

The Zymoglyphic Museum

A Guide to the Collections

*2nd edition, greatly
revised & expanded*

Jim Stewart, Curator





Second edition

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THE ZYMOGLYPHIC MUSEUM: A GUIDE TO THE COLLECTIONS

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FOREWORD

The Art World Beneath our Feet: The Zymoglyphic Museum and its Mission

By Peter Frank

Since about the time some *Homo sapiens*, or reasonable facsimiles thereof, first rendered images on the walls of a cave¹, said species has regarded itself as distinct from – above – nature. Sure, has gone the thinking, nature is a creative force, maybe bigger and fiercer than we'll ever be, but in its very elementality it is not an *artistic* force, y'know, the way we are. In other words, nature makes the world, we make art.

Not so fast. We make the world, too – for better or worse. The whole ecological movement places responsibility for the recent, increasingly drastic changes in the natural order at our feet. We have a demonstrable impact upon the natural order, locally and (increasingly) globally, as do no other sentient beings. Therefore, it would stand to reason that, if we can make the world (even though we can't seem to make it to our liking)², nature can make art.

Look at it another way. "Art," at least as much as beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. It is a matter of perception, a condition of discourse, not an inherent quality. If someone sees something as art, it's art. If someone says something is art, it's art. That doesn't make it good, worthwhile, or an embodiment of truth or morality. Designating something as art doesn't let it off the hook. Art can be inhumane, reprehensible, evil, and still be art.³ And, in this regard, art can be entirely amoral, sourced in non-sentient forces beyond even the social impulses of, oh, creatures of air and sea. Neither fish nor fowl can see "art," and don't need or care to. But we see their coloration, their shapes, their sounds as art. Scientists band such creatures; perhaps artists should sign them.⁴

¹ Lascaux, say, or Altamira.

² Our supposed degradation of nature is in fact nothing more than a degradation of the nature that sustains us. When natural conditions become inhospitable, they will still be natural conditions.

³ Karlheinz Stockhausen declared the 9/11 attacks a work of art, acknowledging the craft of their perpetrators and recognizing in the attacks the experience of Kantian sublimity.

⁴ Any number of artists have come close – Jannis Kounellis, for instance, exhibiting stabled horses in his gallery show, Piero Manzoni signing live nude women – but no one has applied Duchamp's concept of the Readymade directly to animals. Plants, perhaps, but not animals....

All this is proffered in defense of – no, actually, as explanation for – the philosophy underlying the Zymoglyphic Museum and the realm of art and inquest it serves to repose. The objects collected by and into the Museum have relied as much on the intervention of nature for their existence and identity as on the intervention of humans, perhaps more so. They are organically produced or naturally modified. Of course, they are naturally produced, as are we all.⁵ But they escape the norms of natural production in falling through nature’s cracks, as it were, having been subjected to metamorphic forces which have degraded or otherwise transformed them into forms and presences we tend, in context, to regard as unusual – unusual not simply in their appearance, but in their “artful” effect upon us. Or do we, in regarding them as art, have an artful effect on them? This conundrum of appearances – nature just does its thing, we come along and designate various of its caprices “art,” and all of a sudden nature is the ultimate artist – drives the Zymoglyphic Museum and indeed the whole Zymoglyphic ethos.

Yes, there is a Zymoglyphic ethos. There needs to be. Where otherwise would art end and nature begin? Or, rather, how would we otherwise explain the fact that nature doesn’t seem to leave off where art begins (and vice versa)? Yes, it is an ethos, transcending (while not abandoning) aesthetics, encompassing human impulses and needs. It feeds on itself, self-evidently, narrowing the ethical argument down to one of aesthetics after all – but that in itself comprises an ethical argument, or, more to the point, a demonstration of an ethically charged condition. Is it right to artify nature?⁶ Is this some kind of attempt to colonize the natural world, to insist that it once again “perform” for (the benefit of) humans?

The delights provided us by the Zymoglyphic Museum’s myriad selections, and even by the relatively elaborate annotations and codifications with which the Museum provides its holdings, are themselves self-evident. The poetry of form, lyricism of association, and economy of function that define every concatenation, that pervade every diorama, rivet us to these apparitions, cementing our fascination and our affection. By inference, they cement our fascination and affection to nature itself. Perhaps that gilds the lily, so to speak. But, even in this era of ecological fetishism, perhaps not.⁷

The Zymoglyphic Museum itself did not spring fully blown from the hands and minds of ecological fetishists. Its contents were preceded on this earth by

⁵ As Jackson Pollock noted, “*I am nature.*”

⁶ There are, not surprisingly, many precedents. To name one, as reported by musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky, his “furfuraceous” friend, Fluxus artist Ken Friedman, claimed the March 1971 Sylmar earthquake as the last movement of his Third Symphony.

⁷ Drill, baby, drill.

everything from tree architecture to the juxtapositional reveries of the surrealists. Indeed, the Museum's holdings would seem to reawaken many of Andre Breton's most profound and most capricious dicta,⁸ and its two-dimensional features descend from the narrative collages of Max Ernst and the photomontages of his dada compeers. And, just as those collages and photomontages begat the ever more riotous and cinematic elaborations of Bruce Conner, Jordan Belson, Akbar del Piombo, Sätty, and a host of others, the surrealists' freestanding confabulations led to a burgeoning assemblage "movement" that may have crested in the early 1960s but has never truly abated.

The Zymoglyphic Museum is itself the latest – arguably ultimate – in a long cascade of gentle Wunderkammers. The modern "museum" indeed began as such a phenomenon, a trophy house of oddments compiled by a particularly vital-minded (or bored) nobleman. Refined, almost refracted, into the carefully collected, carefully crafted lesson in art and/or science we know as today's museum, the Wunderkammer still proposed a spirit of ravenous, unfettered adventure, whether one that roamed the globe or one that roamed the neighborhood. For instance, the Zymoglyphic Museum's most immediate predecessor, the famed, if short-lived, Fred Gallery, featured items isolated from an emphatically constricted region.⁹

Still and all, the Zymoglyphic Museum, not least in its dedication to the artfulness of the non-human spirit, distinguishes itself among centers devoted to the found and/or founded object. Such an object may or may not have been touched by human hands in its formulation; but it took Nature to formulate it in its essence, and it took humankind to call it "art." Is Fred itself, then, dead? No, but, thanks to Nature,¹⁰ Art is still alive.

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⁸ In the early 1930s, to make the Expositions Surréalistes ever more provocative, Breton invited his surrealist minions to produce objects, especially objects invented from other, already extant objects. This is precisely what Nature has done here (with a little help from its friends).

⁹ The region consisted approximately of the streets around Columbia University In The City Of New York, not to mention the campus itself. It is no accident that at least one of the Zymoglyphic Museum's founders had a hand in founding and maintaining the closet-sized, world-shaking Gallery, dedicated, of course, to the proposition that "Art Is Dead, Long Live Fred."

¹⁰ ...and, it goes without saying, the crew of experts comprising Team Zymoglyphic...

zy'-mo-glyph'-ic, adj. [Gr. *zyme* leaven + Gr. *glyphe* carving]

1. Of, or pertaining to, images of fermentation, specifically the solid residue of creative fermentation on natural objects.
2. The collection and arrangement of objects, primarily either natural or weathered by natural forces, for poetic effect

INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSEUM

“a museum of mortal remains—of endoskeletons and exoskeletons—of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chitin—of dottles and orts and residua of souls long gone.”

The museum's mission

The Zymoglyphic Museum is a small but complex and multi-layered institution. Its primary role is custodian for the world's only collection of Zymoglyphic art, artifacts, and natural history specimens, the last remnant of a once-thriving culture.

The museum also serves to educate the public on themes that are prominent in Zymoglyphic culture:

- Art that is formed by nature or in partnership with nature
- Art that is formed by assemblage of natural objects
- Art that is formed by the action of weathering and other natural forces
- A sense of wonder in the world through collections of curiosities
- Personal museums as a means of creative expression

On the most general level, the museum's mission is about making connections: found objects are connected to make new objects, objects are organized into collections, collections are organized in a museum, and the museum is connected to the world through outreach programs.

Outreach programs

The museum is keenly aware of its own mortality and isolation and so it attempts in a number of ways to reach out to the world, to make connections with it, and to leave some sort of lasting impression on it.

- The museum is open to the public on occasion and by appointment so that visitors can experience for themselves the physical evidence of Zymoglyphic culture and meet the curator in person. Details may be found on the “about” page on the museum’s Web site.
- Potential patrons unable or unwilling to visit the museum may wander through the museum’s virtual incarnation in cyberspace. This Web site, located at **www.zymoglyphic.org**, extends the museum’s reach worldwide, and provides a venue for special exhibits relating to Zymoglyphic themes.
- The museum maintains a Web log, fitfully updated, with articles on themes of interest to the museum. A given entry may trumpet a new acquisition, expound on the implications of the museum’s collections, present anecdotes from the curator, spotlight similar museums past and present, announce events of interest, or complain about the woeful state of the museum shop’s finances. It can be found at **zymoglyphic.blogspot.com**
- The museum’s photographic staff documents the collections. Its goal is to take flattering portraits of the objects in the museum’s collections.
- The museum shop is the controversial brainchild of the museum’s marketing department. Its original purpose was to promote awareness of the museum through the production and sale of fashionable souvenir merchandise related to museum themes. Today, it sells print and books (including this one) from the Zymoglyphic Museum Press, as well as a carefully selected stock of books and motion pictures.





An aerial expedition to a remote upland valley noted for its unusually large fauna

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ZYMOGLYPHIC REGION

Introduction

The natural history of a region consists of the study of its rocks and minerals, its geological structures and climate, its panoply of living creatures, and all the ways in which any one of them one affects the others. The historic and biological isolation of the Zymoglyphic region in particular is due in part to the peculiarities of the currents in the surrounding seas, and the dense fogs that sometimes surround the islands. Lacking influence from surrounding areas, some very unusual flora and fauna have evolved in response to evolutionary pressures. The Natural History Wing of the Zymoglyphic Museum showcases these unique life forms, as well as examining the influence that natural forms have had on the artistic expression of the region.

The Zymoglyphic land masses were formed by the upwelling of molten magma from the underworld pushing up through cracks in the Earth's crust, boiling the sea, cooling, hardening, finally poking out of the water and mellowing in the tropical breezes. Once the land settled into shape, its mountainous terrain blocked the breeze, forcing it to rise up and over and drop its contained moisture on the land. The windward side of the island grew dense with jungle, a rich multilayered ecosystem with strange things going on in the undergrowth, rusting anything in its path. The leeward portions of the islands have become parched deserts, being passed over by empty clouds. The sea, lapping persistently at the rough edges of the new land, created ledges and beaches. The fierce storms that occasionally wash over the islands, rusting anything in their path, deposit on the beaches a bounty of intriguing objects churned up from the ocean depths. During the Rust Age, wanderers on the beaches would gather items that contain significant messages, and incorporate them into art objects.



House Fungus

The House Fungus grows natively in the denser tropical forests, and looks for all the world like it is made of plastic and an old orange peel. It is in fact a colorful fungus found in the Zymoglyphic region which is commonly grown there as a house plant. The spiky head fills at certain times of the year with a hallucinogenic gas that is highly prized by the native inhabitants. This particular specimen has already made its atmospheric contribution and collapsed into a stupor.

The House Fungus is one of a number of molds, fungi, and ergots with psychotropic properties. During the Rust Age, these organisms were central to many shamanic rituals and ecstatic dances. In the Modern Age, these properties helped artists focus on the significance and visual properties of objects rather than their functions or literal representations.

It is controversial whether the dreamlike quality in much of Zymoglyphic art is due to the pervasiveness of these gases affecting perception, or inherent in the landscape itself.



Eyeball plants

Naturalists peering too deeply into the undergrowth may find themselves being observed in return by the “eyes of the forest”. They are the scaly eyeball plant and the convoluted eyeball plant. During the Rust Age, these plants were revered for their oracular qualities, in the belief that they could see into the unknown.





Pond-headed cactus

The mountains of the region produce dense jungles on the windward side of the islands, leaving very little moisture for the leeward side and resulting in deserts. These harsher conditions require some remarkable adaptations for survival.

The pond-headed cactus is a plant species that originated in the ocean as a member of the kelp family and has evolved to become a land based species. It carries within it a little bit of the sea.



Spinybirds

Spinybirds are small, shy, flightless birds that have evolved a unique cactus-like means of defense against the nocturnal predations of the leatherwings.



X. pallidula



X. corrugata

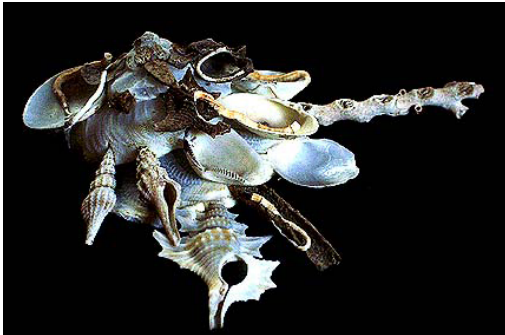
Xenophora

Xenophora are marine snails that live in the tropical seas of the Zymoglyphic region. They collect shells, rocks, corals, and sometimes coins, bottle caps, and bits of glass from their environment. At regular intervals during the shell's growth, the animal's foot attaches the chosen object to the shell's opening and holds it until it is secure. The shell then grows around the attached part of the object. As the snail's shell grows, it becomes covered with an arrangement of objects. Many of the objects seem to be carefully positioned. Clam shells, for example, are usually placed with the inner side up. Others seem to be stuck on at random. The resulting arrangements can vary from neat radiating patterns of similar stones and shells to wildly jumbled concoctions of totally dissimilar objects.

The reasons for doing this are speculative, but probably involve some combination of camouflage and increasing the surface area of the shell to avoid sinking into muddy bottoms. The attachments may also strengthen the relatively thin shells.

During the Rust age, Xenophora were valued for their mystical connections as "messengers from the deep". During the Age of Wonder, their collections were seen as little samplings of a variety of faraway underwater realms, a sort of natural curiosity cabinet. In the Modern Age, Xenophora have been called "assemblage artists of the deep," a sort of natural art.

Outsiders have doubted the existence of these animals for many years. Visitors to the region often imagined that the shell assemblages were created by bare-breasted native women working in happy little groups on the beaches, then selling their creations to unwitting tourists.



X. pallidula



X. robusta



X. cerea



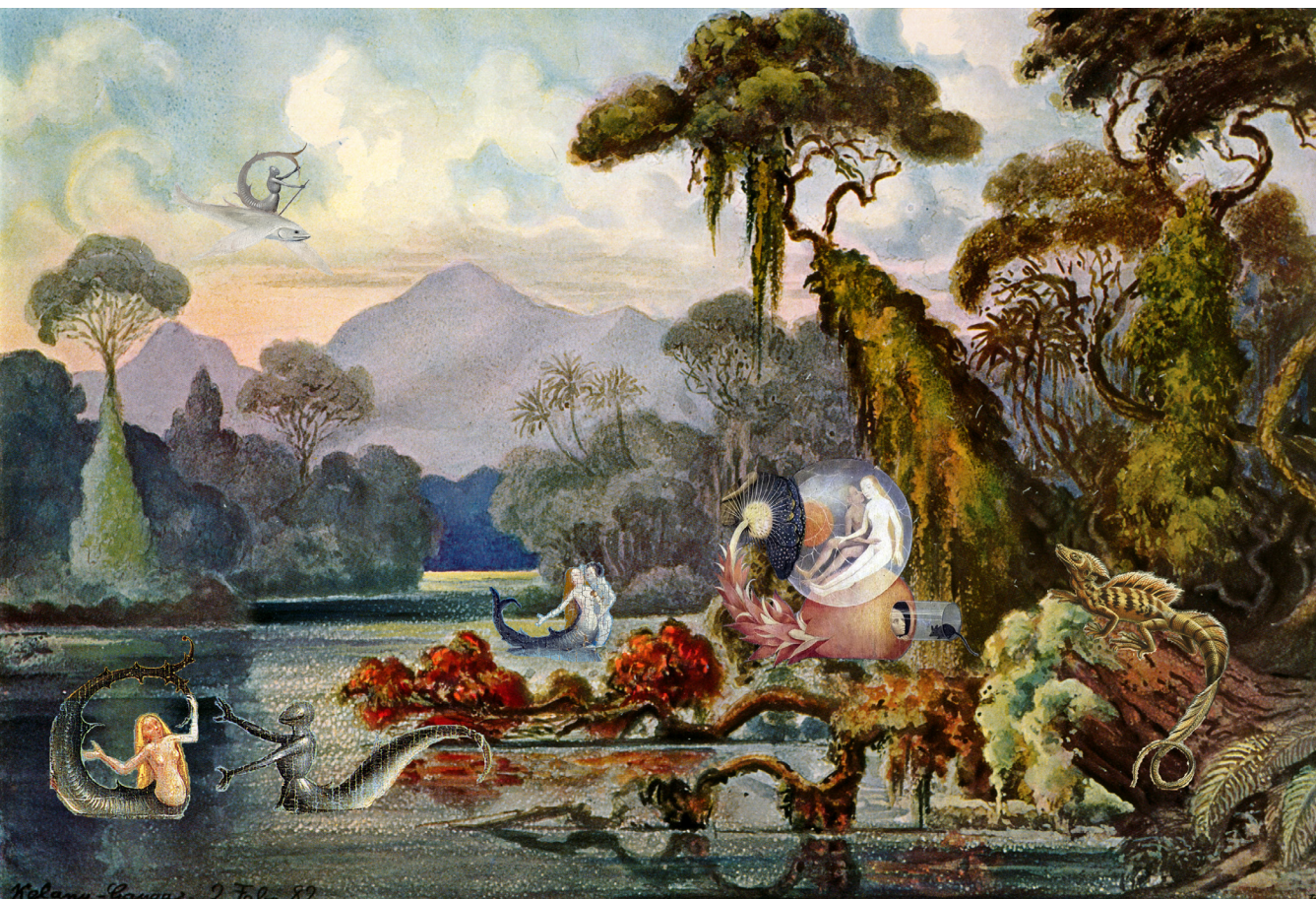
X. pallidula



X. solarioides



X. japonica



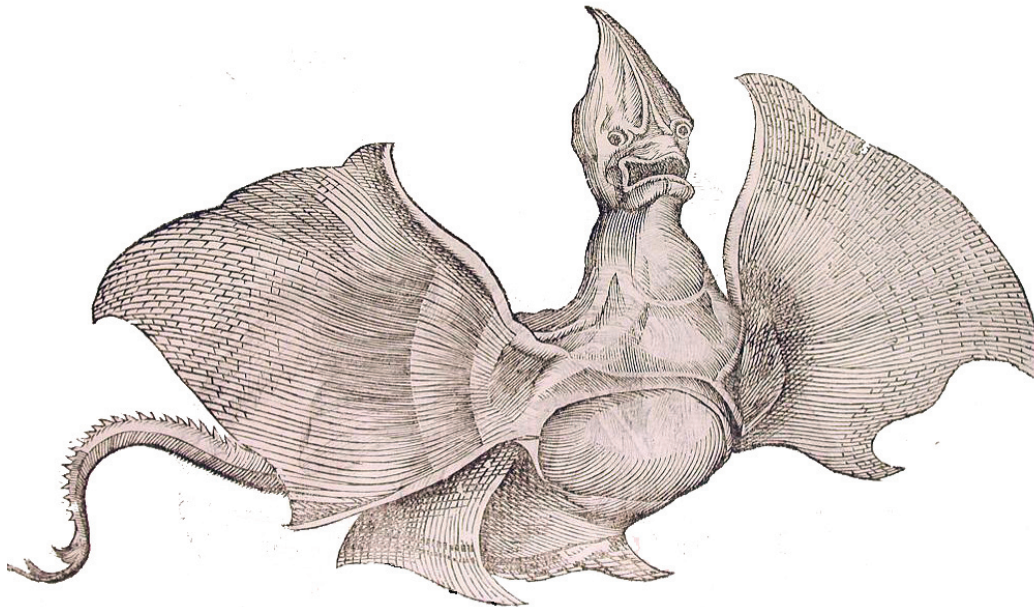
Mermaid lagoon

Mermaids

Tales of mermaids frolicking in the moonlit lagoons of the Zymoglyphic region have spawned much speculation about who these creatures might be. Known as the “fish with a human face” during the Rust Age, they were revered as creatures partially human and equally animal, at home on the surface of the sea but capable of plumbing its depths, learning its secrets, and possibly sharing them with people if only the people could communicate with them.

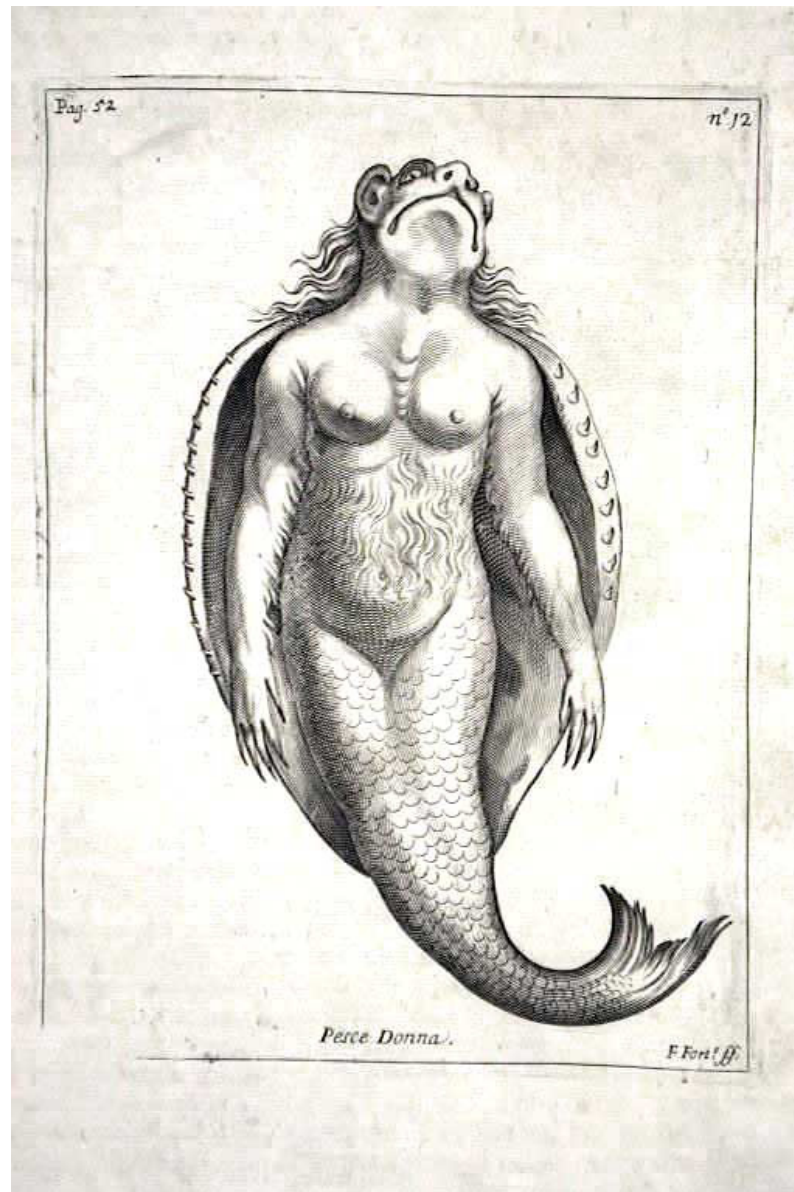
Expeditions to the region during the Age of Wonder of resulted in tales of glamorous fish-women. They were known for their intelligence, cunning, and apparently consistently happy demeanor.

The actual specimens returned by collecting expeditions, however, bear little resemblance to the fanciful illustrations. To the right is a purported sentient fish creature, apparently also capable of flight. Below is an illustration of a related species from Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* (1658).

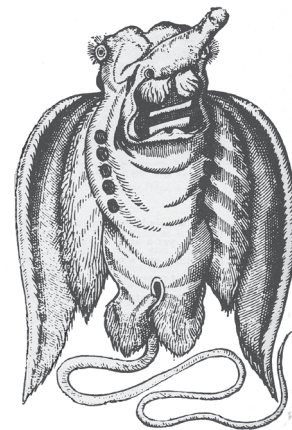
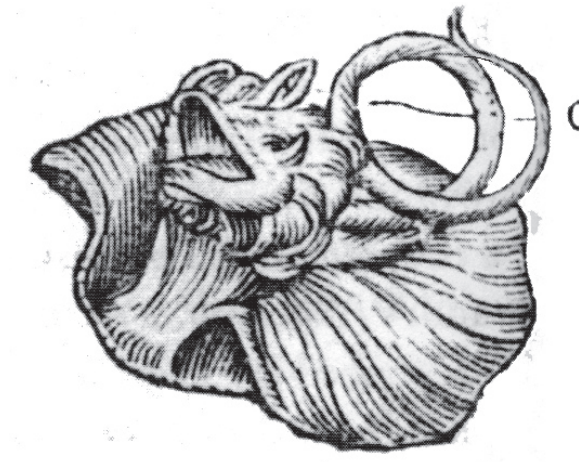




The largest and most primitive mermaid species in the museum's collection is affectionately known as "The Zymoglyphic Mermaid" and has become somewhat of a spokesmodel for the museum. Its sinuous body and delightful smile grace the museum shop's drinkware, clocks, and clothing, as well as the frontispiece of this guide.



A similar species of mermaid as recorded by G.A. Cavazzi in 1687, possibly under the influence of the House Fungus or simply a natively overactive imagination combined with wishful thinking.



60. Figure of another very monstrous flying fish

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The Leatherwing

The Leatherwing is a silent, nocturnal creature adapted for long flights from the sea through the jungle. Although rare, early European explorers to the region sometimes brought back samples for their curiosity cabinets. The specimen on the left, above, is from Ulisse Aldrovandi's 17th century collection; the other is from Ambroise Pare's 1573 book *On Monsters and Marvels*.





Happy Fish

As the land itself is hidden from outsiders, so many of the inhabitants hide from each other. The Happy Fish (*Piscatonus delitus*) can be found clinging to rocky bottoms in fast-moving waters. Its rough exterior camouflages it well; it might be confused with a random selection of seaweed. Its happy demeanor is thought to be due to its lack of internal organs. Its watery environment just passes right through it.



Root Worm

The root worm, in contrast, is often found on the forest floor. Its resemblance to an old root causes it to get stepped on and bumped frequently, resulting in a rather irritable disposition.

Picture Stones

Picture stones were prized as illustrations of past era, particularly as remnants of the Mud Age, when no other means of recording was possible. They are believed to have been formed by an impressionist geophotogenic process whose mechanism has not yet been determined.

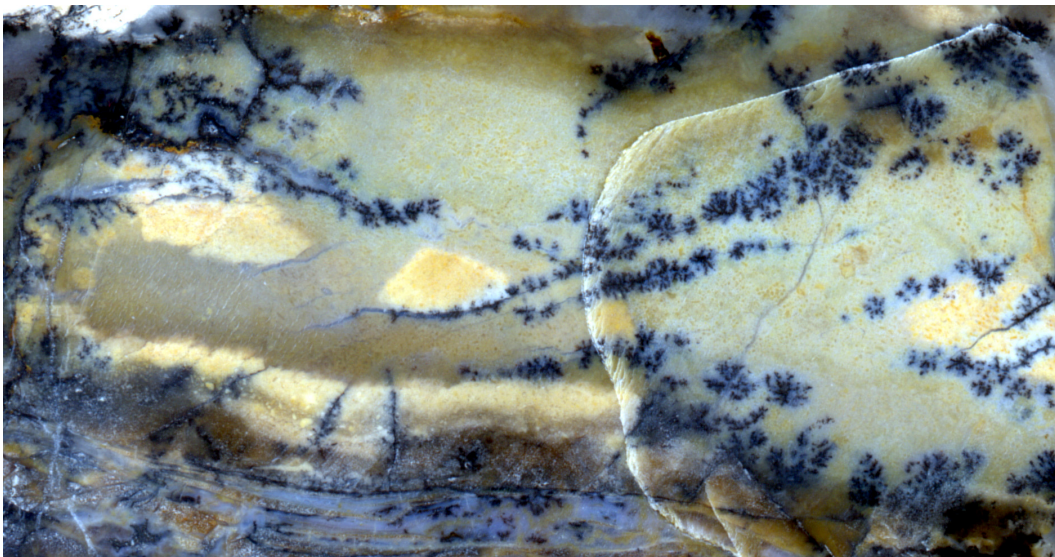
In the Rust Age, picture stones were the equivalent of mysterious photographs of past eras, a divine means of communications. During the Age of Wonder, agate slabs were used as “windows” when building miniature grottos (see p. xx for an example). In the Era of Oriental Influence, they were mounted as viewing stones for contemplation (see example below). In the Modern Era, they served as the basis for an inspiration for abstract art. For example, the moss agate scene shown on the opposite page is displayed along with a number of biomorphic acrylic paintings in one of the shoebox galleries (page 102).



Picture stone from the Era of Oriental Influence



Aquarium stone



Moss agate biomorphic scene



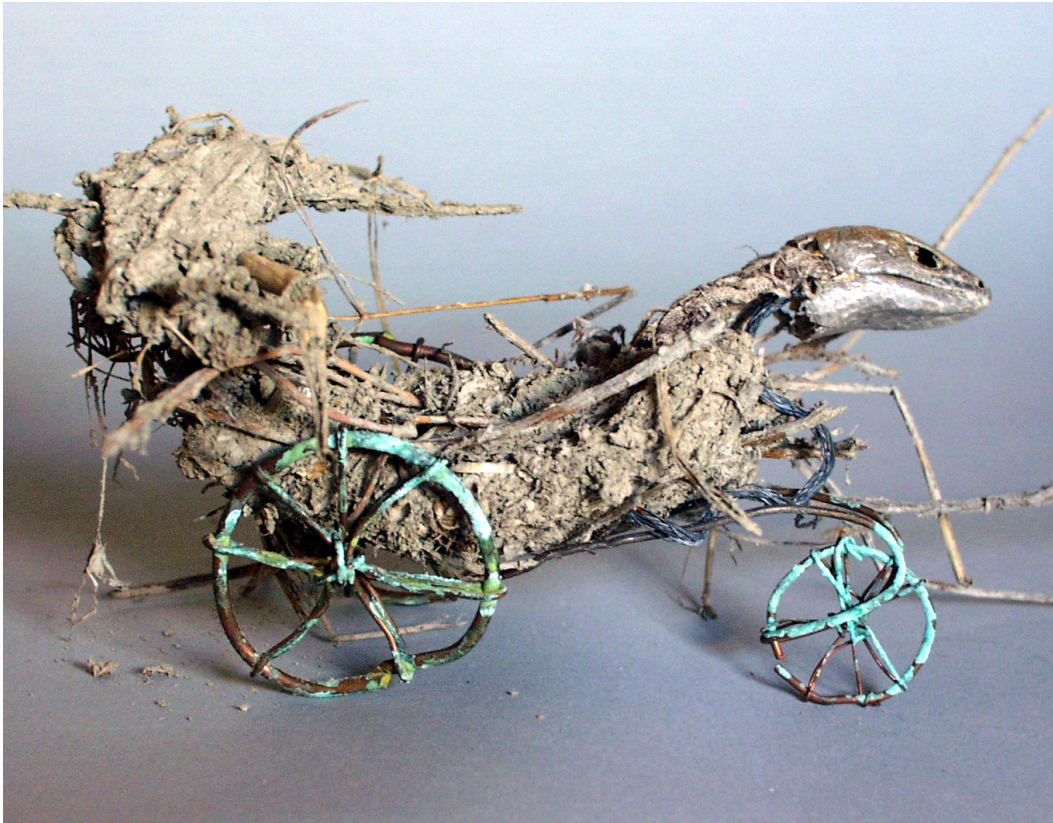
THE MUD AGE

The Mud Age is known in Zymoglyphic mythology as the time before the beginning of time, when no records were kept and no events were recorded. Perpetual dense mists shrouded the tree-fern forests. Mud pots and fumaroles boiled and popped everywhere, caked with colorful minerals, sulphurous yellows, coppery greens and blues. Millions of tiny creatures ate the sulphur and excreted all the colors of the rainbow. Where pools of cool water were able to form, they were covered in pond scum and bacterial mats, known as the “primordial ooze”. Frequent lightning strikes on these ponds caused convulsive chain reactions on the organic materials, letting loose aethereal spirits and demons of all kinds.



A fossilized remnant of the Mud Age

This picture stone served throughout much of Zymoglyphic history as the equivalent of a crystal ball, helping to induce miasmatic visions of the Mud Age, especially in conjunction with the vapors of the hallucinogenic House Fungus.



Lizard-headed mud cart

The only known artifact from the Mud Age is a wheeled cart believed to be a magic vehicle for navigating the spirit-infested landscape. It was guided by a reptilian brain and harnessed the generative power of mud.



Love in the time of rust



Guardian figure

THE RUST AGE

The museum's collection of ethnographic artifacts from what has been termed the Rust Age provides a glimpse into a long-vanished way of life. We know little of the reality of life in those times and what we imagine is probably idealized to some extent. It was a time of spiritual concerns, centered on various rituals, many of whose details are lost to us today.

The Rust Age is so named because many of the ceremonial artifacts were made of decaying metal, which was thought to have a sublime quality of character and texture of age. In some of the artifacts, the rust continues to decay and eat away at the core

of the object. The decaying metal, along with delicate organic material such as feathers and leaves, was intended to create a sense of time passing and of the fleeting nature of life.

One of the beliefs of the Zymoglyphic people during this age was the sense of life being an illusion, that they were in fact the dream of a god, not the serene, all-knowing deity found in some cultures, but the one with a fevered imagination, a fitful god constantly trying out new things, experimenting with the course of their lives, ultimately wiping them clean and trying anew with the next one, never quite getting it right. Their lives were often stories that started out well, lost focus along the way, then needed to be discarded in order to start a new one.



Bird cart

This bird cart is a symbolic wheeled vehicle which embodies a full circle of life, as symbolized by the combination of the bird nest and the skull, along with the potential motion of the cart as it traverses life's meandering paths.



Wooden mask



Mirror mask

Masks

As with many tribal cultures, facial images were used in ceremonies. Ritual ecstatic dance was a means of communicating with the spirit world. Dancing with a mask and costume transformed the wearer from an ordinary individual into one participating in a great cosmological unity. The details of these rituals have been lost, and the masks that remain as artifacts were not necessarily wearable.

The wooden mask on the left dates from the early Rust Age and is a simple but expressive depiction of an animal spirit. It is constructed from a minimally modified piece of gnarled wood, shells, rusty circles, and mirrored shards for teeth.

The mirror mask was constructed very late in the Rust Age as baroque complexity became more valued. Its themes are presented as an interplay of visual puns and allusions: a metal “bird” perched on the face doubles as a nose, a topknot of hair is part of a pond scene, and a mirror, where a brain might be, symbolizes “reflection.”



Ancestor figure



Sea spirit

Ritual Figurines

During the Rust Age, shamans attempted to gain control over their lives by developing ways to communicate with the many spirits, some helpful, some not, that inhabited the region. One such method was building figurines imbued with mystical powers.

Ancestor figures were constructed from various organic materials, symbolizing the reinvestment of deceased ancestors' parts into new forms. The figure shown here (above left) is made of bone, decaying wood, cat hair, feathers, mica, and tar. It has two mollusk opercula for eyes.

The **sea spirit** figure represents a helpful spirit that assisted shamans in finding the significant organic materials for use in constructing their objects. It is itself made from a beach find, a piece of anthropomorphic coral.



Primordial couple



Shamanic figure

The **primordial couple set** represents the generative principle.

The **shaman** is represented in spirit form as an intermediary between the human and spirit worlds, with skull headdress, feathered neck ruffle, and traditional gnarled walking stick. The figure is made of bone, rusty metal, wood, lichen, and delicate organic filaments.

The **guardian figure** (shown on page 37) is a figure in a defensive posture who is in fact crumbling and exposing its mechanical innards. The figure was originally supposed to serve as a protector against certain demons, but its fragility and constant state of decay have transformed it into a symbol of the futility of relying on such talismans

Preliterate books

In the Zymoglyphic region, book-like artifacts appeared before the introduction of written language in the form of leaf books and metallic scrolls.

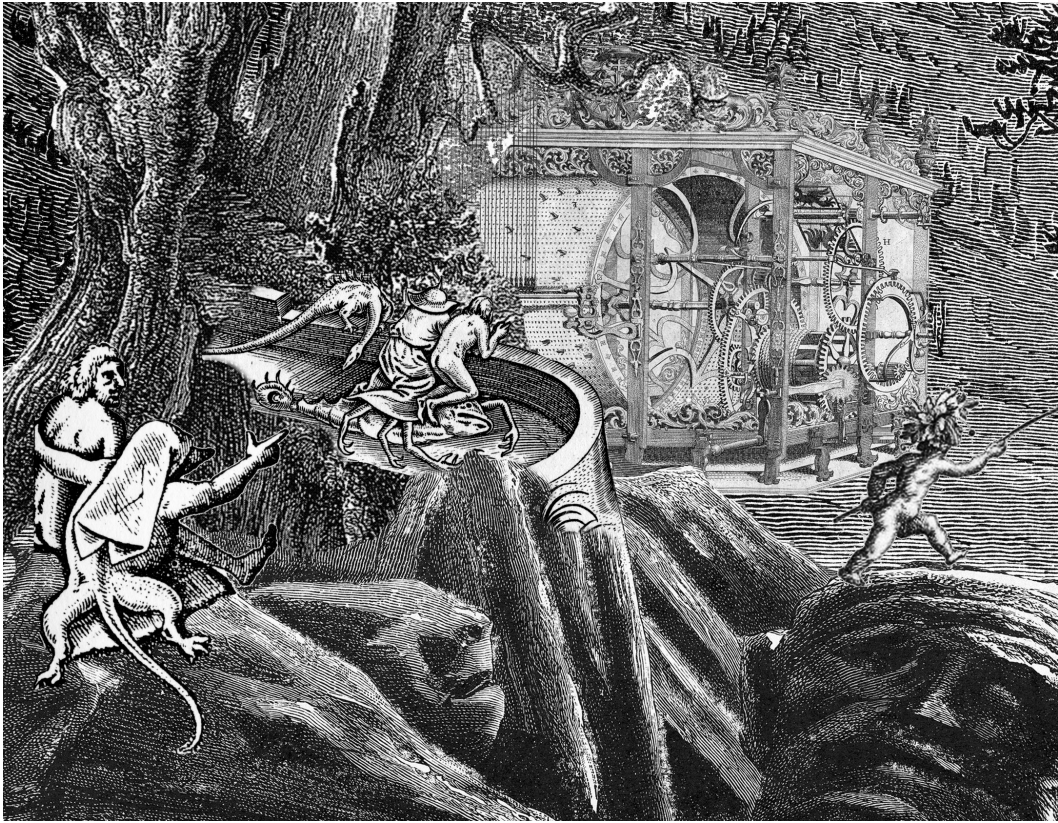
Leaf books were an early attempt to impose a narrative structure on the inchoate ramblings of nature. It was thought that there was a story that could not be expressed in words to be found in the folds, tears, and textures of the book's leaves. This example uses dried magnolia petals in a rusty metal binding.



Copper scrolls

Metallic scrolls were primarily made from copper, hammered and subjected to various chemicals to create visions of the primordial ooze. Some of these chemicals were blue vitriol (copper sulfate), sal ammoniac (ammonium chloride), liver of sulfur, and common salt, as well as biologically derived fluids such as vinegar and urine. This was an early attempt to produce artificially the complex natural patinas that were prized by artifact makers. These processes were further developed by the alchemists of the Age of Wonder.





THE AGE OF WONDER

The discovery of oil in the Zymoglyphic region spelled an end to the Rust Age, freeing up the rusted wheels of progress and ushering in the Age of Wonder. This was a marvelous time of technological innovation, discovery, and exploration. The creative focus shifted from the uncertainties of the next world to the wondrousness of the world around us, making meaning from the juxtaposition of objects.

Mechanical marvels

Automata and other mechanical marvels were of particular interest in this time because they occupied a mysterious gray area between life and death. Although clearly made of inanimate parts, they had some semblance of life. They offered the disturbing possibility that living creatures were at heart themselves merely mechanical devices. This particular mechanical wonder was a clockwork automaton that not only told time but continuously removed pieces of itself and offered them to passers by. How the internal parts were regenerated has yet to be determined despite intensive investigation by the museum staff.





Tabletop wonder cabinets

Eclectic collections of marvels were popular during the Age of Wonder. Crystals, shells, minerals, and marine life decorate this tabletop variety. The large crystal is rutilated quartz, a variety which is particularly prized because its inclusions form a microcosm of precipitous cliffs and chasms. The figure inside the cabinet is the generative source for the profusion of objects above.

Wall-mounted wonder cabinets

As collected objects came back from explorations, curiosity cabinets were popular as a way to display them, usually in a heaped jumble. A typical cabinet would include artifacts from exotic cultures, classical antiquities, taxidermied creatures, strange animals, fossils, shells, dried sea life, and mechanical wonders, as well as objects whose function and purpose is mysterious. Especially prized were objects that might be considered grotesque, unusual, or in bad taste.



Top: Multi-headed tribal figure, pheasant, sawfish, ram skull, classical statuette
 Top shelf: Various shells with protuberances, fossilized pterosaur (*Pterodactylus longirostris*), duck skull, pterosaur skull, Chinese temple fragment, cat skull, coral
 Middle shelf: Owl skull, 18th century English clay pipes, clay bowl with face, Santeria figure (eleggua), golden orb with bound winged lizard, "Sputnik" sea urchin, erotic dice, mousealope, flaming helmet shell
 Bottom shelf: Rock with fossil shells, nautilus fish, turtle skull, barnacle cluster



The mousealope is a diminutive relative of the jackalope which flourishes in the nooks and crannies of the urban wilds, rather than the wide open spaces of its larger cousin, the jackalope.

The nautilus fish (bottom right) is named after Captain Nemo's famous submarine which visited the Zymoglyphic region in the 19th century.



Alchemy

In the Rust Age, Zymoglyphic artisans were generally content with assembling various ritual objects from components that already had, for example, a prized patina of oxidation, or an air of rotted organic elegance. They were not concerned about finding an incorruptible philosopher's stone, preferring instead to maximize the corruption of the base metal; purity was seen a sort of bland homogeneity. The Zymoglyphic ideal was to transform something relatively pure, such as a sheet of copper, into something more complex and interesting.

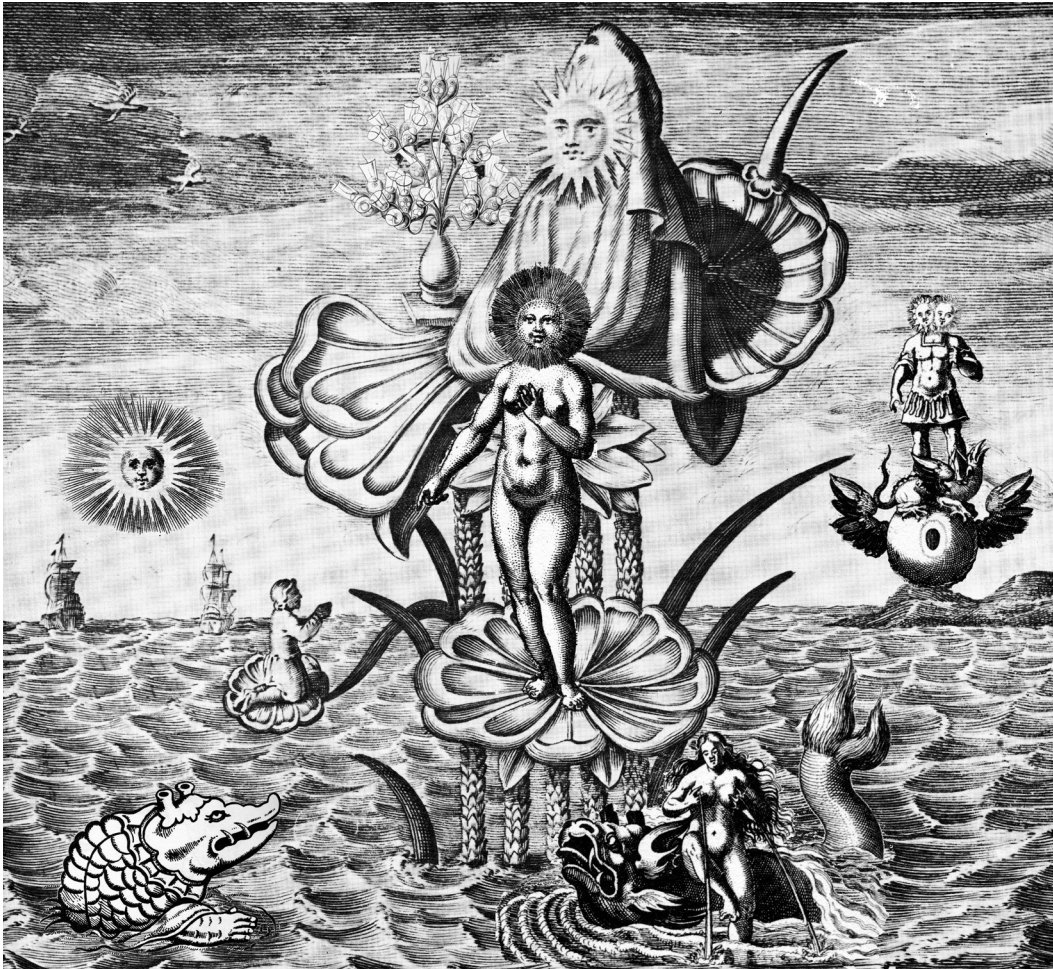


In the Age of Wonder, alchemists attempted to exert more control over the various natural processes that caused objects to become imbued with a poetic meaning, the very process that gave Zymoglyphic culture its name. An apparatus such as this one could, given the right conditions, coalesce a sort of metallic sludge out of simulated thought processes and various bits of decomposing matter. The simulated thoughts are obtained by removing the head of a symbolic figurine and placing the remaining body where a fire would otherwise be burning. The space formerly filled by the head coincides with the position of a flask bulb; thus, the thoughts mingle with the decomposing matter. The resulting metal is a variant form of primordial ooze, still Zymoglyphic in style but resistant to further decay and corruption.

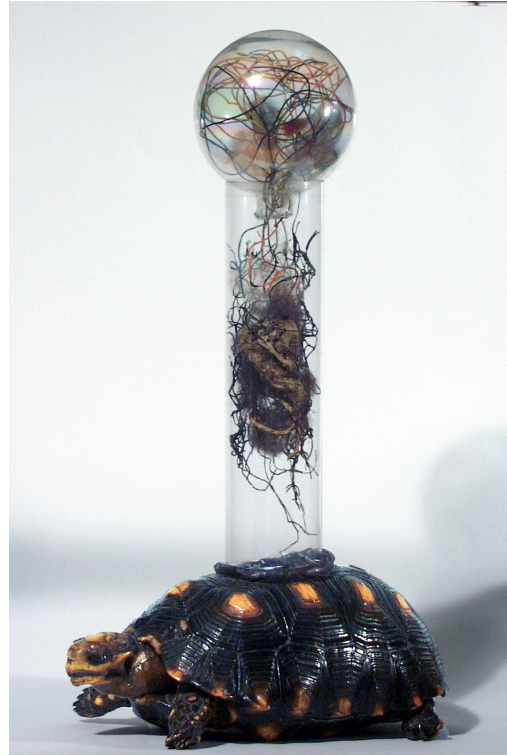
Alchemists sought to release “spirit in matter” through the symbolic dissolution of metal and creation of its fermentation by-products. During the Zymoglyphic Age of Wonder, alchemists focused more on metaphysical transformations, rather than chemical ones, as can be seen in this alchemical apparatus from that era.



An alchemist at work



The Alchemist's Nautical Vision



Memento mori

The coming of the Age of Wonder and its focus on the material world did not diminish the preoccupation with, and bafflement by, the universal sentence of death. A number of artifacts fall into the category of “memento mori,” reminders that one’s time to enjoy the wonders of the world is limited. One is a grinning monkey skull resting on a florid base, reminding the viewer of the fleeting nature of life. Another is a symbolic burial urn, in which a transparent column rises out of a wandering turtle and contains the decaying remains of a mouse, swathed in wires and fur.

Parlor aquaria

As the Age of Wonder progressed, curiosity cabinets became larger and larger with rampant accumulation, eventually becoming room sized, and then filling entire edifices, becoming museums as we know them today. A popular type of exhibit was the diorama, in which real animal and plant materials were used to create fanciful narrative scenes. A domestic spin-off of this trend was a fad for dehydrated aquariums in the parlors of well-appointed homes.





Closeup of a parlor within the parlor aquarium



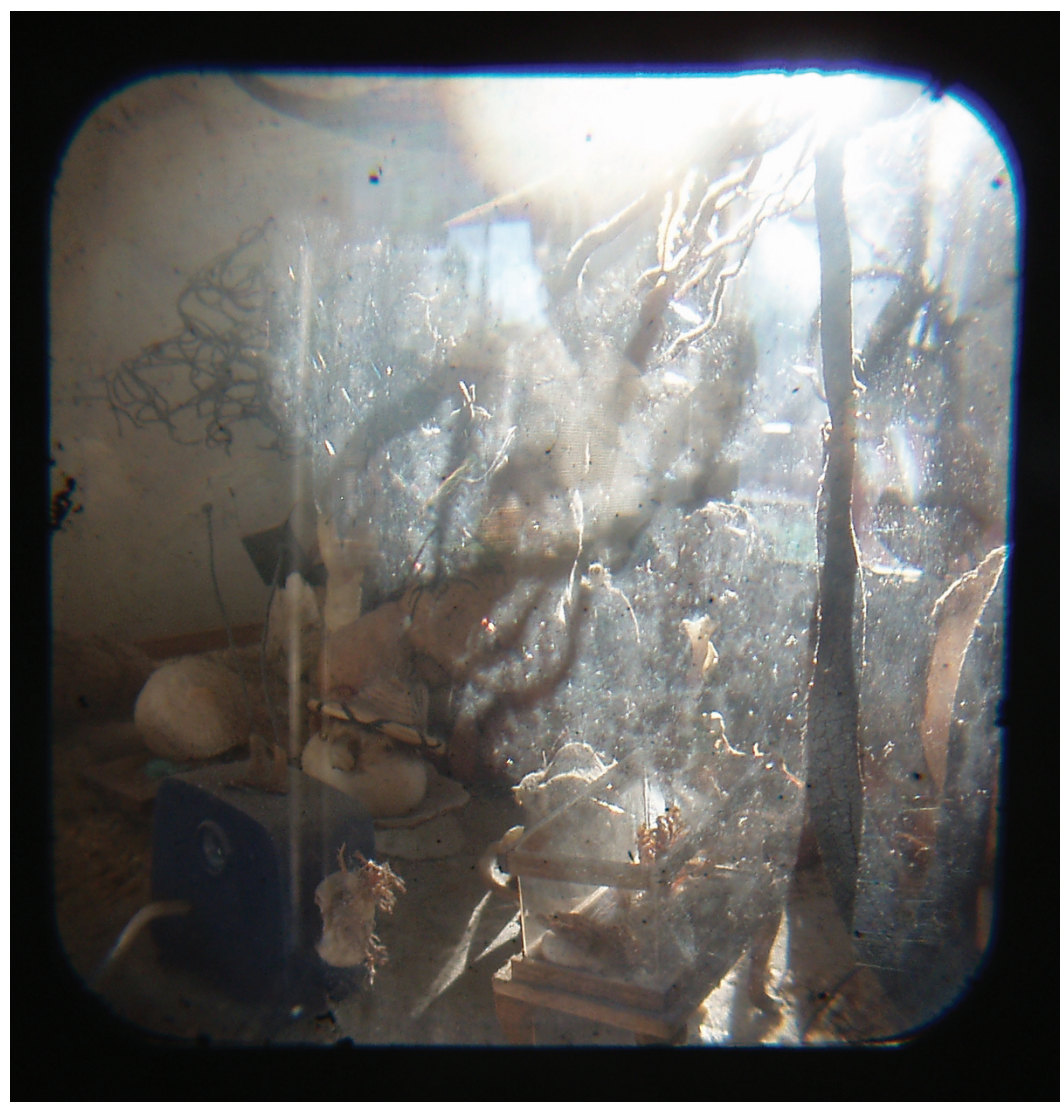
Little aquarium in the parlor inside the aquarium

Aquarium Photography

In the latter days of the Age of Wonder, it became possible to capture images directly, affixing them to a permanent medium, instead of relying on the talents of a skilled illustrator. Faithful reproduction became possible with little effort. This was considered desirable only briefly; the fad passed quickly in favor of more expressionistic approaches to photography.

The miniature environments of the dioramas and parlor aquariums inspired the development of various schools of photography, each trying to capture the spirit of the little environments. In the images below, a simple pinhole is used in place of a lens. The pictures on the facing page use a multiple lens arrangement to suitably degrade the image to a more aesthetic result.





Grottoes

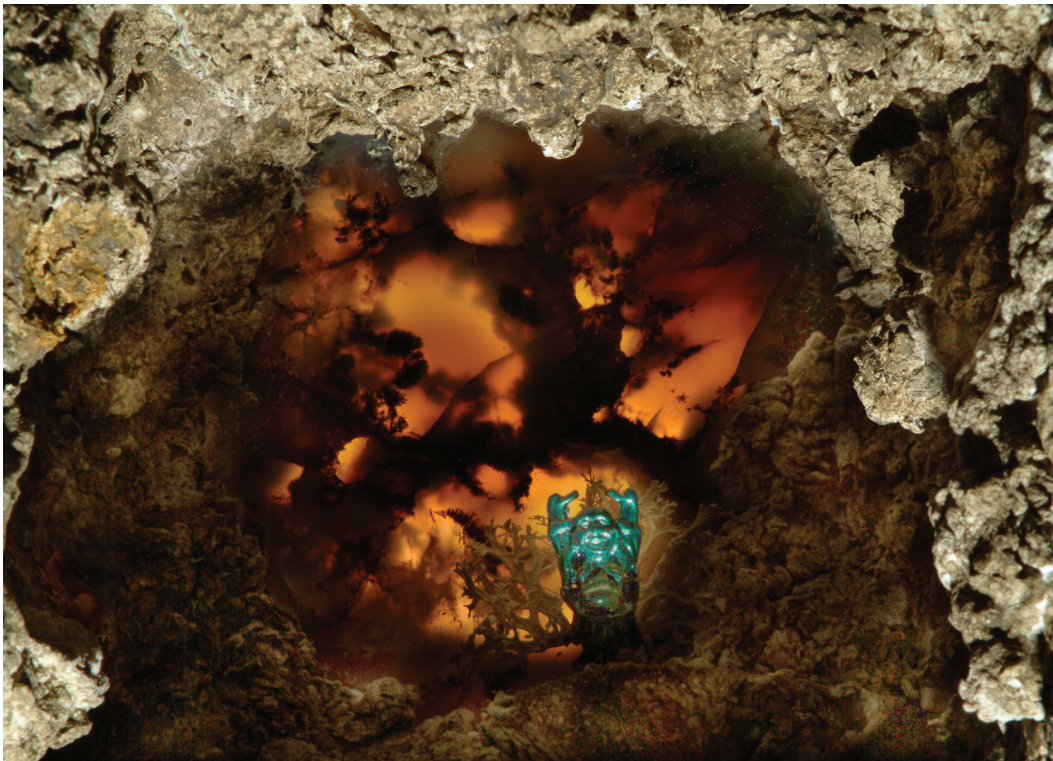
Grottoes are natural or artificial caverns imbued with a certain aesthetic spirit. Water seeping over limestone creates natural sculptures, crystals form. Some have springs thought to be home to nymphs who provided the life-sustaining water. One particularly large grotto has been turned into an artists' cavern, as can be seen in the accompanying illustration (facing page).

Miniature grottoes are small dioramas that capture the spirit of the grotto, using various encrustations to mimic minerals and crystals. They were usually placed in windows, backlit by the Sun, to emphasize the details of the agate slab that usually formed their backdrop.





View of an artist's grotto



Cloeseup of a grotto on the previous page. The background is an agate picture stone



Poet on a Mountaintop by Shen Zhou (1427-1509)

THE ERA OF ORIENTAL INFLUENCE

During the Age of Wonder, people of the Zymoglyphic region had an opportunity to learn of and trade with other cultures in the world. Contact with philosophies and nature-based art of the fabled Orient had a profound impact and led to more streamlined aesthetic in art. Values of baroque complexity and runaway accumulation gave way to a more contemplative aesthetic, with simplified compositions and a return to the poetic effects of nature. Art was made as a meditative process, and the value of the poetically weathered surface was rediscovered.

The Literati Tradition

The artists and writers of the period were particularly inspired by the “literati” tradition of scholar-bureaucrats who worked ordinary jobs, generally in government service, then retired to pursue the arts. A multi-disciplinary approach was valued, rather than specialization; the ideal scholar would be conversant in music, painting, calligraphy, poetry, and a strategy game. Self-expression was considered more important than craft - that was left to professional artists who were considered merely technically competent. Some literati were hermits but most stayed home to study and learn from nature. They collected gnarled wood, picture stones, and other enigmatic bit of nature for learned contemplation.

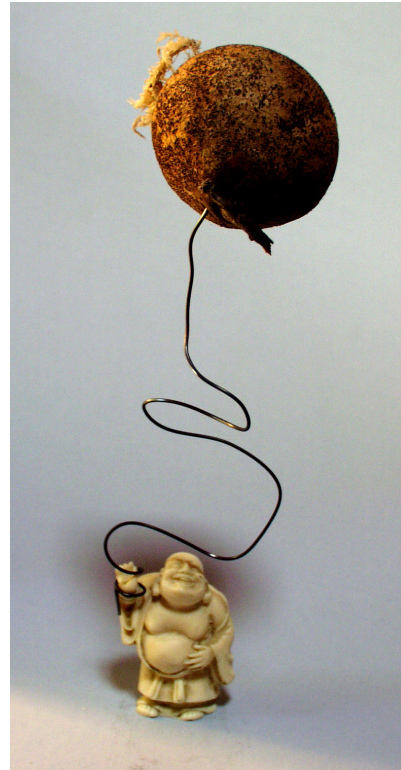


Assemblages

As the ideals of the literati tradition took hold in the Zymoglyphic region, gathering enigmatic natural objects led to making simple assemblages from them. The results were displayed in assymetric shelves such as the one shown on the opposite page.

In addition to small assemblages made with dried fruit, rusty wire, rocks, and shells, there are viewing stones, which are single stones mounted on a stand, and a tray landscape,

The Happy Monk is a recurring theme during this era. He is depicted here carrying a bag full of inflatable universes, and letting one loose.



The happy monk



Tray landscape depicting the legend of the crazy houses



A traditional dried fruit and vegetable arrangement, this one based based on an orange and a carrot



A precariously balanced arrangement of seaworn detritus.



A cut piece of bubble plant, native to the Zymoglyphic region, in a simple arrangement.

Miniature trees

During the Age of Wonder, elaborate dioramas were popular. In this era, a simplified form of diorama emerged, constructed around a single tree. These are not literal trees, but arrangements of organic material that capture the sweep, rough aesthetic, and spirit of a tree. The curved-trunk style depicts a venerable, stately tree under which philosophers may gather, or a hermit seek refuge. The clinging-to-rock style evokes a windswept tree hanging on to a precipitous cliff.



Curved-trunk style



Clinging-to-rock style



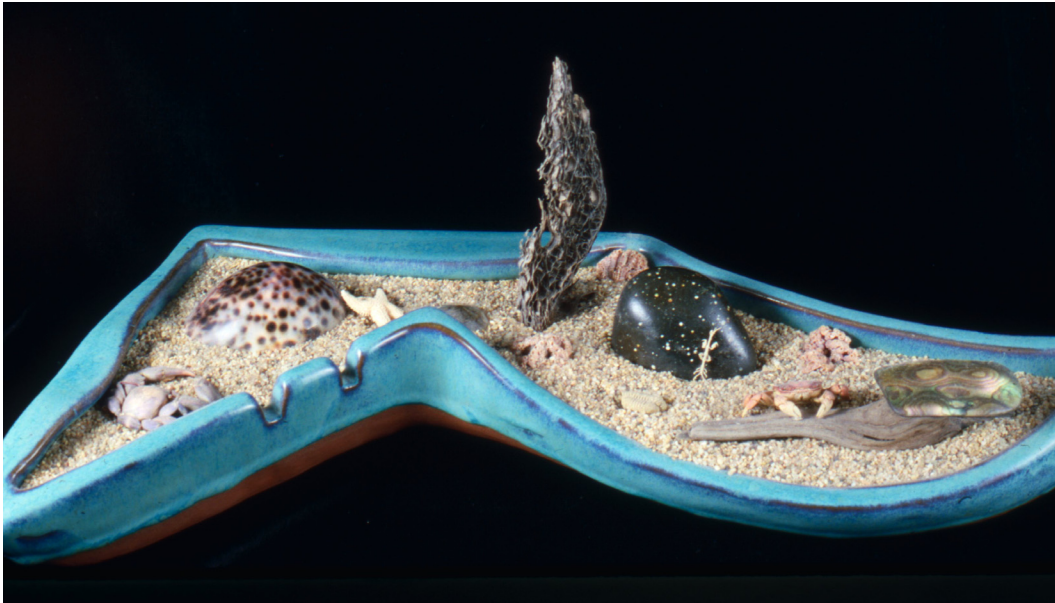
Curved-trunk style with hermit shelter



Sand tray landscapes

Sand tray landscapes were one of the earliest forms of self-expression to be developed during the Era of Oriental Influence. The process begins with a collection at hand of a number of interesting and evocative objects. Next, a frame is selected, usually in the form of an oddly-shaped tray, and filled with sand. The objects to be put into the landscape are selected and arranged seemingly at random, but actually in response to unconscious urges that may be difficult to put into words.

This method is popular in that it requires no technical skills, just the willingness to work spontaneously. The sand makes it easy to change arrangements, so one's conscious mind can just sit back and "see what develops." A piece is considered finished when the objects have not been rearranged for some period of time. The piece may or may not inspire a story to accompany it.





Miniature viewing stones

The simplification trend of the age reaches its extreme in the art of “viewing stones”, which consists simply of selecting a small natural object which is worthy of contemplation, putting it on a stand in a proper position, then giving it an evocative name. The object does not need to be a stone; it could be a piece of sea-worn shell, coral, or weathered wood. Objects with complex holes, indicating “worlds within worlds” are especially prized.



Window Stone



Storm Cloud



Stars-in-Stone



Shelter Stone



Jagged Mountain



Net-for-Pebbles



Caves-in-Mountains



Dangerous Passage



The Garden of the Four Monks

The museum's front garden is dedicated to the legend of the four Zymoglyphic monks, a tale from the Era of Oriental Influence. An ancient tradition holds that enlightenment can be sought in the study of nature and natural forces, especially decay and oxidation. According to the tale, each of four monks set out to seek enlightenment, but, as is so often the case, different schools of thought prevailed.

The **Scholar Monk** maintains a well-stocked library, surrounding himself with the writings of the great minds and kindred souls of the ages. He studies and reflects on them, compiles, analyzes, and synthesizes his research. He collects art and significant objects for inspiration (a favorite viewing stone, a copper nodule, is currently on display). He has staked out a breezy top-floor aerie in one of the garden plants, and installed a mobile that makes the wind visible. A little monkey comes to visit sometimes to remind him to get his nose out of his books and reconnect with nature.



The **Rust Monk** is less interested than the Scholar Monk in what other people have said and done. He wants to find his own unique way, unencumbered by the past, listening to an inner voice. He seeks enlightenment from his creative expression, to express things that cannot be said in words. He has collected a number of rusty objects and assembled them to create a complex living environment. His creation floats above the garden, not rooted in any part of it.





The **Wandering Monk** has decided to rid himself of the distractions of possessions, collections, books, and art, no matter how pure or ennobling they may be. He has kept only a bag full of necessities and set off to wander in the wilderness, savoring the freedom of the adventure, to see what nature and rust can teach him. In the twists and turns of the thick branches of an ancient stumpy tree, he has found a rusty viewpoint from which to view the passing scene and get some perspective on the world.



The **Shelter Monk** is a hermit. Like the Wandering Monk, he has cast away his possessions, but he is content with a simple place to sit in quiet, inward contemplation, sheltered from the buffeting environment. He believes that each part of the universe contains the whole and one need only stay in one place and fully experience it to attain the sought-after enlightenment. It is not necessary to go from one place to another. He has found his spot on a flap of rust, under a wide natural shelter, and he plans to stay there.

Each monk personifies a different philosophy. The Rust Monk transforms what he finds into art, making decay into something valuable, hoping that the art will resonate with others and live on as part of a chain of inspiration. Similarly, the Scholar Monk seeks to leave as his legacy knowledge gathered and arranged, new connections made in the web of knowledge, collecting objects and arranging them. The Wandering Monk hopes to be remembered in tales of picaresque adventure, descriptions of the world as he found and experienced it, in all its differences and similarities. The Shelter Monk cares for none of these, since, in the end, all will be rotted, and forgotten, decomposed into its original molecules, those molecules recycled into something else entirely, until the Sun expands to vaporize the Earth, and the very atoms themselves cease their motion.

At it turns out, there is in fact another monk, the **Fifth Monk**. Like the Shelter Monk, he prefers to stay in one place, hiding in his rusty cave, spending his time listening to cosmic drivel on his homemade antenna, allegedly not seeking enlightenment at all. He has become transfixed by the incessant babble of the infosphere, vapid entertainment, titillation, and interesting factoids. However, he does seem to be enjoying himself. He is often represented, as shown here, as having a number of small planets that revolve around him.



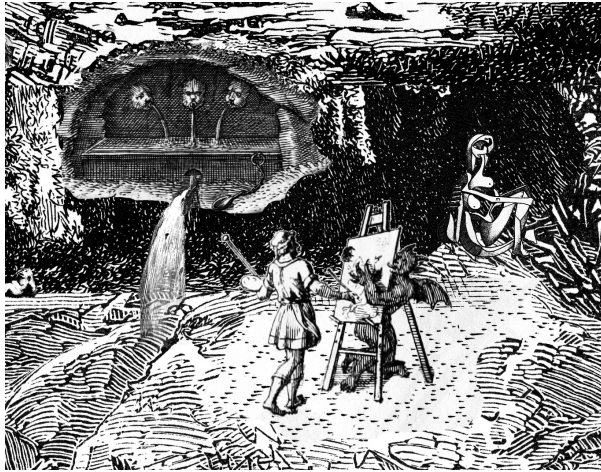




The Modern Age - a jazzy, jangly time of skewed perspectives

THE MODERN AGE

Like any region in the world, the art and culture of the Zymoglyphic region has been heavily influenced stylistically and philosophically by the modernist trends of the 20th century. The development of "assemblage" as an art genre legitimized practices that date back centuries, and "surrealism" provided a theoretical basis for creating art intuitively and trying to find its meaning and purpose later.



In the Modern Age, Zymoglyphic art becomes more formalized and self-referential, more about art itself than serving a specific function in cultural life. We see a succession of art movements as each new trend pushes aside the old, establishing itself as the latest thing before becoming outdated itself. Each new style or medium, however, is inevitably a recasting of traditional forms. The curiosity cabinets and dioramas of the Age of Wonder reappear in modern form as shoebox art galleries. The schools of Natural Modernism and Ephemeral Abstraction draw on the tradition of viewing stones, and the Biomorphich Abstractionists use the new material of acrylic paints to visualize the traditional notion of the primordial ooze.

Plein Air Sketches

A popular pastime in the early Modern Age was for citizens of all types to fan out across the countryside, find a good vantage point, set up easels, and sketch away. Since wonders abounded, they often did not have to go far to find suitable subject matter. The sketches are just that - quick, spontaneous, strokes, capturing the essence of a scene, with a bit of color added for accent.





Natural Modernism

A brief trend during the Modern Age was Natural Modernism. The sculptures shown here are a collaboration among a boring clam, the sea, and a human eye and hand to select and arrange the results. The clam in question is known as a piddock.



Piddock

It is more torpedo-shaped than clam-shaped and has the ability to rasp its way into rock using the ridges on its shell and a rotating motion. It uses the holes it creates for protection. When the rock is broken up by erosion (often aided by the weakening of the rock by the clam holes themselves), the resulting fragments are worn smooth by wave action and cast up on the shore. The results often bear an uncanny resemblance to an archetype of modernist sculpture, the 3-dimensional free-form blob with one or more holes in it. These are prized by modern Zymoglyphic collectors as "nature imitating art"





Natural modernism may be found in a variety of other media besides sea rocks. In these two examples, a similar composition is found in piece of driftwood and a discarded bit of electrical wiring. Once such objects are found and selected, they are carefully positioned and mounted in the manner of the miniature viewing stones that were so popular during the Era of Oriental Influence.

The School of Ephemeral Abstraction

A recent development in the Modern Age has been the cloud sculptures developed by the School of Ephemeral Abstraction. The cloud sculptures use the messy, weathered, delicate natural materials that were popular in the Rust Age, no longer of ceremonial significance but presented as “assemblage art”. They are the ethereal counterpart of the viewing stones from the Era of Oriental Influence, and were originally created simply by finding entwined masses of hair and debris, and mounting them on a stand.

The school has split into two factions. The “Pure Way” group, believes that only naturally occurring groupings may be used. As with the viewing stones, human intervention is limited to selection and positioning, with a certain amount of “fluffing” allowed. Examples from this group are shown above. The Neo-Constructionists, on the other hand, take inspiration from nature, but assemble the sculpture from various materials, such as wool, wire, and selected detritus to create a result that is in the spirit of the original found sculptures, but which would not actually be found in nature.





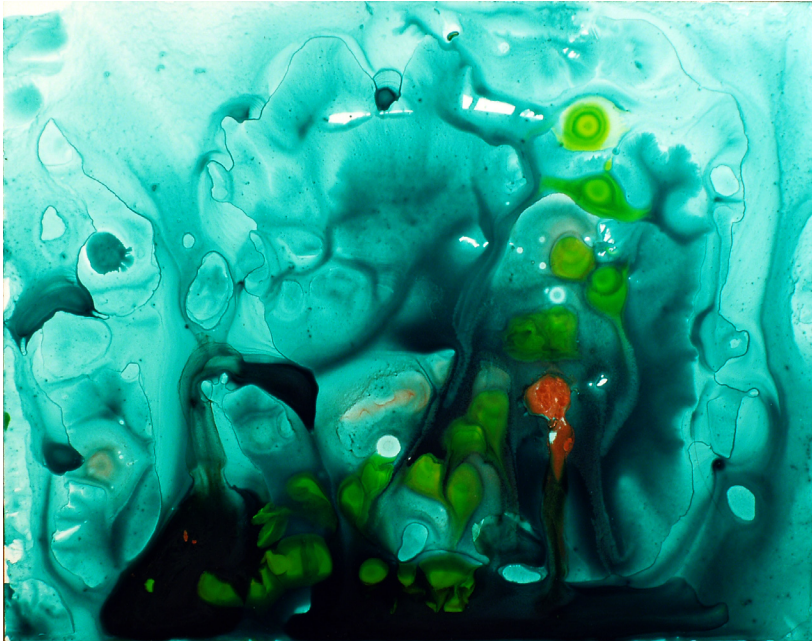


Biomorphic Abstraction

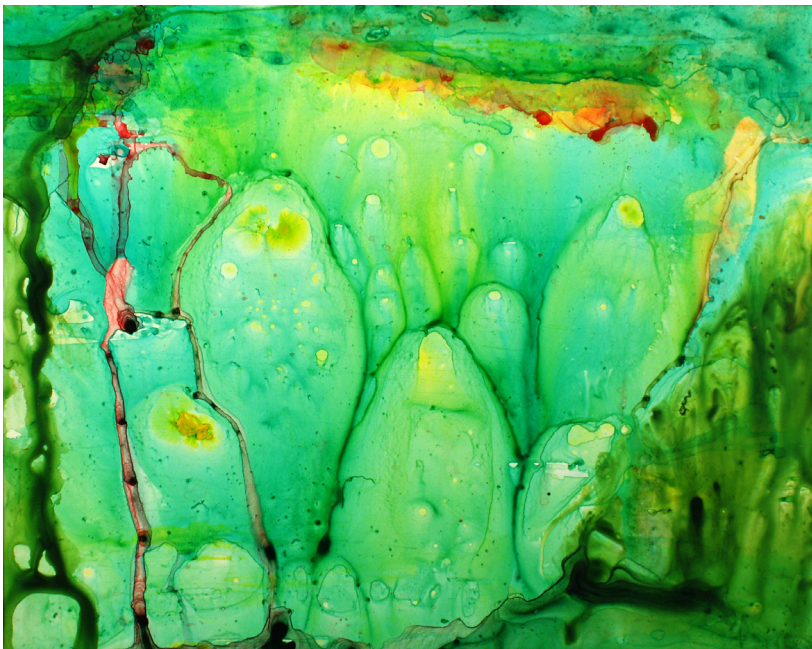
Acrylic painting is the Zymoglyphic art of the new millennium. It combines modern materials with sense of abstraction with ancient themes of the rise of life from the primordial ooze. It is fed at its roots by the traditional collaboration with nature. No brushes are used; pigments are mixed with water, spread on masonite, and allowed to deposit while the board is gently rocked. Chance and the physical processes of diffusion and particle deposition determine the detail of the pattern through the dispersal of the pigment. The patterns are similar to the natural dendrites found in old picture stones and the patinas on the copper scrolls of the Rust Age.



Primal Swirl



Creative Fermentation



Lights in the Sea



The Flowering of Color



Lights in the Forest



INSIDE THE MUSEUM

The museum is a small building at the end of suburban cul-de-sac, rather nondescript on the outside, easily missed. A crude, hand-lettered sign on weathered wood points the way to the main entrance. The landscaping around the museum consists of a row of strange potted plants, mostly gnarled stumps and flowers of metal and plastic. Once inside, you see a bewildering but intriguing assortment of items, including dead animals, dried fish, insects, and assemblages made of desiccated and decaying objects.



A veneer of dust and cobwebs covers some objects perched in the one small window.

A more careful look reveals that there is an organizational plan to the museum. There are exhibit cabinets, some haphazardly lit, some with labels askew. You find that the museum expands when its individual parts are examined more closely. Each exhibit becomes a room. In the museum's natural history wing, the unique flora and fauna of the region are displayed and a beguiling mermaid smiles at you from her tank. Historical artifacts from the Rust Age, the Age of Wonder, and the Era of Oriental Influence have their own grand galleries. The dioramas in The Great Hall of Dioramas are physically small, but they invite you into a complex world, one in which you can shrink yourself and wander down tiny paths in the undergrowth and discover strange tableaux, or swim through seaweed to a long-forgotten palace of rust. Tiny shoebox galleries contain whole museums within themselves. It is not known how far these worlds-within-worlds go, since some of these microcosms contain yet smaller ones. There is a documented instance of a viewing stone which consists a single grain of cosmic dust.

The exhibit preparation area

Across a small patio from the museum is the exhibit preparation area, a vast jumble of partially prepared exhibits, newly arrived specimens awaiting assignment to a proper location in the Zymoglyphic cosmography, and bits and pieces to be used in the reconstruction of historic artifacts.



THE GREAT HALL OF DIORAMAS

The Great Hall of Dioramas is great primarily in its ambition to represent universal themes of life, death, and rebirth; the scenes themselves are scarcely a foot high. They use narrative to depict little dramas occurring in the undergrowth.



Creation

The Hall opens with a scene of two winged creatures and a broken egg in a nest perched perilously on a wooden bridge. One is a skeletal bird with perched on a gnarled branch, its head tilted in such a way as to give it a puzzled expression. The other is a beatific plastic angel, serenely playing its lute for the benefit of the invisible being that has hatched out of the egg and filled the whole diorama with its unseen presence. The landscape is typical of these dioramas: a strange mix of winged creatures, natural materials and castoffs from human civilization - a chunk of roadway, a candy wrapper growing like a fungus, newsprint that has melted onto pine needles.



Picnic

As visitors move to the second scene, they see another species of winged creature. This one often reminds them of the “bug-eyed monsters” popularly associated with the evolution of life forms on other planets. In this scene, they have landed their tiny, rusted spacecraft in a desiccated, dreamlike spot in the undergrowth of the Zymoglyphic region. One stands on lookout; two others have hunted down a nice juicy beetle and are preparing to make a meal of it. They are being watched by a skeletal lizard, and a tiny car is approaching from the right side of the scene.



Curiosity

The third diorama of this series moves past the basics of birth and finding food; creatures are now looking around at their environment with curiosity. The central characters are a pair of “nosy” plastic creatures with long snouts ending in peculiar heart-shaped flaps on the end. They are investigating the skull of a cat, an animal that may well have met its demise as a result of its own curiosity. Perched above them, a skeletal bird cocks its head and focuses an eye socket on one of the many peculiar organisms of the Zymoglyphic region, which to the untrained eye resembles nothing so much as a colorful tangle of wires erupting from the earth to form plastic spore clusters.



Getting On

In the fourth diorama, we move to the inevitable aging, decay, and death, ever-present themes in Zymoglyphic art. A wizened mouse, bent with age, its skull already emerging from its leathery skin, leans on his cane at the entrance to the underworld, ready to make his final descent. When visitors to this diorama scan the dry weeds, they find other mice at the ends of their lives, one of them near a rusted structure of old can.



Magic Carpet

The last diorama in this series offers some hope of rebirth. An old rug takes on new life, and the scene is presided over by a cicada with wings like the stained glass windows of a cathedral.



Primordial Ooze

This diorama is the first one in the Hall to have an underwater theme. Root-like tentacles emanating out of a rusty cavern hold a kelp-urn representing the mythic fountain of the primordial ooze. In an inevitable counterpoint to the creation image, a predatory tentacle-creature engulfs a hapless fish, and a small school of prehistoric reptilian bird-fish swim past the baleful gaze of a death figure.



Deception

The predatory theme is continued here with an illustration of the ways in which creatures resort to temptation and deception in order to get a meal. An angler shell uses a lure at the end of its wiry tongue to lure unwary prey. An even more sophisticated mollusc creates the allusion of a yummy meal to trap a hungry diver.



The Rusty Palace

A disembodied doll head has taken up residence in the remains of a once-glorious palace that has given way to corrosion and decay

THE SHOEBOX MUSEUM

The Shoebox Museum is a miniature museum within the Zymoglyphic Museum. It consists of a number of galleries of small works and artifacts, with each gallery contained in a shoebox.

These galleries are modern versions of the Age of Wonder's curiosity cabinets. Where the curiosity cabinets are complex and chaotic, the shoebox galleries are orderly with objects carefully labeled. Such spaces serve both as little islands of order in the chaotic jumble of the larger museum, and to keep modernizing influences, such as formality and abstraction, quarantined.

The shoebox galleries also trace their descent from dioramas. While the dioramas have an emphasis on narrative, with characters acting out a story, the shoebox galleries are more formal spaces, with the only characters being the visitors to the museum. Their only function is to ponder whatever is on display (and perhaps each other).

The content of the shoebox galleries are frequently "recontextualized" found objects which are presented as art by mounting them on a pedestal or framing them. The galleries also provide a venue for works from the Natural Modernist and Ephemeral Abstraction movements, as well as miniature acrylic paintings.



The first shoebox gallery followed a minimalist aesthetic as its basic architectural form with a single "peep-hole" style, with no apparent way in. It displays a collection of miniature art from various sources. All pieces are untitled.



Inside the gallery, from left to right:

- Assemblage (dried pepper, wire, carpet padding)
- Dollhouse landscape
- Model railroad garbage car contents
- Found object on pedestal (glue)
- Sculpture from the Natural Modernist school
- Found object (weathered copper plate)
- Metal sculpture (silver, copper, brass)
- Framed assemblage (shell, wax)
- Sculpture from the Natural Modernist school
- Dollhouse landscape



In the second shoebox gallery, a controversial attempt was made to apply more advanced architectural principles. The gallery has been designed so as to “open up” the basic shoebox form, breaking away from the basic box form and integrate the inside and the outside. An entranceway for visitors has been added, the visitors admitted, and at least some of works have been given titles.

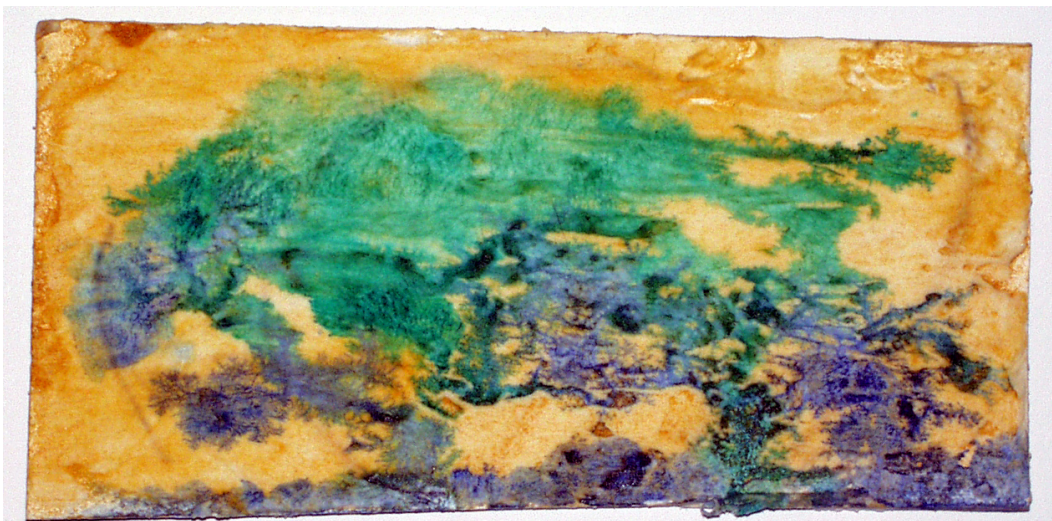


Inside the gallery, from left to right:

String Theory	Found object (carpet padding)
Untitled	Watercolor
Untitled	Found object (dried mud)
Untitled	Found objects (banana peel, magnolia leaf)
Oh no...	Found object (cartoon) simulating Pop Art
Aspiration	Found object (beach rock) simulating modernist sculpture
Untitled	Found object (sea sponge)
Composition/Decomposition	Assemblage (melted plastic, bead, wax, rusty washers)



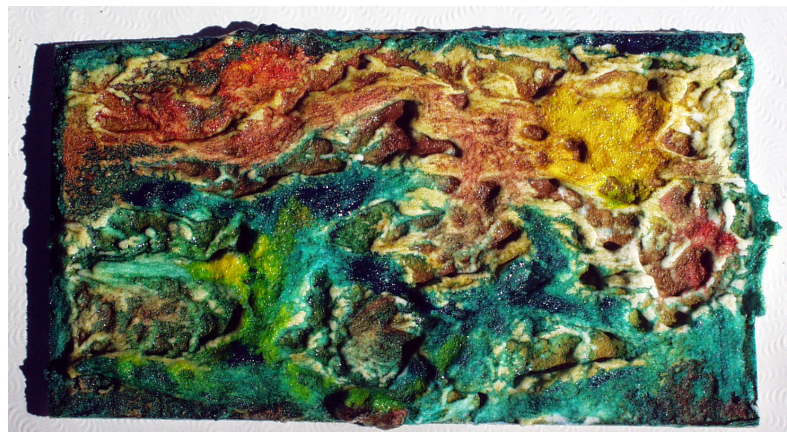
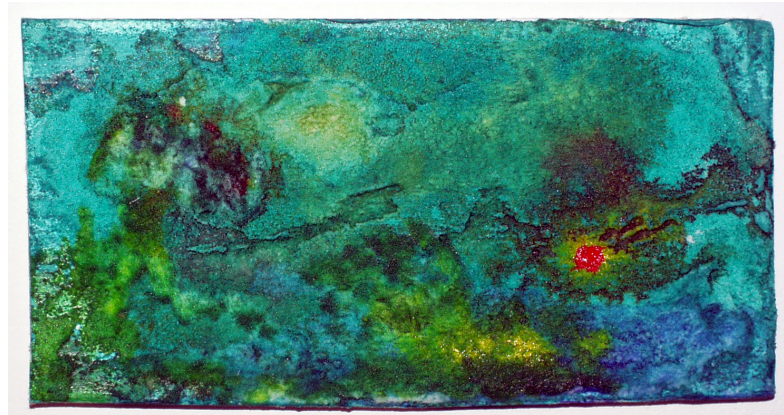
The third shoebox gallery, known as the Biomorphic Abstraction gallery, shows a return to the classic box form, augmented by some outdoor landscaping. The contents of the gallery focus on untitled miniature acrylic paintings from the Biomorphic Abstraction school, along with found objects which follow the theme of “nature imitating art”. The two objects with sculptural qualities harken back to the Rust Age fascination with copper from the earth and intriguing objects from the sea. The “found image” is derived from a picture stone (see page 28).





Inside the gallery, from left to right:

- Found image (moss agate)
- Found sculpture (copper nodule)
- Acrylic on cardboard
- Acrylic amoeba
- Acrylic on cardboard
- Found sculpture (seaweed holdfast)
- Acrylic on cardboard





Meteorite



Rainbow Jewel

The **Zymoglyphic Meteorite** is a 4 billion-year-old remnant of the iron core of an asteroid, seared and pocked from its violent entry into the earth's atmosphere. It was formed during the creation of the solar system and is older than life itself. It was revered as divine agent during the Rust Age.

The **Rainbow Jewel from Another Planet**, like the meteorite, dates back to the beginning of a timeline, in this case the museum's history. It is one of the museum's earliest acquisitions, believed at one time (or at least hoped) to be an artifact from a distant solar system, perhaps originally a multifaceted jewel, melted and distorted like the meteorite in the last stage of its unimaginably long journey.

The **dinosaur coprolite** is the fossilized remnant of a dinosaur's meal consumed some hundreds of millions of years ago. It has been mounted as a viewing stone for quiet contemplation, in the style popular during the Era of Oriental Influence.



Dinosaur coprolite

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The curiosity cabinet

Looming tall out of the chaos of the exhibit preparation area is the curator's personal curiosity cabinet, a wide-ranging collection of natural oddities, primitive artifacts, microcosms, and significant objects.





Family silhouette



Surrealist Barbie



Living cheese



End-of-days clock



Gilded apple head



Chinese root sculpture



Hedgehog card receiver

The Crustacean Collection

During the Age of Wonder, the ideal collection was an eclectic set of objects, often displayed in a jumble. In the latter years of that era, more systematic collections became popular, appealing to a “theme and variations” aesthetic.

Crabs have an important place in Zymoglyphic culture. When dead, they often look as though they are just holding a long pose, and so make excellent diorama characters. They are nautical mechanical marvels, from the tight, interlocking parts of a box crab to the implausibly leggy spider crabs. Some, such as the fiddler crab, verge on becoming “eccentric contraptions”, surreal beings whose very existence seems impossible. Some have great character, such as the leopard crab shown below. The lack of gravitational pull underwater allows the development of unusual forms.



Decorator crab

Decorator crabs, like the *Xenophora*, are “assemblage artist of the deep” and make themselves into living, walking gardens. They cover themselves with a selection of living seaweed and plant-like animals, such as sponges, corals, and bryozoans. This is not a weed garden in the sense of just allowing things to grow on the carapace; the selections are carefully nipped and placed on specialized projections on the shell. The purpose is both camouflage and protection due to the poisonous nature of many of the selections.



Leopard crab





THE MUSEUM FORECOURT

The xeriscape gardening against the museum's front wall is based on some gnarled stumps and includes a number of strange plants endemic to the Zymoglyphic Isles, some of which derive their drought tolerance from having metallic and plastic components. The forecourt is most noted for its depiction of the tale of the four monks that dates to the time of the Era of Oriental Influence.



Cafe Ruste



Rust Flower

At the far north end of the wall is the Cafe Ruste, a haven for those seeking hedonistic pleasure instead of quiet contemplation. Its patronage is limited to sentient beings under 3 inches tall, although incorporeal spirits of any dimension are welcome, and planet of origin is immaterial.

At the center of the scene is the legendary Rust Flower, a rare species endemic to the Zymoglyphic Islands. It flowers only once in its lifetime, but spectacularly, a huge colorful bloom; the flower rusts in place, decaying slowly thereafter.

The tour of the museum ends at the beginning. We are back outside, in the driveway of a suburban cul-de-sac. The last thing we see as we leave is the first point of interest as we come in - a Rust Age monument mounted on the corner of the museum building. This structure is typical of many that were common in that era when dilapidation was considered a valuable architectural asset, and spiders were encouraged to add their webs as stained glass might be added to a cathedral.





Rust Age Monument detail

END NOTE

Photo credits:

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pp. 54-55, 90-95 Judith Hoffman (judithhoffman.net)

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Jenny Haniver on p 23, by Sarina Brewer

Primordial couple, p 39, collaboration with Judith Hoffman

Mousealope p 47 by Jeanie M

Curiosity cabinet, pp 107:

Surrealist Barbie by Ileana Anderson

Living cheese by Sarah Brunner

Family Silhouette and End-of-Days clock by Judith Hoffman

Additional objects found or purchased

Rust Age Monument, p 112, collaboration with Judith Hoffman

Quote on page 9 from *The Sirens of Titan* by Kurt Vonnegut, 1959

Also available from the Zymoglyphic Museum Press:

Views of the Zymoglyphic Region

Sketches of the Zymoglyphic Region

For more information, visit the museum's shop at www.zymoglyphic.org!