooden pedestal
- Coral crucifix on alabaster pedestal with a cross made of scagliola, Trapani, South Italy, around 1720
- Amber altar for private devotion, Gdansk, around 1650
- 8 Rock crystal bowl of the Landgrave Carl of Hesse-Kassel, Kassel, 1688, 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.
- 5 This glass cabinet shows scientifica of different epochs:
- Eternal calendar in original leather etui, Germany, around 1680, silver, 5 sheets made of bone, case of gold-stamped leather, silk
- Ivory diptych sundial, Nuremberg, around 1565, Hans Tucher (1535–1615), signed
- Renaissance sundial, Munich, 1575, Ulrich Schniep, monogrammed
- Universal equinoctial ring dial, Nicholas Bion, Paris, 1685–1715, brass
- Model of a human skull, probably South Germany, 17th century, ivory carved
- Miniature model of a human skull, Japan, 17th century
- Clock with crucifixion in the original case, Augsburg, around 1620, master Nikolaus Schmidt the Elder (1550–1630), monogrammed
- Courtly hexagonal table clock with moon phases, Vilnius, 1651, master Jakob Gierke, monogrammed
- Pietra-Dura-Landscape, around 1600, hard rock: lapis lazuli, rhodochrosite, mountain crystal, agate, chrysolite, blood jasper, slate, frame: bronze fire-gilt
- Coral tree, South Germany, around 1600, coral, wood pedestal with original polychromy, around 46 cm
- Pocket globe, early 18th century, wood, fish skin, metal
- Ragged small death with hourglass, South Germany, around 1620, bronze, provenance: Paris, collection Yves Saint Laurent
- 6 Courtly travel hourglass, Venice, 17th century, silver, silver filigree, glass
- Ivory hourglass with its turned wooden case, South Germany, 17th century
- Hourglass with 4 flasks, Nuremberg, 17th century, punched brass, glass, Nuremberger maker's mark Pfeil
- 10 This glass cabinet shows naturalia and exotica from faraway countries:
- Black Amazone with Cigarillo, German, around 1835, oil on canvas
- Porcupine fish (Diodon), preparation, around 1800
- Tortoise (Testudinata), preparation, around 1800
- Viewing Stone I*, 2017, Hugo Wilson, terracotta and cortensteel
- 11 Rhinoceros Horn Cup, Nuremberg, around 1610, rhinoceros horn cut, silver cast, driven, chiselled and fire-gilt, city and maker's mark
- 12 This glass cabinet shows medical-historical objects from the 16th–19th century:
- Vanitas rosary, Germany, 17th century, ivory, ivory pearls turned, silver cord
- Box with anatomical theory of Dr Gall, France, around 1810, rootwood, tortoiseshell
- Big Vanitas skull, Germany, 17th century, ivory
- Model of a human skull, late 19th century, ivory, metal coil
- Sleeping mother with child, South Germany, around 1640, circle of Leonhard Kern (1588–1662), ivory
- Vanitas cane handle, South Germany, around 1740, ivory carved on a modern mountain crystal base

- Small death in coffin, Germany, 18th century, ivory, wood root, red velvet
- Miniature skull from a cherry stone with removable calotte, German, 19th century
-  8
- Small model of a skull with jaw, Germany, 17th century, ivory
- Monk and Death, South Germany, around 1740, limewood
-  11
- Male ivory skeleton, Germany, 19th century
- Twelve-part medical knife set with quiver, around 1600, mother-of-pearl, steel, leather hallmarked with gold
- Set of court surgical instruments, Germany or France, around 1600, provenance: Buckinghamshire, Mentmore Towers, collection of the 6th Earl of Rosebery
- 13 *Death and the cripple*, Mathew Weir, 2009, oil on canvas on wood
- 14 Monk and Death, South German, around 1520, limewood with original polychromy
- 15 Anatomical teaching models of a pregnant woman, an ear and an eye with an accompanying book, Nuremberg, around 1680, Stephan Zick (1639–1715)
- 16 Portrait of the universal scholar Giovanni Antonio Magini, Bologna, 1598, Francesco Apollodore, oil on canvas. The portrait shows the universal scholar Giovanni Antonio Magini (1555–1617) who belonged to the most prominent scientists of the Renaissance and received with his application for the chair of mathematics in Bologna the preference even before Galileo Galilei.
- 17 A unique collection of Janus heads of ivory, bone and boxwood, German and Franco-Flemish, 1520–1600. The big Janus heads were fixed at the end of the rosary, while the small ones formed the rosary beads. The standing figure “Death and Girl” is a work from the 19th century.
- 18 Madonna with child, around 1710, attributed to Ehr Gott Bernhard Bendl, ivory
- 19 Portrait of the sculptor Jean Thierry, Francois Vispré (1730–1790), oil on canvas
-  12
- 20 This glass cabinet shows different Memento Mori objects:
- Collection of boxes in coffin form, Germany, 1680–1780, milk glass, cherry wood and ebony
- Small death with hood, South Germany, 17th century, fruitwood, on a partially gilt and ebonised wood pedestal
- Vanitas cup, Augsburg, around 1700, enamel painting by Johann Aufenwerth (around 1659–1728), silver fire-gilt
- Seated elder woman, around 1525, pear wood
- Lying corpse, South Germany, around 1530, circle of the IP master, boxwood
- Memento Mori head, Mannheim, Paul Egell, around 1720, fruitwood
- Lying corpse, South Germany, around 1530, circle of Master IP, boxwood
- Memento Mori head, Mannheim, Paul Egell, around 1720, fruit wood
- Corall Jesus, late 17th century, (Woodpanel is dated later), attributed to Fra’ Matteo Bavera, coral, wood, copper, gold
- Wooden shrine with intarsia skulls, Spain or Italy, 17th century
- 21 Court cabinet with altar for private devotion, Augsburg, around 1610, ebony with ivory intarsia, paintings: oil on copper
- The Humboldt Chalice*, Dutch, 1648–1653, made for Johan Maurits van Nassau, owned by Alexander von Humboldt, coconut carved, silver, chased. The coconut is carved with scenes representing Brazilian cannibals.
- 22 *Studies into the Past*, Laurent Grasso, 2013, Oil on wood
- 23 Large Wunderkammer cupboard with collection objects of the 16th–21st century. The order is a reconstruction after the 1666 dated *Kunstammer* painting by Georg Hinz (around 1630–1688) in the Hamburger Kunsthalle.
-  13
- Modeled Skull, Melanesia, „Vanuatu“, Malakula Island, around 1900, bones, vegetable paste, natural color pigments
- Wendekopf as an end of rosary, Germany or Franko Flanders, 17th century, ivory
- Janus head with crown, French or German, around 1800, bone
- 24 Memento Mori Knife, North Germany, 1571, ivory, silver, steel. There is only one other identical knife, 1549, in the German Blade Museum in Solingen.
- The pendant in shape of a small coffin bears the inscription “ICH WERDE LEBENS / LANG MIT ZÄHREN / LLHZ / DEIN VIEL ZU LIEB / GEDECHNIS EHREN” (“I WILL HONOUR LIFE / LONG WITH TEARS / LLHZ / YOUR MEMORY FAR TOO DEAR”) and was manufactured for Ludwig IV von Hessen-Darmstadt in memory of his father, deceased 1661, landgrave Georg II von Hessen-Darmstadt. It also shows the initials of the client (“LLHZ”) and the deceased father (“G.II.L.Z.HF.Z.H.”).
- Janus head, South Germany, around 1600, served as a receptacle for so-called crab eyes in the Renaissance and protected the bearer from illnesses.
- Polychromed enamelled gold skull-shaped pendant, Germany, around 1630, enamel, gold, polychromed
- Memento-Mori pendant of the Dukes of Baden-Baden, Germany, around 1620, gold, enamel
- Gold ring with small death and hourglass, England, around 1720, gold, enamel, crystal insert with skull intarsia
- Gold ring with skull, Germany, around 1700, gold, enamel, diamonds
- Courtly ivory cabinet, Augsburg, around 1650, circle of Melchior Baumgartner (1621–1686). The drawer fronts and folding doors of the cabinet are adorned with 19 enamel paintings which image the complete passion of Christ. Comparable pieces of furniture have remained only in the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, on castle Skokloster in Sweden, and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.
-  14
- 25 St. Sebastian, around 1760, Veit Grauppensberg, ivory, carved
- Ivory statuettes of boys with skull, snake and hourglass, Germany or Flanders, around 1720
- Sleeping Jesus, Spain, 17th century, wood, with original polychromy
-  15
- Renaissance-Vanitas-automatic-clock, around 1600, enclosure: bronze, copper fire-gilt, base: ebony, clockwork: iron, brass, clockface: silver
- 26 *Melancholy-fugacity of time*, Antwerp, around 1580, Frans Pourbus the Elder (1545–1581), oil on canvas. The naked Putto is represented with hourglass and skull as attributes of vanitas. Also the animals refer to the Christian doctrine of salvation.

#### In the corridor

- 27 Relief with descent of the cross, Germany 17th century, ivory, wooden pedestal

- 28 Distorting mirror, France, around 1900, wood, mirror glass
- 29 Large magnificent trophy, Venice or Façon de Venise, around 1600  
Cup, Façon de Venise, Netherlands, Antwerp, end of 16th century  
Small cylindrical beaker, Germany, end of 16th–mid 17th century
- 30 Bread, a Carafe of Wine, an upturned 'Roemer' and a Crayfish on a Plate, ca. 1640, Sebastian Stoskopff, Oil on canvas
- 31 *Bernard Amos, Jonathan Nobles, Martin Vegas*, Still lifes by Mat Collishaw, 2011, framed C-prints
- Room II**
- 32 *Adam and Eve in paradise with the forbidden fruits*, Jan Brueghel the younger, 17th century, Oil on copper
- 33 *The same but silver*, Jake & Dinos Chapman, 2007, silver  
Pair of Small Deaths, Italy, around 1600, boxwood, bases with mirror glass  
Coco de mer, Indo-Portuguese, 17th century, seychelles-nut (*Lodoicea Seychellarum*) with carvings
- 34 St. Sebastian, attributed to Leonhard Kern, c. 1620, ivory, wooden pedestal  
Ivory Tankard with wise and foolish Maidens, Schwäbisch Hall, around 1650, Leonhard Kern, ivory, silver  
Four Contrefait Spheres, 18th and 19th century, wood and ivory, turned  
Wonder Sphere, China, Canton, Qing dynasty, 18th century, turned and carved ivory  
 16  
*Untitled (Sphere)*, Alastair Mackie, 2009, mouse skulls, glass, wood
- 35 not on display until 18.08.2019, *Studies into the past – Eclipse*, Laurent Grasso (1972, France), 2011, animal adhesive, resin, boiled oil and pigments on oak panel
- 36 Lanna Cabinet, by Adam Eck, Eger, around 1640, from the collection of the Baron of Lanna, pinewood, ebonised pearwood veneer, relief intarsia: native woods partly stained, brass  
Saint Michael defeats the devil, southern Italy, around 1700, ivory
- 37 Two baroque altars for private devotion, coral, mother-of-pearl, and ivory, Italy and South Germany
- 38 Micro-carving of a walnut, Renaissance pendant, crab's eye holder and pomander, North Germany or Denmark, around 1650, walnut, carved, fire-gilt
- 39 Bezoar stone with silver capsule, Indo-Portuguese, Goa, around 1700, Bezoar (Pedra Cordial), silver engraved and pierced  
Musselmann, Germany, 18th century, various shells, snails, mother-of-pearl plaques, wood core  
Nut box with erotic representations, probably Dutch, around 1620, coquilla nut carved, polished and carved stag horn  
Nut flacon used at court, around 1680, coquilla nut, turned and carved, wood  
Nautilus cup used at court, goldsmith work, around 1670, black engravings around 1660, silver, partially fire-gilt, chased, engraved, worked in repoussé, polished nautilus shell (*nautilus pompilius*), partially carved, engraved and blackened  
Kunstkammer tortoise, around 1620, shell of an Indian tortoise, silver, fire-gilt, tortoise shell  
Tortoise powder bottle, Netherlands, around 1680  
Turbo-snail powder horn, 17th century, Gujarat  
Rayskin Powder Horn, Ottoman, 17th Century, Rayskin, bone, ivory, wood core, leather, iron  
Buffalo horn powder bottle, Ottoman, 17th century, buffalo horn carved, bone partially painted, iron
- 40 Preparation of a leopard with fluorescent eyes
- 41 *Beytrag zur Naturgeschichte der Vögel (or 'On the Natural History of Birds')*, Joachim Johann Nepmuk Spalowsky, 1791–1792, 2nd, 3rd, 4th vol., with large hand-coloured plates metal
- 42 Mounted specimen of a Nile crocodile from a historical collection of natural curiosities, 19th century, 4.50 m
- 43 Rhino trophy, around 1920  
Rhinoceros horn chalice, Augsburg, 1644–1647, Hans Leucker (active in Augsburg 1641–1666)  
Emu-egg, Indo-Portuguese, probably Goa, 17th century, emu egg, silver partially gilded  
Complete set of pieces of straw intarsia, around 1720, wood core, straw partially dyed, engraved and inlaid  
Seychelles Cup, Indo-Portuguese, Goa, 17th century
- 44 Death's head pocket watch, around 1790, Jean-Antoine Lépine, gold, enamel, rose-cut diamonds. Active in Paris in the late 18th century, Lépine was one of the most celebrated watchmakers. Louis XVI and Napoleon were among his patrons. Around 1770, Lépine invented a new clock mechanism which allowed the production of radically smaller pocket watches than before.
- 45 Siren, Japanese, Edo period, around 1800, skin of a fish, modelling material, genuine teeth and claws
- 46 A massive Vunikau rooth club, Fiji Islands, around 1800
- 47 The "ruler's staff of King David", one of the wonders related in the Bible. A gift presented to the Prague court by Johann Graf Zrinyi (1565–1612), Aulic Councillor of the Holy Roman Empire. Large Vunikau club (Vunikau Vulubuli Vonotabua), Polynesia, Fiji Islands, second half 15th century, fire-gilt mount: royal workshops of Prague, dated 1608 with original case
- 48 *Self-Portrait as Great Scout Leader*, Julie Heffernan, 1998, oil on canvas
- 49 Dipsochelys, Seychelles
- 50 Skull of a walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*)
- 51 *Gazelle (Pamphile)*, Gitte Schäfer, 2011, glass, turtleshell, metal
- 52 This glass cabinet is dedicated to precious art works made for a Renaissance and Baroque treasury of various exotic materials:  
Chinese soapstone jug, Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Kangxi era (1666-1722), around 1670, mounting: probably French around 1780, yellow marbled marbled soapstone (steatite), bronze fire-gilt  
Bowl with fighting sea monsters and Andromeda, 17th century (Act probably later), circle of Georg Pfründt, narwhale and ivory set in gilded silver, nude with intarsia  
Windmill cup, Façon de Venise, Antwerp, 1590, Antwerp glassworks of the Venetian master Ambrosio Mongardo, silver plating partly fire-gilded  
Courtly Coconut Chalice representing Diana from Actaeon, Germany or Switzerland, around 1600, coconut, copper
- 53 *Tapir*, 2016, Hugo Wilson, oil on panel