

EARLY EUROPEAN MUSEUMS

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE OF EARLY UNIVERSAL MUSEUMS ESTABLISHED BY PETER THE GREAT MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY (KUNSTKAMERA) (SAINT PETERSBURG, RUSSIA), FRANCKESCHE STIFTUNGEN (HALLE, GERMANY) AND TEYLER'S MUSEUM (HAARLEM, THE NETHERLANDS) ON 13 OCTOBER 2020

The Alliance of Early Universal Museums (AEUM), initiated jointly by Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Kunstkamera (St. Petersburg, Russia), Franckesche Stiftungen (Halle, Germany) and Teyler's Museum (Haarlem, Netherlands), aims to revitalize the traditional values of universality, encyclopedism and enlightenment in museum epistemology and practice.

Many early European museums—including the three AEUM founders—embody the matrix of a holistic approach that aimed to promote systematic knowledge and humanistic values as governing principles for research, publication and display.

Such universal museums, often coexisting with libraries, universities, or academies, embraced primarily the concept of *theatrum mundi*—the ‘theatre of the world’, cross out the universe in a cabinet, the macrocosm in the microcosm—with the aim of pursuing a better understanding of mankind and its place in the (natural) world.

The Alliance aims to foster the spirit of universality, and to privilege the primacy of original material in authentic interiors and buildings. Present day debates about, for example inclusiveness and colonialism, invite a fresh and critical look at precisely this group of museums and their relevance for society today.

Cooperation between the present-day curators of these early universal museums will open up new research horizons based on long-established principles, providing keys to the study of museum histories, museological theories and the historical trajectories of collections and objects.

Old-established museums embody the functions of both preserving antiquarian and early scientific collections and of engendering new interests. The Alliance's agenda foresees the sharing of research as well as exhibitions (both actual and virtual), for the general public and for specialized audiences.

The AEUM welcomes further institutional members and would be interested in contacting experts and researchers in our field of interest.