

seinem Sensorium an der Avantgarde der europäischen Geistesgeschichte mitwirkte.

Was hat man aus der Antike gemacht, klagt Flaubert am 17. Mai 1853 in einem Brief an seine Freundin Louise Colet, als man sie für Kinder zubereitete. Seine Antike ist nicht *ad usum Delphini* zugeschnitten, und er entnimmt sie nicht bloß den Funden der Archäologen – für Flaubert lebt und leibt sie im arabischen Orient, wo die »harmonie des choses disparates« die Ästhetik des Alltags prägt: »Alle Verlangen (appetits) der Vorstellungskraft und des Denkens werden auf einmal befriedigt« (an Louise Colet am 29. März 1853). Nach einer solchen Totalerfahrung verlangt es André Breton im 2. Manifest des Surrealismus (1929): »... et nous voici de nouveau, après des siècles de domestication de l'esprit et de résignation folle à tenter d'affranchir définitivement cette imagination par le long, immense, raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens.« Die »überlegte Entregelung (Verwirrung)«, ein Rimbaud-Zitat aus dem

Brief vom 15. Mai 1871 an Paul Demeny, mutet wie ein Paradoxon an, ähnlich den Selbstwidersprüchen der Pathosformeln und den vielen transitorischen Dichotomien und Polaritäten, mit denen Warburg sich umgab. Er tat das in seinem Kopf, in seiner Bibliothek und im Mnemosyne-Atlas.

Zur selben Zeit schuf sich André Breton in Paris mit seiner Atelierwand eine tatsächliche, dreidimensionale Umgebung aus Kunstobjekten, Fundstücken und anonymen Kuriosa. Diese von Objektmagie durchwirkte Schauwand führte »viele Richtungen« und Bedeutungen zusammen, widersetzte sich also dem ästhetisierenden Grundgedanken des Kunstmuseums. Wer vor ihr stand, befand sich zugleich in einem Initiationslabyrinth.

Werner Hofmann

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## ATHANASIVS KIRCHER, S. J.: IL MUSEO DEL MONDO

*Catalogue of an exhibition at Palazzo di Venezia, Rome, 28 February-22 April 2001, ed. by Eugenio Lo Sardo. Rome: Edizioni de Luca 2001. 373 pp. 117 b/w, 109 color ill. Euro 62,-. ISBN 88-8016-421-X*

Among the inventions of Athanasius Kircher (1602-80) was the »Anemoscopium Magneticum,« an arrangement of magnets, globes, and dials that displayed the motions of the breeze much like a modern wind gauge. That his device was reconstructed in a recent exhibition suggests how far the winds have shifted in favor of this remarkable Jesuit polymath who blended early modern empirical science with the older worlds of alchemy, hermeticism, and the Catholic priesthood. Historian and curator Eugenio Lo Sardo set out to concretize this paradox by studying Kircher's famous »museum of the world,« once installed at the Jesuit college just steps from the exhibition venue. Established in 1651, the *Museum Kir-*

*cherianum* attracted tourists for two centuries, and its *disjecta membra* still enrich collections at the Vatican, the Quirinal, the Museo Nazionale Romano, the Museo Etnografico Pignori, the Roman University, the Etruscan Museum at Villa Giulia, and the Egyptian Museum in Turin. *Il Museo del Mondo*, sponsored by Italy's central office for archival patrimony, realizes a dream begun fifteen years earlier with an international congress whose papers (*Enciclopedia in Roma Barocca: Athanasius Kircher e il Museo del Collegio Romano fra Wunderkammer e Museo*, ed. M. Casciato, M. G. Iannello, and M. Vitale, Venice, 1986) long constituted our best knowledge of the collection. While Kircher's publi-



cations are becoming better known, in part through exhibitions like Ingrid Rowland's *The Ecstatic Journey: Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000), this is the first attempt to ferret out and reassemble the historic trove of wonders on which those studies were based. As such, it offers both a precious window onto Kircher's working laboratory and new insights into one of Europe's greatest encyclopedic collections.

Kircher himself would relish this initiative, which foregrounds his astonishing intellectual scope. Born near the university town of Fulda in 1602, Kircher taught moral philosophy, mathematics, Hebrew, and Syrian at the University of Würzburg before being offered the prestigious Kepler Chair at Vienna. Enticed instead to Rome by the family of Pope Urban VIII, he assumed the Chair of Mathematics in 1635, while the wounds of Galileo's trial were still fresh in the papal capital. In fact Kircher soon abandoned active teaching and dedicated his time to the study of subjects as diverse as oriental languages, Egyptology, cosmology, cryptography, optics, magnetism, volcanism, and music theory. This breadth helped him survive the backlash after Urban's death and endeared him to Innocent X Pamphili, Clement IX Rospigliosi, Queen Christina of Sweden, and Alexander VII Chigi, with whom he had corresponded since meeting years before in Malta. Like Galileo, Kircher balanced self-promotion with the courtier's tact; never shy of the spotlight, he wrote a congratulatory autobiography and appeared on one title page as the »Egyptian Oedipus« who believed he had finally decoded hieroglyphics.

Kircher's museum originated with the legacy of Alfonso Donnini, a Tuscan nobleman who willed his collection of »many curious and valuable things« to the Roman College in the hopes it could be kept intact, open to the public, and used for teaching. A spacious second-floor loggia was adapted for the purpose, forming the long, groin-vaulted gallery

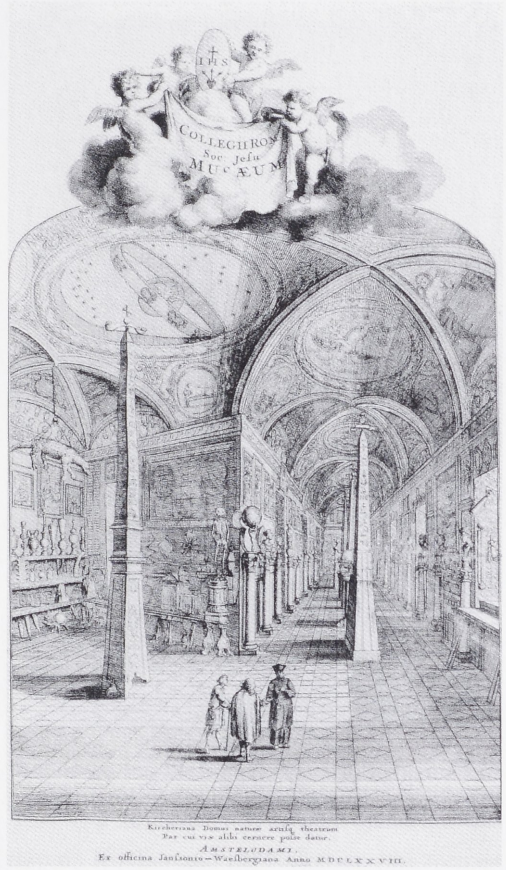


Fig. 1 Frontispiece to *Giorgio de Sepi, »Romani collegii Societatis Jesu museaeum celeberrimum«* (Amsterdam 1678): interior view of the original *Museum Kircherianum* (author)

depicted in the museum's first catalogue of 1678 by Kircher's assistant Giorgio De Sepi (fig. 1). That frontispiece shows how Kircher expanded Donnini's nucleus of paintings and antiquities into a comprehensive cabinet of natural and artificial curiosities surmounted with magical emblems and an anthology of ancient wisdom in Coptic, Egyptian, Arabic, Greek, and Chaldaic characters. The vault's first bay, for instance, depicted a salamander among the flames, an alchemical allegory of Kircher's role as our stalwart guide through





Fig. 2 Nuptial coffer with stories of David, ivory, 9th-10th centuries. Rome, Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Venezia (Lo Sardo cat. 1.3)

the crucible of revelation. Reconstructing this lost microcosm is a daunting challenge, since by the time of De Sepi's book the museum had already been relocated to a much smaller space, the first of many alterations that compromised Father Kircher's original intent. A fuller catalogue by Filippo Bonanni from 1709 records a third reinstallation after Kircher's death, but in the end it is not always possible to track when and how specific objects entered or left the collection, much less to determine their changing placement and context. Recreating the Kircherianum thus demands a special blend of archival sleuthing, historical imagination, and informed guesswork.

The exhibition in Rome epitomized this challenge. I must admit that I first saw it back-

wards; having wandered into the exit, I proceeded for an hour in retrograde before discovering my error. In fact Lo Sardo's strategy was to isolate the museum's components before reassembling them at the end. Obedient visitors entered through a room of zoological specimens (horns, skulls, whale jaws, and a menacing crocodile) supplemented with plates from Kircher's treatise on Noah's ark, a book expounding both his novel thesis that earth's diverse fauna sprang from a few founder species and the older view that frogs and other vermin generated spontaneously from mud. The next room displayed a handful of the 123 paintings mentioned by De Sepi (Bonanni listed twice that number), most of religious themes. What is left suggests no particular program, although Daniel Seghers's floral garland with a portrait of St. Ignatius and Maratti's portrait of the same saint reflect an evident interest in Jesuit subjects. The following theme room documented the history of the collection and juxtaposed selected treasures of applied art such as an enamel Pantocrator and a Byzantine ivory box (fig. 2) with their early illustrations; a fourth displayed ethnographic objects including maps, travelers' drawings, a Japanese sword, a Brazilian feathered staff, a Congolese pillow, a Mexican hammock, and a Sioux buckskin suit (fig. 3). Helpful as such divisions are to modern viewers, we must remember that not all of this material entered the collection during Kircher's lifetime and that his audience would have seen it rather differently. Kircher himself had been denied a missionary assignment to China in 1630 and remained an armchair traveler intent to trace the world's diverse cultures to a single Edenic source; his peers, meanwhile, valued these exotic testaments to martyrdom (like an American stone club) less for their anthropological interest than as signs of a Jesuit empire on which, to quote Kircher, the sun never set.

The succeeding rooms broke down these modern categories by presenting more varied



artifacts in dizzying proximity. Thus, in one hall visitors encountered the primitive computer – the so-called »organum mathematicum« Kircher sent to Archduke Karl Joseph in 1661 – within view of a human skeleton overgrown with coral, a group of gnostic talismans probably commissioned by Kircher himself, samples of his Egyptian publications, and the horoscope of a Milanese cleric. Here, too, were Kircher's suite of painted slates or *sciaterrica* combining astronomical observations with notations of maladies caused by celestial conjunctions (fig. 4). Disoriented as we might be, we are no more bewildered than those contemporary skeptics who accused the Jesuit of witchcraft and demonism. His cabalistic studies were especially suspect, as were the famous machines evoked in the next, noisy room: the magnetized »Dove of Archita,« apparently defying the laws of gravity, the mirrored »Proteus Catoptricus« that transformed humans into animals, the ominous »Magic Lantern« or slide projector with its images of purgatory, or the windblown wheel of bells to calm the soul. These splendid contraptions were among the museum's first casualties, whose reconstruction is discussed in Lo Sardo's earlier *Iconismi e Mirabilia* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1999) and a catalogue essay by Filippo Camerota. The show climaxed in the last gallery, which commingled *naturalia*, *antiquitates*, *artes*, and *artificialia* under a vaulted trellis suggesting Kircher's original loggia, albeit without his »explanatory« texts. Still, it was a joy to see the armadillo that inspired Bernini's »Tatù« at the Four Rivers Fountain, together with the five wooden obelisks rediscovered at the Liceo Visconti. These extraordinary survivals expose the exaggerated scale of De Sepi's view and remind us that Kircher's microcosm was not always what it seemed.

The exhibition was accompanied by a substantial and well-illustrated catalogue, which is less a handbook to the show or the museum than an anthology of contemporary scholar-



Fig. 3 Buckskin suit, Canada, Eastern Sioux, described by Bonanni 1709, p. 229. Rome, Museo Preistorico Etnografico »L. Pigorini« (Lo Sardo cat. II.10)

ship on Kircher and his collection (the former function was served through a shorter guide by Lo Sardo, subtitled »Macchine, Esoterismo, Arte«). Prefaces by Lo Sardo and Mark A. Lewis, S. J., explaining the scope and criteria of the show are followed by twenty-four essays and selected object entries, divided into eight thematic chapters. The initial section on the museum includes a fine essay by Paula Findlen (»Un incontro con Kircher a Roma«), who reminds us that Kircher was a curiosity in his own right and hypothesizes that the tube installed between the gallery and his quarters not only alerted the curator to visitors but also conveyed his disembodied voice. The next section on exoticism and missionaries includes a cogent essay by Clara Bargellini tracing Kircher's exchange of objects and ideas with New Spain. Focusing on his correspondence with



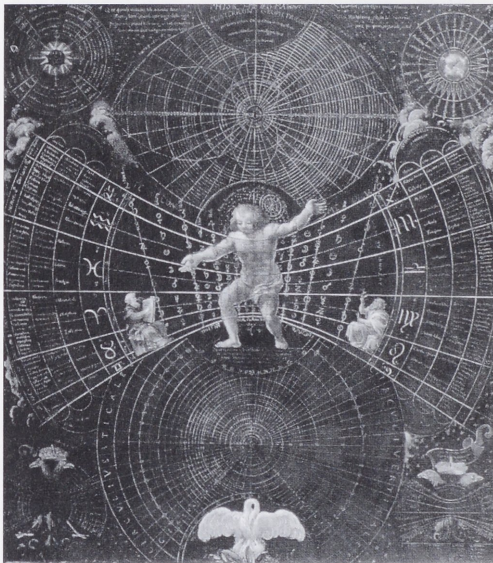


Fig. 4 »Physico-medico-mathematicum Scientiarum Geometricarum«, painted slate, 1635-6. Rome, Museo Astronomico e Copernicano (Lo Sardo fig. 47)

the *criollo* priest Alejandro Favián, Bargellini clarifies how Kircher learned about indigenous Mexican practices and how his ideas spread in the new world; not only did Favián found his own Kircherian museum at Puebla, but the poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz described the search for a key to all knowledge as »to Kircherize.« Other essays treat the Jesuit's work in the natural sciences: Nicoletto Morello studies his interests in volcanism, while zoologist Ernesto Capanna focuses on his *Arca Noë* of 1675 and his pioneering use of the microscope during the plague of 1656. In a following section on science and machines, Umberto Eco studies Kircher's interest in cryptography, while Michael John Gorman and Nick Wilding consider the Baroque fascination with automata and other »legitimate« magic arts, as they were termed by Kircher's assistant Kaspar Schott. The portions of the catalogue most likely to interest art historians concern Kircher's collec-

tion and interpretation of visual objects. The section on Hermeticism and Egyptology, for instance, emphasizes Kircher's progressive attempt to connect neoplatonic theory with the archeological evidence. Sergio Donadoni analyzes his »ideal reading« of Egyptian hieroglyphics, while Ingrid Rowland (»Kircher Trismegisto«) interprets his emphasis on divine absolutes and occult but eternal truths as a response to the scientific, political, and religious mutability of his age. Rowland argues convincingly that Kircher's belated hermeticism, far from subverting Catholic orthodoxy, embodied the Jesuit call to comfort the faithful in troubled times; she thus reads Kircher's priestly but circumspect Hermes Trismegistus as the author's virtual self-portrait and interprets his wish to restore Hermes's primitive truth as a response to the splintering of Christianity by Protestantism. A subsequent chapter on archeology deals with Kircher's Roman antiquities (fig. 5). Rita Paris provides an admirable overview of the collection, its provenance, and its display, while Silvia Bruni traces the dispersal of these holdings in the wake of Italian unification. Similar concerns inform the essays on the Jesuits' painting collection, which Maria Antonietta Quesada, Anna Maria de Strobel, and Maria Serlupi Crescenzi attempt to reconstruct from documents connected with Donnini's gift and Clement XIV's dissolution of the Order in 1773. Although Kircher's own acquisitions can rarely be identified, these records (together with the early catalogues) reveal his taste for subjects ranging from mountain landscapes and hunting scenes to shipwrecks, portraits, and architectural views. Finally, a concluding essay by Angela Deutsch on »Iconographia Kircheriana« studies the elaborate frontispieces of his publications (fig. 6), which mark a shift from the architectural mode of the Renaissance title page to pictorial or theatrical *concetti* in dialogue with the text and the museum. Deutsch inserts these plates within the rich Jesuit culture of emblems, tracing not



just the use of individual motifs (the chain, the eye of god, the sphere, etc.), but how their combination illustrated the epistemological paths offered by Kircher's universal science. Rich and instructive as it is, the catalogue does have some limitations that reflect the project's complexity. As in the exhibition, the inevitable imposition of modern taxonomies is often at odds with how Kircher conceptualized his material, while the diversity of disciplinary voices and concerns sometimes dilutes the historical focus. Thus, although all the Asian objects appear together here, contributors Aldo Mastroianni and Alessandra Antinori remind us that Kircher used the concept of salvation to link his portraits of the Dalai Lama and Amida Buddha with Guido Reni's *Christ the Savior*. By a similar logic, De Sepi's class of »heroes and famous people« included both biblical and classical figures, as well as two playful »fanciulli« by Bernini (now lost); Kircher's *Confucius*, meanwhile, was inventoried with the statues, while other Asian artifacts were classed as »documents of foreign languages.« Although one understands the need to include comparative material, the close attention given to objects with scant connection to the museum might have been focused instead on demonstrably Kircherian artifacts (the skeleton of a newborn, the model obelisks, the sciaterica, the gnostic »talismans,« the crocodile, the armadillo) that are mentioned only in passing. In the section on Egyptology, for instance, only one of the four items catalogued ever belonged to the Jesuit collection, and another (cusp fragments of the Pamphili obelisk) differs from what was exhibited. The antiquities section has just a single *scheda*, Kircher's letter to a friend in Lucca regarding his unpublished treatise on Tuscany. This approach sometimes makes it difficult for the reader is to identify the diverse objects discussed or to determine their link to Kircher, since the text illustrations are not keyed to the essays or otherwise coded by provenance. This confusion could have been lessened by including a



Fig. 5 *Aesculapius*, marble, described and illustrated by Bonanni 1709, pl. XIV, 1. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (Lo Sardo fig. 129)

list or concordance of the objects traced so far; it might also have been desirable to give more attention to De Sepi's and Bonanni's publications, which remain a key window onto the museum's early states. The book is rounded out with a helpful digest of documentary sources and a list of Kircher's works, which alone conveys a sense of his astounding intellect. There is no modern bibliography or subject index, however, which may limit the volume's accessibility.

Despite the questions that remain, both the catalogue and the exhibition succeed in demonstrating how different the Kircherianum was from anything existing today, including the Museum of Jurassic Technology with



which it is sometimes compared. Kircher was rarely so tongue-in-cheek, and his fervor to instruct was clearly real. Several of the essays – Eco’s, Findlen’s, and Rowland’s in particular – remind us that Kircher straddled two encyclopedic systems: the ancient, which collected both the verified and the unverifiable, and the modern, which includes only what can be experienced and tested. Just as his scholarship balances empiricism and allegory, Kircher’s Jesuit training made him a master of persuasion who, like Bernini, Borromini, or Poussin, balanced science with scenography. Much as he understood hieroglyphics as a »pantomorphic theater of Nature,« he conceived his collection as a theater of the world whose specimens and specters »reveal the wondrous, ordered chain that unwinds itself in nature’s shrines.« Kircher, in sum, is hard to pin down. Umberto Eco had it right when he described him as »the most contemporary of our ancestors, and the most old-fashioned of our contemporaries.« On the one hand Kircher believed that there is »no knot so tight that the wise genius of human ingenuity, inflamed by the love of truth, cannot discern how to untie it«; on the other, he echoed Julian the Apostate’s view that »Nature prefers to remain remote and hidden.« No single lens can bring him into focus, but the chance to see and to study objects that he himself scrutinized brings him



Fig. 6 Frontispiece to Athanasius Kircher, »Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae« (Amsterdam 1671)

that much closer. Kircher is indeed a weather-vane, or a bellwether, and this spotlight on his museum tells us more about his gusting mind than we ever knew before.

Jeffrey Collins

DELA VON BOESELAGER

## Capella Clementina. Kurfürst Clemens August und die Krönung Kaiser Karls VII.

*Studien zum Kölner Dom, Band 8, hrsg. von Barbara Schock-Werner und Rolf Lauer. Köln, Verlag Kölner Dom 2001. 476 S. Text mit 89 farb. Abb. auf Tafeln und 167 vorwiegend sw Abb. ISBN 3-922442-37-4*

Die Kaiserkrönung des bayerischen Kurfürsten Karl Albrecht (Kaiser Karl VII.) am 12. Februar 1742 in Frankfurt gehört zu den Höhepunkten in der Geschichte der Wittelsbacher, auch wenn kein bleibender politischer

Gewinn damit verbunden war, sondern eher das Gegenteil. Die Krönungsmesse zelebrierte Karl Albrechts Bruder, Kurfürst Clemens August, Erzbischof von Köln sowie Bischof von Münster, Paderborn, Hildesheim und