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**CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES — TRACING THE ELUSIVE
AFTERLIFE OF A CONCEPT: FROM THE THEATRE
OF THE WORLD TO THE OMNIUM-GATHERUM**

ABSTRACT. Since the English language lacks an adequate translation of the terms *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*—imbued as they are with both particular conceptual and chronological implications—Anglophone historians have tended simply to appropriate them. Reference to the ‘cabinet of curiosities’ may serve in certain circumstances as an appropriate translation, but continuing use of this term from the seventeenth century to the present day has brought with it new connotations that summon up entirely different meanings. Although such semantic drift is a normal feature of linguistic development, it poses difficulties of interpretation when applied to the study of museums over the several centuries of their development. A degree of prudence is called for in using the term in museological literature, so that its implications within a given context remain clear.

KEY WORDS: *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*, cabinet of curiosities, history of collecting

УДК 069.01

DOI 10.31250/2618-8619-2020-4(10)-8-19

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Language has a habit of evolving according to its own lights, a process in which everyday usage generally triumphs over all attempts at resistance to change. The editor of *The Times* regularly receives letters from readers offended at one perceived outrage or another committed against ‘standard English’; from time to time the newspaper even publishes a column in which one of its senior journalists dissects the various claims made for ultimate authority—usually concluding, with commendable pragmatism, that it is current usage rather than historical precedent that ultimately determines acceptability. In France the Académie Française has, since the days of Cardinal Richelieu, sought to regulate standards for the French language, but—whatever its impact on formal communication—the academy’s pronouncements have little impact on the vibrant language of everyday speech, where new norms emerge on a daily basis; some of these prove ephemeral, while others enter into more common usage and begin their own linguistic journeys.

On the matter of the cabinet of curiosities, it is easy to find oneself aligned on one occasion with the febrile correspondents of *The Times* and on another with the conservative arbiters *de l’Académie*. In the arena of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century studies, historians have laboured hard to ascribe to the concept an agreed set of meanings and commonly recognized governing principles, in marked contrast to present-day usage in which the term conjures up a multiplicity of different attributes—most of them pejorative: all that is agreed nowadays is the implication of miscellaneity and the indiscriminate nature of the assemblage being described, lacking all structure, form, or meaning—what in English might be called (in a quasi-Latin construct, itself of sixteenth-century origin) an *omnium-gatherum*.

Of course there are occasions when either alternative may be quite appropriately implied, but in the narrow field of the history of collections it becomes important for the writer to make discriminating use of the term and for the reader to be aware of the particular interpretation that is intended. An illustration will serve to highlight the difficulties.

THE INDIA MUSEUM

My own recent research has been focused on the museum of the East India Company in London¹, the impetus for which emerged a year or two either side of 1800; the collection was transferred in 1858 to the care of the India Office, a department of state created to assume control of the government of British India from the Company, and the collections were dispersed in 1879. In his application for the post of the Company’s first librarian and curator of the museum, Charles Wilkins (1749–1836, knighted 1833) submitted an outline of what, in his opinion, ‘the Museum, to be useful, as well as ornamental, should principally consist’; duly impressed by what they read, the directors of the Company invited Wilkins to submit a more detailed document that effectively formed the museum’s founding manifesto. Wilkins envisaged three principal divisions:

A Cabinet of Natural Productions, which ‘should comprehend chiefly such animals, parts of animals, or produce of animals, as are objects of commerce’; Vegetable Productions, notably ‘trees and plants whose produce is an article of commerce’, as well as dyes and gums, oils and resins; and mineral productions, including such ‘ores, stones, earths, and clays as might be useful in our manufactures’.

Artificial Productions, including ‘samples of all the manufactures of Asia’, including silks and cottons, models of the various machines and tools used in manufactures, implements of husbandry and ‘instruments used in their sciences, mathematical, astronomical, musical, etc.’

Miscellaneous Articles, ‘To consist of curiosities chiefly presents, and generally such things as cannot conveniently be classed under any of the former heads’ (Desmond 1982: 8–10).

¹ For extended accounts of the India Museum see (Desmond 1982) and (MacGregor 2018).

The summary provided here obscures the extent to which the first two categories (extensively detailed in Wilkins's text) were intended to outweigh in importance the third, although the wording leaves no doubt as to the subordinate importance envisaged for the miscellanea. It should be said, however, that the personal ornaments, clothing, weapons, religious figures, woodwork, metalwork, ivory carvings and pottery that accumulated under this heading did much to establish the reputation of the museum as the most extensive collection of its kind—encyclopaedic in the true sense.²

The desirable characteristics of the institution envisioned by Wilkins encapsulate perfectly the late Enlightenment concept of what a museum might be—rational, orderly, informative and, above all, 'useful'. Its closest forerunner in London lay in the collection assembled by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, a body whose declared mission was to 'embolden enterprise, enlarge science, refine art, improve our manufacturers and extend our commerce'; the society's museum collection, consisting largely of models and materials of industry and commerce, was fed principally by items contributed to regular annual exhibitions, and by 1783 its catalogue listed 165 such exhibits—a long way short of the East India Company's museum at its peak, although comparable in its purposeful programme. While these institutions would have identified their respective primary constituencies as, on the one hand, the industrial engineering and agricultural communities and, on the other, the mercantile classes—especially those engaged with textiles but also with dyestuffs, drugs and other commodities—both museums were openly accessible to the public throughout their existence.

From its inception, the India Museum (to give the East India Company's collection the name by which it came to be known in the course of the 1800s) followed to a large degree the outlines drawn up by Wilkins (Figs. 1–2). In terms of sheer bulk, the influx of new material was dominated by contributions from the Company's naturalists, employed in surveying the natural resources of India and determining their potential for exploitation³. Administrators, diplomats and commercial employees sent not only manufactured goods, including decorative metalwork, woodwork, hardstones and textiles, but also examples of the tools and implements used in their processing and manufacture, as well as models to illustrate their operation. The miscellaneous material in Wilkins's third category proved more attractive to individual donors than he had anticipated—just as it held particular appeal to everyday visitors to the museum—with the result that trophies of military campaigns, items associated with famed (or notorious) personalities and illustrations of the unfamiliar dress, ornament, weaponry and religions of the inhabitants of India and its immediate neighbours became increasingly numerous. The gradual expansion of this 'miscellaneous' element in the collections beyond the very subsidiary role envisaged by Wilkins may indeed have been influenced more by the tastes of the visiting public than by any deliberate change in collecting policy on the part of the Company. It seems inevitable that exposure to this material will to some extent have reinforced any colonialist preconceptions that visitors might have brought with them⁴, but despite its creation at the heart of perhaps the most overtly colonialist body the world has ever seen (and despite the ready assumption of some modern historians that it must have been so), there is little

² The term 'encyclopaedic' is unfortunately imbued with as many meanings as 'curiosity'. The India Museum certainly was not conceived in the universalist image of the *Kunstammer*, but it undoubtedly did see its mission in terms of providing a comprehensive and exhaustive survey of Indian material culture (and, by association, the human population) as well as the natural resources of the sub-continent. In recent years, the epithet 'universal museum' has made an appearance (or rather re-appearance, since it too is also commonly applied to collections of the *Kunstammer* variety), but one can see an equally fraught future for it: the British Museum, for example, proclaims itself a universal museum, sheltering impartially the material culture of the whole world, but critics detect in the construct an elaborate sleight of hand, designed to frustrate attempts at cultural repatriation. See, for example, <http://www.elginism.com/similar-cases/the-british-museum-and-the-universal-museum/20080712/1180/> (last visited 05.11.2020).

³ See, for example, (Sclater 1873), (Moore 1982), (Desmond 1992).

⁴ Perhaps the most overt example of such a pre-formed colonialist opinion appears in the pages of the *Sea-Pie* (1842): '[Amongst the many repositories of London] there is one, which, sharing in the intention and merit of the rest, possesses in addition a peculiar claim upon the best regards of British visitors; one, too, which is more truly National than from its having been founded by Britons, and stored by their exertions . . . We here speak of a repository which is National, inasmuch as it owes its origin to national character, national employment, and national prosperity; and in which every article, whatever may be its intrinsic value in itself, stands in relation to a series of incidents that successively disclosed the national character—and gave to the valour and sagacity of a company of British traders, the subjugation of extensive kingdoms, and the consolidation of a mighty empire . . .' These were not sentiments engendered or promoted within the museum itself.

evidence that the museum itself functioned as a site for the nurturing such views⁵. On the other hand, the continuing scientific work that lay at the heart of the museum is evidenced by the publication of a series of catalogues on the natural history collections in particular: these included volumes on plants (1828), mammals (1851) and birds (two volumes, 1854–8)—a range of systematic surveys that compares favourably with any other institution of the age.

By mid-century the museum's primary purpose remained intact and was brought into focus by the involvement of John Forbes Royle (1798–1858), a former Company naturalist in India, subsequently appointed professor of materia medica at King's College, who became closely associated with the work of the museum. Largely at Royle's initiative, the East India Company would emerge as the dominant contributor to the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held in the specially constructed Crystal Palace in London in 1851⁶. Although conceived on a vastly different scale, the commercial ambitions of the Great Exhibition were very much in line with those of the more modest India Museum, which would benefit materially from exhibits acquired specifically for display (or in some instances purchased after the event), not only at the 1851 exhibition but in the series of international exhibitions of similar character that took place in Europe and beyond in the following decades. This continuing association not only demonstrated the essential survival of the India Museum's original aims but positively reinforced them.

The year 1857 saw widespread rebellion in India, a disaster that almost cost Britain its foothold in the sub-continent. A large part of the blame for this debacle was laid at the door of the East India Company, which found itself deprived in the following year of the wide political as well as commercial privileges it had exercised in India. A new department of state, the India Office, was created to exercise control over not only the vast expanse of empire but also (quite incidentally) the collections of the India Museum. The former Company headquarters were promptly demolished; in the course of the following twenty years the contents of the museum were removed to a succession of less-than-satisfactory venues (see below). Any thought that the momentous events of the Rebellion and its subsequent suppression might have been registered in the displays were certainly lost in these upheavals, but the practical functions of the museum continued to be performed—and indeed were considerably expanded—under a new India Office appointee, John Forbes Watson (1827–1892), designated Reporter on the Products of India. The mission of the collection was now restated in trenchant terms: it was

*...not a mere museum of curiosity, nor even primarily a museum intended for the advancement of science, but the reservoir, so to speak, that supplies power to the machinery created for the purpose of developing the resources of India, and promoting trade between the Eastern and Western empires of Her Majesty, to the great advantage of both*⁷.

Far from functioning as a mere static repository, the museum was now given an increasingly dynamic role in promoting direct commercial engagement between producers, suppliers and manufacturers in India and in Britain, a development viewed by Forbes Watson as wholly desirable. He set about his mission with enormous energy: perhaps his most ambitious exercise in public engagement involved the compiling and distribution of 20 sets of albums, 18 albums in a set, each containing some 700 samples of Indian textiles that were distributed to British manufacturing centres with the intention of educating producers in the precise needs and tastes of Indian consumers—some of the samples cut from otherwise intact textiles, garments and furnishing fabrics within the museum's own collection (Forbes Watson 1866). He also constructed a number of 'mobile museums'—stands designed for wide circulation, each

⁵ Two of the most famous items in the collection—'Tipu's Tiger', seized at the capture of Tipu Sultan's capital at Seringapatam in Mysore in 1799, and Ranjit Singh's throne, taken at the annexation of the Punjab in 1849—undoubtedly must have radiated powerful messages of British supremacy; there were other such souvenirs, but they projected no coherent propaganda message.

⁶ Royle's volume on *The Arts and Manufactures of India* (1852), published by the Society of Arts, was based on the contributions to that field made at the Great Exhibition.

⁷ British Library, IOR, L/SUR/6/3 Memorandum to the Duke of Argyll, 13 February 1869.

holding numbers of glazed frames displaying expositions of specimens and explanatory texts on textile and other industries in India that would repay exploitation by British manufacturers (see Driver and Ashmore 2010). Surely there can never have been another institution calling itself a museum that engaged in such an extraordinarily direct manner with commerce and industry, with the sole aim of boosting trade.

Even under the commercial bias of Forbes Watson's regime, however, the India Museum continued to function to some degree as a platform for wider interest in the representation of India. It was significantly involved, for example, in the emergence of ethnography as a scholarly field of interest in Britain—partly, it should be acknowledged, in the course of exploring the human populations of the sub-continent alongside its topographical outlines and its natural resources. It was also an early proponent of the use of photography as a recording medium in the fields of architecture and archaeology (as well as ethnology), and it continued to sponsor the publication of academic tracts such as Thomas Horsfield and Frederic Moore's *Catalogue of Lepidopterous Insects* (2 volumes, 1857; 1858-1859), Forbes Watson and John Kaye's *The People of India* (8 volumes, 1868–1875) and James Fergusson's *Tree and Serpent Worship* (1873), as well as a number of transcriptions and translations of historical texts from its archives.

The account given here, therefore, speaks of the India Museum as an institution imbued with a clear sense of purpose, one that intensified with time even while the collections suffered a series of disruptive moves. With the loss of the East India Company's headquarters building, the collections were transferred first from 1858 to 1869 to Fife House (Fig. 3), a former residence in Whitehall, a building judged 'not ... well adapted for the purposes of a museum, [though] it may serve as a temporary depôt'; then from 1869 to 1874 they occupied the upper floor of the newly built India Office (reached by means of 140 steps), described by one visitor as 'a maze of sky-lit chambers and passages, which seem to have been originally contrived, partly for astronomical observations and partly for the growth of tropical plants'⁸; after which matters improved for a time when accommodation was found in 1874 in a more spacious, purpose-built exhibition hall at South Kensington, before the collections were definitively dispersed in 1879. With three somewhat chaotic moves in thirty years, the coherence of the displays undoubtedly suffered, although strikingly it was also during this same period that Forbes Watson formulated its more outward-looking mercantile role with an almost evangelical zeal.

However, even though Queen Victoria had been proclaimed Empress of India in 1877, symbolizing the very apotheosis of Britain's imperial ambitions, the museum, which had begun under a mercantile company before being inherited by a department of state, was by now regarded as an irrelevant and costly luxury by the political establishment—surely supporting the view presented here that any propaganda role it may have performed was of minimal importance. Henceforth the collections were dispersed according to their relevance to the academic disciplinary specializations that had already begun to take form by this period. Amongst the scientific collections, the botanical material went to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, zoology to the appropriate department of the British Museum (already in the process of institutional separation into what is now the Natural History Museum), and geology to the Museum of Practical Geology. At each of these the specimens were readily absorbed into the appropriate systematic collections, most strikingly at Kew, where they made a particular contribution to the newly established Museum of Economic Botany—again underlining the practical, utilitarian and scientific basis of the India Museum's mission.

Amongst the artefacts, antiquities and ethnographic material for the most part went to the British Museum, where they made a prominent contribution to the developing Indian collections, while arts and crafts went mostly to the South Kensington Museum (renamed in 1899 the Victoria and Albert Museum), an institution founded in the aftermath of the Great Exhibition under the Department of Science and Art, a government body with a particular mission to improve the practice of commercial and industrial art. An Indian Department had already been created there before the influx of East India Company material, and although the absorption of over 20,000 new specimens presented an enormous challenge to the curators, they succeeded in compiling a complete listing, which remains a basis for current research.

⁸ *The Times*, 5 May 1874.

CURIOSITY AND THE INDIA MUSEUM

Having traced the trajectory of the India Museum from beginning to end, its reception amongst scholars of our own era may now be addressed—particularly in relation to perceptions of its contents and purpose. My attention was caught by a statement made by the much-respected author Carol Breckenridge, who characterized it thus (Breckenridge 1989: 199): ‘This Oriental repository (in effect a wonder cabinet) staged objects without framing them visually, conceptually, or theoretically’. In support of her characterization she cites a paper by James Bunn in which he writes (this time without specific reference to the India Museum) of a lamentable ‘trader’s taste for collecting odds and ends of individual worth, without consideration of a unifying principle’ (Bunn 1980: 304). If my own broad account of the museum as offered above is accepted as having any validity, it becomes difficult to find any common ground it might share with the concept of the ‘wonder cabinet’—perhaps the closest the English language comes to the *Wunderkammer*—as proposed by Professor Breckenridge. The matter is not one of semantic interest only, for surely those now encountering the India Museum through this school of writing will be seriously misled by its characterization as little more than a latter-day cabinet of curiosities—reproducing the outward diversity of the *Wunderkammer* but bereft of any philosophical framework as had determined the contents and arrangement of the typical sixteenth- or seventeenth-century collection and denied any other significance.

One might take further issue. Far from lacking a conceptual framework, by the time the East India Company relinquished control, the museum had functioned for over half a century broadly according to the programme devised by Wilkins. As mentioned above, the miscellaneous element had expanded during that time, largely due to private donations rather than by design, while the premises made available for the collection had expanded piecemeal over several floors at East India House (the Company’s headquarters) during the last twenty years of the museum’s existence there; as a result, it would have been all too easy to gain an impression of random growth that was not wholly merited. Neither would it be accurate to conclude that no thought was given to the visual dimensions of the displays: one visitor in 1858 (on the eve of the museum’s closure on those premises), having indeed observed that ‘it is not easy at one view to acquire anything like a correct notion of the whole, much less to note every object worthy of observation’, none the less went on to find himself—even in one of the communicating lobbies—‘in the presence of an exhibition of the choicest works of Indian skill of all kinds’; he waxes lyrical at the display case occupied by arms and armour: ‘[t]hese are, nearly one and all, of the most magnificent and costly description, being inlaid or overlaid with ornaments of pure gold, and glittering here and there with precious gems ...’; later he finds ‘inclosed in a number of glass-cases ... a fine collection of gems, jewels, and personal ornaments, together with articles in silver and gold of the choicest kind’; this was followed by ‘a department in which [is] a dazzling exhibition of female garniture and dresses, of gold-embroidered cloaks and head-dresses, of muslins bearing patterns printed in gold ...’, etc. etc.—all seeming to speak of a series of thoughtfully composed thematic installations⁹. From 1843 another commentator recommended dispensing with the services of the attendant and his unpleasant practice of ‘hurrying the spectator from one thing to another as fast as the names of them can be run over’, and simply wandering through the displays at will, since ‘most of the curiosities here are labelled, [and] therefore this plan is attended with little inconvenience’ (Old Humphrey’s Walks in London 1843: 147–148)¹⁰.

Given the thrust of the present argument, the appearance in the latter passage of the term ‘curiosities’ demands some comment. One thing that is immediately clear is that the author uses it in a totally neutral sense (as Wilkins himself had in his initial manifesto), neither with the esoteric overtones of the Renaissance nor yet with the pejorative implications it would later acquire, representing an intermediate

⁹ *The Leisure Hour* 7, 1858: 469–73.

¹⁰ Admittedly, fifteen years later another visitor would regret that ‘every facility, with regard to ... the distribution of annotated catalogues, and the affixing of descriptive labels to the several articles, is not afforded to the public’ (*The Leisure Hour* 7, 1858: 469–73).

stage in the development of this highly nuanced term. Similar references are made throughout the India Museum's only guidebook (East India Museum 1851), in which the author takes the reader on a sequential tour of the galleries, picking out major thematic displays in which he not only regularly uses the term 'curiosities' where we might refer to 'exhibits', but periodically focuses on one particular display or another, which he designates more particularly as a 'cabinet of curiosities'. Some of the cabinets so described contain a single category of material—'figures and small idols of every description'—while others are clearly more mixed—'numerous rare implements of art', 'a miscellaneous collection of Eastern rarities'. Again the commentary is entirely objective and without qualitative implications—unless it is to indicate that the objects concerned are indeed of some interest. Clearly it would be mistaken to view use of the term 'curiosity' in these sources as implying that the collection consisted of no more than a mass of unrelated miscellanea.

THE WANING OF THE CABINET OF CURIOSITY

By this time the India Museum—like every other museum of the age—had long since left behind any concept in which 'curiosity' or 'wonder', in the sense that was privileged in the Renaissance period, played any operative part. The process was one that had indeed already begun by the time the *Kunstammer* had reached its maturity¹¹. For example, the cabinet of Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605) in Bologna, with its systematic arrangement of drawers in which specimens were stored as in a series of filing cabinets, had little in common with the contrived cosmology favoured by the majority of the princely founders of central European *Kunstammern* (although even Aldrovandi maintained also an aesthetically arranged display for purposes of representing his collection to non-scholarly visitors and to potential patrons). Even in the Central European heartland there were many instances in which a complementary 'scientific' role was acknowledged: the collection of Elector Augustus of Saxony (reigned 1553–86), for example, was marked by a preponderance of natural specimens forming an epitome of the mineral wealth of Saxony, together with the tools, implements and machines by which these resources were exploited and transformed into virtuoso works of art. And in the north the well-known engraving representing the cabinet of Ole Worm (1588–1654) in Copenhagen—perhaps the most widely reproduced and emblematic rendering of the cabinet of curiosities—is perhaps more noteworthy for the systematically labelled drawers that line the walls in an orderly manner than for the riot of creatures and objects that inhabit the ceiling space.

In short, the philosophical functions of many *Kunstammern* were extended at an early stage to include some aspects of the laboratory, workshop and observatory, complementing their recreational and speculative dimensions with the capacity for practical examination and experimentation. By the late 1500s this process had extended to the point where the contemplative space of the cabinet, as founded within princely courts or in other private, academic or religious contexts, had become only one element within a wider suite of what might reasonably be called research facilities. The astronomical observatories established by, for example, Landgrave Wilhelm IV (reigned 1567–92) at Kassel or by Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612) at Prague took on a significance independent of the *Kunstammer*, as did the workshops of Lorenzo de' Medici's *galleria di lavori* at Florence or the botanical gardens formed at Pisa, Leiden and elsewhere. The advent of printed—and especially illustrated—catalogues of collections brought them in a sense out of the realm of private study and into a field of collective endeavour that extended over all of Europe and beyond. The concept of curiosity as a driving principle began to be left behind in this process, which marked the beginning of a movement that would see the emergence in the eighteenth century of museums with a programme and a character that was generally more specialized and more 'scientific' (for lack of a better description, though word had not yet entered the language). In institutions such as the *Kunstkamera* of Peter the Great wonder might still play a role, but by now it was a very

¹¹ The theme is eloquently explored by Findlen (1994).

subsidiary one within an ambitious and grandly conceived programme in which the world was represented in systematic form rather than symbolically. The museum established with the collection of Pieter Teyler van der Hulst (1702–1778) at Haarlem represented, if anything, an even more definitive break with the culture of curiosity: containing the very latest electrical apparatus and with a programme that sought to place the museum at the very forefront of research in that area, Teyler's museum abandoned entirely both the passive and memorializing role of the museum and with them the speculative uses to which earlier cabinets had been put. The universal ambitions of the early museum, supported by a conceptual framework in which metaphorical or indeed poetical dimensions might be deployed in order to approach a state of symbolic completeness, had given way to the more literal and comprehensive programme of the *Encyclopédie*. Museums would continue to evolve new strategies for collection and display, but in the more ambitious of them the culture of curiosity had definitively run its course.

CONCLUSION

Not only the designation of certain collections as 'cabinets of curiosities' has survived, but also the reality of such collections of miscellanea: these might continue to charm the public in their hours of recreation with their whimsical displays of assorted materials—even up to our own era—but few of them can lay claim to further serious or productive purpose. Interestingly, cabinets from all ages have served in recent years as models from which artists have constructed their own assemblages, drawing inspiration from and giving new significance to the juxtapositions of objects and materials that in the first instance appear random but which, with closer study, may be imbued with profound—or at least intriguing—significance¹².

It is easy to chart how the epithet of the 'cabinet of curiosities', as applied to collections of miscellanea, was introduced first with entirely positive implications but later conjured up negative (or at best frivolous) meanings, before an appreciation of the potential for outwardly unrelated materials to form engaging conjunctions prompted a renewed wave of intellectual and visual stimulation. From the point of view of the museum historian, it is clear that 'curiosity', which has had and continues to enjoy such a variety of equally legitimate but totally disparate meanings, needs to be used with circumspection and preferably to be precisely qualified in its meaning in a particular context, so that our own writings may be saved from evoking in their audience the same bafflement engendered by many of the as-yet ill-defined exhibits that inhabited the early cabinet itself. The matter is not one that merits another letter to the editor of *The Times*, merely the exercise of a sensible degree of caution.

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¹² Some of the most interesting of these have recently been reviewed by (Bredenkamp 2016: 18–24).

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КАБИНЕТЫ ДИКОВИН: ОТ ТЕАТРА МИРА ДО OMNIUM-GATHERUM

АННОТАЦИЯ. В английском языке отсутствует адекватный перевод терминов «кунсткамера» и «вундеркамера» (камера чудес), обозначающих конкретные концептуальные понятия и имеющих хронологические рамки. Отсылка к «кабинету курьезов» при определенных обстоятельствах может быть подходящим переводом, но продолжительное использование этого термина с XVII в. до наших дней принесло с собой новые коннотации, которые объединяют совершенно разные значения. Несмотря на то что такой семантический дрейф является нормальной чертой языкового развития, он создает трудности интерпретации, когда применяется к изучению истории музеев. При использовании термина «кунсткамера» в музеологической литературе требуется определенная осмотрительность, чтобы его значение в данном контексте оставалось ясным.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: кунсткамера, вундеркамера, кабинет диковин, история коллекционирования

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Fig. 1. A selection of views of the India Museum, from *The Leisure Hour*, 7, 1858

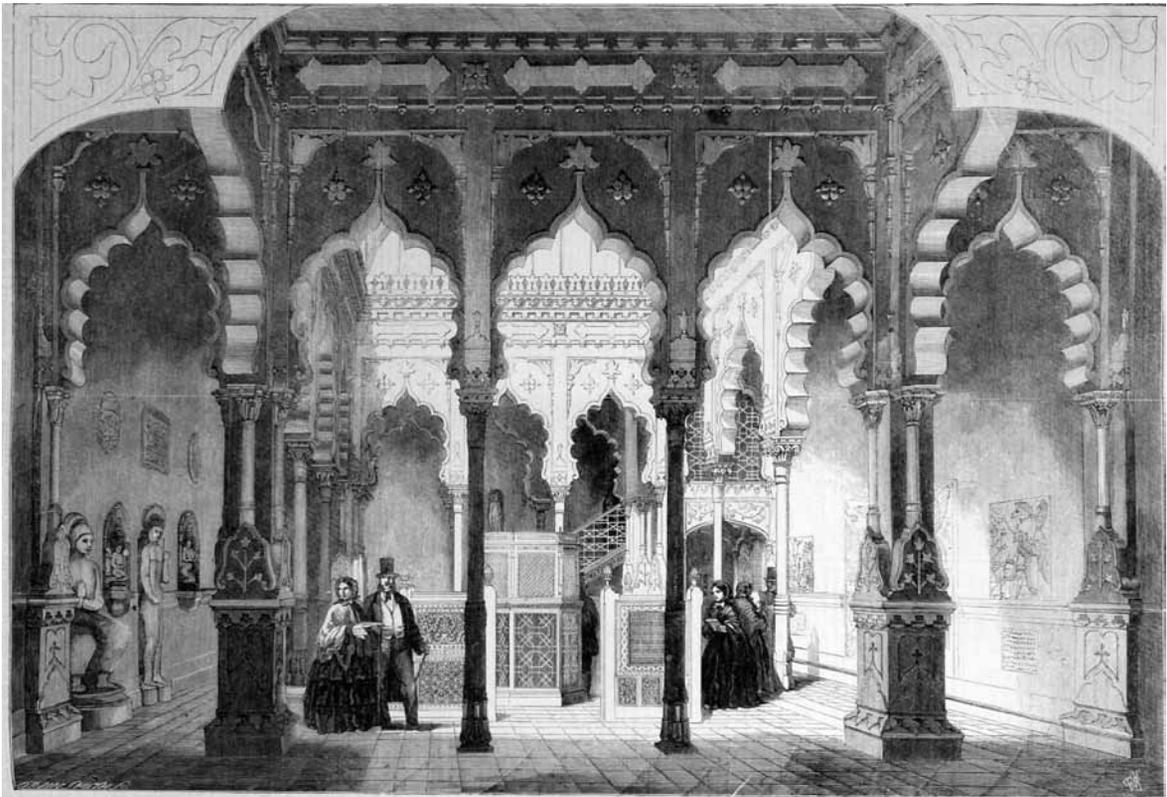


Fig. 2. The East India Company's former tea sale room, transformed into a Mughal-style gallery.
From *The Illustrated London News*, 6 March 1858



THE NEW INDIA MUSEUM, WHITEHALL-YARD,—SEE SUPPLEMENT, PAGE 125.

Fig. 3. Part of the museum, installed at Fife House, Whitehall.
From *The Illustrated London News*, 3 August 1861