

Kunstkammer: Early Modern Art and Curiosity Cabinets in the Holy Roman Empire. Jeffrey Chipps Smith.

London: Reaktion Books, 2022. 320 pp. £35.

Leafing through Jeffrey Chipps Smith's book about *kunstkammern* approximates being in those enriched collections of the world's wondrous material manifestations in nature and from human hands. Each page brings copious revelations of these spaces, the people who organized and enjoyed them, and the objects they contained. It is illustrated beautifully. Smith's text is unassuming, vividly descriptive, and incisive.

Collectively, *kunstkammern* and their variants—*wunderkammern*, *kunst-und-wunderkammern*, and Italian *studioli*—comprise a seminal category of production. The sixteenth-century rise of such spaces coincided with global conquest, humanism's interest in ancient texts, print's explosion, the adjacent rise of treatises codifying knowledge of all sorts, and the development of spaces dedicated to increasingly programmatic collections and displays of art, especially antiquities. Central to these developments around organizing a burgeoning knowledge base, the *kunstkammer* ultimately begat a range of modern institutions: locally and regionally scoped archives and museums of natural and human history, libraries, specialized and encyclopedic art museums, and art galleries. Thus, the *kunstkammer* should enjoy centrality in scholarly discourse. However, the study of *kunstkammern* has remained underdeveloped. Until this book's publication, the field's biggest lack was a comprehensive, accessible survey of the most important *kunstkammern* in Northern Europe. With his customary mastery of primary and secondary sources, Jeffrey Chipps Smith has amply filled that void.

Smith frames his book with an introduction addressing how these spaces developed. The ruling families who formed the earliest *kunstkammern* in the 1550s drew on their preexisting collections, which they self-consciously supplemented with aggressive acquisitiveness. The next two chapters describe theories of collecting and the *kunst-kammer's* precedents across Europe, respectively. In less capable hands, chapter 1's assessment of theories on the organization of knowledge in treatises by Samuel Quiccheberg (*Inscriptiones*, 1565) and Gabriel Kaltemarckt (*Bedencken*, 1587) would mislead readers into thinking that such publications determined early collection and display practices. However, little evidence supports such relations. While contextualizing and describing these theories, Smith fastidiously cautions against positing their influence on specific collections (even despite Quiccheberg's role at Schloss Ambras as Archduke Ferdinand II's advisor). Chapter 2's assessment of *studioli* and other early private collections emphasizes their organic growth into gathering places for learning and discourse.

The core of Smith's book presents studies of four major *kunstkammern* in Munich, Schloss Ambras, Dresden, and Prague. Each receives its own chapter-length assessment, methodically providing context, content, and an account of the collection's fate. A chapter on smaller *kunstkammern* in Graz, Stuttgart, and Kassel follows. Smith states that "the effect [of these abundant collections] is to overwhelm"; accordingly, his text



in these chapters is loaded with serial constructions as he describes each's contents. His "tour" of the Wittelsbach *kunstkammer* in Munich, for example, is pages long. We round each corner of the building's corridors to inspect table after table bearing wonderous objects. Readers may tire of plowing through such lists, all of which may begin to seem similar. However, this technique embodies the *kunstkammer's* copiousness and prompts the associative thinking that made them such stimulating venues for considering relations between things. The book's penultimate chapter assesses the elaborate writing cabinets that formed the centerpieces of so many of these prestigious collections. Here, Phillip Hainhofer emerges as a major maker of such objects. For Philipp II of Pommer-Stettin's cabinet, Hainhofer marshaled the talents of sixteen artisans. With its complex configuration of over three hundred drawers for smaller objects of wonder, Hainhofer's cabinet could speak to the collection it inhabited, suggesting his nuanced understanding of the *kunstkammer's* discursive function for its users.

Smith raises fruitful questions beyond his book's purview. His conclusion traces the *kunstkammer's* modern afterlife, highlighting its endurance in, for example, the Walters Art Museum's *kunstkammer* display of its early modern holdings. However, a holistic, critical assessment of the *kunstkammer's* importance for Holy Roman imperial ambition remains underdeveloped, and the *kunstkammer* does not receive comment reflecting an awareness of the discipline's recent global turn. Similarly, Smith provides a detailed description of a painting portraying the presentation of Hainhofer's writing cabinet to Phillip II, but pictures of *kunstkammern*—manipulations aggrandizing the collector's knowledge and power—require more integration with how *kunstkammern* functioned. Doubtless, however, future scholars will benefit from this book's abundance of clear, accessible knowledge. One looks forward to their explorations of the lines of inquiry Smith has so generously laid out.

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Gendered Touch: Women, Men and Knowledge-Making in Early Modern Europe.
Francesca Antonelli, Antonella Romano, and Paolo Savoia, eds.
Leiden: Brill, 2022. xiv + 306 pp. \$191.

This fascinating collection of essays examines how knowledge-making during the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe was gendered and impacted by changing representations of gender. Another key topic is how knowledge was produced and disseminated among men, women, and various groups in early modern European society. In choosing the title *Gendered Touch*, the editors are unequivocal in their view that "the essays . . . make no sharp distinction