

For the blind man...

ANONYMOUS



The Renaissance ancestor of the museum, the *Wunderkammer* (curiosity cabinet) was born out of the impulse to own exotic and alien objects. Collectors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would travel extensively to far-off lands in search of the extraordinary and the miraculous. They would return with prized hard-to-find curiosities—animals, plants, tools, but also paintings and artifacts—and display them in dedicated rooms, filling every spare inch. At its heart, the *Wunderkammer's* popularity lay in the fact that its visitors could inhabit a place they didn't understand. This seventeenth century book reminds us now that not-knowing has been a central part of the museum experience since its beginning.

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Image:

Portrait of the Ferrante Imperato Museum, 1672

Printed frontispiece, 13 x 20 x 2 inches (closed)

Courtesy of the Missouri Botanical Garden Library, St. Louis