

Intermedial Digital Wunderkammer in the 21st Century

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Abstract

No baroque cabinet of curiosities has survived till our times, perhaps because of an extremely individualistic and personal character of each cabinet collection (contextual qualifying aspect). We can only learn about the phenomenon through an intermedial perspective provided by cognitive import transferred and communicated to us by media products that transformed and represented the historical cabinet of curiosities, i.e. catalogues, inventories, engravings, paintings, watercolors, and drawings. However, with the advance of the digital era, the return of the Wunderkammer as a qualified media product can be observed. Not only has the distance between the image/object and the beholder been considerably reduced, but also the contents of a curiosity chamber have become virtual, i.e. they have become digitalised abstract data, much more personalised and customised, i.e. “tailored precisely to the individual user, based on social proximity and interactions ranked as more relevant or less so” (Burda 181). Today’s digital cabinets of curiosities, like Google, Facebook or former Twitter (now X) and the technical media of display we carry on us and with us to gain access to these and many more, not only “create endless number of possibilities for the global storage, networking and representation of knowledge” (Burda 182) but also collect and save data concerning different aspects of individuals’ lives in a space which is unlimited and gives endless possibilities of reorganising and accessing the stored items. The paper seeks to explore the changes in the modalities of contemporary

Wunderkammer (as opposed to the baroque cabinet) determined by the shift in contextual and operational qualifying aspects and related to the digital media types. It also attempts to discuss the consequences of these changes for the wider intermedial networks. Henry Jenkins’ convergence culture and black box fallacy might additionally shed new light on the intermedial digital Wunderkammer in addition to Hubert Burda’s deliberations in his seminal study *The Digital Wunderkammer: 10 Chapters on the Iconic Turn* (2011).

Keywords

Cabinet of curiosities, digital Wunderkammer, intermediality, convergence culture

Bio

Dominika Bugno-Narecka is Assistant Professor in the Department of American Literature and Culture at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland). Her research interests include ekphrasis and other relationships between word and image, intermediality, baroque and neobaroque in literature and culture, and the 21st century fiction in English. Currently researching cabinets of curiosities in literature and culture, she is the author of the chapter “Cabinet of Curiosities as a Transhistorical and Intermedial Phenomenon” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality* (Eds. J. Bruhn, A. López-Varela, M. de Paiva Vieira); the book *(Neo)baroque Ekphrasis in Contemporary Fiction* (Wydawnictwo KUL, 2019) and article “Beyond Language: On Intermediality (and Multimodality) in Literature” published in *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* 46.3 (2022).

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