



Cabinets of Curiosities

Patrick Mauriès

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"Bound to entertain anyone who is intellectually curious, and serve as a source of inspiration for interior decorators and contemporary artists."? *Antiques and the Arts*

Unicorns' horns, mermaids' skeletons, stuffed and preserved animals and plants, work in precious metals, clocks, scientific instruments, celestial globes . . . all knowledge, the whole cosmos arranged on shelves. Such were the cabinets of curiosities of the seventeenth century, the last period of history when man could aspire to know everything.

Who were the collectors? They were archdukes and kings?the Emperor Rudolf II was the prince of all collectors?rich merchants and scholars, and their collections ranged from a single crowded room to whole palatial suites. Patrick Maurie`s traces the amazing history of these "rooms of wonders" in this ingeniously erudite survey. Not many of the rooms survive, though there are pictorial records, but their contents still exist and are among the treasures of museums all over the world. 139 full-color and 133 black-and-white illustrations

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