

-Press release-

Researching, discovering, understanding – the Wunderkammer Olbricht

A voyage of discovery with Alexander von Humboldt

me Collectors Room Berlin / Olbricht Foundation
Auguststrasse 68, 10117 Berlin, Germany
Opening hours: Wed – Mon, noon – 6 p.m.

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On the occasion of the Humboldt Year, me Collectors Room Berlin has developed a scavenger hunt through the city, which guides participants to important places in Humboldt's life. There will also be workshops for children and youth as well as a new video guide with Thomas Olbricht (collector) and Georg Laue (curator), guiding visitors through the Wunderkammer, which counts the Humboldt Cup and Humboldt-related stamps among its holdings.

A scientist, anthropologist and historian, Alexander von Humboldt (14 Sep 1769 – 6 May 1859) made a great impression on the world even during his lifetime. He was born in Berlin, travelled widely and, in 1827, settled permanently in his home city. While he continued to embark on explorations of the new and unknown, he was nevertheless firmly rooted in the capital city; after all, 'Alexander von Humboldt belongs in Berlin (...). But he also belongs to the world.'¹

Scavenger hunt

Participants will have the opportunity explore – on foot or by bicycle – **original locations that were central in the life and work of Alexander von Humboldt**. In the process, they will learn details from stories told about him and trace his everyday paths. The scavenger hunt is free of charge and you can download the trail of clues under www.me-berlin.com. You may also pick it up at the counter at me Collectors Room Berlin.

The final destination in the hunt is the **Wunderkammer Olbricht**. This is where you will find not only **stamps**, which show Alexander von Humboldt or animals and plants he discovered, but also the **Humboldt Cup**, which was commissioned in the mid-seventeenth century by Johann Moritz of Nassau, Governor-General of Dutch Brazil; it came into the possession of Alexander von Humboldt in 1795 (see figure).

¹ Fischer, Ernst Peter, *Noch wichtiger als Wissen ist Phantasie. Die 50 besten Erkenntnisse der Wissenschaft von Galilei bis Einstein*, 3rd edition, Munich, 2016, p. 185.

‘Cabinets of art and curiosities’ first arose during the late Renaissance and Baroque periods. They were private exhibition spaces, where precious artworks (artificialia), rare phenomena of nature (naturalia), scientific instruments (scientifica), objects from strange worlds (exotica) and inexplicable items (mirabilia) were preserved. Encyclopaedic in nature, ‘Cabinets of art and curiosities’ were designed as miniature depictions of the world that would illustrate the position of mankind in the universe. They were reflections of both the natural philosophy of the early modern period and the categories of knowledge underlying the worldview at the time. The fact that this holistic understanding goes back this far and was taken up by researchers such as Humboldt, leading to the three pillars being developed further to read *Researching, discovering, understanding*, is a testimony to the living currency of the ‘cabinets of art and curiosities’.

Workshops for children and youth

For kindergarten and school groups there will be **workshops on the subject of ‘Wunderkammer and Humboldt’**. The children set off to do field work within the Wunderkammer so as to, in accordance with Humboldt’s holistic understanding of nature, delve into the most diverse areas. In the process they discover the Humboldt Cup, interesting measuring instruments, exotic plants and other unusual organic forms, exploring the origins and materiality of these objects. In the hands-on part, the children and youth develop their own imaginary plant and learn an archaeological drawing technique.

Video tour

With the new **video tour**, Thomas Olbricht and Georg Laue (Kunstammer Georg Laue) lead visitors through the Wunderkammer Olbricht. They not only provide insights into the concept of the ‘cabinets of art and curiosities’ but also give background information about selected objects and highlights.

Press contact

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