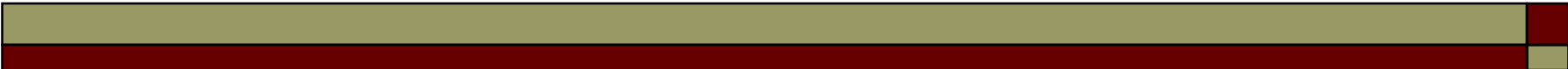


# 8 What are museums?

## Museums as heritage institutions – a short introduction

HPHE7002 Unravelling Heritage

Dr Katharina Zinn (Associate Professor in Egyptian  
Archaeology and Heritage)  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David



# Readings

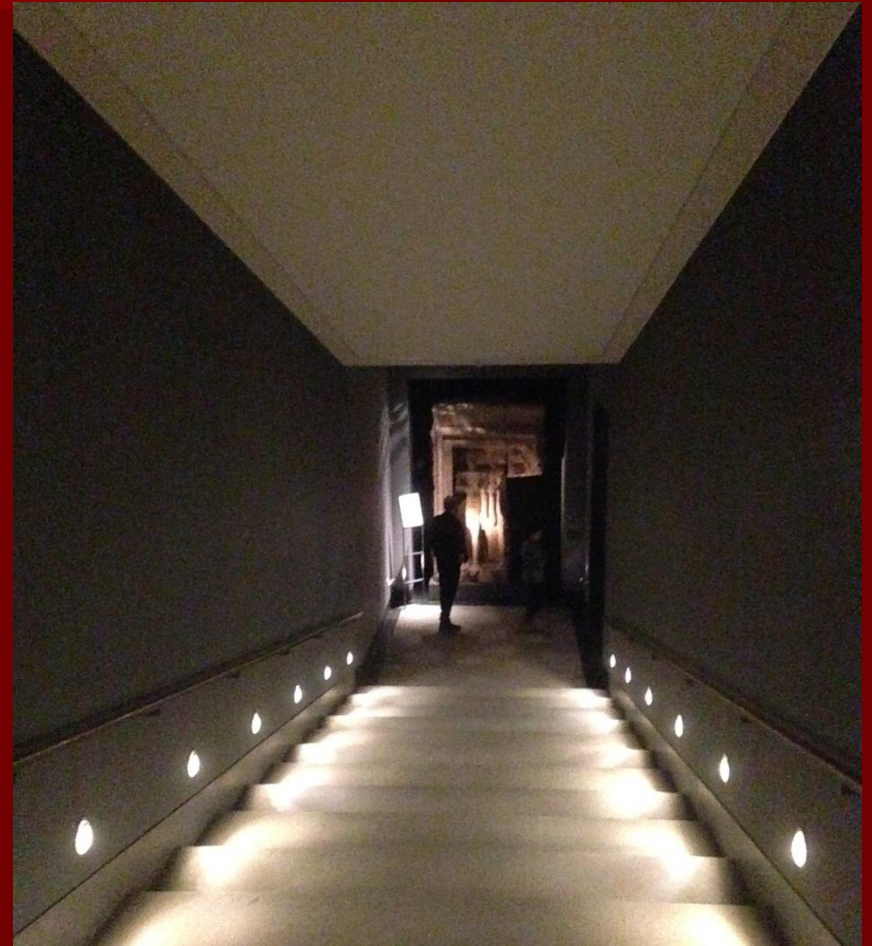
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- ❑ McDonald, S. (2011). *A Compendium to Museums Studies*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- ❑ Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992). *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- ❑ Ambrose, T.; Paine, C. (2006). *Museum Basics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- ❑ Walsh, K. (2002/1992). *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*. London: Routledge.
- ❑ Vergo, P. (ed.) 1989. *The new museology*. London: Reaktion Books.

# What are museums?

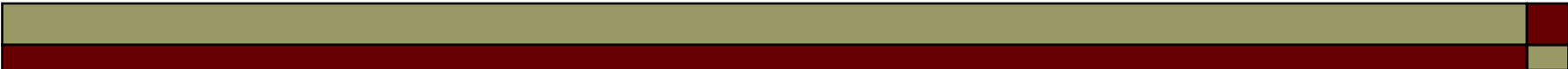


# What are museums?



# What are museums?

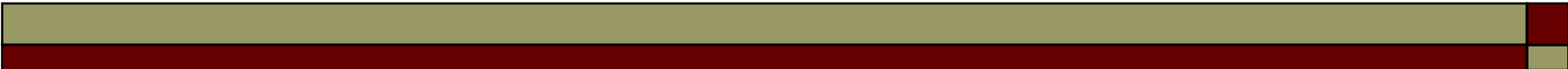




And now you...

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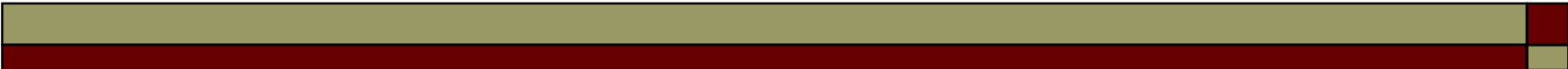
□ What are museums?



# Definitions

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- ❑ **The International Council of Museums definition:**
- ❑ A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.



# Definitions

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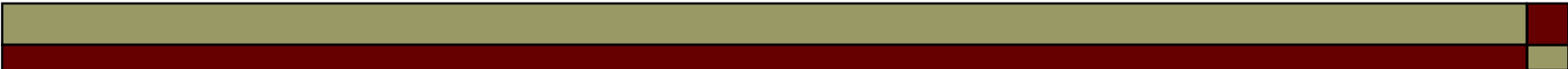
- ❑ **The Museums Association (United Kingdom) definition:**
- ❑ A museum is an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit.



**A museum is an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit.**

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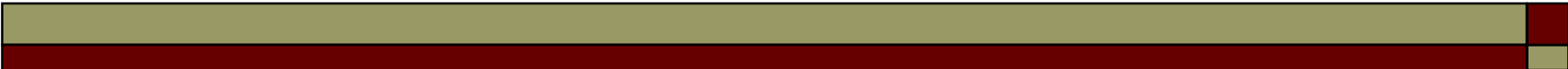
- ❑ ‘Institution’ implies formalised establishment, = long-term purpose
- ❑ ‘Collects’ = all means of acquisition
- ❑ ‘Documents’ emphasises need to maintain records
- ❑ ‘Preserves’ = all aspects of conservation and security
- ❑ ‘Exhibits’ stands for expectation of visitors that they will be able to see at least a representative selection of the objects in the collections
- ❑ ‘Interprets’ covers display, education, research and publication



**A museum is an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit.**

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- ❑ ‘Material’ indicates something that is tangible
- ❑ ‘Evidence’ guarantees its authenticity (‘real thing’)
- ❑ ‘Associated information’
  - represents the knowledge which prevents a museum object being merely a curio
    - ❑ strange and interesting object which evokes curiosity
  - includes all records relating to its past history, acquisition and subsequent usage
- ❑ ‘for the public benefit’ = deliberately open ended; is intended to reflect current thinking “museums are the servants of society”, both within + outside profession



# Definitions

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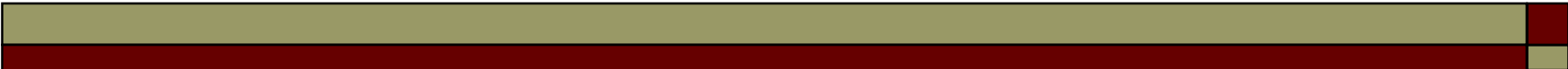
- ❑ **The American Association of Museums definition:**
- ❑ A non-profit permanent, established institution, not existing primarily for the purpose of conducting temporary exhibitions, exempt from federal and state income taxes, open to the public and administered in the public interest, for the purpose of conserving and preserving, studying, interpreting, assembling, and exhibiting to the public for its instruction and enjoyment objects and specimens of educational and cultural value, including artistic, scientific (whether animate or inanimate), historical and technological material. Museums thus defined shall include botanical gardens, zoological parks, aquaria, planetaria, historical societies, and historic houses and sites which meet the requirements set forth in the preceding sentence.



# Museums and the shaping of knowledge

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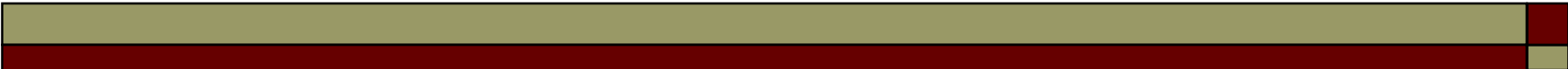
- = shaping knowledge over last 600 years: structures of knowledge and rules for the production of truth (especially during period of the Renaissance *episteme*, *the classical age*, and the modern age)
- accumulation of material things (natural + artificial) → one of the ways to know the world
- cabinets, *studioli*, *Theatrum sapientiae*, *repositories*, and ‘museums’ = constituted according to the prevailing epistemological context → enabled different ways of knowing → always according to the rules and structures in place at the time



# **There is no essential museum!**

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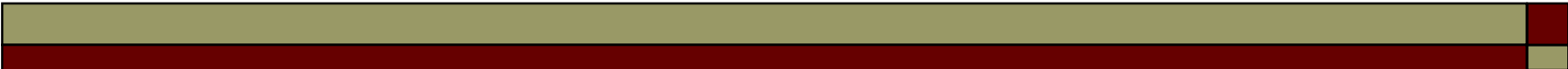
- ❑ museum is not a pre-constituted entity which is produced in the same way at all times ('direct ancestors' or 'fundamental role' identified)
- ❑ identities, targets, functions, subject positions = variable + discontinuous
- ❑ no essential identity for museums
- ❑ constituted identities = subject to constant change (due to shifts, new relations of advantage and disadvantage)
- ❑ 'Truth is of the world: it is produced by virtue of multiple constraints' (Foucault, 1977b:13).



# Museums as part of “Cultural Theory”

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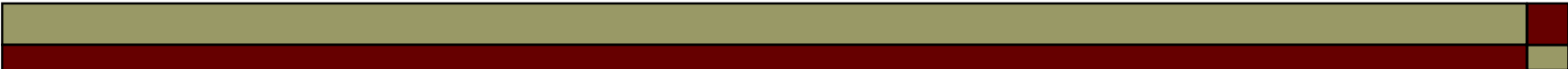
- ❑ Argument: we inhabit culture in the sense that we share a certain amount of knowledge and understanding about our environment → share “cultural maps,” of shared cultural maps involves making judgments about cultural practices or products + their value, status, and legitimacy
- ❑ applicable to work within museums and galleries where the act of display = of definition and attribution of value: “this is art” or “this is culture.”
- ❑ Controversies: arise over such acts of value definition



# Museums as part of “Cultural Theory”

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- ❑ Museums = public spaces in which definitions of cultures and their values = actively contested and debated
- ❑ Museums materialize values + supports processes of meaning-making into sharp relief
- ❑ = reason that museums are of such interest to cultural theoreticians and museum studies researchers alike



# Museums as contact zone

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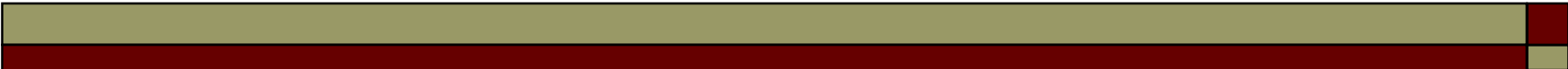
- = interactive nature of the relationships between various communities, stakeholders, and museums.
- As “contact zone,” museum = space of transcultural encounter (more than being a tightly bounded institution disseminating knowledge to its visitors) → heritage: museum as a space where different cultures and communities intersect, interact, and are mutually influenced by the encounter
- museum itself is a community with its own conventions and cultural values

# Museums as contact zone

museums are changing continually in response to their own changing contexts – colonial, postcolonial, modern, postmodern, public, commercial, COVID, ...



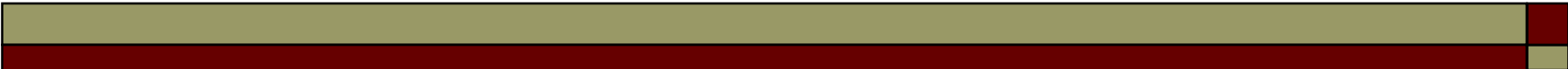
→ “museum” is understood as a flexible and expansive way of describing a whole range of relations and activities which surround the valuation, collection, and display of cultures and histories → beware the visitors and their needs!!!!



# Museums as Heritage Centres

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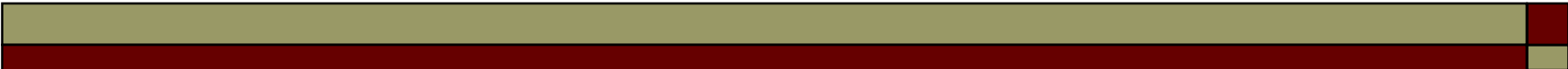
- ❑ **Heritage centre**
- ❑ a term widely used to describe a facility interpreting the natural and/or cultural heritage of a place or an area
- ❑ in many cases, heritage centres are collections-based and are thus functionally museums,
- ❑ ‘heritage centre’ is thought to sound more attractive to visitors



# **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS**

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- ❑ preserves and conserves community's cultural and natural heritage;
- ❑ cultural focus + place of shared 'memory' for community;
- ❑ engagement with educational organisations, learn through contact with original material;
- ❑ providing accessible cultural facilities, (exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, lecture theatres);
- ❑ representing the history and culture of minority groups;
- ❑ organising accessible cultural events and activities;
- ❑ acting as a centre of objective professional expertise;



# **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS**

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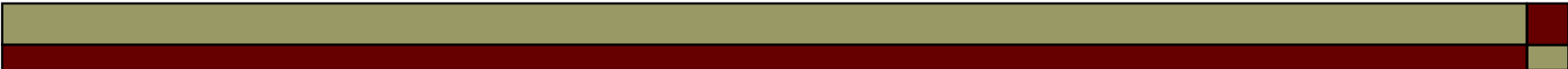
- ❑ providing opportunities for community involvement through volunteer programmes, Friends' groups or training programmes;
- ❑ working in partnership with other cultural bodies, e.g. libraries, archives, theatres, arts centres to develop joint programmes and projects



# Classifications – Types of museums

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1. Classified by collections
2. Classified by who runs them
3. Classified by the audience they serve
4. Classified by the way they exhibit their collections



# 1. Types of museums – Classified by collections

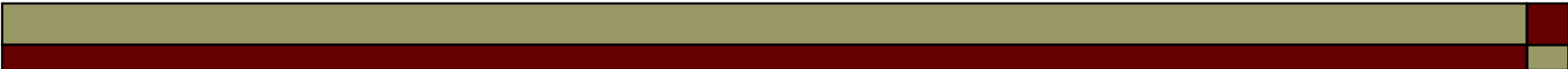
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- ❑ general museums
- ❑ archaeology museums
- ❑ art museums
- ❑ history museums
- ❑ ethnography museums
- ❑ natural history museums
- ❑ science museums
- ❑ geology museums
- ❑ industrial museums
- ❑ military museums

## 2. Types of museums – Classified by who runs them

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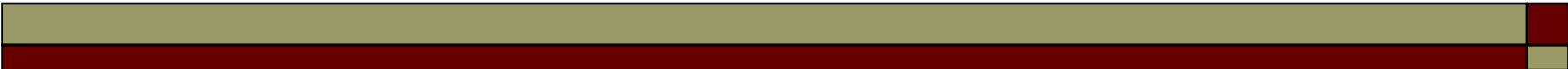
- ❑ • government museums
- ❑ • municipal museums
- ❑ • university museums
- ❑ • independent (charitable trust) museums
- ❑ • army museums
- ❑ • commercial company museums
- ❑ • private museums



### 3. Types of museums - Classified by the area they serve

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- ❑ national museums
- ❑ regional museums
- ❑ city museums
- ❑ local museums



## 4. Types of museums - Classified by the way they exhibit their collections

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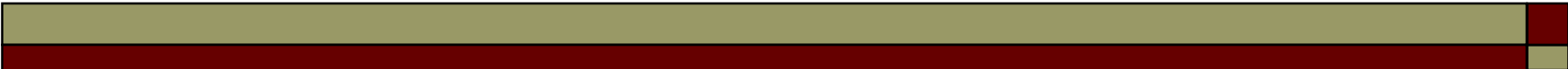
- ❑ traditional museums
- ❑ historic house museums
- ❑ open-air museums
- ❑ interactive museums

# Example:

## Cyfarthfa Castle Museums and Art Gallery Merthyr Tydfil







# Cyfarthfa Castle Museums and Art Gallery Merthyr Tydfil

---

- ❑ Regional Museum:
  - serves the “valleys” in South Wales
- ❑ Community Museum:
  - represent everyday living and values
  - explores indigenous creativity, visual culture and public culture through collection and interpretation of artefacts
  - provides flexible exhibition and public programs within specific community settings
- ❑ Municipal Museum:
  - until recently run by County Council Merthyr Tydfil
- ❑ Independent Museum:
  - Run by a charitable trust



Please note that Gallery E on the top floor of the Art Gallery is currently closed. This closure does not affect current exhibitions: John Atkinson Grimshaw and The Art-It Museum.



## About Scarborough Museums Trust



### Mission and Strategic Aims

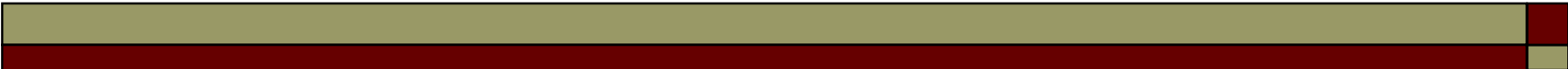
[Find out more >](#)



### History

[Find out more >](#)

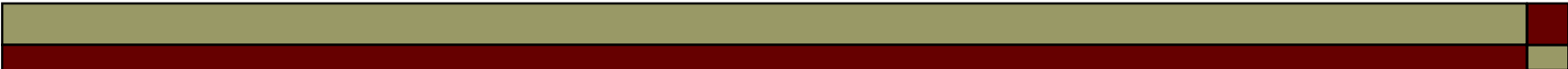
# Scarborough Museum Trust



# Scarborough Museum Trust

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- ❑ Regional Museum:
  - serves Scarborough town and county
- ❑ Community Museum:
  - represent everyday living and values → “museum by the sea”
  - explores indigenous creativity, visual culture and public culture through collection and interpretation of artefacts
  - provides flexible exhibition and public programs within specific community settings
- ❑ Municipal Museum:
  - until recently run by County Council
- ❑ Independent Museum:
  - Run by a charitable trust



# Why museums (collections)?

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## □ Humans

- have a long history of preserving artefacts of the past.
- Collecting things is a basic need!
- **Preserving The Past**

# Book Label of Amenhotep III



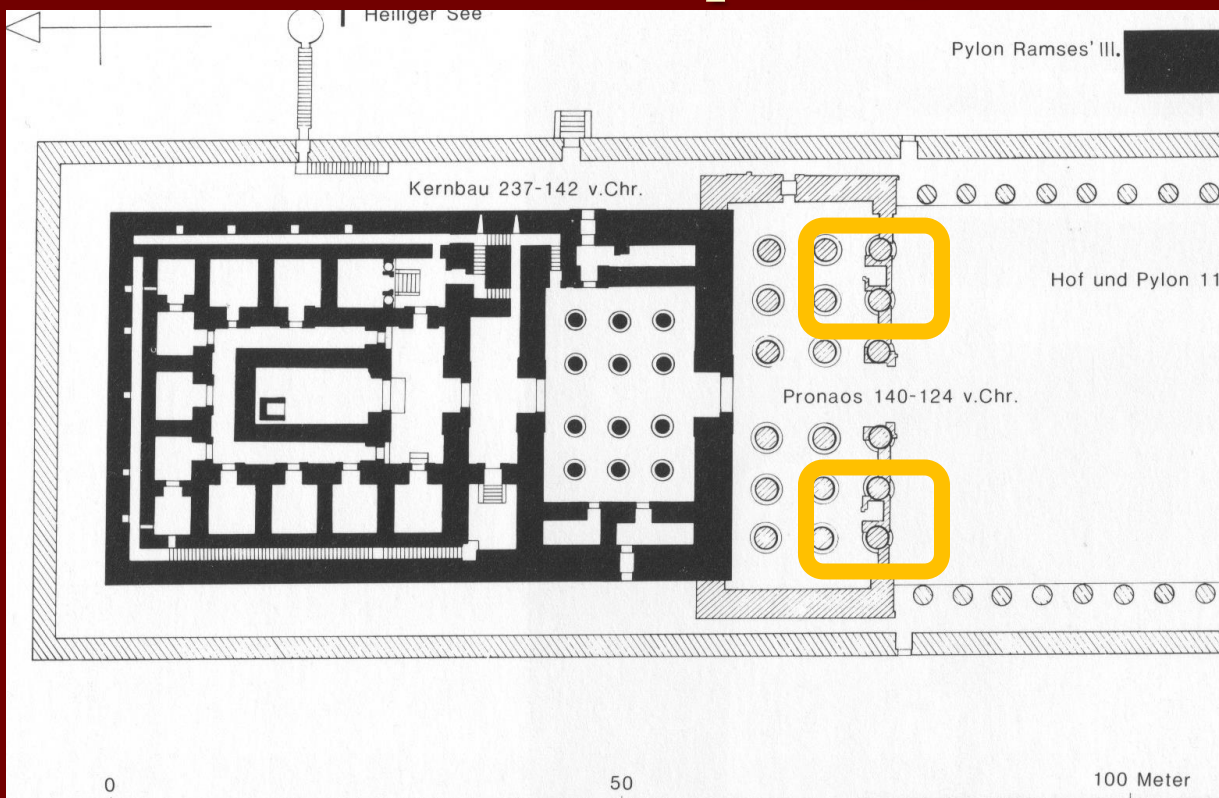
# Book Label of Amenhotep III



- Egypt, Thebes, 14<sup>th</sup> cent. BC
- Glazed composition book-label of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye
- "Beloved of Ptah, the king of the Two Lands, the good god Amenhotep III, may he be given life; the wife of the king, Tiye, may she live"; "the book of the moringa tree."
- **Dimensions**  
Length: 6.3 centimetres  
Width: 3.8 centimetres

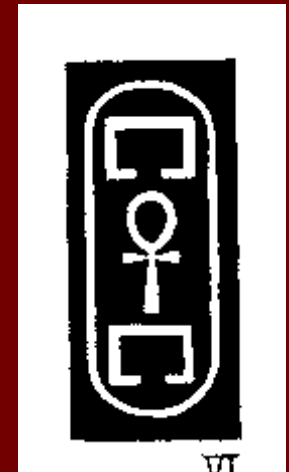
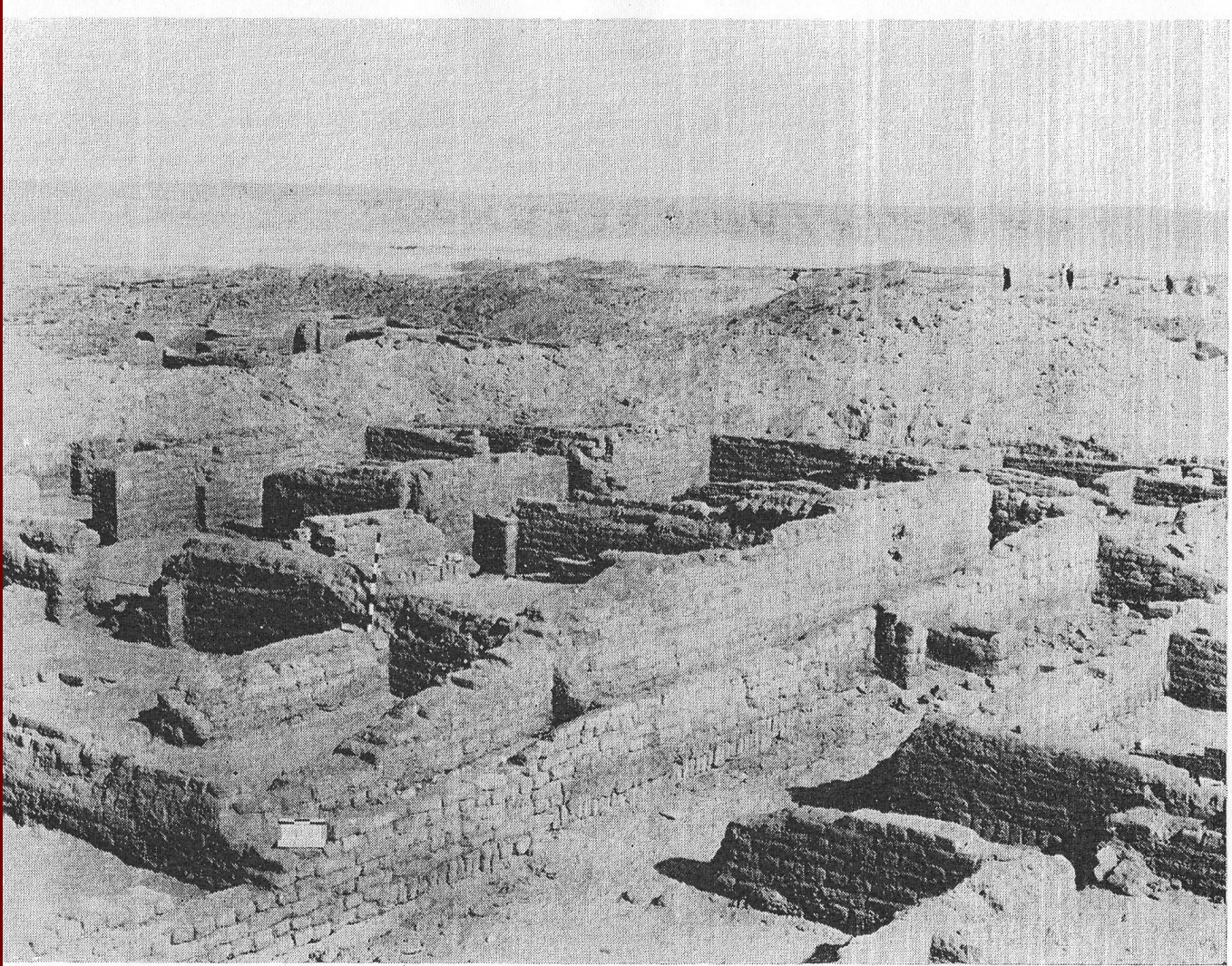
# Edfu: Library (*pr-md3.t*)

*pr-md3.t*

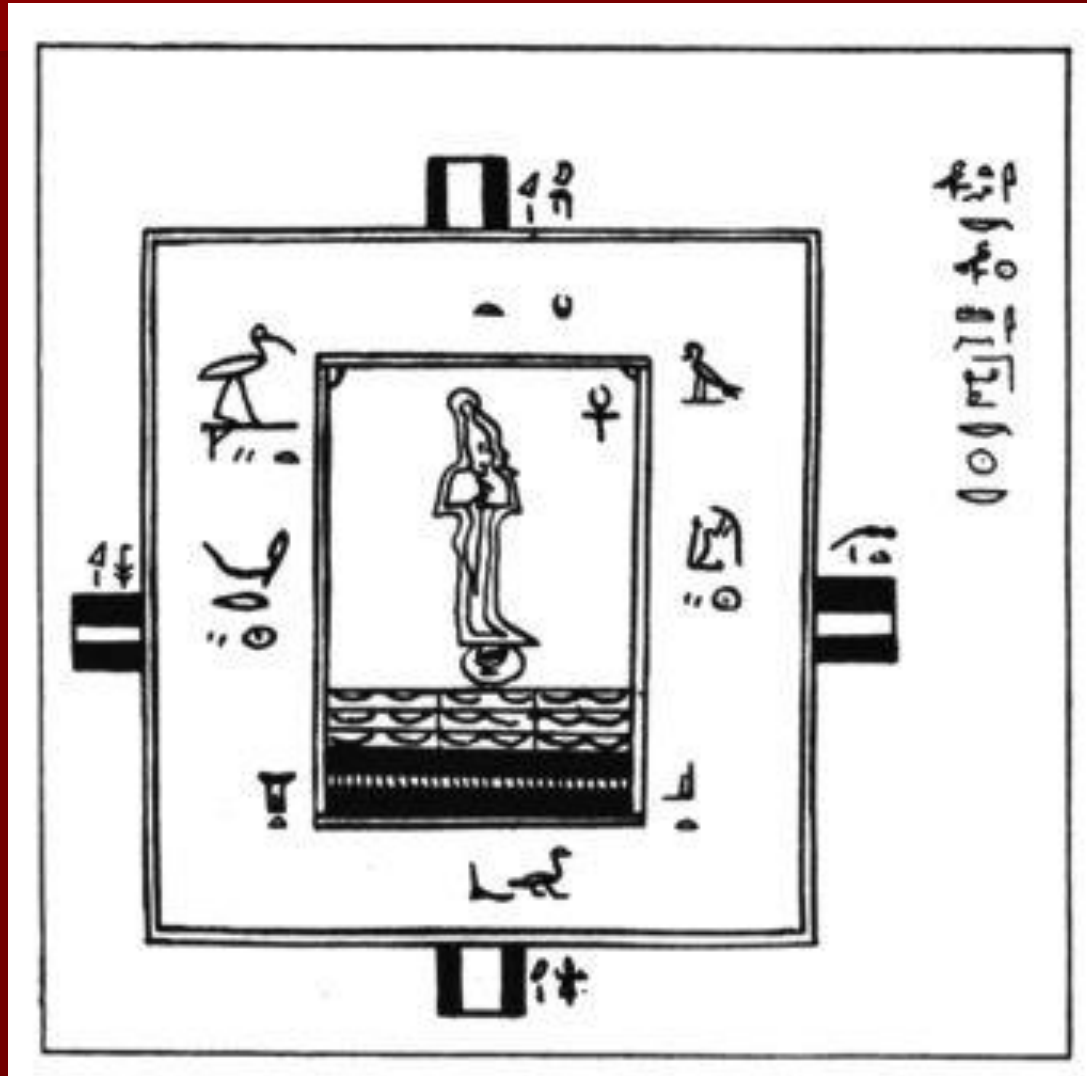


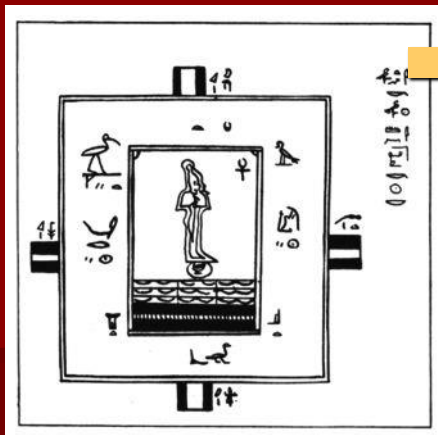
*pr-dw3.t*

# Amarna: House of Life (*pr-<sup>ḥ</sup>nh*)

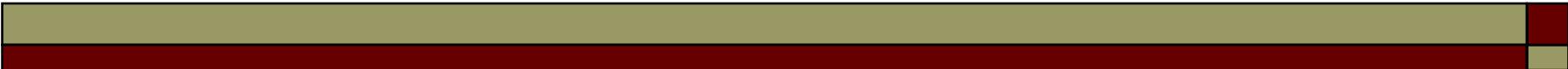


# The house of life in Pap. Salt 825





*There are four mansions of life at Abydos, (each) is built four stories high and is internally waist-coated with palm wood. There are four mansions of life, Osiris is master thereof. The four houses are Isis, Nephthys, Seb and Nu. Isis is placed in one, Nephthys in another, Horus in one, Tahuti in another, at the four angles: Seb is above, Nu is below, The four outer walls are of stone. It has two stories, its foundation is sand, its exterior is jasper, one is placed to the South, another to the North, another to the West, another to the East. It is very hidden, unknown, invisible, nothing save the solar disk sees it. It escapes men that go there. The Sun's librarians, the Treasure Scribes are within. pSalt 825*



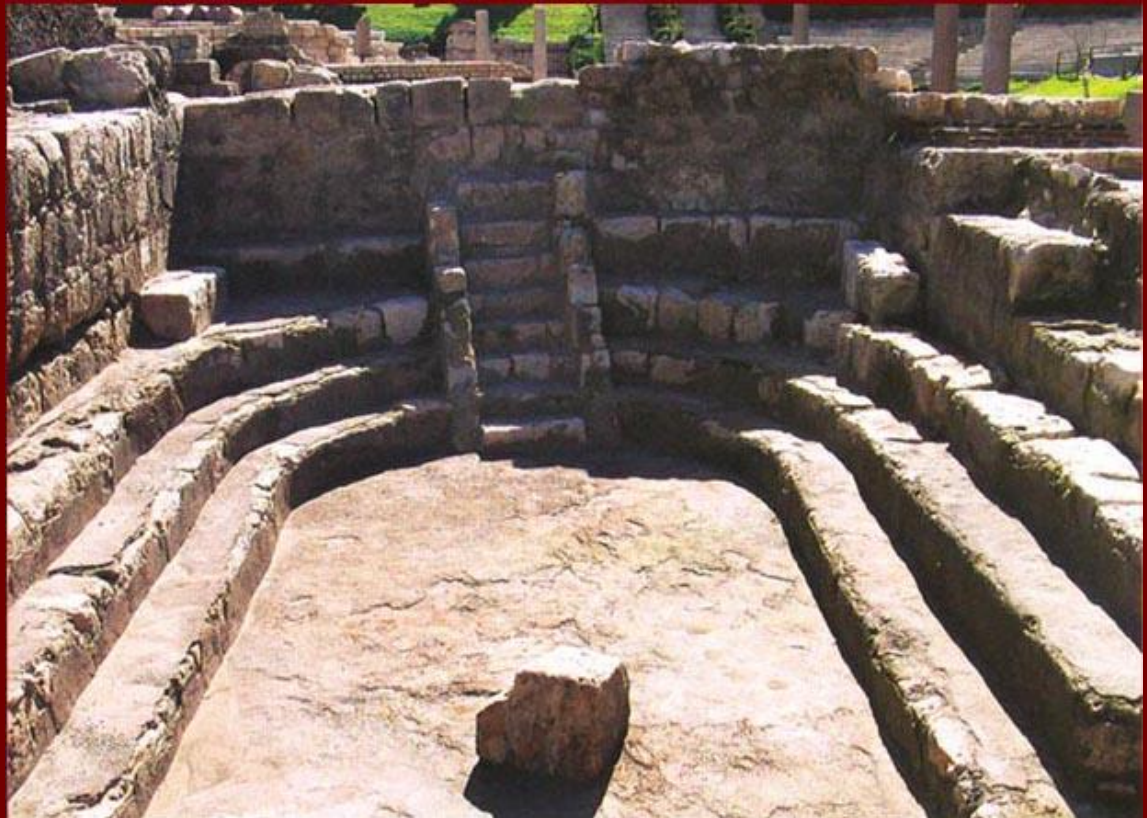
# Preserving The Past

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- ❑ The ancient Greeks coined the term *mouseion* when they first built a temple to "the Muses," spritely goddesses who kept watch over the arts and sciences
- ❑ The Greeks filled their temples with both sculpture and scholars. The tradition was copied in the kingly treasure houses that followed — spoils of war were displayed in the halls of royal palaces and the cages of royal zoos

# Museion in Alexandria

- Museion as place for the muses → becomes a place of memory and education
- 2007: lecture theatres discovered → thought to have belonged to Museion

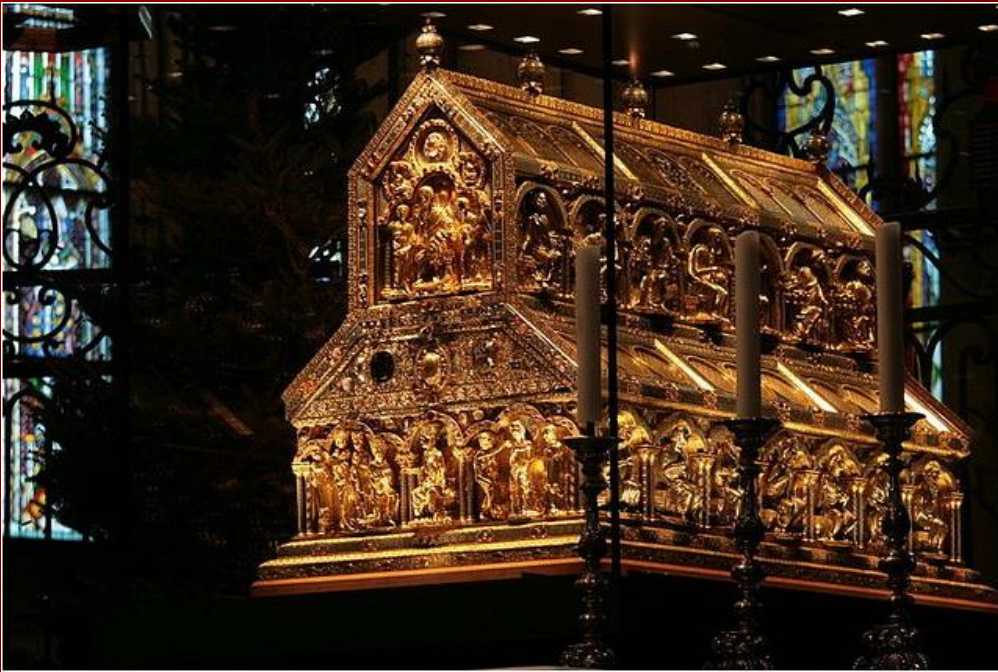


# Museion in Alexandria

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- ❑ founded at Alexandria by Ptolemy I (305-285 BC)
- ❑ Mouseion at Alexandria, Musaeum or Μουσεῖον τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας
- ❑ not a museum as in modern terms but a learning institution (brought together some of the most brilliant scholars of the Hellenistic world): study of anatomy and mathematics (Euclid's geometry), astronomical observation and studies in engineering
- ❑ Location of the Library of Alexandria: Hellenistic scholars edited major works of Greek literary canon

# Medieval Treasure Chambers



# Medieval Treasure Chambers

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- ❑ Medieval collections of antiquities
- ❑ Belonging to secular rulers and ecclesiastical orders
  - Relic collections → relics gained in addition to religious and ritualistic purpose a collective quality
- ❑ Treasures to legitimise rule and demonstrate wealth, not museums in the modern sense
- ❑ Sense for aesthetic



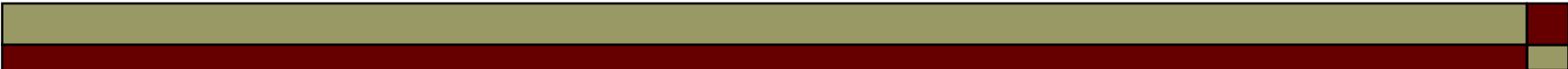
# Cabinet of curiosities

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- ❑ Encyclopaedic collections in Renaissance (mainly 16<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> cent.) Europe of all types of objects
- ❑ Called **Cabinet of Wonder**, and in German **Kunstkammer** ("art-room") or **Wunderkammer** ("wonder-room")
- ❑ Combined objects of natural history, geology, ethnography, archaeology, religious or historical relics, works of art (including cabinet paintings), antiquities and fakes of all kind

# Ferrante Imperato's *Dell'Historia Naturale* (Naples 1599)



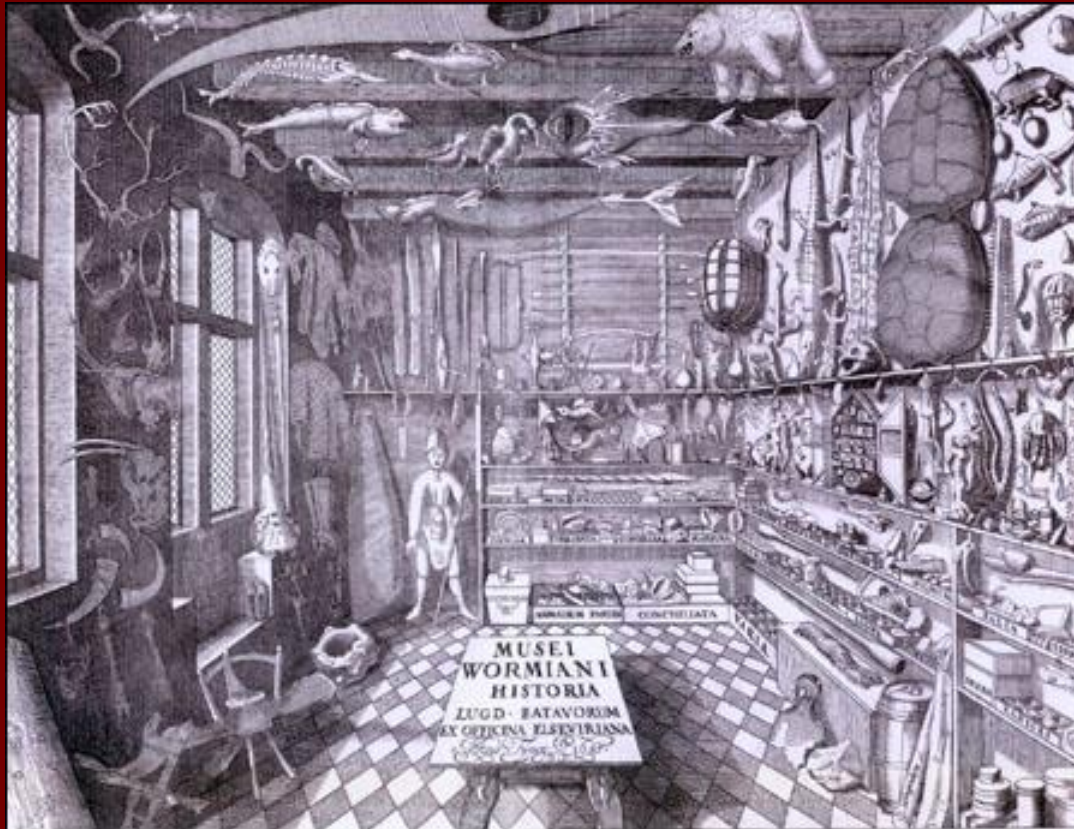


# Cabinet of curiosities (Kunstkammer)

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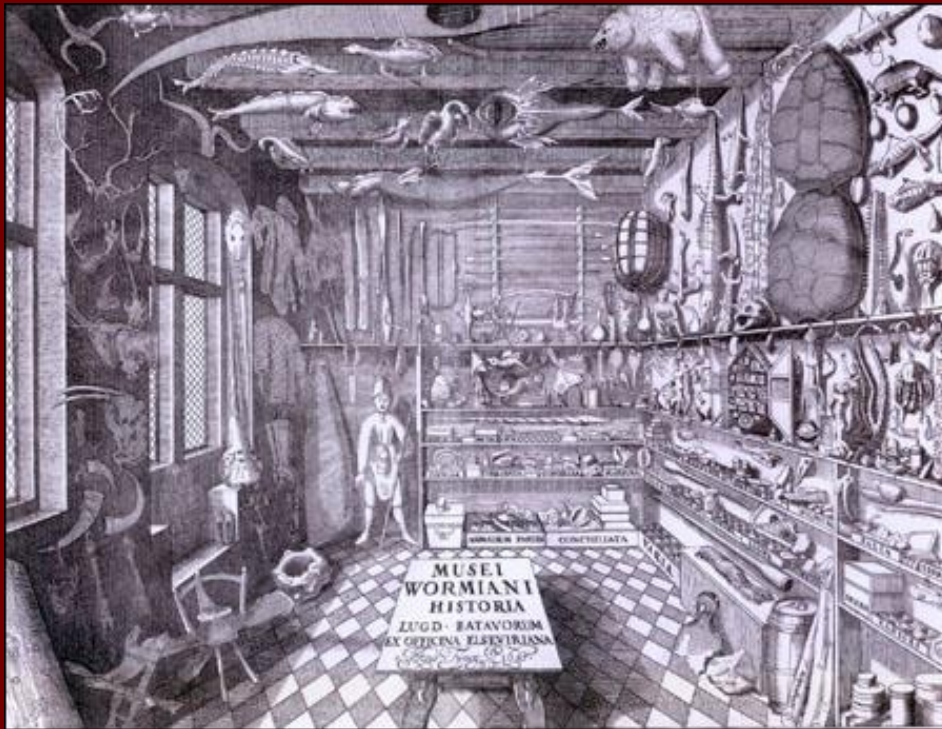
- ❑ Kunstkammer = regarded as microcosm / theatre of the world → memory theatre, were precursors to museums
- ❑ conveyed symbolically patron's control of world through indoor, microscopic reproduction
- ❑ Charles I of England used his *Kunstkabinett* as a form of propaganda
- ❑ most famous and best documented cabinets = of European rulers and aristocrats
- ❑ But also important: Kunstkammer of members of the merchant class and practitioners of science also formed collections

# Kunstkammer of Ole Worm (1588-1654) – professor of medicine

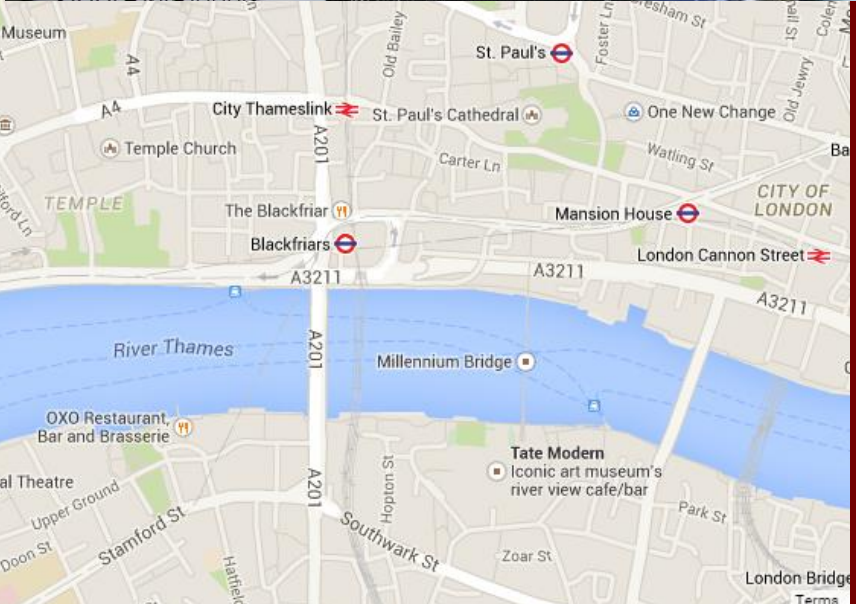
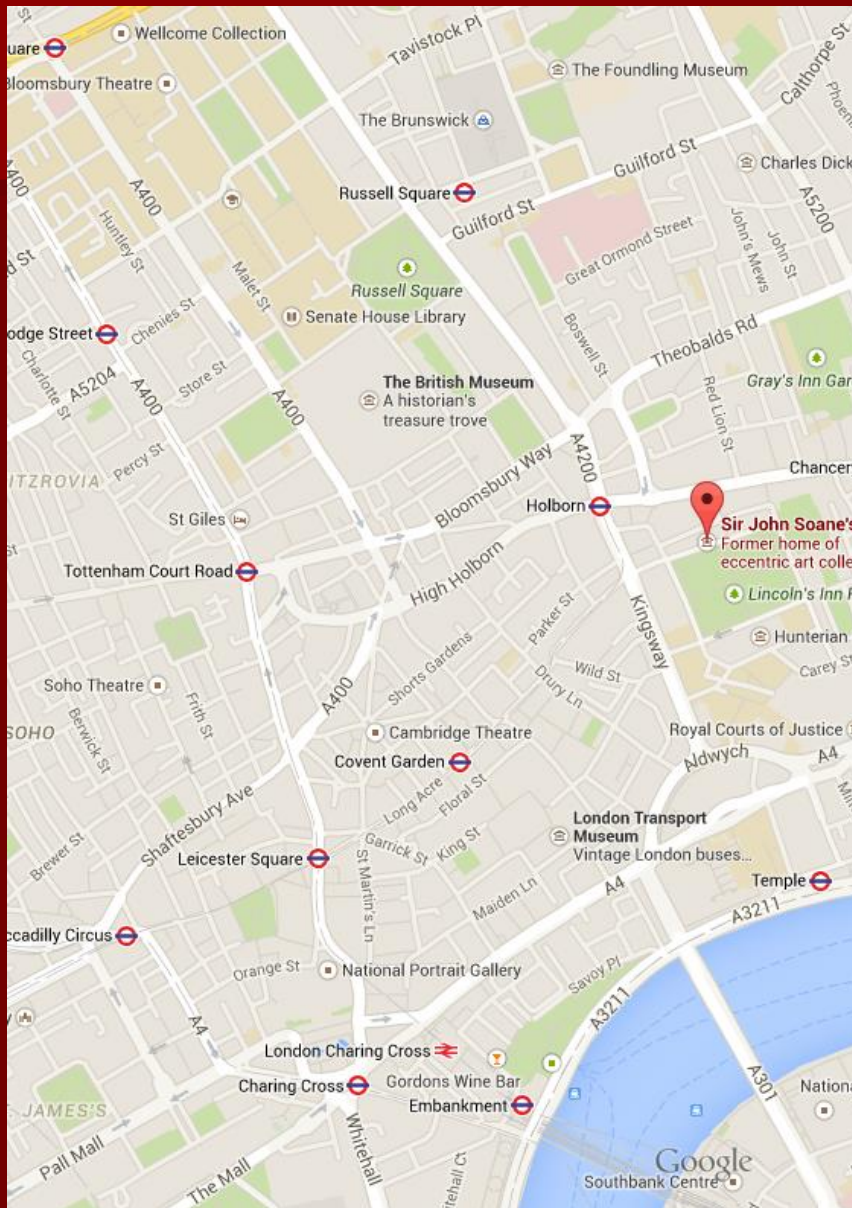


- Believed, that learning comes about through the observation of nature - "through empiricism and experiment" - and not just through the study of texts.

- museum in his Copenhagen home: ethnographic curiosities, skulls, stuffed animals, optical and experimental devices → detailed frontispiece in 1655 catalogue called "Worm's Museum, or the History of Very Rare Things, Natural and Artificial, Domestic and Exotic, Which Are Stored in the Author's House in Copenhagen."



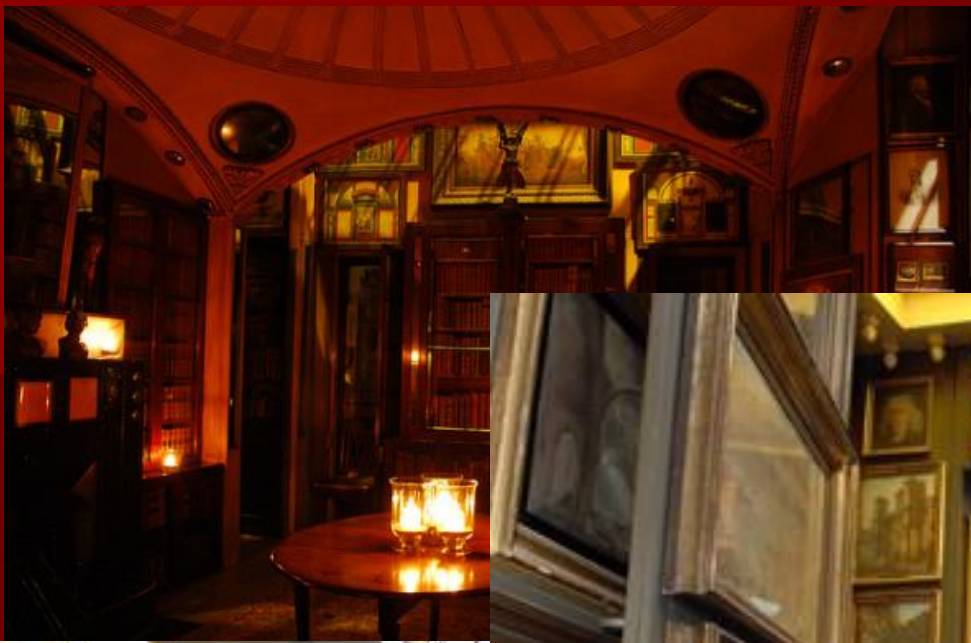
# Sir John Soane's Museum



# Sir John Soane's Museum



- Born in 1753, died in 1837
- son of a bricklayer
- English architect, specialised in Neo-Classical style
- professor of architecture at Royal Academy, official architect to the Office of Works
- received a knighthood in 1831
- designed 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields as his home + setting for his antiquities and works of art
- established the house as a museum by Act of Parliament (1833) requiring that his romantic and poetic interiors be kept as they were at the time of his death



# SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

HOME | YOUR VISIT | THE MUSEUM | EDUCATION | COLLECT



## The house and Museum of the architect Sir John Soane, R.A.

Born in 1753, the son of a bricklayer, Soane died in 1837 after a long and distinguished career. He designed 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields as his home and as a setting for his antiquities and works of art. After his wife's death he lived here alone, constantly adding to and rearranging his collections. He established the house as a museum by Act of Parliament (1833) requiring that his romantic and poetic interiors be kept as they were at the time of his death.

search

Current Exhibition



## What's On



Explore our exciting programme of events and activities.

### Choose Date Range

20/02/2015

26/02/2015

### Select A Category

ALL

FIND

## Soane Museum Blog

### Following in Adam's Footsteps



Fran Sands travelled to Croatia for a conference on the influence of Diocletian's Palace

posted on 18/12/14 in Latest News

### The New State Paper Office



Drawings Cataloguer Tom Drysdale examines the history of Soane's final public building

posted on 13/11/14 in Looking at Drawings

### Night at the Museum Mile is Here!



We've teamed up with 11 neighbouring museums for half-term family fun

posted on 23/10/14 in Latest News

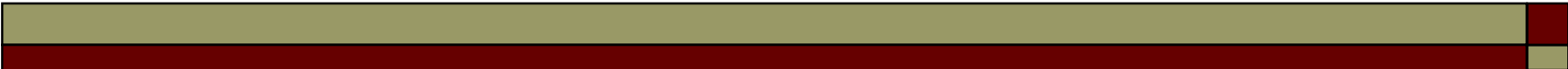
previous | next

showing 1-3 of 21 items

GUIDED TOURS

OUTS

SOANE SHOP



# Rotunda Museum Scarborough

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- ❑ Opened in 1829, one of the earliest purpose-built museums
- ❑ Design by Richard Hey Sharp, based ideas by William Smith – ‘father of English Geology’
- ❑ housed / displayed fossil and mineral collections → end of the 19<sup>th</sup>cent.: natural history museum, 1950s local social history collections
- ❑ 1952, the Scarborough Corporation opened Museum of Natural History at Woodend (home Sitwell family): relocation of geology / natural history
- ❑ Rotunda re-opened in May 2008 (two year restoration) as ‘The Rotunda: the William Smith Museum of Geology’

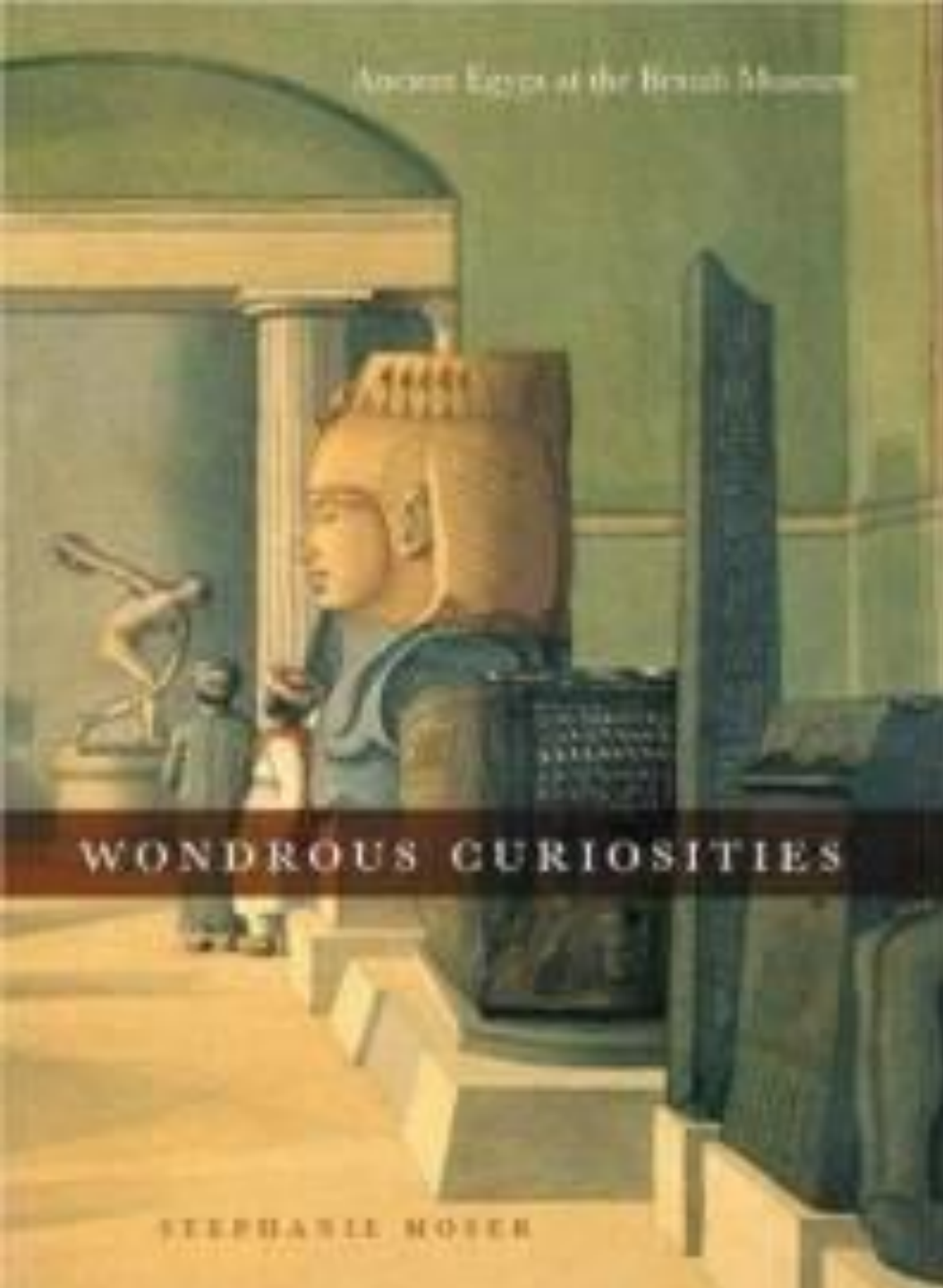




# Wondrous curiosities

- American showman P.T. Barnum (left) and Commodore Nutt, pictured circa 1862. Nutt was "exhibited" at Barnum's American Museum in New York, which Barnum claimed attracted 15,000 visitors per day.





# ■ Ancient Egypt at the British Museum

# Follow up reading

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- ❑ Lee, Paula Young: The Musaeum of Alexandria and the Formation of the Muséum in Eighteenth-Century France. In: The Art Bulletin 79(1997)3, pp. 385-412
- ❑ URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046259>