Artificial nature and contemporary curiosities: The representation of nature and the revival of the cabinet of curiosity in contemporary art practice

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Eva Singeling

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, many artists show an interest in early modern collections, and this fascination has manifested itself in their artistic practice. Especially the cabinet of curiosity is frequently reintroduced, cited and reappropriated, with underlying concepts and visual tactics resurfacing.

It will be determined to what extent visual or conceptual phenomena are reinterpreted or referenced by discussing the work of Steffen Dam, Damien Hirst, Marc Dion, and Marc Quinn. In their art, there is a revival of the traditions of collecting, classifying, categorising, ordering and displaying the natural world. Furthermore, the interrelationship between arts and science forms a prominent factor.

This study aims to identify the main influences, strategies and connections to the curiosity cabinet and explore to what extent these are reflected in work by these artists. Various case studies will be discussed using visual analysis. Primary and secondary sources will be used to support this visual analysis to uncover possible connections and gain insight into the artists' sources of inspiration and intent.

It will be considered how far their methods are tied to curiosity collections. The goal is to determine the collective characteristics present in those case studies. This will add to the comprehension of the main historical influences on these artists and the interconnection between their artistic practices.

Keywords— cabinet of curiosity, contemporary art, historical influences, nature, science, sculpture, installation work

Introduction

Many contemporary artists show a resurgence of interest in the cabinet of curiosity. This fascination has become reflected in their artistic practice, where concepts that were originally embedded in the historical curiosity cabinet have been revived. As commonly seen, artists integrate the cabinet's underlying concepts and visual tactics. As will become clear in this research, contemporary artists try to emulate the feeling of curiosity cabinets and retrace into the system of thinking about how the world was understood and how nature was represented.[1]

The creative and artistic influence and the reinterpretation of cabinets of curiosity demonstrate continuity. By incorporating and paralleling concepts and visual strategies, artists show that the cabinet of curiosity is not an outdated concept and blow new life into it by reinterpreting it in their unique ways. Visual appropriation is frequently used in contemporary art practice, and it will now be investigated why there is such a fascination with these types of collections. However, there is some differentiation between approaches employed by artists as some directly echo concepts, and with others, the connections are more ambiguous. It will become apparent the different ways this is performed. Either there is more focus on the external features, noticeable by framing and containing objects and presenting them in visually pleasing manners, or a more conceptual focus on the contents or ideologies rather than formal conventions.

The cabinet of curiosity, also known as a *Kunst-und-Wunderkammer*, was essentially a place where various objects with a strong focus on the enigmatic, rare, extraordinary, and exotic were showcased to communicate about knowledge, the world and its history. Fundamentally, these collections symbolised the world in miniature, in which the microcosm, the accumulation of objects, reflected the macrocosm, the world at large.[2] Generally speaking, there is this idea that cabinets of curiosities played a fundamental role in the development of the modern museum and science, although particularly in the early days, the concept of wonder heavily dominated. The definition of the term ‘wonder’ would refer to the emotion excited by the perception of something unexpected or inexplicable: where astonishment is mingled with curiosity.[3]

This study investigates how older visual principles and concepts of the historical curiosity cabinet are referenced in contemporary art, as well as the artists' motivations for

[1] Bowry, “Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,’’ 332-333.
[2] Beßler, Chambers of Art and Wonders, 1.
[3] “wonder, n.” OED Online. March 2022. Oxford University Press.

incorporating those elements. The aim of this research is to explore the relation of the work of Damien Hirst, Marc Quinn, Mark Dion, and Steffen Dam in relation to the collecting principles of the cabinet of curiosity in terms of referencing conceptual and visual display strategies. This selection is based on the unique way historical elements are incorporated in their artworks, with each artist having their own point of departure and incorporating elements in a variety of ways.

The focus will be on identifying which elements are referenced, reimagined, and occasionally contradicted or subverted. With every artist, the works of art cross the territory of the separate worlds of art and nature. Oppositions such as the division and interplay between art and science, the temporal and the eternal, and the natural and artificial are recurrent aspects that find their origin in the curiosity cabinet. The emphasis will be on how nature is represented and how this can be viewed in terms of the representation and framing of the natural world, notably through acts of reappropriation and reconfiguration of organisational and classificational structures. By focussing on the artificiality of nature, the nature-culture construct, and the longing to shape, possess, manipulate, and control the natural world, artists also lean towards conveying information on the state of the world today, highlighting this distorted relationship between man and nature. As a result, the case studies have less to do with the universalist approach of constructing the world in miniature and function more as tools leading to a kind of escapism or nostalgia for another world.

The following research question will be the basis of this research: 'To what extent can be spoken of a revival of concepts deriving from cabinets of curiosity when looking at the representation of nature in artworks by Steffen Dam, Damien Hirst, Marc Dion, and Marc Quinn, and how can this resurgence in contemporary art be understood?' In order to answer this research question, throughout the chapters, attention will be given to the following themes: cabinets of curiosity of the past versus today, the reflection upon the principles of the cabinet of curiosity in contemporary art, framing and representing the natural world, the use of the cabinet of curiosity as a framing device, and the criticising and falsifying of elements and concepts underlying the cabinet of curiosity.

A brief history of the cabinet of curiosity, its characteristics and gradual changes throughout time will be the starting point of this research and will be discussed in the first chapter. To determine and reflect on the kind of resonance in contemporary times, it is necessary to go back in time to explore the nature of cabinets of curiosity. This background information will provide insight into how the cabinet of curiosity functioned throughout the centuries and how it evolved to become, as argued by many, the forerunner of the museum as

it is known today.

From this foundation, the next step is to determine and understand how these contemporary artists reinforce, reconfigure, reappropriate, destabilize, question, or subvert these notions and ideologies of the cabinet by looking at various case studies that will be addressed in the subsequent chapters. A visual analysis of the case studies will be conducted to identify the approaches taken by these artists and see which elements are most prominent and determine the extent to which their methods are tied to curiosity collections. The artists' perspectives on how they envisioned their work and what inspired them are also considered when discussing the artworks, constituting the second method. Thereafter, it will be considered to what extent the approaches of these artists are tied to curiosity collections, with the aid of secondary literature, so that general characteristics and interrelationships can be identified.

Chapter two discusses the work of Steffen Dam, to whom the curiosity cabinet forms the basis of his work. The artist produces glass sculptures that imitate specimens from the natural world. He is especially interested in arousing wonder through his art. In his practice, he devotes special attention to a play between the natural and the artificial, showcasing objects in cabinet-like units. For his sculptural works, he directly has taken over some formal elements as were seen in historical curiosity cabinets. In this chapter, attention will be given to the ways his works are reminiscent of the type of objects and arrangements seen in historical cabinets of curiosity and how the display of his objects influences their perception.

In the third chapter, the work of Damien Hirst will be discussed. Many consider his work provocative, especially due to the incorporation of animal material, typically presented in tanks or vitrine-like displays and cabinet constructions, reminiscent of the formal arrangements seen in historical cabinets of curiosities. He creates compositions using organisation principles and visual strategies to frame his objects, in which a direct relationship to the cabinet of curiosity is discernible. The incorporation of taxidermied animals and animal specimens is an old tradition that traces back to early modern collections and will be addressed briefly to contextualise his practice. The complex relationship between life and death is also explored in his work, focusing on transience, artificial preservation and controlling the natural world through the acts of manipulating.

The questioning and implementation of scientific methodologies to examine the nature of objects and authoritative discourses form the basis of chapter four, where the work by Mark Dion will be discussed. Dion reworks the idea that Western ideologies and scientific practice shape the world and how this has become the dominant way of understanding and constructing knowledge of the natural world. An important element of his practice is taking inspiration from

historical curiosity collections in terms of content and formal arrangements. In this chapter, special attention will be given to reformulating the contents, organisational principles, visual tactics, and application of order, hierarchy and logic of the cabinet of curiosity in his contemporary reconfigurations.

Chapter five discusses the work by Marc Quinn, who is known for expanding the possibilities of the field of sculpture by experimenting with various materials. In the works that will be examined, special attention is dedicated to working with delicate, organic materials, where the artist plays with the transiency of flowers. This chapter slightly deviates from the others, as the cabinet of curiosity has not explicitly been mentioned as a source of inspiration by Quinn, and the to-be-made connections are more conceptually and ideology-based. Hence, special attention will be given to the symbolism reflective of principles seen in the historical cabinet of curiosity. Throughout this chapter, the themes of controlling and manipulating nature will be addressed, and the connection will be made to the early modern discourse of collecting botanical specimens in curiosity collections.

Status quaestionis

In the field of art history, a significant amount of literature is devoted to forms of early modern collecting. In particular, the cabinet of curiosity is a familiar object of study, ranging from discussions on famous collectors to contemporary reinterpretations. Much has been written on the motives, ideologies, strategies, and overall understanding of these collections in early modern times, as well as how they influenced the modernist museum and science. Most of the time, writings provide a general overview of early modern collections or discuss particular examples of prominent historical figures. Fewer writings exist on how the cabinet of curiosity is referenced or reflected upon in contemporary art.

Nevertheless, some authors have researched the curiosity cabinet and its revival in the field of contemporary art. Most of the time, they delve into specific elements or concern general descriptions of prominent features that can be traced back to the early modern cabinet of curiosity.

Paula Findlen has provided insight into the nature and concepts of cabinets of curiosity and their function in early modern (pre-)scientific context, which is of use to understand the general concepts that underly the early modern cabinet of curiosity and allow to reflect upon which concepts are interrelated in contemporary art practices.

The writings by Rachel Poliquin are of importance, as in this paper, the use of animal material and the representation of animals will be considered. In *The Breathless Zoo*, Poliquin

had written on taxidermy from when this art first became prevalent in cabinets of wonder until its presence in contemporary art. Poliquin focuses on the urge to defy decay and how the art of longing and remembrance is incorporated into contemporary art practices, specifically looking at wonder, beauty, and order of the natural world and its meaning. Also, she made the important assertion that the experience of the material world was chased after in historical cabinets of curiosity.

Next to that, in "Post-Specimen Encounters Between Art, Science and Curating", Edward Juler and Alistair Robinson investigated how collections and scientific artefacts influence contemporary art practice and curatorial practices. They investigated how the resurgence of curiosity cabinets in art provoked new thinking manners. The concept of the specimen as an object in science is given special attention to exploring the hybrid 'art-science practices'. In order to do this, they brought together multidisciplinary viewpoints and methodologies of art historians, artists, poets, critics, curators, and anthropologists. These writings are essential in this research since the representation of nature is challenged through an interplay of natural and artificial to manipulate and control nature.

Another significant theoretical source to explore the nature of framing objects is *Sculpture and the Vitrine* by John Welchman, who focused on using glass display cases like the vitrine, cases, containers, and boxes as framing devices. Furthermore, he delved into the produced effects of showcasing objects behind glass. These writings mainly concern the reinterpretation of the cabinet of curiosity as revived in the practice of the surrealists artists, who were the first to evoke the visual effect of the curiosity cabinet by using its ordering principles of displaying or encasing objects behind glass. This source is valuable because the information is in line with the tactics used by contemporary artists. Welchman delves into the principle of using these framing devices to increase the aura of items and act as a physical border between the real and imaginary. He argues that this is deeply rooted in the more scientific-based cabinets of curiosity that emphasised taxonomic order, classification, and selection.

"Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet: a Study of Visual Representation in Early and Post Modernity." by Stephanie Jane Bowry is of great significance in this research, as her writings are the most recent on the phenomenon of the resurgence of interest in the cabinet of curiosities in contemporary art. She investigated the history of cabinets of curiosities and theorised artistic practices concerning specific tactics that paralleled those seen in the cabinet of curiosity. Next, she demonstrates how the practices seen in the cabinet of curiosity are echoed on a level that extends beyond the visual representation and, therefore, includes conceptual aspects. In

addition, she notes that some artworks reference the concepts more subtly or that sometimes these references can even be absent or obscure, even though connections can still be made on an epistemic or performative level. Her writings are fundamental as she outlines some of the motifs and tactics employed by contemporary artists, which provides insight into how the cabinet of curiosity is revived in contemporary art practices.

The purpose of the research is to build further upon these writings, specifically those of Bowry and Welcham, to discover what links can be made to the cabinet of curiosity and how this resurgence of interest can be examined and interpreted when looking at the representation and framing of nature when discussing specific case studies. An interdisciplinary approach will be taken where, besides using these writings as a theoretical background, there will also be a focus on the specific tactics applied by the artists. When discussing case studies in which the natural world is represented, these tactics will be examined and further deconstructed in terms of their function and effect.

Chapter 1 | The historical cabinet of curiosity

To explore the revival and reinterpretation of the cabinet of curiosity in contemporary art, it is necessary to delve into the history of the cabinet of curiosity. It will be explored how the cabinet of curiosity has changed over time to understand its reminiscence in contemporary art practices later on. Curiosity cabinets were widespread and characterized the pre-modern era, covering roughly the end of the fifteenth century and until the early nineteenth century. First, it is crucial to define the term cabinet of curiosity and its meaning throughout this research. Out of all types of early modern collection forms, the cabinet of curiosity: the confined space, also referred to as the *Kunst und Wunderkammer* or 'wonder room', is the most well-known to the majority of people. The understanding of the word cabinet today slightly differs from the meaning of a cabinet back in early modern times. The definition used throughout this research when referring to the cabinet of curiosity concerns a collection that displays all types of extraordinary objects, where they are often collected in copious quantities and juxtaposed to create interesting compositions.

Cabinets of curiosity

Where one now would think of a type of furniture piece when thinking of a cabinet, these historical cabinets were often entire spaces. Occasionally, the collections spread to multiple adjacent rooms, which were filled with an overabundance of spectacular objects of all kinds. Initially, these private collections were owned by princes, rulers, wealthy citizens, or scholars. The collections were relatively inaccessible to the general public, yet throughout time, more visitors were allowed to enter. These types of collections demonstrated the worldly knowledge of the collector and reflected welfare, taste, and the ability to gather the breadth of wonders of the universe, where the collector metaphorically ruled over a now manageable, scaled-down world.[4]

The entire system of the cabinet of curiosity was made to visually overwhelm those visiting the collection by exhibiting as many objects as possible in a variety of ways. In these rooms displaying wonder, objects were organised and displayed in visually pleasing ways, customarily in cases or on pedestals so that visitors could observe and learn by looking at objects. They were suspended from the ceiling, mounted to walls, presented on shelves, or exhibited on floors. To give an idea of a possible presentation, it was not uncommon to show a crocodile hanging from the ceiling, a mummified creature on a shelve, a taxidermied animal

[4] Beßler, *Chambers of Art and Wonders,* 3.

mounted to the wall, specimens in glass vials stacked in compartments, or rare shells hidden in large drawers. Individual pieces and extra valuable objects were, for the most part, shown under glass covers and presented on tables to form arrangements with other objects, sometimes belonging to a similar theme or typology.[5] This phenomenon is often cited in contemporary cabinets of curiosity.

There was a strong desire to possess and comprehend the world, as well as express artistic wonder through collecting rare and exotic *mirabilia*: wonders of the world. The contents of cabinets of curiosities contained both natural and artificial objects: combining items constructed by man and those belonging to nature, which in turn were referred to as *naturalia* and *artificalia*. The interchangeability of the terms *Kunstkammer* and *Wunderkammer* reflect the equal status of objects from the natural world juxtaposed to artificial ones and how they were placed in the same context, integrated into a total system of correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm.[6] Essentially, the collections were universalist assemblages. The natural items consisted of specimens and creatures, such as animals, plants, and minerals found in nature, referring to the natural world at large. The objects belonging to the other category were made by man and would include antiquities, artefacts and natural objects augmented through craftsmanship. Collecting items like this indicated the ability to collect and possess nature. In contemporary reinterpretations, this interplay between natural and artificial is often deliberately sought for.

In early modern times, the idea behind these cabinets was to elicit wonder and encourage contemplation in a world that was everything but commonplace but rather a fantastical universe full of infinite possibilities.[7] All collections are comprised of objects that deliberately have been selected and segregated from the chaos of the world and hence have always been shaped by dreams and fantasies on how the world connects to us.[8] Wonder is in the object itself, but even more so in the reaction that follows when engaging with it. It might be the intrinsic capability to provoke wonder, disorient, question, or excite. Besides collecting and conserving objects to inhibit decay, especially collectables from the natural world, it was also a way to capture, preserve and prolong the emotional response attached to them.[9]

[5] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 78.
[6] Beßler, *Chambers of Art and Wonders,* 1.
[7] Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 16.
[8] Ibid., 80-81.
[9] Ibid., 19.

Natural versus artificial

Clearly accentuated was the interaction between art and nature, where human-made objects and their natural counterparts were explored in terms of 'rivalry' to highlight their contrast. In the field of contemporary art this kind of *paragone* a frequently encountered aspect. The inclusion and division of objects according to categories of *naturalia* and *artificialia* was intended to be universal. Yet, the distinction between nature and art was sometimes somewhat ambiguous, mainly through deliberately obscured distinctions in the form of hybrid creations. Artefacts challenged their natural counterparts by blending natural and artificial elements.[10] As a result, these objects positioned themself in a grey area. Aside from these clearly defined categories, there was also an equal curiosity for, and fascination with, collectables that were harder to categorize and swung back and forth between movement and static and alive and still.[11] A clash between the impermanent and the eternal was frequently sought, as well as in the past as by contemporary artists.

Collectors were increasingly fascinated with, in particular, natural wonders. As a result of the quest for properties of strangeness, collected objects were usually not everyday items but had unique qualities. To give an impression, these 'repositories of wonder' contained amongst other things ethnographic objects, paintings, manuscripts, antiquities, medals, precious stones, shells, minerals, fossils, and anatomical and botanical specimens. In terms of contents, items could range from one extreme to the other. Not only precious and 'attractive' objects like plants, corals or scientific instruments were displayed, but also strange and monstrous oddities from nature, like deformed animal embryos.

There was an abundance of exotic items in the early modern period, which made their way into the collections of those who could afford them. Many natural objects were turned into commodities, sold for prices determined by their rarity.[12] Anything obscure, monstrous, fascinating, strange, or extraordinary originating from far-flung corners of the world was sought after.[13] The content of collections was obtained chiefly through trade and gifting. The wide range of objects imported from other countries may suggest that collectors were primarily interested in items from overseas.[14] Explorers brought back goods, and these were, in turn, exchanged between collectors. Also, sometimes collectors commissioned merchants to go to

[10] Van de Roemer, "Neat Nature'' 51-52.
[11] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine,* 112.
[12] Smith & Findlen, *Merchants & Marvels,* 5.
[13] Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo,* 16.
[14] Van de Roemer, "Neat Nature'' 50.

specific places to bring animals, specimens, and artefacts to their home country. As will become clear later on, contemporary artist often take on this notion but disrupt it as well by using less exotic or rare objects. In this way, collectors replenished their possessions by bringing in objects considered to be the missing link in their current collection to better understand the fast-expanding world. The latter became more troublesome as developments in science and continuously expanding knowledge of the world made it more challenging to ascertain what had not been discovered yet: the limit of the known world was repeatedly breached.

Changes over time

To some extent, there was order over chaos in the early cabinets of curiosity, but it was still a pre-scientific era, so the imposed order mainly reflected the mindset of the collector and the relationship this person had to the world. Throughout time, the drive to collect items with certain levels of ambiguity or strangeness became also scientifically supported, and the attention given to collecting, classifying, categorising, and organising disparate objects became more evident. Eventually, this scientifically orientated viewpoint became leading in society at large and progressively integrated into curiosity collections, leading to a shift in their character.

The taxonomical classification system published in 1735 by Carl Linnaeus, called *Systema Naturae*, presented new ways to order the natural world through binomial naming, to mark genus and species. Categorizing, naming, labelling, and explaining animals, plants, and natural world objects had become the new standardized method. Instead of more randomly ordered groups of objects, this development gradually caused cabinets of curiosity to become more empirical, encyclopaedic, and coherent collections. What became noticeable was the establishment of a more rationalized view and the development of subdivisions where curiosities were shown according to their place within this classification system instead of shown in a single, adjoining area. This caused some objects and oddities to be considered merely entertaining rather than of importance for scientific inquiry. In contemporary cabinets of curiosity these more scientific and rational curiosity cabinets are often referenced, in which principles like classifying are incorporated.

The change from the Renaissance to the Classical era, the Age of Enlightenment (1750-1820), marked a transition in opticality, where the new epistemological way of thinking was visually oriented with a close connection between the gaze and object of scrutiny.[15] Careful

[15] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 77.

inspection of the natural world was fundamental in the epistemological form of reasoning in the theatrical, epistemic space of the cabinet of curiosity.[16] When scientific thinking became the primary lens through which to grasp and interpret the world as best as possible, material specificity became a more important component. Different ways of exploring and researching nature existed, but in general, the experience of the material world was chased.[17] Objects were considered 'carriers of knowledge', where knowledge could be acquired through sight.[18] In order to understand objects fully, they had to be observed and analysed in real life and, if possible, handled and experimented with.[19] Contemporary artist reflect on these different ways of exploring objects and incorporate this in their artistic practice.

Instead of merely being depositories of objects, cabinets of curiosity evolved into visual tools for organizing knowledge. They transformed from reflections of taste to factual systems.[20] A transition occurred, especially with natural history artefacts, where instead of portraying wonder, 'a culture of facts' was shown by implementing the systematic order of the expert mind. This was accompanied by a change of emphasis where rarity and curiosity were not paramount, but representativeness, order and objectivity were accentuated instead.[21] So, where in early collections, objects were presented side-by-side, the display etiquette changed to spaces with specialized displays with compartmentalization and shelf-like organisations. Moderately, the accessible and relatively 'open' area of the cabinet of curiosity created room for vitrines and presentations within cabinets with glass doors, in keeping with the shift from theatrical presentation to more analytical, methodological presentation.[22]

When representing the natural world, many early collections included preserved natural objects like dried and stuffed specimens. The continued existence of 'living forms' only became possible halfway through the 17th century when specimens were retained in alcohol in glass vials and bottles. Already from the cabinet's origin, there was the ambition to preserve the beauty and keep it in a state that safeguards originality and agency.[23] Naturalism was sought after, as these objects were praised for their resemblance to the natural world.[24] Also contemporary artist often work with elements of manipulating and controlling the natural world, where they construct a play between that what is ephemeral and that what is eternal.

[16] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 77.
[17] Findlen, "Anatomy Theaters, Botanical Gardens, and Natural History Collections." 285.
[18] Klemun, *The Botanical Garden*, 6.
[19] Smith & Findlen, *Merchants & Marvels*, 7
[20] Zytaruk, "Cabinets of Curiosities and the Organization of Knowledge." 15.
[21] Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 125.
[22] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, 113-114.
[23] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 47.
[24] Smith & Findlen, *Merchants & Marvels*, 9.

Curiosity collections do not exist anymore as they were, for the most part, only individual objects that once belonged to them ended up in specialised museums of nature or culture, like natural history museums, science museums or art museums. As expressed by Beßler: "In spite of the beauty and splendour […], we (often only) see individual objects – and are seldom able to see the world in them."[25] It is an impossible pursuit to re-establish them in their historical condition, and attempts made to reconstruct them mostly are museum-like replicas of the lost phenomenon of the encyclopaedic outlook on the world.[26] Yet, some contemporary artist see this as a starting point to create their own representations or attempt to create some type of reconstruction of a curiosity collection.

Organization and interpretation

The deliberate manner in which objects were positioned in cabinets of curiosity mirrored the idea of being able to control and interpret the infinite macrocosm. Display tactics would make visible correlations between objects, for example, by showing objects that relate to each other.[27] Following Bowry, the way objects were displayed and framed had implications for how they were looked at and influenced their interpretation, either by augmenting it further or detracting from the work of art.[28] Accordingly, the cabinet of curiosity served as a representational space in which associations and relationships create complex networks of meaning. This all was reliant on the display modes and, of course, the architecture of the place itself.[29]

The overall organization in cabinets of curiosity symbolized the philosophical understanding of the world. The formal aesthetic principles of cabinets of curiosity were based on the dramatic, theatrical presentations of artefacts and wonders, serving as a testimony to worldviews and wisdom.[30] The collections were encyclopaedic in scope and served as a microcosm where they, through association, represented the world in miniature. In a way, curiosity collections could be interpreted as miniature ''Arks of Noah or Garden of Edens''.[31] Repositories reassembled the scattered products of Creation, and their function was to recover this knowledge.[32] A comprehensive approach was at hand, where the ultimate desire was to

[25] Beßler, *Chambers of Art and Wonders,* 8, passage 34.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 3, passage 9.
[28] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 167.
[29] Ibid., 140.
[30] Beßler, *Chambers of Art and Wonders,* 8, passage 32.
[31] Zytaruk, "Cabinets of Curiosities and the Organization of Knowledge." 6.
[32] Ibid.

reach totality, attempted by collecting various elements of the world, reflected, for instance, in collecting the objects associated with the four seasons, four elements or different continents.

To some extent, the representation and display principles of historical cabinets of curiosity have become apparent through visual representations, typically illustrating rooms stacked with large quantities of objects [fig.1]. However, it is impossible to encapsulate all variations of curiosity cabinets since distinct types developed and their character changed continuously. For instance, Bowry mentioned that they might change due to the altered taste of the collector or changing perceptions of how the world could best be understood.[33]

Next to that, curiosity collections had classification systems of their own, which have led to multiple discussions on how they should, or could, be interpreted, even today. Due to the large diversity of objects, it may be difficult for the modern beholder to appraise and evaluate the activities of collectors, as well as the rationales and motives behind collecting.[34] Therefore, exact interpretations or statements about specific ways of organizing, ordering, and exhibiting objects are not easily formulated. If attempted, it must be considered that there is a risk of constructing systems of order that did not exist in reality.[35] This is because almost all information on curiosity collections is interpreted from sources like inventories, catalogues, correspondences, images, prints and diaries. Therefore, there is no clear indication for general underpinning collecting practice on the whole as treatises or rules on how to construct, organize and arrange a collection at the time were not present, very rare exceptions excluded. Nonetheless, some central concepts interrelate, and general assumptions about their features, display and selection criteria can be distinguished.[36]

A resurgence of interest in the cabinet of curiosity

When it comes to reinterpreting cabinets of curiosity and representing the natural world in contemporary art practice, artists often reflect on adopting certain elements, strategies and central points, a few of which have been named so far. When looking at contemporary art practice, roughly two discernible methods as defined by Juler and Robinson predominate: the artist who questions institutional authority involving processes of collecting, juxta-positioning, archival research methods, engaging with protocols of natural history, and the artists have taken the interdisciplinary and subversive impulse of the curiosity cabinet as a tool, both visually and

[33] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet.'' 18.
[34] Van de Roemer, "Neat Nature'' 51.
[35] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 22.
[36] Ibid., 73.

epistemologically.[37]

The following expression by the scholar Andrea Eis contextualises the reappearance of the cabinet of curiosity in contemporary art practice: art that rhymes with the past is intrinsically bound to it.[38] According to Eis, there has been a transfer of power over the centuries, with a similar capability to arouse wonder and stimulate the imagination as seen in the past.[39] This means that the re-emergence of the curiosity cabinet in contemporary art practice, in the form of reinterpretations and appropriations, results in art that is reminiscent of the past and where the power inherent in the cabinet is captured. The following statement by Bowry contextualises the resurgence of principles from the cabinet of curiosity in the contemporary realm:

"More than simulacrum, reconstruction, appropriation, or homage, renditions of the curiosity cabinet by contemporary artists have sought to re-enter the systems of thought by which cabinets were governed, not simply to emulate them, but to gaze back to discarded ways of seeing and to harness these as a critical tool in order to puncture our very own idols of knowledge, representation and meaning."[40]

As argued here by Bowry, contemporary artists do not aim to copy or equate the historical concepts and practices but rather revive some of the principles present in historical cabinets of curiosity. So, as the preoccupation with presenting objects by exploring their relationship to others was a vital element, in which notions such as order, containment, revelation and visual hierarchy were significant constituents, these are resurrected in the contemporary field.[41] Often visible are elements of falsification, where the principles of the cabinet of curiosity are used but simultaneously subverted to create a type of clash and add a twist to the way the cabinet of curiosity is generally understood or interpreted. As will become apparent in the following chapters, there exist a multitude of connections to the cabinet of curiosity where most of the discussed markers will pass by. It will become obvious in what distinct ways various artist use the model of the curiosity cabinet as a tool to look at the world through a different lens, in which gazing, thinking, and interacting with objects take centre stage.

[37] Juler & Robinson, *Post-Specimen Encounters Between Art, Science and Curating*, 75.
[38] Eis, "Contemporary Art and the Past,'' 81.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 332-333.
[41] Ibid., 17.

Chapter 2 | Steffen Dam: Between life and fiction

When looking at the work of Danish glass artist Steffen Dam (1961), particularly his cabinet-like creations, he does not falsify the underlying principles of the cabinet of curiosity but validates and reinforces them instead. Dam brings together the worlds of nature and art through the interaction between the scientific, biological and artificial. His production consists mainly of assemblies of sculptural works that resemble natural specimens trapped in glass tubes, where he engages the viewer's senses and stimulates their thoughts. In his oeuvre, the artist mainly reflects on aspects like imagination, materials, framing and ignition of wonder. His work is influenced by animal and plant morphology, where the artist observes their forms and replicates their shapes in glass.[42] Accordingly, his imaginary glass creations call to mind zoological and botanical specimens or parts thereof.

Dam was initially a toolmaker by profession, but after working in that field for many years, he decided to shift his focus to glass-making, as the material qualities interested him greatly. Dam eventually found great pleasure in discovering the beauty glassmaking can bring and has been working with glass for over thirty-five years.[43] To most people, glass is a hard and brittle material, but to Dam, it is a soft material, a liquid almost, that he can control and manipulate into any form or shape he desires. A tremendous amount of skill is required to work with glass since it is such an unpredictable medium.

Glass is tough to manipulate, so the end products rely on the collaboration between the artist and the material. Dam became increasingly interested in allowing spontaneous mistakes to happen, and by doing so, he essentially deviated from established and conventional glass making, which is considered relatively 'pure'. Instead, the artist started to experiment with and appreciate the aesthetics obtained when dealing with imperfections like cracks, ash marks, air bubbles and stains.[44]

Taxonomic collections and the historical *Kunst- und Wunderkammers* have strongly influenced Dam. His interest in these started early in his life when he was fascinated by a collection of illustrated books on fauna, flora and natural sciences owned by his grandparents.[45] Although the artist uses these kinds of visual resources as sources of

[42] Martin, "Nature Trapped in Glass." 875.
[43] Steffen Dam, "Home."
[44] Steffen Dam, "Specimens from an Imaginary Voyage - Steffen Dam's commission at RAMM" Royal Albert Memorial Museum, published July 3, 2017, YouTube video.
[45] Deborah Blakely, ''Steffen Dam: Glass Artist.'' Zoneone Arts.

inspiration to develop ideas and invent new shapes to experiment with, his creations are all based on memory and association.[46] Aside from these visual sources, Dam draws inspiration from historical cabinets of curiosity by studying specific examples or aspects, which he then quotes in his work by drawing inspiration from the display and contents of collections.

Concerning the work of Dam, the revival of constituents of containment and visual relationships is most noticeable. The preoccupation with framing and arranging items is the most prominent feature in Dam's reimagining of a curiosity cabinet. Thus, it can be said that his work is not necessarily about examining or historicising the cabinet of curiosity as it used to be, but rather about using the cabinet as a theatrical device to promote visual interaction with his objects. His interest in the curiosity cabinet lies primarily in the fact that they were places where objects were put on display that were not completely understood and could not be explained. In historical curiosity collections, objects were showcased that were generally considered 'alien'., meaning that they were unfamiliar or seemed to belong to another world. Dam expands on this theme, attempting to create life forms that are extraordinary or incomprehensible in some way to arouse feelings of wonder and curiosity.[47]

Dam has a vibrant imagination and an extreme eye for precision, and his creations generate feelings of curiosity when looking at them. The objects elicit wonder and appear as if they could have been part of an old natural history collection. In his controlled and intentioned wonder pieces, the old trends of analysing, documenting, and making sense of the natural world are continued. In his groupings of objects, he mainly recalls how objects were collected and displayed in old collections and replicates the same effect. The glass objects produced by the artist are either encapsulated within individual glass cylinders or trapped with glass panels or blocks.

Illustrative of the first, *Wunderkammer* [fig.2], demonstrates glass cylinders in an illuminated wooden presentation box. In terms of display, the glass creations substantially resemble the presentation of specimens in historical curiosity cabinets, where glass vials contained specimens of all kinds. The wooden presentation box in which the objects are placed is lit from the back, serving as a lightbox, thereby illuminating the specimens all the more. Contrary to mimicking more prominent architectural elements as generally seen in the work of contemporary artists that reference the historical cabinet of curiosity, Dam opts for

[46] Martin, "Nature Trapped in Glass." 875.
[47] Steffen Dam, ''Specimens from an Imaginary Voyage - Steffen Dam's commission at RAMM'' Royal Albert Memorial Museum, published July 3, 2017, YouTube video.

smaller scale, minimalistic framings suggestive of the formal arrangements seen in cabinets of curiosity.

The various compartments of *Wunderkammer* are filled with tall glass cylinders containing three-dimensional objects resembling encapsulated underwater life forms like plankton, jellyfish, and other invertebrate creatures. Because the cylinders act as a one-dimensional lens, the 'specimens' appear to extend sideways, as seen with taxonomic specimens kept in preservation fluids. To go into greater detail about the creation process, this effect of the cylinders appearing to contain organisms suspended or floating in liquid is obtained by embedding the glass-blown creations inside a casted cylinder. Dam uses materials such as oxide powders and silver foil to create their specific textures and colours. Any additional impurities on the surface are polished and removed afterwards. Dam then selects and arranges his cylinders until a visual weight balance is achieved and the final composition is established.

In his presentations, Dam strives to reach a harmony between fiction and reality instead of making 'simple' reproductions of life. Dam purposely wants the viewer to question whether the specimens in the cylinders are imitations or whether they belong to the real world. This effect is further stimulated by the seemingly natural air bubbles surrounding them, making his creations appear even more convincingly lifelike [fig.3] In reality, these specimens are entirely artificial fictitious creatures, although their soft colours, organic shapes, and textures are suggestive of natural specimens. Despite appearing natural, they are not scientifically accurate depictions of true life. Even so, they actively trick the viewer into believing they are, in fact, real. Consequently, what is perceived is a kind of pseudo biology that feeds the play between real and fake. As the artist says: ''My cylinders contain nothing that exists in the ocean, my specimens are plausible but not from this world, my plants are only to be found in my compost heap, and my flowers are still unnamed.''[48]

This notion is interesting when considering the writings by Bowry, who stated the following: "If the curiosity cabinet existed to demystify the world, contemporary art seeks to problematise it, to obscure it, to re-mystify it.''[49] This is in concordance with the traceable elements in the works created by Dam. Likewise, the artist aims to create this sense of mystery or obscurity by imitating nature through art, feeding the tension between natural and artificial and realistic and fictive. Essentially he does the opposite of demystifying, as he provides no

[48] Corning Museum of Glass, "Flower Block."
[49] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,"312.

information on what his specimens represent, why they are juxtaposed in this manner, nor what he aims to communicate. What is shown in Dam's works largely defies the concept of rationale-based display because the contents do not fit into a clearly defined category and forge a play between deception and perception. This ties in with the insights by Welchman on how artists revive the *Wunderkammer*-like poetic principles of arranging, which is primarily based on analogy and visual resemblance rather than the emphasis on the reasoning and logic behind displayed objects.[50] As seen in the composition by Dam, logic is missing, and the theatrical and poetic prevails.

The fact that the connectedness to fictive evolutionary trajectories and imagination plays such a big part also becomes apparent in some of the titles given to his creations, as is true for *Specimens from an imaginary voyage* [fig.4]. With this particular example, he alludes to an older existing curiosity collection of natural oddities. This piece, consisting of sixteen jars containing mythological sea creatures, was inspired by the echinoderm collection of sea urchins and starfish by biologist and palaeontologist Walter Percy Sladen (1849- 1900), currently housed at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum [fig.5].[51]

When looking back at the historical cabinet of curiosity, although dried and wet specimens could be visually appealing, they were usually collected for pedagogical purposes rather than curiosity itself. Learning from objects to understand their place in the natural world was a foundational step toward fully comprehending the universe. This didactical aspect is not present in work by Dam. Looking at his work from that perspective, it can therefore be said that his work does not encompass the full function of the cabinet of curiosity, which would include didactical aspects of some kind relating to the disseminating and acquiring of knowledge through studying objects.

Interesting to note, however, is what Poliquin argues on this topic, who disagrees with others on the fact that these curiosity collections are always didactical in purpose. She states that they enable the exploration of raw possibility instead, where each item offers something of the unknown or undiscovered.[52] This statement by Poliquin is essential as it sheds light on other purposes besides learning. This links to what Dam aims to accomplish, who emphasises the importance of experience over knowledge. His specimens are not intended to be educational aids but to capture the viewer's attention and imagination. His specimens work as

[50] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, 104.
[51] The Culture Diary "Sea Life: Glimpses of the Wonderful."
[52] Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 36.

a distinct type of knowledge; visual poetry in an infinite variety of forms.[53] So, regarding interpretation, the artist invites the viewer to appreciate their splendour and ruminate on the importance of nature as being reflective of the 'human mind and spirit'.[54]

Not only do small sea creatures speak to the artist, but Dam also draws inspiration from flowers to generate new shapes. One example is *The secret life of plants* [fig.6], dealing with the study of flattened-out forms of flowers and plants. Each segment of the panels contains the interpretation of parts of a flower, showing their botanical details. In Dam's flower series, the accentuation of the material features correlates with historical curiosity collections, notably the history of botanical collecting. Nonetheless, they are revolutionary in terms of aesthetics and thought but modern in spirit.[55] Whereas with the objects presented in frame constructions, the artist mainly exploited the three-dimensionality and refracting qualities of glass, here, it is about their two-dimensional shapes.

The cross-sections suggestive of parts of different flowers are mounted between slides to make them appear to be floating mid-air. Dam created these harmonious designs of fictitious plants by slicing and cutting glass shapes and transforming them into thin plaques that are laminated into a larger glass plate [fig.7].[56] As seen in *The secret life of plants, e*ach glass plate resembles a coverslip: the thin piece of glass used to cover and protect a specimen under a microscope. Like anatomical specimens sliced between layers of glass, these plates reach a similar scientific aesthetic by showing the anatomy of imaginary flowers. The association to the type of cross-section prints or colour illustrations in natural history publications is also clearly discernible. Again, as in the other works by Dam, there is this apparent connection between fiction and reality by representing flowers in an artful and at the same time, scientific way.

Throughout this chapter, it has become clear in what manner the art practice by Dam is based on the historical cabinet of curiosity and natural history. The content of collections, particularly elements of the alien and the unknown, and the way objects were staged serve as sources of inspiration. The artist has also reworked notions of older existing collections, of which he references some elements. Furthermore, fusing the natural and artificial to arouse wonder has proven to be an essential characteristic, where it is not about copying the natural

[53] Steffen Dam, "Between Art and Nature: The Glass of Steffen Dam."
[54] Ibid.
[55] Corning Museum of Glass, "Flower Block."
[56] Martin, "Nature Trapped in Glass." 875.

but about evoking feelings of curiosity. Also clearly present was this level of experiencing the material qualities of the objects in his creations and were the influence of specifically the more rationalised, scientific collection is evident.

Chapter 3 | Damien Hirst: Assembling, framing and representing the natural world

Unlike the artist in the previous chapter, who used artificial materials to create objects that appeared natural, the following artist works with actual animal materials. Animals are a recurring motif in the works created by Damien Hirst (Bristol, 1965), who dominated the United Kingdom art scene during the 1990s. His works explore the relationship between art, science, mass consumer culture and commercialism. Aside from drawing inspiration from the cabinet of curiosity, many other artistic and conceptual influences, most notable minimalism, are discernible in his work. The influence of the cabinet of curiosity is visible both materially and conceptually, which he often intermixes with 'commercial displays'. In his creations, Hirst resurrects existing elements of the cabinet of curiosities, primarily through acts of containment of objects in theatrical displays.

Hirst is best known for his 'visceral works' that feature animals preserved in formaldehyde, collectively titled *Natural History*. In these artworks, animals are submerged in formaldehyde solution: a substance the artist associates with memory. The most famous examples are his famous tiger shark tank installation and *Mother and Child (Divided)* [fig.8&9]. This piece was one of the first examples where the artist worked with bisected animals.[57] It consists of perfectly symmetrical bisected carcasses of a cow and a calf, with the parts displayed in four glass-walled tanks, with one half mounted in each.[58]

The animals are neither scientific specimens through and through nor artistic objects in themselves, but something in between as they are presented in a highly objectified manner yet also intended for contemplation. Although operating in a completely different context, the installation piece alludes to the tradition of collecting specimens in cabinets. However, due to their dramatic presentation, Hirst's variations are more on the verge of unorthodox taxonomy. Aside from that, his work is not directly based on any taxonomic or curiosity collection. The interiority and exteriority of the animals are visible, revealing their 'mystic truths' of what is usually hidden behind the surface of their skins. Aside from this, Hirst vigorously subverts the historical connotation of taxonomy seen in the curiosity cabinet by using more commonplace animals rather than exotic or rare examples. The most commonly slaughtered animals, such as 'banal' domestic ungulates, like cows, are used to reacquaint viewers with the source of butcher's meat.[59] Pieces like these thus very clearly confront the

[57] Tate, ''Damien Hirst: Mother and Child (Divided).''
[58] Damien Hirst, ''Mother and Child (Divided), 1993.''
[59] Tate, ''Damien Hirst: Mother and Child (Divided).''

viewer with how nature is trying to be controlled where animals are treated for entertainment or consumption.

According to Poliquin, wonder is one of the first reactions to taxidermy, as a once-living animal has been refashioned and transformed into an object. These 'objects' can be interpreted in various ways: as a symbol of decay, a symbol of the deconstructing human relationship to nature, its cultural or institutional significance or as an object of science.[60] This multitude of possible interpretations describes the strong reaction that can occur when confronted with an object that marks unknown territory and forms the 'poetics of strangeness' the author talks about: it is precisely about this feeling that overtakes when something fascinates, attracts, repels, and provokes.[61] Similar feelings overtake the viewer when standing in front of the installation pieces with the animals in formaldehyde, as most have never been confronted with the interiority of an animal in this manner before.

Giovanni Aloi, who in his writings has focused on the ontological status of taxidermied objects, highlights that when animals are presented in this objectified state, the viewer deals with the tension between whether they should be understood as objects or real animals. According to him, the focus should not so much be on whether these taxidermied animals position themselves between artificial or natural but on the recurrence of power relationships between animals and humans and cultural conditions.[62] Even though Hirst presents the animals as perfected objects, it is impossible to capture the lifelikeness of a real animal, and its capacity lies more in making aware of this human-animal relationship.

After his steel-frame vitrine debut in 1990, the heavy, visually dominating display units have become signature elements When it comes to presenting animals encaptured within the vitrine, this affects the manners of engagement with the piece. Welchman, who has written on the properties and dual nature of glass, expresses that the revealing surface, sheen, transparency, and capacity of glass to refract and reflect lead to both detachment and animation of what is presented inside the vitrine. It simultaneously places the viewer at a precise distance, resulting in detachment but also 'animates' the items it covers, stimulating the viewer's mind, body, and imagination.[63]

As expressed by Bartram, the vitrine, in addition to providing excellent visibility from all angles and directions and creating a space that encourages viewers to walk around freely,

[60] Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 38.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 53.
[63] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine,* 113.

challenges and destabilizes traditional perceptions of nature and makes the viewer aware of the act of gazing.[64] As seen with *Mother and Child (Divided)***,** not only does the vitrine serve a practical function for storing and showcasing, but it also augments visibility, leading to closer observation of the animals. The latter is especially true for freestanding units, as seen in this piece. This effect is amplified by the walk-through space between the two units, creating a tension between interior and exterior, subjective and objective, and representation and perception.

Furthermore, Welchman states that pairing the revolutionary character of glass with the energy of the object reinforces each other.[65] He has written on how the total package of integrating taxonomical principles of the natural history museum, the shop window discourse, and the two-dimensional flattening of the animal in conjunction with the gleam of glass, help maximize the impact on the viewer. Essentially, Welchman argues that the viewer longs to engage with the piece on various levels, including tactile, intellectual, and imaginative levels.[66] This interaction would result in feelings of uncanniness in the viewer, who feels as if they become part of the work of art themselves, and in this case, as if they are involved in the act of cutting open and unveiling the interiority of the animals themselves.[67] Consequently, as seen here, there is a strong play between what attracts and what repels, and Hirst actively pushes the boundaries of experience to the point where the observer is no longer merely a bystander but becomes a part of the artwork. This is similar to what was encountered earlier with the creations by Dam. Furthermore, Welchman states that pairing the revolutionary character of glass with the energy of the object reinforces each other.[68]

This use of the vitrine as a framing element is consistent with the shopwindow discourse, in which the purpose is to display the most visceral works as objects. Welchman argues that despite a glass border protecting objects and inhibiting direct physical contact, the capability to affect the observer by evoking feelings of wonder or unease is not toned down.[69] The glass of the parallel display cases in which the cow and the calf are placed exacerbates the encounter with their inside-out imagery, whereby nothing is left to the imagination.

As disputed by Bartram, the vitrine mocks the idea of nature being interpreted by rational, scientific normative systems and processes. Also, questions about the real and the

[64] Bartram, "Nature, Art and Indifference." 9.
[65] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, 97.
[66] Ibid., 114.
[67] Ibid., 64.
[68] Ibid., 97.
[69] Ibid., 103.

artificial arise, and this sensitivity is thought to be heightened even more when real animals are involved.[70] The static and hygienic-looking display units clashes with what is represented inside. In addition, the encasement also reminds the viewer of the scientific obsession with categorizing the natural world. For example, the extreme clean cut present with both carcasses indicates that there is little room for the dysfunctional and disordered. As a result, Hirst causes the viewer to reconsider the conventional, dominant techniques used to explain and understand nature.

Less attention is given to the, what Aloi refers to as, the 'cultural afterlife', which would include biographical information or data to explain events that are important in its material history. [71] This would for example include information on the animal's life, genetics, evolution or anything else of value for the field of taxidermy and the natural history discourse.[72] Instead of providing this information and adding to the cultural afterlife of animals that have been turned into art pieces, examples in the art by Hirst are stilled, isolated, sterilized, and further abstracted from their reality and become regarded as a kind of commodity. When working with this 'controversial' medium of animal materials, the complex relationship between animals and humans is prioritised.

Besides these tank-like vitrines, Hirst has produced more theatrical, so-called 'cabinet pieces'. Compared to those by Steffen Dam, the variations by Hirst are significantly larger in size. For these pieces, Hirst directly reflected upon the curiosity cabinet, mainly in terms of organisation, by showing objects inside glass or steel chambers and vitrine constructions. Bowry contends that when artists use the cabinet as an empty vessel, as a sculptural unit in which objects are arranged, it is not about the single object within but the overall organisation, aesthetic, and display tactic.[73] Consequently, the point Bowry is making is that the cabinet becomes 'an object in and of itself', with its connotations to the past, the bizarre and secretive.[74]

The historical tradition of collecting curiosities and their visual impact to arouse wonder and amaze is referenced by Hirst, who has explored the complex relationship between art and science by taking in elements such as hierarchy, symmetrical arrangement, and visual analogies. However, the artist introduces a level of falsification, where logic appears to be present but is absent. Hirst has made multiple curiosity cabinets, varying in form, shape, and

[70] Bartram, "Nature, Art and Indifference." 8.
[71] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 54.
[72] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 54.
[73] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 296.
[74] Ibid..

content, sometimes additionally embellished with mirror backdrops. For example, clinical and sterile feeling medicine cabinets filled with tools, instruments or other ready-mades. Other variations illustrate a repetition of a similar trick being performed. Here, Hirst uses different items such as medical tools and instruments, specimens and other objects with which the artist addresses the themes of hope, fear, life, dread, and death. The contents of the contemporary curiosity cabinets are rendered behind a glass barrier to stylise and abstract them, calling attention to their diversity in terms of material, shape, and effect.

Illustrative of this phenomenon is the wall-mounted cabinet piece called *Isolated Elements Swimming in the Same Direction for the Purpose of Understanding (Left)* [fig.10]. This installation includes thirty-eight varieties of preserved fish encapsulated in perspective boxes to emulate as though they are frozen in time and space. Welchman has argued that in display units, compartments reinforce the intrinsic values of what is on display and work as a marker of difference by separating the contents in terms of relation.[75] This compartmentalisation is a vital element in this piece and is supported by the idea that it promotes visual interaction and stimulates the search for differences and similarities.

As seen here, these fish, which from afar look relatively alike, are positioned in visual harmony so that they can be analysed for their interrelations. The arrangement was based on the mechanisms of the curiosity cabinet, particularly those of the nineteenth century, where the artist has taken in aspects of scientific order and minimalism to create a sense of permanence in contrast to the impermanence of life of the fish.[76] The influence from the 19th-century analytical presentations with systemised order is clearly visible, where 'nature' is placed in a cabinet and principles of collecting, classifying, categorising and ordering are reflected by presenting the fish as 'carriers of knowledge'. Another striking element taken from older scientific collections is how the focus in this cabinet seems to be more on the side of objectivity and representativeness rather than emphasising rarity and curiosity.

Again, formaldehyde is used to chemically preserve the specimens, through which Hirst tried to give them the illusion of life, but it is equally important as a communication medium.[77] When it concerns using animals as a material interface, according to Aloi, the bodies of the animals draw the connection between animals and humans and uncover previously undiscovered connections of knowledge and power.[78] As in this example, the

[75] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine,* 113-114.
[76] Damien Hirst, ''Isolated Elements Swimming in the Same Direction for the Purpose of Understanding (Left), 1991.''
[77] Ibid.
[78] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 64.

physicality of the taxidermied fish serves as a means to reveal power relationships and the rhetorical structures that have become inscribed in the type of display are deconstructed. This compartmentalisation of the taxidermied animals, as stated by Aloi, allows viewers to piece together shared histories and reconfigure the human-animal relationship.[79] In the case of Hirst's composition, the emphasis is again on man's control over nature and this exploration of the existing relationship between humans and the natural world. Also present is again the link to the way nature is understood in today's time, with a strong focus on the scientific view.

As Bartram claims, the denaturalized and hyper-perfected view of nature, without any imperfections, such as highly stylised representation, sharp lines of the display unit, and the representation of nature in endless repetition and duplication, make a connection to the scientific understanding of nature.[80] Likewise, as seen in the vitrines with the bisected cow and calf, the display has a very 'clean' appearance, leading to feelings of scientific detachment. This is further reinforced by the effect this cabinet organisation evokes, which provides a systematic overview of the variety of fish. This has to do with what Welchman has said about glass heightening the level of scientific detachment by exchanging the possibility of touch for the predominance of gaze, which also heightens the enchantment flowing from the objects, thereby augmenting the desire of the viewer to interact with it.[81]

Other series demonstrate a more direct connection to old *naturalia* collections, such as the butterfly paintings that are part of the *Kaleidoscope* series. Butterflies have been a popular motif in the creations by Hirst, who has worked with butterfly iconography multiple times. The artist's work has ranged from working with live butterflies in exhibition spaces, making prints with butterflies imagery, to incorporating real butterfly bodies. The first butterfly work was created in 1991 as part of a series of all-monochrome paintings that included at least one butterfly.[82] In his *Kaleidoscope* series, Hirst plays with the notion of symbolism attached to the butterfly, including their associations of growth, beauty, change, death, resurrection, and transformation.

Whereas he initially depicted butterflies on the painted surface, he later changed his method and started to use the animals more directly by incorporating their material form.[83] With this significant shift from form to actual animal material, the artist started to use the delicate wings of tropical butterfly species. He used these wings to create ornamental patterns

[79] Aloi, *Speculative Taxidermy*, 70.
[80] Bartram, "Nature, Art and Indifference.", 5-8.
[81] Welchman, *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, 114.
[82] Blanché, *Damien Hirst*, 210.
[83] Ibid., 223.

formed by a complex network of wings. A direct visual influence for this series were tea trays produced in the Victorian era (1837-1901), which incorporated butterfly wings to form intricate patterns [fig.11].[84] Hirst owned one of these trays himself and was captivated by the exquisiteness of the wings, which inspired him to create works that captured a similar effect.[85] The unique patterns of the individual wings become part of even more complex patterns in which similitude and difference are highlighted.

The *Kaleidoscope* pieces are created in his Brixton studio with the help of assistants and fellow artists. The actual butterflies that have been used to create the pieces are part of old butterfly collections bought up by the artist himself. The selected butterfly wings were prepared, treated, and flattened, but apart from these changes, they maintain their natural state. The wings were then carefully transferred and adhered to a primed canvas, where the clear spaces, the reserves, surrounding the wings are filled with coloured household gloss. The pieces are kaleidoscopic in effect, meaning that the combination of multiple patterns produces the effect of looking through a kaleidoscope lens, hence the name of the series.

The series, in general, demonstrate an array of complex patterns and colour palettes, each piece having its effect obtained via differently sized, shaped, and coloured wings. The compositions are sometimes geometric and linear, producing parallel circles of wings, and other times applied more arbitrarily. In each version, butterfly wings zone out from the centre to form a piece that closely resembles mosaics and mandalas: a circular figure representing the universe, wholeness, totality, and unity; To give an idea, some of his artworks symbolise and are named after the four elements, representing earth, air, fire, and water. This in turn relates to the idea of universalism that was pursued in old curiosity collections.

The material forms and shapes of the butterflies are explored, which goes hand in hand with a paradoxical appreciation of admiring their beauty and highlighting the tragedy of their death. Rather than focusing merely on morbidity, the *Kaleidoscope* paintings are more about the celebration of life and beauty in the natural world, emphasized by the titles given that express the splendour they embody. When looking at *Rapture* [fig.11], the repetition, symmetry, visual analogy, and harmony of the concentric composition stand out most. When looking at the piece from a distance, these colours merge into a colourful and bright composition.

[84] Damien Hirst, ''Rapture, 2003.''

[85] Damien Hirst, Interview. Damien Hirst, '' Artist Damien Hirst at Tate Modern | Tate '', artist talk with Damien Hirst at Tate Modern, interview by curator Ann Gallagher, Tate modern, published April 4, 2012, YouTube video: 09:45

From up close, individual multicoloured butterfly wings become visible [fig.12]. These butterfly wings still capture their original elegance and liveness through their reflective properties. The contrast between the natural and artificial is also in line with what was seen in cabinets of curiosity. Handling butterfly specimens in the manner seen by Hirst can also be traced back to historical entomological collections, where, albeit significantly different techniques, there is an emphasis on the butterfly wings.[86] When displaying entomological specimens, significant attention was devoted to the wings in their opened-out form.

In early modern times, building collections was a popular pastime, especially for those who aimed to contribute to scientific knowledge and taxonomic data on species variation. Butterflies were pinned and presented in cabinets or cases intended explicitly for display. A rare example of a 19th-century Dutch butterfly cabinet [fig.13] that has remained in its original shape over time is an example of a specialized miniature collection and how it relates to curiosity. The content of this unconventionally shaped collection, which is disguised as a selection of books, could be explored layer by layer to reveal butterfly wings set between glass plates [fig. 14]. This example and the history of entomological collections demonstrate that Hirst was not the first to experiment with butterfly wings alone and that a long tradition of collecting practices with a similar emphasis has preceded his practice.

As discussed throughout this chapter, themes of visual resemblance, repetition, analogies and differences, the exploration of life and death, framing and the preservation of animal material play a big part in the work produced by Hirst. Also visible is his engagement with and reflection on older concepts, particularly his interest in the cabinet of curiosity as a model for visually framing his work, in which he sharply contrasts the natural with the artificial by means of preservation.

[86] Definition entomological collection: entomology is the study of insects. Specimens in collections played an important role in telling the story of collecting, taxonomy, and the desire to comprehend the natural world.

Chapter 4 | Mark Dion: Reinterpretations of visual strategies and concepts

The reappearance of the cabinet of curiosity in the art created by Mark Dion (New Bedford,1961) is mainly traceable through resurfacing fragments in terms of contents and framing. Again, ideas, processes, and concepts are visualised and ingrained rather than wholly duplicated. As stated by Bowry, generally speaking, when contemporary artists re-imagine the historical curiosity cabinet, they tend to reference it and examine its meaning through ready-mades and unique display spaces, like vitrines and pedestals.[87] As becomes clear from her statement, these are fundamental characteristics in many contemporary works of art that cite the historical cabinet of curiosity. These are also seen in the assemblages, sculptural works and mixed-media installations created by Dion. In his pieces, he incorporates an assortment of objects he has collected over the years and even constructs entire spaces that emulate the feeling of a curiosity cabinet.

Dion cites the curiosity cabinet in diverse ways. Overall, his work is generally quite large in scope and shows objects in visually pleasing compositions that resemble the display and organisation of objects in historical cabinets of curiosity. For example, he uses the curiosity cabinet model as a metaphor to show how humans have taken control of the natural world, as a physical framing device in which cabinet-like furniture, pedestals, and vitrines are used to mount objects, and finally, by drawing inspiration from the contents of such collections. The final products are installations and sculptural works that show a physical and conceptual connection to the historical cabinet of curiosities.

Dion's spectacular, imaginative curiosity cabinets are modelled after historical cabinets of curiosity and are characterized by their unique, atypical arrangement of objects. The artist gained fame due to his installation pieces that have a scientific presentation and reflect on natural history, resulting from his intense preoccupation with the principles of the cabinet of curiosity. Dion is also known for his fabricated spaces in museums and institutions, where instead of taking on more conventional representations, he transforms the atmosphere in the exhibition spaces creating the illusion of another space. The most famous examples are the storage room and the laboratory. To some extent, Dion follows the same pattern as Dam and Hirst by creating imaginary spaces, but unlike these two artists, Dion delves deeper into the connotations of the curiosity cabinet, and its function in meaning construction and challenges these perceptions and conventions to a greater extent.

[87] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 277.

Bowry has stated that contemporary artists have started to delve into the act of collecting itself and examine display methods, taxonomies, epistemologies and iconographies that support object interpretation. [88] Dion's practice aligns with this, where he actively explores the cabinet of curiosity's connotations and crosses different territories, methodologies and strategies. His work can be regarded as an endeavour to resurrect the 'universal museum' of the past in which he addresses the perception of nature, ecological issues and examines the science of authority.[89] To do this, he adopts scientific methods of collecting, organizing, and displaying objects, most notably those used in archaeology.[90] Dion is not only thought of as an artist but also an environmental activist and avid collector who is captivated by converging order and chaos. Besides this, he could also be labelled as an adventurer. The theme of the explorer is frequently addressed, both as it existed in the past and today. Instead of the explorers in the past searching for exotic or extraordinary materials and objects, Dion takes on this role of the explorer where he works with objects obtained during his site-specific excursions or organized project excavations and later incorporates these into his creations.

As specified by Craig Richardson, contemporary artists tend to reinterpret sites of cultural heritage in their art practice through the process of intervention. Typically, they produce site-specific works of art, and they visually or conceptually intervene with the authoritative representation in the museum.[91] Dion's work corresponds to this, as institutional criticism is integral to his presentation strategy. The artist recurrently collaborates with and exhibits his work at institutions with a shared interest in the history of the natural world, such as natural history museums, botanical gardens, zoos, and science museums. In the museum space, a reading of objects is often initiated through methods of viewing and chronological sequencing, where objects are presented in such a way to allow side-by-side comparison. Richardson argues that these viewing technologies, regardless of exact display unit or type, are meant to assist viewers to look comparatively.[92]

The artist is mainly inspired by how natural history is represented in spaces of knowledge and how this vision circulates in society. In his work, Dion addresses the quest of why some things are referred to as 'nature' and how nature is depicted in particular ways, most notably in the scientific field. To explore these topics, he explores the systems of knowledge

[88] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 311.
[89] Mark Dion ''Mark Dion: Methodology | Art21 Episode #042: "Extended Play"'' Art21, published December 11, 2008, YouTube video.
[90] Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, ''Mark Dion.''
[91] Richardson, "Artists' 'embedded Reinterpretation' in Museums and Sites of Heritage." 24.
[92] Ibid.

presentation, production and accompanying assumptions that form the basis of how the fields of art and science classify, structure, and convey data. Dion returns to the origins of the epistemic discourses to investigate the dominant classification systems. His method is to immerse himself in these ways of ordering, where his interests, for the most part, lie in the reasoned, subjective, and objective. By borrowing scientific methods of collecting, classifying, and displaying material and embedding this in his art practice, the logical and analytical are contrasted with the subjective and irrational. He strives to elicit the visitor to reflect upon how to interpret this natural history by questioning the objectivity of science and how institutions shape our understanding of the world. According to the artist, his duty is to question tradition and challenge established societal perceptions.[93]

The sculptures and installation pieces made by the artist frequently emulate the embodiment of values of a specific time, ordering practices of the natural history museum display and its accompanying academic methodology. He makes visible how nature is continuously reinterpreted, reshaped and constructed. Unlike the approaches taken by Dam and Hirst, Dion mirrors, encapsulates, and contrasts the aesthetics, classification systems, and modes of organising that curators, explorers and scientists would use. Dion playfully questions the authority of each and establishes a connection between the past and the present.[94] Generally speaking, Dion accomplishes this by inserting humorous, illogical or ambiguous elements into his compositions, such as inserting visual puns or other subverting elements that deconstruct the assumed logic or scientific connotations. About his approach, Dion says he works as an amateur biologist, scientist, and archaeologist. On no account does he claim to be any of those persons and argues that he merely shadows their methodologies instead of fully recapitulating them.[95]

The artist has developed several cabinets displaying ‘waste’ or found objects from various locations. They take on different forms each time, sometimes showing locked cabinets with objects presented behind a glass barrier and other times in open architectural cabinet frames, as seen in *Cabinet of marine debris* [fig.16]. This theatrical installation consists of a grey architectural unit with multiple shelves, where items of various colours and sizes are placed. This is done in a similar way as seen in the works created by Damien Hirst. *Cabinet of marine debris* includes *objet trouvé*, which were gathered at the islands off the coast of Alaska

[93] Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, “Mark Dion.”
[94] Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, “Mark Dion: Theater of Extinction.”
[95] Mark Dion ‘’Mark Dion: Methodology | Art21 Episode #042: "Extended Play"’’ Art21, published December 11, 2008, YouTube video.

during an expedition. The objects presented in the cabinet-like structure were all collected from the ocean, where the trash now is deployed as both a medium and a message.

This cabinet includes all types of marine debris: plastic litter, fishing nets, trawl floats, ropes, empty bottles, and plastic bottle caps, which are presented in the various compartments. Items considered to be of no or little value are presented like true works of art, where items become augmented in their value through their position and hierarchy within the cabinet. The piece demonstrates the artist's awareness of ideological power buried in categorisation. In this case, the artist targets the field of archaeology by turning a selection of scrutinized objects into a work of art. Conforming to the writings of Vilches, Dion borrows methodologies used in the field of archaeology and shows the process of analysis as an object in and of itself.[96] There is also the assertion that exotic or anthropological subject matter does not have to be archaeological in nature.[97] Therewith, Dion aimed to get across that even simple objects can be intriguing to investigate.

As seen in *Cabinet of marine debris*, the artist positions existing objects in a new context and creates juxtapositions with them. By doing so, Dion references the aesthetic and museological conventions of the curiosity cabinet, but simultaneously he also disrupts it by cross-examining their logic and ubiquity. Herewith, he comments on the perception of authority and objectivity that is very existing in the public discourse. As mentioned earlier, the goal of the artist is to deconstruct the imposed logic of the cabinet by subverting and repositioning of what seems to be authoritative, logical, factual, and scientific. Consequently, there exists a type of codification, falsification, and construction of logic between the elements within the composition. The artist destabilizes the logical systems of thought and attempts to impose a new order via a presumed, logical framework where there is none, leading to a kind of pseudoscience.

Aside from trying to replicate methodologies from various scientific fields, Dion widely reworks the idea of *scala naturæ* that was articulated in many early curiosity collections, even though quite loosely and unfounded. This Aristotelian principle entails assigning objects by hierarchy on a metaphorical 'ladder' that corresponds with their level of perfection. Inanimate objects like minerals and crystals would be most insignificant, in ascending order to fossils, plants, animals to humans, ending with God, who was considered most superior in the chain. Bowry, who has looked at traces and reinterpretations of the early modern cabinet of

[96] Vilches, "The Art of Archaeology." 200.
[97] Ibid., 219.

curiosity in the oeuvre of Dion, expresses that in his works, the cabinet-style display is employed to frame assembled objects into a composition where items are compressed to frame materials into a hierarchy. Through the relative positioning of objects to one another, their location and proximity finally construct their meaning.[98] However, the element of *scala naturae* revives not so much in terms of symbolic or monetary value, where a hierarchical value can be distinguished but more arranged by aesthetic qualities and visual similarity.

Most of all, attention is given to the visual arrangement to admire the objects for their colour, size, visual relationships or other similarities and differences. Oddities that once belonged to the ocean and are typically considered floating pollution suddenly are ascribed with meaning and are now treated equally to luxury goods. Rather than showing some remarkable objects found in nature and refined by man to bring out their beauty or splendour, much like in the historical cabinet of curiosity, this grouping of objects does something completely opposite. Instead, nature has intervened with the artificial objects resulting in an altered state. Primarily due to environmental factors, the forms and colours have changed. For instance, this is visible in the softened colours and the faded surface of the plastic containers.

Dion reconfigures the cabinet of curiosity but disrupts the expected valuable content and distorts its scientific and rational image. Structuring the objects in assemblages in this cabinet-like frame raises questions about where the objects come from and who is responsible for the objects ending up polluting the oceans. Herewith, Dion makes visible the impact of humanity and damaging aspects of culture on the marine ecosystem and the natural world as a whole. This also is illustrative of how the artist delves into the relationship between things to conceptualise ideas and themes rather than explore each object in its isolated form, as it is the grouping of objects that constitutes their power.

As previously stated, the approach taken on by the artist closely parallels the one of the archaeologist museum, where assembled materials have been researched and put on display to convey a narrative. Yet, the difference is that Dion does not provide a story or information on how his work should be interpreted or what exact statement he is trying to make. Whether the artist comments on possession, consuming, depleting, polluting, or endangering species is not made explicit. Instead of ascribing meaning by expressing it in words, he mirrors the tragedy in his art. Through visual language, he makes visible an understanding of the natural world as

[98] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet," 263-264.

it was in the past, as it is at the present moment, and how it might become by tenuously pointing towards the future.

This way of framing the natural world can be understood in line with what Davis and Turpin have written about how artworks can serve as a vehicle to address the theme of the Anthropocene, which they have described as a sensorial phenomenon and experience of living in a world that is increasingly declining.[99] David and Turpin argue that artists reflect the living on a damaged planet by incorporating visual and discursive strategies, without scientific objectivity like data visualisation or satellite imagery climate models, but through objects instead.[100] This factor of scientific background knowledge or data interpretation is not present in this example, as is the case for his other works.

In other installation works, Dion focuses slightly more on the contents of curiosity collections and less on the methodologies and display principles. To give an idea, Dion once made a cabinet presenting off-scale replica models of animal figures and teeth, tusks, and skulls of animal species that are extinct or on the verge of becoming so. For example, the legendary tusk of the endangered narwhal, formerly thought to be a unicorn horn, was a sought-after item in early modern times due to its exceptional rarity and its magical, protective properties. Numerous objects in curiosity collections were believed to have miraculous or apotropaic qualities and were endowed with a specific status.

However, today, most objects are no longer enchanted to a similar level of wonder as they did in the past. For example, 'mystery' objects like coco-de-mer, corals, bezoar stones, or narwhal tusks have been unravelled by science. Be that as it may, their aesthetic appearances are still a theme of exploration, as epitomized by Dion, who visually puns these types of *Kunstkammer* objects. This is visible in a piece made in 2014 called *New Curiosities for the Green Vault. Ostrich Egg* [fig.17], where the artists created a *simulacrum* of an artificially worked ostrich egg. A goblet like this is a typical example of a piece one could come across in a curiosity collection. This convincing replica is made of an ostrich egg, plastic, metal, and spray paint, which stands in stark contrast to 'real' examples that have been decorated with the utmost precision whilst using the most costliest materials. As with pre-existing specimens from earlier centuries, the features of the egg are highlighted, making the egg itself stand out the most.

As a source of reference, to highlight the level of analogy, figure 18 demonstrates a

[99] Davis & Turpin, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 3.
[100] Ibid., 3-4.

typical *Kunstkammer* model that was once part of the curiosity cabinet of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1552- 1612). This example shows an embellished ostrich egg with gilded silver, produced around 1560-1580. Apparent is the intertwining of the skills and craftsmanship of a goldsmith and the use of exotic natural materials. The ostrich egg by Dion is ornamented through an engraving showing an ostrich with its head stuck into the ground, and the 'gilded' ornaments on top show the hanging head and neck of an ostrich as if the part hidden under the ground reveals itself again. The ostrich egg is decorated in such a way that it almost appears as if the artist is ridiculing it.

Besides large installations and singled-out items, the artist also produces small-scale sculptural objects, where animals or animal remains are put in museum-like presentations. They seem to comment on or symbolize the loss of natural diversity due to pollution, climate change, and hunting. Dion highlights the process of naturalization and denaturalization inherent to the museum. He mainly obtains this effect by inserting special effects such as creating fictional scenarios or providing animals with funny attributions. For instance, taxidermied animals smeared with tar or artificial animals placed in metal buckets filled with small ornaments, serving as traces of humanity.

As can be seen in *Mandrillus Sphinx* [fig.19], an artificial skeleton of a mandrill is supported via an armature inside a glass box, mounted on a wooden transportation crate that serves as its pedestal. As can be derived from the title of this piece, the binominal, scientific name of the endangered primate species is used. This piece belongs to a series of similar sculptures presented in this manner, including casts of skeletons of various organisms, some examples being a manatee, crocodile, dodo, bear and even a human foetus. The recurring element throughout is the presentation of animal remains presented in a vitrine, with a ground covered in tar on which various found objects are laid.

In these pieces, the artist teases aspects of the display conventions seen in the natural history museum by presenting them almost as hunting trophies or a type of relic on a bed of 'human valuables'. The idea of lost context is very much highlighted by presenting the objectified animals behind glass in anything but typical museum displays. This brings attention to how the thing is isolated, fitted into a strange environment on the one hand, but also how it ties to the other components and their meaning.

As examined by Poliquin, displays in natural history museums most of the time show animals presented in seemingly natural, simulated environments.[101] Dion contradicts this by

[101] Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 111.

creating a new artificial, non-fitting environment. The mandrill skeleton cast is not set up as one would expect in a museum setting, where usually information is provided and where animals are preserved truthfully and realistically through perfected taxidermy. Commonly, installations in natural history would show a variety of skeletons to demonstrate connections between species, rather than a singled-out specimen in a travel crate, with all its connotations attached.

Instead, Dion combines the cast bones with an array of miscellaneous items presented on a ground of tar, including trinkets such as coins, keys, jewellery, and shards of broken service wares [fig.20]. Juler and Robinson ague that, rather than seeking explanations through information panels or captions, presentation lets objects speak for themselves, which would motivate learning by prompting thought-provoking questions.[102] The combination of numerous forms in the sculpture elicits a response from the viewer, who begins to consider the components in their isolated form, taking in their textures, shapes, and materials and their relationships with the other components. There is no information available on how to interpret the piece.

He works with the conventions of museum displays and changes them by organising the natural world using a different sensibility through his self-made methodology. Accordingly, the non-symbiotic relationship with nature and the nature-culture dichotomy are made explicit. The objects are used to conceptualise a particular idea and are not ascribed with a specific meaning on their own. The challenging of perception, representation and conventions is done via appropriation, manipulation and ordering of the natural versus unnatural. He goes against the grain of policy and creates paradoxes where he subverts the classification system but maintains them at the same time.

This chapter has outlined some of the general characteristics found in Mark Dion's work. It is clear how the artist reinterprets and subverts organizing principles and visual arrangements by incorporating humorous elements or imposing logic, leading to pseudoscience. Dion visually and conceptually parallels concepts of the cabinet of curiosity while also expressing institutional critique and exploring and questioning display conventions, nature representation, and the authoritative voice of science.

[102] Juler & Robinson, *Post-Specimen Encounters Between Art, Science and Curating,* 76.

Chapter 5 | Marc Quinn: Artificially preserving the natural world

The engagement with art and science is ever so strong in the contemporary field of the visual arts as Marc Quinn (London, 1964) demonstrates in his art practice. More specifically, Quinn draws upon the concept of wonder itself, which is a fundamental component of his work and forms the conceptual link to the cabinet of curiosity. Compared to the work of the other artists that have preceded, again, a different angle is explored, where it is more about trying to embody wonder rather than any direct referencing or clear visual resemblances to the cabinet of curiosity. Even though the vitrine remains an important component, the visual clues to the historical cabinet of curiosity are more ambigious, as the link is to be found most in the ideas and symbolism that underlie his artistic practice.

The drive to discover nature is also strongly present throughout his work. Quinn's work is diverse and executed in various media, including sculpture, painting, and installation work. New advances and techniques allow the artist to experiment with materials, colours, textures, and surfaces, where he varies from working with more traditional materials, like marble, to unconventional ones, including organic matter. The concepts of life, death and beauty are frequently addressed throughout his oeuvre. One of his most famous series where he does this and deals with organic materials is his ongoing series of self-portraits called *Self*. This series in which Quinn became inventive and experimented with blood in a frozen silicon oil solution led him to become curious and investigate what other organic matter could be immersed.

Consequently, Quinn wondered about freezing one of the most delicate creations seen in nature: the flower in bloom.[103] The outcome of this experiment was a flower that looked identical and was visually immortal and where a high level of realism was obtained. In these flower pieces, the artist blurs the line between the flower still-life and sculpture, creating hybrids that position themselves between static and alive. Quinn, for example, engages with the physicality, the tactile qualities, of frozen flowers in his sculptural installations. Nature's transformation into art raises questions on life and death. The curiosity of Quinn is piqued by the notion of when a thing dematerialises to the point where it becomes challenging to dispute whether it has become 'an image of itself', whether it is dead or whether it is alive.[104]

Instead of emulating lifelike representations, Quinn artificially preserves real material and deals with the real physicality of botanical specimens. To some level, Quinn's approach resembles the one by Hirst, that of eternalising organic material, so that what is

[103] Marc Quinn, ''Artworks: Eternal Spring (Red) I.''
[104] Ibid.

inside can be admired for its splendour. The vitality of the flowers is preserved perfectly, resembling the manner in which anatomical preparations give the illusion of life through perfected preparation techniques. To illustrate, *Eternal Spring (Red) I* [fig.21] shows an artificially preserved bouquet of red flowers in frozen liquid silicone. The work manifests the aesthetic outcome of an alliance between art and science and shows the mingling of the inorganic and organic. In reality, flowers bloom, wither and decay, yet Quinn resists this natural process by artificially conserving this peak of the flowering moment.

Interestingly, the flowers are no longer authentic in their material being, thus emphasizing their ephemerality. Quinn pays homage to the versatility and beauty of nature and captures it in an almost lifelike scene. Flowers decay quickly and only bloom for a short time, but by freezing them, Quinn has managed to capture their beauty for eternity. The effect is best summarized by the statement of Petry, who comments that working with preserved organic materials results in works that are slightly different from the traditional still-life but instead focus on the 'stilled life' idea, in which the trace of time in the natural world is artificially halted.[105] This idea of Petry's is important because it shows how artists again have this interest in the eternal and ephemeral, and thus relates to the idea of memento mori that was often referred to in art in the early modern period.

The metal unit is a specifically installed refrigerating case that emulates a scientific feeling. Besides adding to the scientific feel, it is more than a simple encasement as this display also has a clear functional purpose of conserving the flowers. Keeping the flowers in this perfect state requires the low viscosity silicone oil to be held at -20°C. Without this highly controlled environment, deterioration will set in as would happen to botanical specimens in real life. The fragile material juxtaposes the highly technical preservation processes, with which the artist is trying to symbolise the idea of transience and the passing of time.

The preference for ephemeral materials can be explained by the artist's pleasure in working with materials that might or might not last, as it allows him to engage with time and the process of remembrance, anchoring it in the present moment. Furthermore, the fact that his art requires maintenance affects whether in the future it remains 'alive' or whether the work itself evaporates into a memory, which emphasises the temporality of things even more.[106] In a sense, the artist plays God, where he alters the natural process of decay.

The theme of the *Eternal Spring* series was exploited further in a large installation

[105] Petry, *Nature Morte*, 179.
[106] Marc Quinn, "In Your Face: Interview: Marc Quinn," SHOWstudio, published December 5, 2014, Youtube video.

piece titled *Garden* [fig.22&23], a 12-meter-long architectural walk-through comprised of a large silver metal chamber lined with mirrors. Inside is a terrarium-like tank with exotic flowers and plants [fig.24]. This large installation displays and demonstrates the obsession with the beauty of nature and the challenges of visualising and preserving it. It can also be viewed in terms of the strong fascination with the natural world and control over nature. Compared to the *Eternal Spring* pieces, *Garden* might be considered an even more ambitious, extensive variation with a stronger connection to the observer.

Various plants and flowers have been brought together and selected, presumably according to their size, shape, intricacy, and overall aesthetic. Concepts like metamorphoses and dynamism are present through freezing 'time', keeping the flowers in their original colours and shapes by integrating them into an alienated, ethereal, stilled, sensational image suggestive of a kind of 'Garden of Eden'. The botanical installation can be conceived as an encyclopaedia of flowers and plants by bringing them together into a harmonious whole. The hybrid piece, in which hundreds of plants and flowers are frozen in silicone oil, exemplifies the blurred line between natural and artificial and unfolds the effect of something between a dream and reality. About this piece, Quinn has said the following:

> "For me, the Garden is about desire, it's about all the flowers in the world all coming up at the same time, in the same place, an idea of a perfect paradise. […] Sculpture is about transformation but what I like about the Garden is the flowers appear not to be transformed, however, if you touch them, you'd find that they're as brittle as porcelain. I wanted it to be about the manipulation of nature as well."[107]

As becomes clear from this quote, Quinn's emphasis is on showing aspects of manipulation: that *Garden* is constructed rather than naturally grown. At first glance, the installation might not look as artificial as it turns out to be, but when taking in its details, such as cut stems of flowers affixed to the bottom surface, it becomes clear that there is a high level of unnaturalness and controlled intervention. In conjunction with the cutting-edge technology used to preserve it all, this demonstrates how there is a human desire to influence and control the natural world.

Aloi contends that this installation by Quinn can be viewed as an otherworldly spectacle, an utopia in which the desire to control nature has been made visible through the selection and organization of beauty, especially the notion of attempting to keep it from

[107] Marc Quinn, "Artworks: Garden."

decay.[108] Similar to the works discussed in previous chapters, a spatial distance is generated by the glass that acts as a physical barrier between the spaces of the flower landscape and the outside world that belongs to the viewer. In consonance with Aloi's idea, the installation can be viewed in multiple ways. On the one hand, it is about capturing the beauty of this artificial paradise and on the other hand, it is inscribed with meaning on the separation between man and nature.[109] The mirror wall surrounding the tank aims to restore this unity. This is in line with what Aloi stated, that the space suggestively recomposes this detachment but simultaneously prevents us from re-entering, in a figurative sense.[110]

Although a significant difference is that in this installation, instead of visually resembling the style of cabinets of curiosity to represent the world, the focus is on the model of nature itself that is used to propagate a similar idea of universalism. Bowry argues that this strive for totality is directly related to the spatial strategies of the cabinet of curiosity, which was designed to be a perfect, universalist representation of real life, whilst also referring to a macrocosm, being an expanded or even imaginary space.[111] This idea is reflected by Quinn, who has aimed to create this perfect paradise by linking back to the extraordinary and wondrous and incorporating these elements of spatiality in his composition.

The following quote by Findlen on early modern botanical collecting is interesting to note when looking at *Garden*: ''The Botanical garden claimed to be a universal portrait of nature- an artificial paradise divested of much of its symbolic meaning as it strove to accommodate the ever-increasing number of plants.''[112] This quote demonstrates how there is also a connection to historical botanical collections because the installation is compiled of different botanical specimens used to create a miniature universe by combining species originating from different geographical locations.

As noted by Bowry, contemporary visual culture significantly influenced the way early modern collections were shaped, where concepts were adopted and altered to fit the chosen medium but shared a similar visual language.[113] For example, Bowry says that in still-life paintings, there was a longing to capture the multiplicity of creation in full splendour.[114] As in the painted flower still-life, the combination of flowers that would not bloom at the same time is mirrored, linking to collections of botanical curiosities, which flourished

[108] Aloi, *Why Look at Plants*, 103-104.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 235.
[112] Findlen, "Anatomy Theaters, Botanical Gardens, and Natural History Collections." 286.
[113] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 295.
[114] Ibid., 233.

simultaneously and shared a similar discourse. Quinn has used elements of both, including the symbolism of the still life paintings and the three-dimensionality of the natural botanical specimens. By using the real materials rather than an image, the symbol of impermanence and the eternal becomes even more convincing.

Another interesting connection to the cabinet of curiosity is the act of conserving. Findlen has examined how in scientific spaces, like sites of natural history and botanical gardens, nature was studied. This was accomplished by isolating natural objects and processes from their original locations and relocating them to the purpose-built spaces with artificial conditions in which nature could be investigated and experimented with.[115] This installation provides a scientific feeling where nature is controlled through the highly controlled refrigeration system. It appears that some experiment is taking place where the goal is not to gain knowledge of natural history but to express the idea of how nature can be controlled and shaped by man.

This urge to control nature and capture the beauty of botanical specimens is not necessarily a new phenomenon, as in the past, there already existed a desire to preserve the flower in bloom. Regarding botanical collecting in early modern times, Klemun exemplified that as the transfer and exchange of plants in Europe expanded, due to the growing desire driven by curiosity, collecting unknown or exotic plants became more common. These botanical collections and gardens included many ornamental plants, of which most were strange and exotic. Yet, the living plant had a considerable disadvantage because its appearance was likely to change over time.[116] In early modern times, a preference emerged for beautifully coloured plants over crushed, dried and resultingly discoloured, real plants. Slowly, new techniques started to emerge that made it better possible to conserve flowers and plants in their most genuine and convincing way and ensure their continued existence.

Bowry has written that visual representations of flowers in curiosity collections merely served as optical substitutes for real blossoming flowers since these could not be preserved or maintained due to their transience.[117] Yet, Smith and Findlen highlight how these visual representations were referred to as done *ad vivum*, meaning they were inextricably linked as 'true portraits' of nature.[118] This concept of an authentic representation of nature makes *Garden* so striking, as Quinn manages to create a sculptural

[115] Findlen, "Anatomy Theaters, Botanical Gardens, and Natural History Collections." 273.
[116] Klemun, *The Botanical Garden*, passage 8-10.
[117] Bowry, "Re-Thinking the Curiosity Cabinet,'' 235.
[118] Smith & Findlen, *Merchants & Marvels*, 3.

portrait that serves as a testimony of 'living' flowers. Whereas in early modern times, it was not possible for collectors to keep botanical specimens alive to their full potential without sacrificing quality, Quinn manages to do so by eternalising his selection of botanical specimens, although dematerialised, many centuries later.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the link to the cabinet of curiosity in these two works by Quinn is less direct as perceived in the works by the other artists. Primarily this has to do with the fact that the cabinet of curiosity has not been a direct source of inspiration for the artist. Interrelationships are primarily found conceptually, where ideas embedded in the cabinet of curiosity's collecting practices resurface. The sculptural installations by Quinn, where the artist brought together the arts and sciences through experimentation with nature, clearly demonstrated the connections between preserving and framing nature. The dissolution of the boundary between art and nature is also remarkable, thereby reintroducing historical collecting tendencies into his art.

Conclusion

In this research, case studies by contemporary artists Steffen Dam, Damien Hirst, Marc Dion, and Marc Quinn have been explored to determine whether and to what extent there is a revival of historical concepts of the cabinet of curiosity. This is accomplished through the application of visual analysis and the examination of statements made by those artists in order to assess their intentions regarding their artistic practice. The findings of the visual analysis of the various case studies have been related to writings on the cabinet of curiosity and its constituents. Especially those by Bowry and Welchman on the revival of visual and conceptual phenomena and the effect of specific formal arrangements rooted in curiosity cabinets. These findings, together with the existing literature on the phenomenon of the resurgent interest in the cabinet of curiosity of the past, indicate that parallels can be drawn in various ways.

The objective of this research is to answer the following question: 'To what extent can be spoken of a revival of concepts deriving from cabinets of curiosity when looking at the representation of nature in artworks by Steffen Dam, Damien Hirst, Marc Dion, and Marc Quinn, and how can this resurgence in contemporary art be understood?'. Based on the discussed case studies, it is not easy to indicate the extent of the revival of concepts of the cabinet of curiosity since there is a wide variety of approaches and tactics employed.

One of the reasons is that artists were inspired by distinct elements, which they have integrated into their work. Next to that, and similar to the great variety of cabinets of curiosity in the past, there is no fixed strategy employed in the contemporary reinterpretations by all four artists. For example, several perspectives are integrated, where the concepts and strategies allude to the poetic, visual and empirical approaches embedded in the cabinet of curiosity. Each artist has employed different tactics and strategies and addressed other ideas and concepts in their work. The result is that connotations to the historical cabinets of curiosity are available in every artwork, but every single artist added their own spin to it, leading to a wide variety of reinterpreted phenomena and concepts. Furthermore, focusing on the revival of elements of the cabinet of curiosity raise issues regarding the interpretation, as the messages of the artwork are not made explicit by most artists. Even more complicating is that it is not always clear whether reconfigurations are supposed to pay homage, mock, or comment on the forms of historical collections. This makes it challenging to identify the overarching resurgence of specific elements.

By the use of the statements of the artists, it is possible to determine whether they intended any relation with the cabinet of curiosity. From those statements, it has become clear

that the cabinets of curiosity are a source of inspiration to all except for Quinn. This direct relationship is the clearest for the art made by Dam and Dion since they verify the presence of an intended relationship with the earlier cabinets of curiosity, as their entire oeuvre is based on their interest in the curiosity cabinet. Overall, these artists sought ways in which objects, artefacts, specimens, or other materials could be exhibited best, taking into account notions of proximity, visual correlations and relationships according to material, size, colour, form, geography, or function.

Dam uses the cabinet framing to animate his objects, in which the mysterious and theatrical display is used as a tool to promote visual interaction with his art. Also, the formal arrangements help to further mystify his work by dissolving the boundaries between the natural and artificial, leading to a higher level of enchantment. Hirst also has made clear that he takes inspiration from old collections, mainly regarding the formal arrangements in the form of cabinet and vitrine constructions that he sets in to frame his work visually. He has used these vitrines and cabinet constructions as visual tools to make restaged reinterpretations that reference the scientific, rationale-based displays. The most recurring element in the work of Hirst is the act of framing, uncovering systems of collecting, classifying and ordering, highlighting visual similarities, and making the viewer aware of the act of gazing. Dion also verified his intention to integrate the concepts of the curiosity cabinet into his art, where he actively reworked concepts and strategies from the historical cabinet of curiosity. He has demonstrated a particular emphasis on institutional criticism and questioning the authority of scientific methodologies via the approach of involving archival research methods, juxta positioning objects in formal arrangements that are reminiscent of the cabinet, where subverts and deconstructs the logic and rational-based connotations of the cabinet of curiosity by inserting ready-mades, found objects and includes other visual puns. With Quinn, links to the historical cabinet of curiosity are to be found as well, especially concerning symbolism and ideologies. To some extent, his work has been linked, spatially and conceptually, to botanical specimen collections. Most noticeable is the inclusion of themes and concepts that were popular in the historical cabinet. Examples of this were the play between the artificial and the natural, temporality and spatiality, preservation and decay, and demonstrates connections to universalism that is so embedded in the discourse of the curiosity cabinet.

Still, these case studies provide more insight into the revival of concepts of the early modern cabinets of curiosity since it shows that there still is a certain presence. To some extent, the featured objects or concepts of the historical cabinet of curiosity are a source of inspiration or are imitated in order to convey a similar sense of the mysterious and extraordinary. Whereas

it has been shown how artists reference the types of objects seen in historical collections, most evident is nevertheless using the model of the curiosity cabinet as a framing device. As has been discerned, objects were many times arranged on pedestals, shelves or in vitrines. The scientific approach captured in the slightly later versions of the historical cabinet is also referenced most. Especially, the importance of themes such as classifications and cataloguing systems are highlighted, where occasionally their rationalised image has been subverted or deconstructed. It can be concluded that the interest in the cabinet of curiosity over the past decades is mainly mirrored in acts of referencing, refashioning and appropriating concepts that are originally rooted in the cabinet of curiosity. As is observed within the case studies, physical and conceptual features of the cabinet are perceived, particularly in terms of spatiality and visual signifiers. Although those contemporary reinterpretations are applied in different contexts and epochs, these artists have made it clear that the cabinet of curiosity is still capable of arousing wonder. These four artists have searched for manners to re-introduce the systems of thought and concepts that underlie these historical curiosity collections. Not only did most artists attempt to emulate feelings of wonder by direct visual interpretation of organising and displaying objects, but also by taking in elements of looking back at how the world can be viewed and understood. Instead of being mere reconstructions or simulations, the concepts underlying the cabinet of curiosity are used as a tool to question and examine systems of representation and meaning.

Most notable is how the model of the curiosity cabinet is used by all artists to emphasise the act of looking, thinking, and stimulating interaction with objects and exploring the material world, which corresponds to the interests reflected in the historical curiosity collections. The acts of framing and encasing, reinterpreting formal arrangements and displaying conventions, questioning classifications, shadowing methodologies, and creating visually pleasing arrangements of objects in which searching for interrelationships is encouraged, are some overarching components that stand out most.

The resurfacing themes in the case studies are more clearly set apart. One important recurring element is the predominance of vision and the strong focus on the exploration of materials, as well as controlling and manipulating the natural world. This is apparent from the chosen themes, as in many cases, links were made to life and death, showing a strong preoccupation with time and transiency. Similarly, the connection between arts and science is often made, where there is an interplay with the objectified truth of science. Sometimes elements are added that subvert or mock scientific principles, such as the imposing of order where it is essentially absent, resulting in a clash where one questions why certain elements are

included. Also, the subverting of scientific conventions, rationalised museum conventions and display strategies are frequently addressed.

Overall, it can be concluded that the revival of concepts rooted in the historical cabinet of curiosity revived in contemporary art practices. Cabinets of curiosity are mainly used for their ability to look at the world from a different perspective. In general, it can be stated that the framing of the natural world is most visible through incorporating phenomena and concepts. However, depending on which theme the artist emphasises, the extent and manner in which these are integrated vary greatly.

Illustrations

Fig. 1 Stephen Cook, *Richard Greene's museum at Lichfield, the "Lichfield clock" standing among cabinets of curiosities*, N/A (18th century), engraving, Wellcome Collection, United Kingdom, inv. nr. Wellcome Library no. 35709i.

Example of a display of a 18th century example curiosity collection by British antiquary and curiosity collector Richard Greene (1716–1793).

Fig. 2 Steffen Dam, *Wunderkammer*, 2021, glass and illuminated wooden presentation box, 89.85x 68.58x 17.78 cm, image courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 3 Detail of Steffen Dam, *Wunderkammer*, 2021, glass and illuminated wooden presentation box, 89.85x 68.58x 17.78 cm, image courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 4 Steffen Dam, *Specimens from an imaginary voyage*, 2017, blown and cast glass, h: 15-32 cm, image courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 5 Echinoderm collection of sea urchins and starfish collected by biologist and paleontologist Walter Percy Sladen, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, inv.nr. CC BY-SA 4.0

Fig. 6 Steffen Dam, *The secret life of plants,* 2006, blown, cut and polished glass, steel frame, h: 90 cm, image courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 7 Detail of Steffen Dam, *The secret life of plants,* 2006, blown, cut and polished glass, steel frame, h: 90 cm, image courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 8 Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child (Divided)*, 1993, glass, stainless steel, perspex, acrylic paint, cow, calf, silicone, acrylic, monofilament, formaldehyde solution, part 1: 2086 × 3225 × 1092 mm, 2086 × 3225 × 1092 mm, part 2: 1136 × 1689 × 622 mm, 1136 × 1689 × 622 mm, collection Tate Modern, London, inv. Nr. T12751, photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012.

Fig. 9 Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child (Divided)*, 1993, glass, stainless steel, perspex, acrylic paint, cow, calf, silicone, acrylic, monofilament, formaldehyde solution, part 1: 2086 × 3225 × 1092 mm, 2086 × 3225 × 1092 mm, part 2: 1136 × 1689 × 622 mm, 1136 × 1689 × 622 mm, collection Tate Modern, London, inv. Nr. T12751, photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012.

Fig. 10 Damien Hirst, *Isolated Elements Swimming in the Same Direction for the Purpose of Understanding (Left)*, 1991, glass, painted MDF, ramin, steel, acrylic, fish and formaldehyde solution, photograph: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd. © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012.

Fig. 11 Example of Victorian butterfly tea tray, image courtesy Oliver Brothers Fine Art Restoration and Conservation.

Fig. 12 Damien Hirst, *Rapture* (Kaleidoscope Paintings), 2003, diameter: 213,4 cm, butterflies and household gloss on canvas, photographed by Stephen White, image credit © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. DACS 2012.

Fig. 13 Detail of Damien Hirst, *Rapture* (Kaleidoscope Paintings), 2003, diameter: 213,4 cm, butterflies and household gloss on canvas, photographed by Stephen White, image credit © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. DACS 2012.

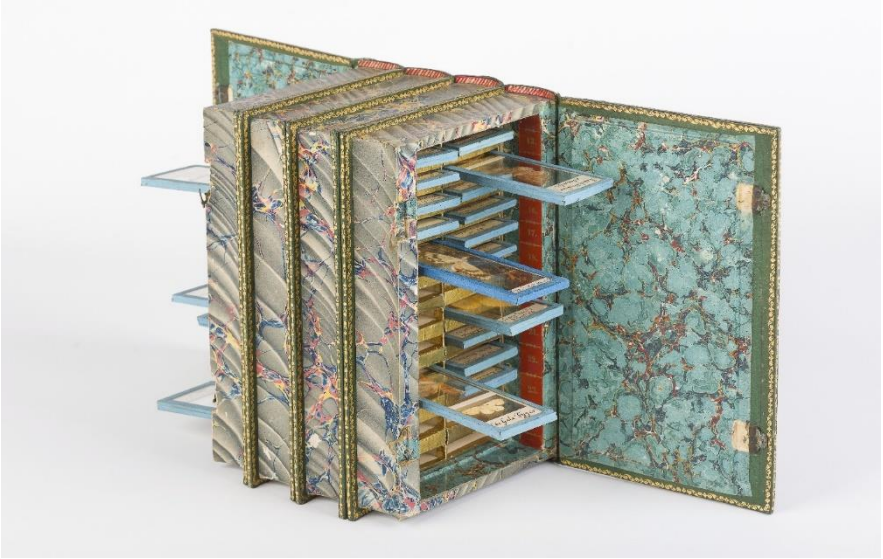

Fig. 14 Butterfly cabinet with 51 preparations, contained in four 'books' entitled J. Ehrlich, Collection of Walchersche Butterflies 1-4, ca. 1850, mahogany wood, glass, animal material, paper, Zeeuws Museum, Collection Royal Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen / Zeeuws Genootschap. inv. nr. G14-003, photograph: Anda van Riet and Mieke Wijnen.

Fig. 15 Detail of butterfly cabinet with 51 preparations, contained in four 'books' entitled J. Ehrlich, Collection of Walchersche Butterflies 1-4, ca. 1850, mahogany wood, glass, animal material, paper, Zeeuws Museum, Collection Royal Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen / Zeeuws Genootschap. inv. nr. G14-003, photograph: Anda van Riet and Mieke Wijnen.

Fig. 16 Mark Dion, *Cabinet of marine debris*, 2014, cabinet; wood, glass, metal, paint assorted marine debris; plastic, rope, 113 x 84 x 32 inches; 287 x 213.4 x 81.3 cm, courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, photograph: Genevieve Hanson.

Fig. 17 Mark Dion, *New Curiosities for the Green Vault. Ostrich Egg*, 2014, engraved ostrich egg, plastic, metal, spray paint, wooden cabinet, 46.3x16x15 cm, photograph: © Sebastian Stadler, copyright and courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler and Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, photograph: Sebastian Stadler.

Fig. 18 N/A, *Ostrich Egg Cup*, ca. 1560-1580, ostrich egg, gilded silver, h. 34 cm, collection Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer, inv. nr. Kunstkammer 982, Image credit ©KHM-Museumsverband.

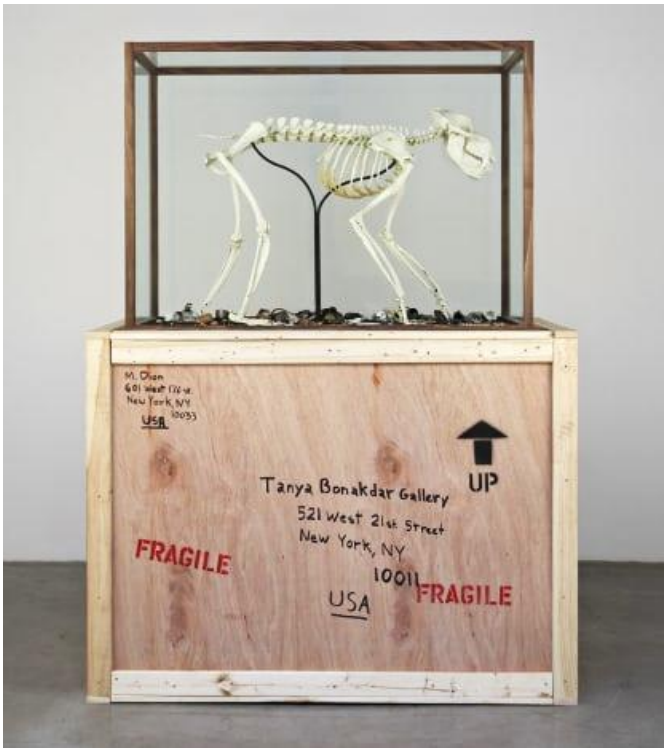

Fig. 19 Mark Dion, *Mandrillus Sphinx*, 2012, wood, glass, plastic, tar, metal, ceramic, paper, cork, ribbon, and string, 175.3 x 67.3 x 128.3 cm. private collection, Paris. photograph: Jean Vong. Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

Fig. 20 Detail of Mark Dion, *Mandrillus Sphinx*, 2012, wood, glass, plastic, tar, metal, ceramic, paper, cork, ribbon, and string, 175.3 x 67.3 x 128.3 cm. private Collection, Paris. photo: Jean Vong. Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

Fig. 21 Marc Quinn, *Eternal Spring (Red) I*, 1998, stainless steel, glass, frozen silicon, flowers, refrigeration equipment, 219.7h x 90w x 90d cm.

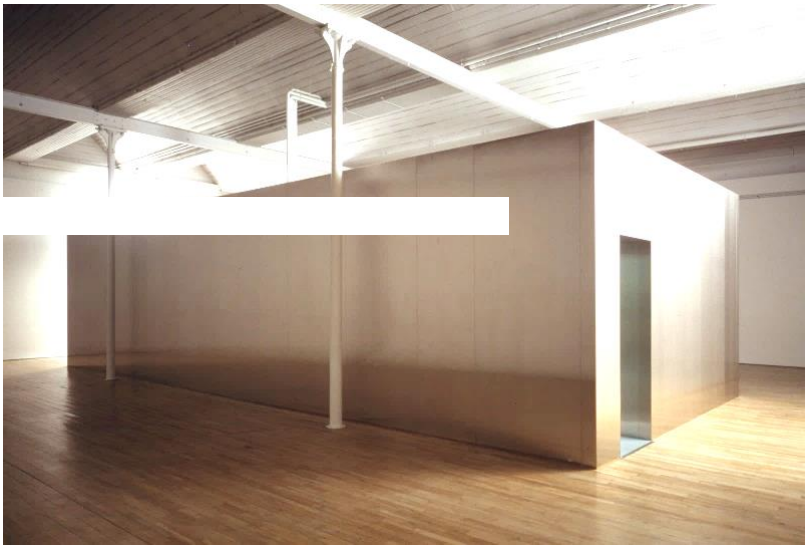

Fig. 22 Marc Quinn, *Garden*, 2000, cold room, stainless steel, heated glass, refrigeration equipment, mirrors, acrylic tank, low viscosity silicon oil held at -20°C, turf, plants, flowers, 320h x 1270w x 543d cm.

Fig. 23 Marc Quinn, *Garden*, 2000, cold room, stainless steel, heated glass, refrigeration equipment, mirrors, acrylic tank, low viscosity silicon oil held at -20°C, turf, plants, flowers, 320h x 1270w x 543d cm.

Fig. 24 Detail of Marc Quinn, Garden, 2000, cold room, stainless steel, heated glass, refrigeration equipment, mirrors, acrylic tank, low viscosity silicon oil held at -20°C, turf, plants, flowers, 320h x 1270w x 543d cm.

Illustration source list

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Fig. 13 Downloaded on April 1, 2022, https://qa.damienhirst.com/rapture

Fig. 14 Received via email by Zeeuws Museum on March 10, 2022

Fig. 15 Received via email by Zeeuws Museum on March 10, 2022

Fig. 16 Downloaded on April 1, 2022, https://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/artists/34-mark-dion/works/9650-mark-dion-cabinet-of-marine-debris-2014/

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