Kunsthaus Graz English

The Painter's Cabinet
Terry Winter's Dialogue with Nature

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Space02

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of the exhibition

The Painter's Cabinet
Terry Winter's Dialogue with Nature

Kunsthaus Graz
Universalmuseum Joanneum
11 March until
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Terry Winters uses abstract processes in his painting to produce pictures of a real world. He is preoccupied with forms as they can be found in nature. For the exhibition at the Kunsthaus Graz he selected objects from the Universalmuseum Joanneum natural history collections and juxtaposed them with his own paintings, prints and graphics. Viewing and comparing this *wunderkammer* opens up many levels of contemplation of nature, humanity, existence and cosmos.

Terry Winters

Terry Winters lives and works in Manhattan and in the Taconic Mountains in New York State. He was born in 1949 in Brooklyn, where he grew up, becoming interested in the New York City museums from an early age. In 1971 he received a BFA from the Pratt Institute and in the following years worked constantly on his art. Only after ten years did he show his work to the public, presenting an oeuvre that had grown steadily. Right from the outset organic forms and nature's aesthetic peculiarities caught his interest. Engaging in a rigorous analysis he developed his abstract formal language, juxtaposing inner and outer worlds, clear and obscure forms. His accomplished painting style draws on historic techniques. He is interested in how pigments are structured and how they appear. Early on he began collecting books on the theme and researched the very beginnings of painting. He became aware of the fact that the material, the surface and the appearance of the surface determine our perception. This is also why the tangible structure of the spaces generated by vibrant colours in Winter's pictures is so important. He constantly returned to the first impulse, to the desire to find forms and to transform these into painting, drawing and graphic reproduction. Throughout his career, none of these techniques has taken precedence over another; all three are equally important and mutually influence each other, growing and developing together. He has also frequently worked in series. In 1977 he worked with Walter de Maria to construct his Land Art project, *The Lightning Field*. The desert and the colours of the earth fascinated him and left a lasting impression. He was also inspired by the organic geometric formal language of the indigenous Native Americans.

Around 1980, Winters increasingly took to drawing both plant structures and architecture. He was interested in biomorphic architecture, particularly that of Buckminster Fuller and Frei Otto. He discovered a potential for further works in the observation of growing structures. Crystalline structures and combinations of pigments become the starting-point for a schematic concept concerning structures and their meanings. Increasingly he immersed himself in biological languages of form, focusing on 'the inside' of nature, microcosms and phenomena invisible to the eye. It was, however, never his intention to illustrate or document them.

At the beginning of the 1980s Terry Winters exhibited in New York. The public were fascinated by his abstract painting (which was not very popular at the time), the captivating craftsmanship of his work and with a new formal language that somehow tied in with old traditions. Winters used an organic, highly original vocabulary, which he continued to develop from picture to picture. Fellow painter Jasper Johns said that he thought certain forms were already familiar with the subconscious.

In his pictures Terry Winters deals with diverse transformation processes from nature, choosing a formal language such as can be found in nature. Since the paintings, prints and graphics are neither illustrations nor documentations of natural phenomena, they open up a space for fictions and at the same time play with the possibility of also being real.

Visualisation

Beyond art, there is also the endeavour to make images of nature in order to see how it works. Forces and phenomena invisible to the naked eye can only be described in abstract terms or perhaps represented in mathematical formula. Nonetheless scientists oftentimes have the strong need to develop and express their theories in concrete, visualised form. For a long time, the visible machinery of humankind lay in contrast to the invisible machinery of a divine cosmos that caused natural phenomena. From the very beginning, the problem of overcoming this 'invisibility' has been the focus of scientific ambition. At least since the Enlightenment this has given rise to wide-ranging visualisations in both concrete and abstract formal languages. Speculative hypotheses were materialised in pictures by scientists in order to lend them a tangible reality that words could not. And yet even in scientific illustrations people see different things. There are very few people who do not have the strong tendency to see not just what they can actually see, but also what they want to see. Every act of

seeing is at the same time an active interpretation. In everyday life we are used to perceiving and deciphering things, and usually without much mental effort. Yet if we encounter pictures that go beyond our experience, we become aware of the interaction between seeing and knowing. Ultrasound images of our own body become alien worlds, just as microscopic close-ups of plants or minerals show puzzlingly abstract forms for the layperson. Visualised phenomena can only ever show us a detail of the whole. Ultimately, objects from natural history collections also only show us a fragmented, interpreted version of history. However comprehensive they are, collections can only ever be partially complete.

Museum

Museums play a special role in academia. The story of the beginnings of the Natural History Museum in Graz is at the same time that of the founding of the Universalmuseum Joanneum in 1811. Natural history collections in general originated from *wunderkammer*, where such objects were purchased for the edification of their aristocratic owners. Rare plants or exotic animals found their way into European collections via distant voyages of discovery. It was mainly the big colonial powers who dispatched such expeditions, motivated purely by economic gain. The natural history collections then evolved from these curious private collections to meet the need for order and practical categories. The exploration of the world interior is to be found in the 19th-century thirst for research as well as the categorical ordering of state-related documents and findings. In the 19th century the sense of natural history collections lay in the almost complete documentation of the different disciplinary areas. The aim was to show as much as possible of the whole breadth of groups or species, to offer opportunities to compare and to make visual material available to students. Today, natural history exhibitions have different objectives. The focus is on the viewing experience of as wide a public as possible. The academic field has retreated into the repository, where the study collections are handled and used by an expert public.

Selection

Terry Winters discovered and selected objects in all of the storage repositories of the natural history collections in Graz. His paintings are juxtaposed with a *Painter's Cabinet* made up of objects drawn from the mineralogy, geology, palaeontology, zoology and botany sections.
Many of these objects date back to the 19th century and they give us an insight into the history of the museum and how objects enter a museum. They are a record of the contemporary understanding of nature and also how 'nature' was seen, researched and conveyed in the past. They demonstrate that, even in the field of natural history, exhibits are collected according to visually imposing criteria. It is impressive to see the forms assumed by nature, and also the human achievement in exposing and classifying them.
Terry Winters opens up the *wunderkammer* in the *Painter's Cabinet* from which he finds inspiration. Within this, the animal and plant world appear as a metaphor for the complex attempt to cultivate the emergence of a world in pictures. He plays with orders and categories, with structures and spaces. His cellular forms and elementary entities become a surrogate for the self, prompting reflection on social structures and relations. They are enhanced by the titles of the works, which for instance make one think of beehives, nests and swarms. The information stored in natural history objects becomes a pool for an extensive personal examination that enables the contemplation of nature, humanity, existence and cosmos on many levels. Winters' works move between abstraction and depiction, between painting, drawing and digital space, where he also collects images, patterns, forms and structures and makes them publicly available via Pinterest as *Graz Cabinet*. In the exhibition, wallpapers with the Pinterest pictures form a visual and content-related connecting link. (http://www.pinterest.com/studio0315/graz-cabinet).
Winters' pictures, drawings and prints stand primarily for themselves. One does not need specialised knowledge in order to view them and one can nonetheless understand them on an intuitive level. There is certainly much that is made visible by his pictures.

Nests

The hornets' nest, the nests of the European wasp, those of the common and median wasps and the nest of a South American wasp species date back in part to the 19th century. There are also more recent examples of nests such as these in the collection. Most enter the museum as gifts from private individuals. As is the case with many other of the objects in the museum's zoological holdings, they were received from inheritances or from private collections. The latter play a very significant role for many sections of the museum and are of greater scientific importance for the natural history department if the objects come with a record detailing the location where they were found, date, coordinates and name of the finder. Preferably objects should hold a special display value for potential exhibitions and offer a very good visualisation of particular themes.

Oyster Bed

The oyster bed is a very young object in terms of this collection, even though the fossil itself is already 15 million years old. The preparator of the geological and palaeontological collections, Norbert Winkler, painstakingly exposed the fossils using air gravers and sand blasting, as well as a great deal of care and expert knowledge. This detailed work took three months. Weighing a total of 700 kg, the oyster bed was found near Wildon and, in this only just transportable size, is a very rare sample. The shells of the giant oysters are up to 40cm long. Smaller species have then been deposited in the upper layer, inferring a changing habitat. The shells show traces of marine borers and boring sponges. This oddly shaped bit of rock also provides information about the hinterland and the shifts in the landscape. Brackish water, a mixture of seawater and freshwater found near the coast, offered the oysters a food-rich habitat. In Styria at that time a flat sea extended over the area from Stainz to Dobl and from Wildon to Heimschuh in what today is west Styria.

Rhodonite Slab

The rhodonite slab is a striking shade of pink. The stone became famous because large deposits of it are found in Russia. Here it gained an important place in the country's cultural history due to its use as cladding in a Moscow metro station. Thanks to its special colour, this manganese silicate is also frequently used in the applied arts. This slab comes from woodland near St. Salvator bei Friesach in the region of Carinthia. It was just twenty years ago that a large number of huge blocks of the rock, black on the outside, were discovered here. One of these blocks was retrieved, transported to Graz and then cut into slices, and one of these slices was polished and donated to the collection. The rock is relatively tough and and very heavy. Its pink colour only becomes visible once it has been cut and polished, since the surface of the rock turns black due to oxidation processes.

Drill Core Samples

A core sample is a cylindrical section taken from various rocks with a core drill. It is then used to investigate the geological substratum. They are necessary, for example, to determine the stability of the ground before roads, bridges or tunnels are built. In Styria, selected core material is usually given to the Universalmuseum Joanneum. Information about this unique core material is also made available to the general public in a comprehensive borehole database. Thousands of core metres are kept in the core sample archive, giving precise information about the geological composition of Styria. This core material holds incredible amounts of information for geologists, such as regarding mineral deposits or fossil records and is a valuable sample material for future research objectives.
http://www.gmld.at/bohrdat.html

Coal

The Universalmuseum Joanneum has a large collection of coal. Most of these objects date back

to the 19th century and are stored in boxes in the repository. The coal is kept in its own storage collection there. Many objects originate from the historic coalmining areas where the mines closed down and are no longer accessible. The material preserved from Styria, Slovenia and a few other European coal deposits is still of scientific importance, especially as a lot of information such as coal rank, fossils etc. is contained within the coal.

Basalt Column

Basalt columns are special phenomena formed by rapidly cooling magma. Its polygonal and hexagonal symmetries make the large piece visually appealing. It did not come from Styria.

Models of Fruit

The models of different fruit varieties were produced in the 1880s and served as visual material for farmers. They show a collection of types of fruit that was specifically considered appropriate for Styria. Although we complain today about the loss of varieties, the wide array of types did not exist in its current form in the 19th century. Instead of attractive dessert fruit it was mainly small fruits that grew, more suited for making cider than for eating raw. Since the new dessert fruit varieties were viewed with a certain scepticism by the farmers, these models were made to serve as 'tasty' motivational samples. The display pieces are made of papier-mâché and are hollow inside. Their surface is plastered, coloured and waxed. The aim was to reproduce the apples in careful detail, making them as realistic as possible. These models are now mostly of cultural-historical significance. They were presented to the Joanneum at the beginning of the 20th century.

Blaschka Models

The Blaschka models are very valuable glass objects from the 19th century. They served as displays in the museum, since jellyfish floating in alcohol were unappealing. These skilfully crafted, artistic glass models made by the Bohemian Leopold Blaschka and his son Rudolph Blaschka on the other hand were aesthetically attractive as well as being scientifically accurate. About 2000 such glass models exist in the world, mainly of invertebrate sea animals but also some very realistic plants. The Blaschkas usually drew the drafts for the models themselves, but sometimes they also used Ernst Haeckel's precise illustrations. According to old annual reports, the Joanneum purchased 19 of these glass models of invertebrate marine animals already in 1868.

Owls and Humming Birds

From the owls and hummingbirds there is an entire series of objects for each, exhibited here 'as in the repository'. While the owls are presented as stuffed specimens that are positioned realistically in their habitat for exhibition purposes, the hummingbirds are laid out as skins ready for research. They are not assigned as display material but rather serve the purpose of scientific comparison, donated to the collection over 100 years ago. At that time an important method for drawing conclusions about species and subspecies was through large series in comparison. Today, biological relationships and genealogical trees are no longer determined only according to morphological features, but instead with contemporary methods such as DNA analysis. Currently the options for ornithologists to collect have become limited since financial resources are low, and also because objects are harder to obtain. Previously it was simply a case of going out into nature and shooting down the 'material'; today, this is restricted to finding dead birds, mainly roadkill. Also for this reason only native birds are collected, chiefly those with display value as stuffed specimens. The Natural History Museum exhibitions focuses nowadays on the experience of nature, and concentrates on themes such as ecology or evolution. The scientific field has generally retreated from the teaching collection of the 19th century into the repository.

Corals

The corals were either bought or collected as display pieces. They are almost all historic items from the 19th century, when they were used as teaching material for students. Today, corals only enter into the collection when they are confiscated at customs, since coral is protected by the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Usually these are souvenirs brought back by tourists from all over the world, where they were either bought or simply taken from the sea. In the past, however, there were traders who gathered such objects and sold them directly.
The brain corals at the Joanneum all have very low inventory numbers, meaning that they are very old and became part of the collection early on. The clearly visible patterns that give it its name are genetically determined and result from a prescribed programming that controls how the coral grows. Marine animals and corals have been an interest at the museum in Graz from the very beginning. The intention was to have typical examples from all groups and species and show everything from protozoa through to mammals. For this reason, almost all of the animals were on display and the rooms were packed full of objects. The museum was seen as a place of learning that allowed one to form a picture of the order in the animal kingdom, to view, study and become familiar with animals.

Tree Disc

The large tree disc of a tropical tree was seized by Austrian customs during an attempt at illegal import (and given to the Joanneum on permanent loan). Trade in certain endangered plants and animals (or also parts of them) is forbidden according to the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Cones

The cones are individually labelled and each assigned to a particular herbarium record using identification numbers. In this way different material from one and the same tree remains available for further examinations.

Minerals with Goethe Book

From 1780 on, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe devoted himself to collecting rocks and minerals. He amassed around 17,800 finds, and was also often involved in writing about geology. In 1807 he wrote the ‘Description of the Karlsbad Müller’s Rock Collection. On the Bohemian mountains,’ which was basic for this collection of not quite 100 objects. This was only recently identified as definitely being Müller’s rock collection. The rock samples are all about the same size, have a standard form of numbering and all come from the area around Karlsbad. Rock collections such as this one existed on various scales and were sold to private collectors interested in nature. In the times of Goethe the subjects discussed were volcanism and post-volcanic changes. The Neptunists believed in an Earth created by God, while the Plutonists argued that new material continually emerged from the Earth in volcanic eruptions. It was only at the end of his life that Goethe realised that the Plutonists were right.

Bird’s Nest

Sinters are deposits formed by minerals dissolved in water. The aragonite sinter from the Universalmuseum Joanneum Mineralogy collection comes from the Erzberg mountain in Styria, where water drips from the ceiling in the mostly abandoned mining tunnels. When the water evaporates the aragonite is deposited. The dripping causes a shell-like crystallisation of aragonite around fragments of rock or aragonite. The force of the impact means that the individual pieces remain constantly in motion. While concretions occur around the edge, loose stone balls form in the area where the drips fall, which sit together like eggs in a bird’s nest.

Amethyst Druse

Amethyst druses are produced when a cavity forms in volcanic rock. When basalt lava flows at about 900 degrees, gases form

cavities that can no longer collapse. Subsequently hot aggressive waters enter the cavities via a system of cracks in the rock. On cooling, dissolved substances are crystallised. Growth begins from all sides from the walls inwards. Some cavities are completely filled. The complete formations are called amethyst geodes, while part is called a druse. Amethyst is relatively rare and has many meanings in folk tradition. As a 'stone of kings' it also has the legendary character of a treasure found in the mountains. This object probably comes from Brazil.

Rock Crystal

This rock crystal is a historic object from the Tyrol. It is the colourless variant of quartz. In rocks it occurs when cavities are torn open during tectonic uplift. Hot fluids penetrate and can form rock crystal on cooling. The larger these 'Alpine clefts' are, the larger the rock crystals grow and so the more beautiful the upper surfaces that are formed. Further shifts and erosion cause the cavities to come to the surface. In the Alps these can usually only be opened under difficult circumstances. Rock crystals are common in Brazil, in Austria the best places to find them are generally located in national parks.

Chalcopyrite

The chalcopyrite shown here originated from Finland. It entered the collection in the 19th century, when there was already much interest internationally in collections. It presents a type of deposit which is to be found in the 'old continental blocks' of the Earth, where nothing has happened for hundreds of millions of years. As a result one can also find a range of information there about the evolutionary history of the Earth. The massive sulphide mineralisations lead to the conclusion that the material had already been formed at a time when the Earth's atmosphere still did not contain any oxygen. These types of deposits contain corridors of copper-iron sulphide that are metres thick.

Flint

A typical feature of these flints is that they are grey-brown and often have concentric structures. The white crust comes from the finely grained chalks that used to surround them in their usual environment when they were deposited during the Cretaceous period, as for example can be seen in the cliffs of Dover. When the rock is struck, edges are produced that are sometimes extremely sharp due to the toughness of the material. We know from archaeological discoveries of pre- and early history that this feature was deliberately used by humans. These stones are found from the Paris Basin to Belgium and in southern England, which is viewed as a geological area. This stone comes from Belgium, where it was taken from near the Tower of Eben-Ezer.

Zeiringite and Calcite

This zeiringite comes from the mine at Oberzeiring and displays a pale shading into turquoise due to a content of the copper mineral aurichalcite in calcium carbonate. The material is used in applied arts and also as jewellery. This example is a large specimen that was purchased from a miner who was legally allowed to remove these exceptionally large pieces. The calcite here is also a large specimen. At this size such display pieces are very rare in museums, the more so as they also present challenges in terms of weight and storage. They are collected purely as display objects, since smaller pieces are sufficient for purposes of analysis.

Dripstone

This impressive dripstone comes from one of the most beautiful and spectacular stalactite caves in Austria, the Lurgrotte bei Peggau in the region of Styria. Dripstones grow there still today as a deposit from dripping water, at temperatures as low as 8 to 10 degrees. The rate of growth is about 0.01 mm per year.

Primate Heads

These plaster casts of primate heads were made in around 1820. Archduke Johann opened his collections to the public as early as 1811. The collections however also existed as teaching materials for the Technical University and the University. The primate heads were used to give the students an insight into the evolution of humankind and the species related to us.

Dinosaurs

These models of dinosaurs were purchased by the museum in 1918. They were probably acquired from a workshop in order to provide a visualisation in the exhibition. At that time the key question was already how one could imagine an organism that corresponded to certain bones that had been found. The picture created generated a physical reality for the skeleton, which still today gives it both a concrete image and a particular appeal.

Xylotheque

In the 19th century, when these wooden books were created, xylotheques were used as teaching material for foresters. The bookboxes were intended where possible to be made of the wood of the species, the spine from its bark. Inside as many parts of the tree as possible are documented: dried leaves, fruits, twigs with buds, wood chips, twigs, a piece of charcoal, pollen and also a cubic centimetre of the wood in order to be able to determine its exact weight. Often a sheet of explanations about possible uses of the kind of wood is included. The xylotheque contains elaborately made teaching material that was produced in just a few workshops in Europe. Due to its cost it was reserved for the big aristocratic or church forest estates. In the Joanneum collection there are about 300 such volumes, some of which are listed already in the Archduke Johann's founding donation. A further part was added as a gift at the end of the 19th century.

Herbarium

Herbarium sheets form an extensive scientific archive in the botany section. Each herbarium record is labelled with location, date and a person. These records do not become less relevant for scientific purposes over the years; rather, new methods constantly allow new ways of viewing them. There are also always several examples of a species, so that a plant can be examined for its variability. These records may also be named as sources in scientific papers, making them verifiable documents. Herbarium sheets record both the disappearance and the immigration of plant species.

Supporting programme
(in German language)

Thur, 17.03.2016, 3.30 pm
Free special guided tour for teachers with Monika Holzer-Kernbichler

In Dialogue with Nature
Guided tours through the repositories of the Natural Sciences Collections with the scientists of the Universalmuseum Joanneum
Thur, 14.04.2016, 4 pm
with Kurt Zernig and Martin Unruh
Thur, 19.05.2016, 4 pm
with Ingomar Fritz and Martin Unruh
Thur, 02.06.2016, 4 pm
with Bernd Moser and Martin Unruh
Lasts about one hour
Meeting point: SSZ, functional room, Weinzöttlstraße 16, Graz-Andritz, access: Am Andritzbach (parking space opposite Billa store), free entry

Seen from 2 Sides:
Art Meets Nature
The Painter's Cabinet at the Kunsthaus Graz and *Interdependencies* at the Natural History Museum
with Barbara Lainerberger and Anna Gasperl
22.03.2016, 3–4.30 pm
19.04.2016, 3–4.30 pm
17.05.2016, 3–4.30 pm
22.06.2016, 3–4.30 pm
08.07.2016, 3–4.30 pm
Meeting point: Joanneumsviertel, foyer, costs: 6 €

Thematic guided tours
The Painter's Cabinet
Sun, 27.03.2016, 3.30 pm
with Barbara Lainerberger
Fry, 01.04.2016, 3.30 pm
with Christof Elpons
Sun, 03.04.2016, 3.30 pm
with Christof Elpons
Sat, 07.05.2016, 2 pm
(Aktuelle Kunst in Graz)
with Christof Elpons
Sun, 19.06.2016, 3.30 pm
with Gabi Gmeiner
Fry, 01.07.2016, 3.30 pm
with Gabi Gmeiner
Sat, 09.07.2016, 11 am
mit Barbara Lainerberger
Sa, 20.08.2016, 11 am
with Barbara Lainerberger
Sun, 21.08.20016, 3.30 pm
(last day)
with Christof Elpons
Meeting point: Kunsthaus Graz, foyer, costs: € 2,50 (excl. admission)

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