DISCUSSING HERITAGE AND MUSEUMS: CROSSING PATHS OF FRANCE AND SERBIA

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MEMORY ON THE CABINETS OF WONDERS IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART
MILENA JOKANOVIĆ

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MILENA JOKANOVIC
Ph.D Candidate, Research Assistant / University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Art History / Seminar for Museology and Heritology

Biography:
Milena Jokanovic is a Ph.D candidate and a research assistant at the Art History Department of Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. She completed master studies of Museology and Heritology at the same department, as well as at the UNESCO Chair for Cultural Policy and Management, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia and University Lumier, Lion, France. Her research interests therefore span the cultural heritage management, museology, theories of memory and Art History. Her current research focus is on the use of historical models of collecting in the modern and contemporary art practice.

Summary:
Memory on the Cabinets of Wonders in Modern and Contemporary Art

Motives and aesthetics of curiosity cabinets, collections consisting of different natural and artificial objects present in Baroque and Renaissance Europe could easily be recognized in Contemporary art. However, in this paper, I will argue how the interest for these wondrous assemblages has been born again in art and theory after the 18th and 19th century when these were almost completely forgotten. Throughout the first part of the paper I will briefly introduce the reader to the historical phenomenon of the cabinet of wonder – Wunderkammer. In the second segment the return of this phenomenon in the 20th century theory of art and Museology will be traced. In the third segment of the paper I will try to position the Wunderkammer recognition in Modern art and after as the appropriation and open quotation, methods characteristic for this period, while in the next unit I will discuss in more details characteristics of Surrealist art which could be linked to the cabinets of wonders. Finally the use of a box (container full of different objects) as an art medium will be observed as a direct quotation of Wunderkammer, which will lead to conclusion that Contemporary artists are deliberately using the cabinet of wonder setting in their installations, influenced by the whole history of art and being direct successors
of the Modern artists who have introduced collection of objects as an art medium. Consequently, aware of all the layers of meaning the use of *Wunderkammer* motive has today, Contemporary artist does not only question the institution of museum and the position of the artist today, but also coquette with today’s values systems.

Résumé :
*Souvenirs des cabinets de curiosités dans l’art moderne et contemporain*

Cabinets of wonders, those magnificent collections, were so present in the Renaissance and Baroque Europe. Spaces formed as chambers filled with different objects of curiosity, natural species, man-made artifacts, machines and literature, were aimed at contemplation, as well as representation of magnificent identity of the owners. These piles of objects delicately assembled and exhibited in vitrines, cabinet-shrunk or various boxes are thought to be predecessors of the modern museums. Things which were gathered tended to represent the microcosms, to be tridimensional encyclopedias of the whole world or at least of the world seen from the perspective of the creator of a collection.

“It is central, indeed, to the thesis underlying the cabinet of curiosities: for the aim of any collection is to halt the passage of time, to freeze the ineluctable progress of life or history, and to replace it with fragmented, controllable, circular time frame established by a finite series of objects that can be collected in full. Subordinated to the general order of things, this time frame delineates an island of sense placed amid an ocean devoid of meaning. While all collections are concerned with the dialectic between ‘disappearance’ and ‘survival’, cabinets of curiosities elevated this obsession to a higher and more rigorous level. Not only did they bring together objects that had eluded or survived the test of time – in itself a cause of wonder – but they also brought together hybrid, liminal objects (suspended between art and nature, death and life), thus investing them with new value, new power and new meaning”¹.

Maybe crucial words for these curious assemblages were: wonder, marvel, chaos and tendency towards the universal knowledge. However, these strange juxtapositions of nature, art and science were not welcomed during the age of order, taxonomies and division of science to many disciplines. This is why in the Enlightenment period, during the 18th century, the cabinets of wonders were slowly left to oblivion and replaced by laboratories meant for scientific experiments, natural museums which stood aside from the art museums and galleries. “The cult of curiosity was the cult of summation, of the sum total of things, of juxtaposition and addition repeated ad infinitum; the Age of Enlightenment, to reiterate a contrast that is now time-honored, adopted a stance at the opposite extreme, pacing itself firmly on the side of universality, of a hierarchical world view, and of an assumption of the validity of the broader

categories of reason”. The rise of the spirit of scientific inquiry and a belief in a new rational order were responsible for relegating ‘wonders’ to the lower slopes of human knowledge, while new methodologies of observation, collecting and research reduced the cult of curiosities to the status of an imperfect science. “It was thus a whole new philosophy of nature and truth, developed in the first half of the eighteenth century that marginalized and dispelled the charm of the cult of curiosities. There was no place for the inexplicable or the bizarre in a culture that demanded, then and now, a reality that was on the way to being explained (...).”

The interest in the cabinets of wonders and the aesthetics of curious was again woken up in the beginning of the 20th century. When it comes to theory, it was David Murray who “rediscovered” this phenomenon in 1904 in his work: *Museums, their History and their Use*, and then Julius von Schlosser with his seminal study: *Die Kunst – und Wunderkammern der Spät renaissance* from 1908, which influenced not just many museum theoreticians, but also artists during the 20th century. However, an Italian museologist, Adalgisa Lugli, was the first one to write about the *Naturalia e Mirabilia* in 1983 from the theoretical and historical perspective and then was invited by the main curator of the 42nd Contemporary Art Venice Biennial in 1986, to arrange the segment entitled *Wunderkammern* of the central exhibition with the topic *Arte e Scienza*. On one hand, this was the first big contemporary art exhibition of the 20th century deliberately mixing art and science again and revealing the unbreakable bonds of these two worlds. In the segment *Wunderkammern*, Adalgisa Lugli juxtaposed the historical cabinet of wonder with DADA and Surrealist artworks illustrating similarities between the two and showing that the inspiration for both is coming from the same impulses. Nowadays, there are many studies dealing with the historical perspective of the old models of musealization and creation of different collections, but also few papers and Ph.D studies having interest particularly in the cabinets of wonders and recognizing these in Modern and Contemporary art, a topic which will be central for this paper.

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2 Ibid, 189.
3 Ibid, 194.
Art as “mnemotechnics of beautiful”

The art world understood in the interpretative art theory as a system itself, where the artifact is seen now and here, always alluding to an invisible world, gathering of different circumstances and meanings in which that artifact has been born, brings many different media of expression in the 20th century. The concept of the cabinet of wonder, the installation with many collected things, can be recognized as the special medium in which an artist combines many various materials, objects, which sometimes have symbolical or memorial potential for the artist. The assemblage of all these material, but also immaterial and metaphorical memories, taken out of the real world and introduced to the world of art, transmits the Wunderkammern to today’s world. Keeping the objects from oblivion and making them crucial parts of his works, an artist is, sometimes spontaneously and sometimes on purpose, acting as a kind of museologist, a curator of his own collection. Marion Endt tackled some of the issues about contemporary artists and curators’ position within the institution of museum, while writing about the use of the Wunderkammern in the Surrealist and Contemporary art (on the example of Mark Dions’ works) in her Ph.D thesis. She argues that, by applying the paradigm of curiosity to objects, installations and exhibitions, contemporary artists and curators are replacing a historicist and chronological approach with a more associative and selective one, questioning “white cube” aesthetic and the monopoly institutions have claimed since the Enlightenment to hold over taste and truth. The concept of curiosity, as she observed, allows playful, experimental approach to collecting, classification and display, questioning the epistemological framework of institutions, which act as mediators and producers of knowledge. I would add to this thesis that artists nowadays, using the concept and the aesthetics of the cabinets of wonders which could be traced throughout the 20th century to today, are questioning the concept of museum institution and transforming it to a medium for expression. Also, artists are using collections of different objects and the heritage of museum and Art History as a field for issuing different value systems. The use of cabinets of wonders’ heritage in art could also be recognized as the appropriation in art, a kind of quotation of the earlier art and museum history. The term appropriation, as Dejan Sretenović discusses, has appeared
in the vocabulary of the art critique in the eight decade of the 20th century in writings of Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Foster Hal, Owens and Crimp who, while promoting and interpreting this notion, in the same time underlined its historical analogies going back to times of cubist collage, Duchamp’s ready-made and DADA/Constructivist photo-montage, which are marked as the result of the Modern art appropriation. Therefore, even though the appropriation in art happened at the beginning of the 20th century, it got its term at the end of it. It is also important to understand that appropriation is not the same as the “influence” or “adoption” which was quite an often activity in the art history when artists imitated their predecessors, quoted or even plagiarized. Appropriation is more complex activity in which an artist takes some particular position, being aware not just of the language he is overtaking, but also of psychological, social, cultural and technological factors which motivate his appropriation. This is what a theoretician Harold Bloom metaphorically calls “the conversation of art with itself.”

In his Salon 1864, Charles Baudelaire, who could be easily linked to the beginnings of Modern art and critique, notices: “Remembrance is the most important criteria of art; art is mnemotechnics of beautiful.” What he implies is that the great work of artistic tradition must admit remembrance to its predecessors and base its own roots on that tradition. However, predecessor must not best the new artwork: it must activate the sublime memories of important images – seek out of them, hideaway them, transfigure them. Following Baudelaire’s conclusions, undertextuality of mnemonic images which has to be differentiated from pastiche and opened quotations, creates an artistic tradition through giving over and transmission of potential meanings. In this sense, for Baudelaire, remembrance is a medium of painting. Still, Hal Foster argues that tradition is not transmitted but always constructed and always in a more temporary way than it seems to the observer. That periodicity has become so characteristic that, in the period of Modernism, tradition was felt as a burden, while the Postmodernist man feels it more as the insupportable lightness of being. The model of the artistic practice, which Baudelaire stands for, as Fos-
fter concludes, is art-historical itself, and it already presents the space of the museum as a structure of mnemonic ideas, palace or place (more imagined then real) where the art tradition is happening. Consequently, that “mnemotechnics of beautiful” presumes institutional transmission between the atelier, where the transfigurations are taking place, and exhibition and museum where these leave the impression on others. As Foster concludes, in the Baudelaire’s scheme “painting is the art of memory and museum is its architecture”.

Not much later after Baudelaire’s intervention, a painter Edouard Manet appeared in the discourse of the artistic memory. As Michael Fried confirms, Manet had slightly shaken Baudelaire’s model – his undertextuality of mnemonic images (which could be seen in Delacroix’ and Gericault’s paintings) went towards pastiche and non-occulted lines. Manet is the first Modern painter who explicitly made quotes without any mythical or historical narrative in the background. He turns to the old themes and painters, but in a completely open and clean manner, and maybe this is the reason why he can be considered as the first Modern painter, beginner of explicit quotations which Picasso and Braque with their colleagues, but also all the other modern and Postmodern artists, will follow. He transforms *The Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) with well-known evocations of Renaissance masters such as Rafael (a detail of his lost *Judgment of Paris* can be read in the central figures position) and unusual combination of traditional painting genres (as Nude, Still Life, Portrait and Landscape) into the “painting of modern life”. According to Fried, this pictorial vocabulary and the combination of genres create sublime unity of painting characteristic for Manet and his followers, the unity in the painting itself.

Hans Belting is not that far from these ideas when he notices that the art from Modern times onwards remembers its own history. He presumes the establishment of the museum as an irrevocable happening after which the look at the art has become the look at the art history. He sees collage as the metaphor of images and memories in our remembrance. “Things have their history” and those seemed more real than ideas for many artist. Widening the medium of art from the two-dimensional painting to three-dimensional installations, Belting extends the history of art to the history of visual culture.

Following this perspective, we can go even a step further and presume that if art is remembering its own history and museum is “architecture of memory”, then in the time of visual culture dominance when the idea of the classical museum has been surpassed (Postmodernism and afterwards), art is

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12 Ibid, 71.
also remembering the history of museology. This is how we can see that the entering of pop-culture and every-day-life objects into the art world in Modern times and extension of two-dimensional paintings to three-dimensional installations, is just one step further within the same process. As Belting is suggesting the end of the classical Art History, Danto the end of classical art itself at the moment when the ordinary mass produced objects are entering the Art World, and professor Tomislav Šola is consequently suggesting the end of the classical museums in almost the same period, the Modern and Postmodern period are probably developing in the direction of artists becoming aware of all those histories and ends, using this knowledge, and creating works which combine them. Through this prism, we can observe art installations which remind on, or explicitly use the cabinet of wonder, a predecessor of the modern museum, as a role model for the setting. Still, before reaching contemporary times, it is interesting to see how everything started and where the cabinets of wonders are recognized in Modern art at the beginning of the 20th century.

**Modern Wunderkammern**

From the 1980s onwards, many big exhibitions of Contemporary art have deliberately used the term *Wunderkammer*, or the physical setting of objects as it used to look like in the old cabinets of wonders. The Venice Biennial Contemporary Art Exhibition, one of the most prominent and the biggest European Contemporary art manifestations, brings back the connection of art and science in one of artistic manifestations, for the first time in the 20th century. Naming central exhibition *Arte e Scienza*, the main curator dedicates a whole segment to the *Wunderkammern* and asks a museologist Adalgisa Lugli, to be curator of this segment.

As Lugli explains in the preface for the exhibition catalogue, the unitary collection, the big synthesis of knowledge unifying science and art was put in the second plan in the 19th century, when the aesthetic value and the impression a work of art left on the observer, were crucial. Quite shy rediscovery of *Wunderkammern* at the beginning of the 20th century will have a greater influence not just on the museology and curatorial practice but also on artworks. The rediscovery of *wondrous* in the first half of the century brought artworks

such as Arcimboldo’s, a magic of representation and subtle game between materials, between natural and artificial. This could also be traced in Alfred Bar’s 1936 exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) entitled “The Fantastic Art” and following the similarities and developments of some fantastic and marvelous moments from the age of the Medieval Europe to the age of Surrealism, DADA and the art of Joseph Cornell recognizable for his boxes which could be observed as direct quotations of the Wunderkammern. Following the Second World War, the art has also led to discovery of bizarre. As Adalgisa Lugli has already suggested 40 years ago, all these are just parts of the art history which is yet to be written and which is provoked with a special manner of observation of the past by artists and the use of collection as a medium of art. The first steps were singular gests to take the cartoons, newspapers and other materials in order to adjust them to canvas, as Picasso and Braque did with their collages and papier collés between 1912 and 1914. This was one of the first comings out of the painting in the third dimension and the use of diverse materials. Even though the artist did not accumulate the wonders which were characteristic for the 16th and 17th centuries but more the “artificial nature”, it was still closer to nature, and they used physical objects to create artworks simultaneously becoming true collectioners. It seems that from this moment on, an artist was transformed into a collectioner – either the one who uses object to express the self or takes the things that other people threw away and creates ready-mades. Adalgisa concludes that this is maybe not the collection of the 16th century, but the collection of all times, the artist who recognizes power characteristic for its gesture. He chooses a work for one collection, animated or not with an innovative spirit, always having a conscience to steal the time and to conserve it in a much more profound way.

The artist acts in that manner to recognize an object and introduce it to the world of art, putting it on the pedestal and making it a part of the magical circle of art. The existence of the museum, especially the museum in its golden era of the 19th century has undoubtfully thought the artist a lot in this sense. The work of Dadaists and Surrealists functions in a certain moment as a place of accumulation of objects taken out of the everyday life or thrown away. Adalgisa recognizes this as a type of the Wunderkammer even though not as deliberate one. The art after the Second World War, particularly from the 1960s to 1980s, as she wrote in 1986, had even more profound stratification in the sense of the use of different materials for art works and collectionism.

Lugli visualizes previous theory as the exhibition which combines objects that once really were constituent elements of the traditional Cabinet of Wonder, with colleagues of Picasso and Braque, ready-mades of Duchamp, Miro and other 20th century artists. Finally, she accents the accumulating tendency and making of the small universes in the *Wunderkammer* as a particular medium of art, visible in Joseph Cornel boxes.\(^{18}\)

**How to recognize the Wunderkammer in the Surrealist art**

When it comes to Surrealist art, Marion Endt offers quite detailed interpretation of the use of the cabinets of wonders by Surrealist artists. She sees the concept of the cabinet of wonder not just as a literate collection but also as a special mind concept. “I think of the *Wunderkammer* not only as a concrete spatio-temporal moment in history, but also as a theoretical concept that raises themes which in turn inform and testify to different episteme. In this perspective, the cabinet of curiosities can be seen as the material manifestation of a shared sensibility based on the rejection of the Enlightenment-informed values of progress, rationality and utility; it raises issues of collection, classification, taxonomy, documentation and display; it is preoccupied with the authenticity, biography and narrative objects; it is concerned with the collector’s identity and status; and it raises the question of interdisciplinarity, with the objects crossing disciplinary and classificatory boundaries on the one hand, and the collector, artist and scientist assuming the persona of the traveler (or armchair-traveler), the naturalist (or armchair-naturalist), the scientist (or amateur scientist), the polymath, or the dilettante on the other hand.”\(^{19}\) This perspective of finding the space for interdisciplinarity and subtle play in-between art and science, for the critical observation of the contemporary value systems in the art world as one of the rare spaces where there are no disciplines prescribed, as well as for free creative field in the contemporary consumerist world, is really interesting.

When recognizing motives of the cabinets of wonders in the Surrealist art, Endt often quotes Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) following his positioning of the marvelous at the center of Surrealist aesthetics: “Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact, only marvelous is beautiful.” Having argued for the importance of imagination and dream in order to counterbalance the predominance of realism,


\(^{19}\) Endt, “Reopening the Cabinet of Curiosities,” 24.
rationalism and materialism, Breton makes a strong case for excavating and reappraising the marvelous, which is, as Marion Endt notices Breton argues, in literature, as well as in art and life in general currently suffocated by the “reign of logic”. Realist novels restrict the imagination as Breton would notice, and it is the unknown, the inexplicable, dream-like, the curious and bizarre what Surrealists find inspiring and what Marion Endt recognizes as the same motives for the creation of collections in the 16th and 17th century Europe. “This ‘property of strangeness’ possessed by the object has always lain at the heart of the culture of curiosities: the ‘accidental’ or secondary character of all that is rare, and hence rarely seen; a discreet charm but an essential one amid the motives driving the collector, who sought to amaze others quite as much as he yearned to be amazed himself.” She will conclude that, paradoxically, the strangeness of any object in a cabinet of curiosities was the surest guarantee of a sort of reality: the reality of distant cultures, of which it offered living proof, or of the shadowy realm of hidden pockets of reality within the natural world itself. “Placed center stage and exaggerated yet further by Surrealism, this ability of the object to go in and out of reality assumed, by contrast, a polemical dimension, dialectic for questioning the status of reality and all the evidence in its favor.”

On the other hand, according to the Modernist Jean Charles Moreux (1889-1956), three principal characteristics distinguished the object of curiosity. The first one was quite close to the Surrealism: “the effect of a surprise as manifested by a more or less violent reaction in the face of the unexpected”. This surprise could not be the only effect, but it was waking up the desire for knowledge, actually, what distracted the eye and tactile feelings was also amusing for the intellect. “Desire for knowledge” for Moreux was rooted in sensitivity to natural objects. The second characteristic is the traditional theme of nature as a creator of art and the art serving and mirroring the wonders of nature – dialectic of considerable significance. Also, cabinets of wonders were known for space which is cut out and framed, encircled and embedded, a place where one object nested within another, receding to infinity and opening up new spaces beyond number.

It is therefore interesting that not just a juxtaposition of different materials and forms, and making of curious and strange relations between objects in ready-mades is similar approach to the Cabinet of Wonder making. Also the object trouvé itself, the object found often on the streets and flea markets during loaning of the modern artist, the fleneur of Modern age is compared

20 Ibidem.
21 Mauries, Cabinets of Curiosities, 214-217.
with the object brought to the *Wunderkammer* after traveling and discovery of the New World. “It seems that the new type of artist, *flaneur*, stroller through the city who consumes the windows he passes by and collects many objects without any esthetic, economical or some other value, but just led with subjective and sentimental needs for surpassing the loneliness and the feeling of emptiness imposed by a consumer spirit, is more and more present every day.”

Throughout their active years, Surrealists set out to the flea markets, junk shops, curio shops and unfrequented museums in Paris and New York, or wandered through the streets and the countryside, in the hope and expectation to find unusual, overlooked objects, which they incorporated in their collections of contemporary paintings, tribal art, rare books, natural objects and a plethora of found objects, whose only binding and connective, aesthetic principle was that of the marvelous. However, not just objects but the same fascination with strange creatures are recognized in the art of Surrealists, as well as the special interest for insects which were popular in the cabinets of wonders after the discovery of microscope from the scientific perspective, but also from the artistic, creative one, due to their colorful bodies with many different patterns. Finally, these small creatures could easily be seen as visualization of the macrocosms which could be settled in a box, microcosms of its owner. The insects, as well as many other natural species and artificial objects where not just constituent elements of the historical *Wunderkamers*, but were also collected by Breton, Picasso and many other modern artists who were inspired with their collections and have often used some parts of it for the art works.

When it comes to boxes, this is again a motive which can be followed from the cabinets of wonders to the Modern and Contemporary art. Symbolical containers of different things, cabinets as a type of furniture or vitrines in the libraries and chambers of Renaissance man have been directly quoted in the modern and contemporary art. This idea of miniaturizing the world and making a little universe in a box determines both Marcel Duchamp’s object series *Bôite-en-Valise*, for which he assembled miniature versions of his own works in a suitcase, and Max Ernst’s painting *Vox Angelica*, which consists of compartmentalized miniatures of his own paintings and objects relevant to his iconography and biography; both artists in this case, reconfirm their identity in times of exile and biographical instability by ‘curating’ a miniaturized version of their personal museum. There will be artists whose main medium of expression will consequently become a box, a container of different objects.

22 Ненад Радић, „Музејски ум Џозефа Корнела,” in Зборник семинара за студије модерне уметности Филозофског факултета у Београду 5, ed. Бранка Кулић, Лида Мереник (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2009), 194.
“The World in a Box”\textsuperscript{23}

It was the medium of a box and the reminiscence of the cabinets of wonders that linked Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell, American artist who was famous for his love for Renaissance and Baroque Europe, had particular interest in the idea of the universal knowledge and was known for his boxes i.e. original art forms sometimes categorized as sculptures, sometimes as installations and sometimes as paintings. Duchamp and Cornell collaborated on \textit{Bôîte-en-Valise (Box in a Suitcase)} series project and Cornell, remembering and in some manner musealizing their friendship and meetings, has made the \textit{Duchamp Dossier}, a box, a container full of different notes, papers, empty tea bags, cigarette packs, and objects which were used during their sessions and which still are caring memory on these moments. “All items/fragments/objects in the \textit{Duchamp Dossier} seem to represent both the provocative meandering of an aimless stroll and the deterministic result of a careful, selective filtering process – allied in paradoxical harmony. (…) Evaluating the specifics of the \textit{Duchamp Dossier}, one finds Cornell’s selection m(eth)ode fairly homogeneous at its core. All the collectibles united in it seem to refer to a particular cultural periphery, representing a borderline aesthetic. (…) Cultural dynamics manipulate the values of the value system and operate the shifting differentiations between trash and artifact, how to retrieve, select, refine and regenerate the relevant elementary particles of the cultural process from the refuse and reject, the garbage and the litter, the flotsam and jetsam of our societies? How to convert the retrieved matter into cultural energy that feeds back into system? To the cultivators of dust, like Duchamp, and compilers of “mouse material”, like Cornell, residue becomes a discipline. (…) Intended as a celebration of memory – the most luxurious feature of cellular and neuronal evolution – these accumulations are at the same time a massive monument to memory’s prime defunct mechanism: its inescapable tendency to dissolve into the vast nebula of oblivion or else to turn into something like the towering calcified structures of coral reefs.”\textsuperscript{24}

Joseph Cornell (1903-1972) was not the first artist to use techniques of collage and assemblage, but he was the first to whom appropriation and arrangement of found objects and materials were basic apparatus for work. Cornell found his occupation in second-hand and through innovative quotations he produced an original \textit{oeuvre} of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century art. Although Cornell has never

\textsuperscript{23} Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak, \textit{Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to images on Screen} (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute Publication Program, 2011).

left the USA, and barely New York, he freely traveled to foreign places and past times through the process of collectioning. His archive, created throughout the lifetime, has finally counted thousands of found objects, ephemeral and notes into diary, books, magazines, hundreds of music records and movies. It represented Cornel's love for all kinds of objects and disciplines. Despite visual variety of their contents, famous boxes which Cornel created, are very recognizable, each standing as a window into the powerful tendency towards wondering and discovering of one constantly curious mind. Although accepting Surrealist visual aspects of an artwork, Cornel has explicitly rejected theories about the subconscious which were crucial for Surrealists, insisting that his starting point is actually the reality. He was creating out of real objects, actual state of things and their values systems and afterward he wondered, researched, collected, questioned, juxtaposed materials and objects. Klipping which Cornel collected during the 1930s, visualizes his interest in European tradition of Wunderkammer which could be traced back to the 16th century. As material encyclopedia of the mysterious and unseen connections, model of the Wunderkammer is the most resonant in Cornel’s approach. For him, collecting and creating constitute psychological, ontological project which reaches beyond boarders of art. These ideas are reflected in his works and presentations of collections of works which are arranged in vitrines as museum artifacts under the title which embraces everything: “The elements of the natural philosophy.”

His innovative methods of appropriation and quotation in art offer the whole catalogue of successors who had a bit more conscious strategies of installation, performance and conceptual art. Cornel has influenced many – visual artists, musicians and writers. Cornel’s work could be best understood as a cumulative project and constantly lasting exploration of humans’ experience. “Every part of his work leaves a measure of curious which he found in every-day life and brings us back to the place where our imagination can wonder freely” so his work is chosen here to represent maybe the first purposefully used cabinets of wonder aesthetics and meaning in Modern art which will influence many contemporary artists.

**Contemporary artists as “museum makers”**

Joseph Cornell might be among the first ones to announce the contemporary artists-collectioners whose medium is explicitly the cabinet of wonder, the archive occupying the whole room or the whole building. Therefore it was quite
often that many artists became “real heritologists”, memory preservers, and used diverse objects to create installations, or even their own “inner museums” or museums of “innocent objects”. Serbian artist Dragan Papić is famous for his project: The Inner Museum which is not incidentally called “the museum of kitsch”. The whole idea has been derived from his impulse to collect pop-culture and kitsch objects in his private apartment negating basic principles of traditional museology – clear historical context of every artifact and high quality of the artistic value of the exposed objects. Although named a Museum or even a Non-Museum by artist, this collection is actually going back to the type of the setting before the traditional museum constitution, the Baroque Kunst und Wunderkammer. The exposed material was definitely not chosen because of the aesthetic value of objects, nor the formal or material similarity between them, but following objects’ purpose and affective lives of people who used it, as well as the deepness of oblivion which is now covering its old function. The artist is a narrator through its own exhibition and he opens the doors of this Inner Museum to audience being a “performative museologist”. Consequently, he transmits the material culture to the artistic objects, and interprets artifacts connecting them with a social history of the 1990s, current cultural values and group identity which is encoded in these objects. All the stories about the collection are interlaced with his personal memories, and artist’s own identity is melting into the identity of the narrator in a performative act. The novelist Orhan Pamuk, on the other hand, explains in his Museum of Innocence, the book and the physical museum, the innocence of objects. The idea is that the collection can be made out of objects taken from the every-day life, which represent memories and belongings to ordinary people and do not have any special esthetic, artistic or economic value. These objects are carriers of personal stories and not of the great histories and myths constructed by the winners.

Recent Venice Biennale exhibition once again represented the tendency towards the universal knowledge gathered in one encyclopedic collection of objects as the main inspiration. The model of Encyclopedic Palace on one side and The Uncanny, Sigmund Freud’s important text for Surrealists and subconscious and dream-like elements in Contemporary art on the other, were introducing visitors to central exhibition full of different collections-installations looking like cabinets of wonders on purpose, but using plastic and every-day objects and ephemeral materials for their expression and again, (as Surrealists) being inspired with the subconscious and dreams. It seems that museum has become a real medium of expression, while the cabinet of wonder as its predecessor with all the layers of meanings, has become an art form. Thus, contemporary artist can question current system of values, coquette with it and tackle many social, cultural, economic issues. But he can also deal with his
self and the need to remember some segments of the past which is gradually left to oblivion in a world of constant and rapid changes. Finally, if the Modern art remembers the art history as Baudelaire suggested, then the Contemporary art remembers the whole history of art and museology, as it happens in the time after all the “ends”, the time of visual culture and tridimensional art forms.
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