Snickare, Mårten: *Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond. From the Kunstkammer to the Current Museum Crisis*, Amsterdam University Press 2022
ISBN 9789463728065, 216 p., 117,00 EUR/open access

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The Kunstkammer, which is commonly regarded as one of the starting points of Western museum history,[1] is often described in a contradictory manner. On the one hand, the proto-scientific combination of artificialia, naturalia and scientifica which is specific to the Kunstkammer principle is idealised as a transdisciplinary, experimental order of things. Indeed, many contemporary museum displays draw on the associative potential of the Kunstkammer.[2] On the other hand, the colonial and economic contexts of early modern collecting have also been critically examined.[3]

This ambivalence towards the Kunstkammer is also evident in Mårten Snickare's book Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden. The author, professor of art history and specialist of baroque art at Stockholm University, focuses on the itineraries and the spaces of colonial objects from Sweden's royal and humanist collections at the time of expanding colonialism. Rather than focusing on questions of provenance, as postcolonial object studies in museum contexts sometimes do, he concentrates on the emotions and values related to these objects, the impact they had on their owners before they became part of a museum collection, and the impact they had afterwards.

The study begins with a critical reflection on the theories of the object that have informed Snickare's approach. These include very different uses of the term 'object', such as those found in Michael Fried's 'Art and Objecthood',[4] which deals with 1960s object art, and the sociological approaches of Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff.[5] Particularly influential for the author is W. J. T. Mitchell's 'Empire and Objecthood'.[6] Based on these readings Snickare develops the term 'colonial object' to describe the shifting cultural, epistemic, and emotional role of museum objects under the condition of colonialism. The term therefore does not describe an intrinsic quality, but a temporary meaning and function of objects in colonial history.

The author concentrates his analysis on two artefacts that have been in Swedish collections since the early modern period. Both are closely linked to Sweden's colonial history. A tomahawk, originating from 'New Sweden', a Swedish colony in North America from 1638 to 1655, is one of these focus objects. The colony's governor, Johan Printz (1592–1663), presented it to Queen Christina of Sweden. From 1680, the tomahawk was kept in the treasure chamber of Tre Kronor Castle, along with various weapons, clothing, and artefacts from the Americas, Africa, and Europe, luxurious carpets from the Middle East, and porcelain from China. It is preserved today in Stockholm's Ethnological Museum.

The weapon is elaborately crafted and equipped with a pointed metal hoe attached to the shaft with leather straps. The wooden shaft is decorated with wampum, a type of inlay consisting of small tesserae of sea snails or shells, and a few pieces of green glass. Wampum had a special val-

ue in Native American culture and was used in rituals, as currency, or as jewellery. The tomahawk was a diplomatic gift from the colony to the Queen. Aspects of Indigenous material culture, such as the value of wampum, were incorporated into Swedish culture through courtly gift giving. The weapon is also a product of both European and American craftsmanship; the green glass shards and the pickaxe are products of European techniques. The tomahawk and other colonial objects are therefore not examples of 'pure' Indigenous culture, as it might appear to the viewer in a museum display, but colonial objects, which Snickare also describes as examples of syncretism or 'creole objects'. He uses the latter quite controversial term to oppose concepts of Indigenous objects as timeless and pure (p. 132).

The way Snickare contextualises this Kunstkammer object within the culture and the art and architectural programme of the Swedish court is most convincing. In detail, he refers to the paintings and frescoes by the court painter David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl (1629–1698). Ehrenstrahl worked at the Swedish court during the time of Queen Dowager Hedwig Eleonora (1636–1715) and produced numerous frescoes at Drottningholm Castle, portraits as well as paintings of animals and landscapes. As Snickare shows by analysing the oil painting Young Man with Parrots and Monkey (1670), colonial ideology plays an important role in the iconography of this genre painting. The frescoes likewise express the global ambitions of the Swedish Crown in their baroque splendour. They functioned, as the author describes, as the pictorial frame of reference for theatrical receptions with exotic costumes and props.

Snickare's analysis of Ehrenstrahl's painting of a reindeer with a sledge and a sledge driver in Sámi costume forms the bridge to the second focus object (p. 63). In this case study the author analyses the agency of shamanistic drums, called in the language of Sámi 'goavdat' or 'gievrie'. After the failure of Sweden's colonial plans in America, the Swedish government turned its attention to the Sámi areas, because rich deposits of silver were suspected there. The Sámi settlement area, Sápmi, spanned several countries: today it stretches over northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

The colonisation of Sápmi went hand in hand with the Christianization of the Sámi people. Snickare illustrates this with a quote of the royal councillor Carl Bonde. Bonde reported in 1635 on a newly discovered silver deposit in Bihtám (Piteå) in the south of Sápmi. 'The people here hope that – with God's help – this will be the West Indies of Sweden in the same way as the King of Spain (benefits from the West Indies). And for this reason the Gospel will be preached among the lost people, and learned by them.' (p. 29)

After the Christianization of Sápmi, the use of ritual drums was banned in Sámi culture and considered heresy. The consequences for the use of a ritual drum were dreadful, as the author describes through the fate of Lars Nikodemus Nilsson, who was burned to death with his drum on 4 April 1693. It is a particularly perfidious twist of logic that Sámi shaman drums became popular objects among European collectors at the same time. For example, the author describes Grand Duke Cosimo III of Tuscany's considerable efforts to acquire such a drum. But also in Berlin a Sámi drum was presented at the Kunstkammer.[7] This interest was possibly aroused because Sámi culture became the subject of scientific study. In 1671, the Swedish humanist Johannes Scheffer published the first book on Sámi culture, Lapponia, which included illustrations of shaman drums. Scheffer worked as a university professor in Uppsala and kept a cabinet of curiosities that

included Sámi cultural objects, ritual drums, and cult stones. The collectors' desires, the banishment of Sámi rites, and neutral scientific description characterise three shifts of interpretation in the process of colonial reframing of ritual objects of Sámi culture.

In the last part of his study, the author follows the fate of colonial objects in exhibitions of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Specifically, he sees references to the global claim of the Kunstkammer and its concepts of centre and periphery, but also to the non-hierarchical and non--classifying association of art objects and non-art objects at the 'Palazzo Enciclopedico', the main exhibition at Venice Biennale in 2012. In a second argument, he reflects on the contexts of African art in exhibitions such as 'Primitivism in 20th century art' in 1984 and Art/Artifact in 1988 at the MoMa in New York and the exhibition 'Unvergleichlich' in 2017 at the Bodemuseum in Berlin (p. 167–190).

The book offers new perspectives for current research on the Kunstkammer and museum debates, and broadens the view of the Kunstkammer by understanding it as part of the political and cultural life of the Baroque court. Especially the author's attention to the reinterpretations and the shifts of the emotional dimensions associated with the objects in the context of colonialism is insightful and new. By placing historical cases in the context of current criticism of the museum as an institution, the author develops his perspective on the value of museum objects in postcolonial times. The book is recommended for students and researchers of seventeenth-century cultures of collecting, museum specialists, and art historians.

[1] Krzysztof Pomian and Gustav Rossler, Der Ursprung des Museums: vom Sammeln, Kleine kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek 9, Wagenbach 1988; Horst Bredekamp: Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben: die Geschichte der Kunstkammer und die Zukunft der Kunstgeschichte, Wagenbach 1993.

[2] Sarah Wagner, Die Kunst- und Wunderkammer im Museum. Inszenierungsstrategien vom 19. Jahrhundert bis heute, Reimer, 2023.

[3] Starting with Tim Barringer, Tom Flynn, eds., Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum, Routledge, 1998; the discourse is continuing until today.

[4] Michel Fried, Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews, reprint ed. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

[5] Arjun Appadurai, ed., The Social Life of Things: Commodities from a Cultural Perspective, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

[6] W. J. T. Mitchell, What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

[7] The Berlin drum is currently part of a research project at Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin: https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/museum-europaeischer-kulturen/collections-research/research/sami-collection-at-mek/.

Recommended Citation:
Angela Fischel: [Review of:] Snickare, Mårten: *Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond. From the Kunstkammer to the Current Museum Crisis*, 2022. In: ArtHist.net, Apr 23, 2024 (accessed Nov 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/reviews/41511>.

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