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**KUNST  
HISTORISCHES  
MUSEUM  
WIEN**

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**Edmund de Waal  
meets Albrecht Dürer**

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***DURING THE NIGHT***

**11. OKTOBER 2016 TO 29 JANUARY 2017**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION**

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This exhibition has been curated by the English artist and writer Edmund de Waal. At the invitation of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, de Waal made repeated visits to Vienna over a period of three years to spend time with its collections and curators, and to make a personal selection of objects from among the many thousands assembled over centuries by the museum's Habsburg founders.

He has borrowed from seven different collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum: the Picture Gallery, Greek and Roman Antiquities, the Kunstkammer, the Imperial Treasury, Historical Musical Instruments, the Library, and the collection of Ambras Castle, the former residence of Archduke Ferdinand II in Innsbruck, Tyrol. Four additional objects, at least one of which was formerly in the Ambras collection, have been generously lent by the Natural History Museum, our twin building across the Maria-Theresien-Platz. The exhibition is completed by a major new work created by de Waal himself, as a response to his selection.

De Waal instinctively understood the opportunities that the invitation afforded while recognizing the trapdoors that came with it. His role was not to be that of the museum curator,

whose task is to identify, study, present and contextualize works of art that represent the most accomplished of their type, period, or style. Nor was it that of the contemporary artist who is invited into an historical museum to trace lines between the past and the present. His role was to be something else: to identify and assemble objects, the majority of them little known, unburdened by the restrictions of the museum's traditional conventions of display; to propose a new understanding of those objects by altering their placement and their context; and to trace new lines of thought within and around the past.

Seen together, the objects that he has chosen represent a personal reinterpretation of the past. The challenge and pleasure for the visitor is to try to match our eye to his, to comprehend the reasons for his choices. In doing so, we deepen our understanding of de Waal's own work and the decisions that lie behind it. The lives of objects, particularly those displaced from their original context or denied their original function, has long been a subject of great interest to him. We see it in his own ceramic work, we read it in his writing, and now we can perceive it in this exhibition.

This is the second exhibition in a series for which internationally renowned artists are invited to work with the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, following that curated by Ed Ruscha in 2012.

**EDMUND  
DE WAAL:  
BIOGRAPHY**

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Edmund de Waal, OBE, was born in 1964 in Nottingham, England. He received his BA Honours in 1985 from the University of Cambridge and his Postgraduate Diploma in 1992 from the University of Sheffield. In 2002 he completed his postgraduate studies as Senior Research Fellow in Ceramics at the University of Westminster, London. A potter since childhood and an acclaimed writer, de Waal is best known for his large-scale installations of porcelain vessels, which have been exhibited in and collected by museums around the world, including: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Recent solo museum exhibitions include: »Ceramic Rooms«, Geffrye Museum, London (2001); New Art Centre, Roche Court, Salisbury, England (2004); »Arcanum«, National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff (2005); »Vessel, perhaps«, Millgate Museum, England (2006); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, England (2007); »Signs & Wonders«, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2009); »Night Work«, New Art Centre, Roche Court (2010); »Edmund de Waal at Waddesdon«, Waddesdon Manor,

Buckinghamshire, England (2012); »On White: Porcelain Stories from the Fitzwilliam«, University of Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, England (2013); »Another Hour«, Southwark Cathedral, London (2014); »Atmosphere«, Turner Contemporary, England (2014); »Lichtzwang«, Theseus Temple, organized by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (2014); and »The lost and the found: work from Orkney«, New Art Centre, England (2015). Much of his recent work has been concerned with ideas of collecting and collections, and with how objects are kept together, lost, stolen and dispersed. His work comes out of a dialogue between minimalism, architecture and sound, and is informed by his passion for literature. His acclaimed memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes* was the winner of the Costa Biography Award and the RSL (Royal Society of Literature) Ondaatje Prize. In 2015, de Waal was awarded a prestigious Windham-Campbell prize for non-fiction by Yale University. His latest book, *The White Road: Journey into an Obsession*, was published in November 2015. De Waal lives and works in London.

# 1

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## DREAM VISION

Albrecht Dürer  
1525  
Watercolour on paper,  
inscribed and signed  
In the Albrecht Dürer  
»Kunstbuch«  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstkammer

Sometime during the night of 7 June 1525, Albrecht Dürer awoke from a frightening nightmare. The following morning, deeply agitated, he recorded what he had seen in a watercolour and added a detailed description. This work is his popular *Dream Vision*: a massive deluge of rain is seen descending upon a wide landscape in which we can make out the faint outlines of tiny houses and trees. *Dream Vision* is part of the so-called Kunstbuch (»Art Book«), a collection of 216 woodcuts and prints from metal plates by Albrecht Dürer. It also contains thirteen drawings, eight of which are by Dürer himself.

Edmund de Waal:

*You wake up and don't know where you are. A plain, low hills and fields. Somewhere from childhood. And the heavens have opened and the waters are coming down, the waters are coming towards you. It is the apocalypse. The world is turned upside down. You can hardly breathe. During the night you are exposed. In the Kunsthistorisches I feel exposed. These are the last days of mankind.*

# 2

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## »SHAKE-BOX«

South German (Tyrol?),  
after 1550  
Wood, cardboard, clay,  
all painted, lead weights  
with wire, moss, poppy  
seeds, snail shells  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstkammer  
(Ambras Castle  
Innsbruck)

This wooden box contains a perfect imitation of a forest floor in moss that acts as the »habitat« of countless small creatures made of painted cardboard, including snails, snakes, tortoises, spiders, beetles, a scorpion and even a dragon-like winged creature of fable, some gazing out from small niche-like caves. Balanced by lead counter-weights and loosely attached to eyelets and small wooden pegs, these tiny cardboard creatures begin to shake and jiggle whenever someone touches the box, creating the impression that they are alive. A typical *Kunstkammer* object, the »shake-box« (»Schüttelkasten«) combines the imitation of nature with outstanding artistry and technical skill.

Edmund de Waal:

*When considering the Wunderkammer, the room of wonders, Francis Bacon talked of the possibility of having »in small compass a model of universal nature made private«. Everything, he says, is possible here. There should be a »goodly huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine hath made rare in stuff, form, or motion; whatsoever nature hath wrought in things that want life and may be kept; shall be sorted and included.« Here is the shuffle and shake of things. How much control do you really have?*

## 3-7, 9-12

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### HANDSTONES

Sankt Joachimsthal (Jáchymov), second half of 16<sup>th</sup> century; Slovakian/Hungarian, mid-18<sup>th</sup> century  
Silver, partially gilt, various minerals, glass, wood  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstammer

Initially the term »handstone« denoted an unusually shaped or sized lump of ore that one could hold in one's hand to study and contemplate. In the course of the sixteenth century such pieces were increasingly turned into *Kunstammer* objects by being reworked, mounted, and combined with other materials or goldsmith work – the earliest presumably at Sankt Joachimsthal (Jáchymov), Bohemia, in the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains), where most of the examples on show here were also produced. This juxtaposing of art and nature is typical of the second half of the sixteenth century, but we also encounter it in baroque handstones such as the model of a mine set on a manchette-shaped silver base, which was probably produced near Neusohl (Banská Bystrica) in present-day Slovakia.

Edmund de Waal:

*The mine is a place of great danger. There are spirits who draw you on, places that give way under you, damp and noxious airs and gases that make you sleep. There are seams that offer riches but are false. Here in these handstones something buried is transfigured: embedded in the rock are the steps to the place of crucifixion, a mine working, a house. This is the landscape of anxiety.*

## 8

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### ALLEGORY OF VIRTUE (»MOUNT OF VIRTUES«)

Lucas Cranach the Younger  
Dated 1548  
Limewood panel  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

»The journey is arduous but an inestimable reward waits at the summit.« While this uplifting Latin inscription on the giant's coat-of-arms is primarily aimed at the representatives of secular and ecclesiastical authority assembled at the foot of the mountain, it is also addressed to the viewer. The sheer cliffs in Cranach's composition symbolize the travails of acting in a virtuous and God-fearing manner, the pursuit of which will ultimately be rewarded. This allegorical call for perseverance painted in 1548 was almost certainly informed by the religious struggles of its time: the Catholics' defeat of the Protestants in 1547 had brought on a profound crisis for the new Christian faith.

Edmund de Waal:

*How do you get up this fissured rock? There is something billowing out from the tree, something written on a banner. There is an angel offering benediction. It promises well. But the gate is narrow and the path disappears. I see a falling man.*

## SERPENT

Italian- or German-speaking lands, 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Lightweight coarse-fibred wood stained brown, leather, brass, ivory mouthpiece  
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Collection of Historical Musical Instruments

ADOPT  
 A MASTER-  
 PIECE

The name of this bass wind instrument derives from its sinuous, serpent-like shape, which allows the player to reach all six fingerholes. In addition to the usual cup-shaped mouthpiece, the present instrument has a blowpipe in the shape of a snake's open mouth; this feature, however, is purely decorative and does not affect the sound. The serpent's conical resonator is composed of several hollowed-out wooden segments, which after being glued together were encased in black leather to make them stabler and more airtight. Both the blowpipe and the ivory mouthpiece are later additions.

Edmund de Waal:

*Blow this great horn. The walls of the city wait.*

## ALLEGORY OF VANITY

Leonhard Bramer  
 c. 1640  
 Oak panel  
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

## ALLEGORY OF TRANSCIENCE

Leonhard Bramer  
 c. 1640  
 Oak panel  
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

A shadowy lute player appears before a woman gazing at her own reflection in a mirror; scattered around them are precious objects, pieces of armour and a number of string instruments. Here Bramer combines the attributes of beauty and authority with the typical elements of an allegory of Vanity. The inscription »VANITAS [VANIT]ATES OM[NIA VANITAS]« (»Vanity of vanities, all is vanity«) is taken from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes and underlines the symbolism of the scene. Its counterpart, the *Allegory of Transience*, shows an old man absorbed in a page inscribed with the words »MEMENTO MORI«. He is the sole living creature in this moribund setting: his only companion is a skeleton clutching and apparently grinning at a skull.

Edmund de Waal:

*This is shape shifting. Pick something up. Instruments and armour, silver goblets and a golden chain. A skeleton and a broken dish, a clay pipe. This is the banquet of images. Emblems and allegories lie around in the darkness. »The most lurid fantasies«, writes Karl Kraus, »are quotations.«*

## 16 & 17

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### MASK-SHAPED VISORS (»HUSSAR« AND »MOOR«)

Court Armoury at  
Prague, c. 1557  
Iron, decorated with oil  
paint, leather, horsehair  
Innsbruck, Ambras  
Castle

Chased and decorated with oil paints, these exchangeable iron visors were worn by joust-ers participating in the »Hussars' tournaments« hosted by Archduke Ferdinand II at Prague in 1557. The »eyebrows« are cut out to function as eye slits; below them, the painted eyes have air holes to facilitate breathing. The masks' shapes, colours and horsehair moustaches were designed to reflect the physiognomy and complexion of the »Hussars« and »Moors« who confronted each other in these tournaments, a reminder of the war against the Ottoman Empire still being fought in Hungary. The mask-shaped visors were produced in the court armoury of Archduke Ferdinand II at Prague.

Edmund de Waal:

*When you put on a mask, it is not clear what happens, who you become. These masks are uncanny. You are »robbed of your eyes«, says Freud.*

## 18

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### THE VEIL OF VERONICA

Pietro Strozzi  
Rome, 1617; Vienna?,  
c. 1721 (outer frame)  
Silver, partially gilt,  
ebony, mother of pearl,  
ivory, onyx cameos,  
wood, silk  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Ecclesiastical  
Treasury

For centuries the Veil of Veronica was regarded as the most precious sacred object in the Ecclesiastical Treasury in Vienna. By the account of its former owners, the Savellis of Rome, who presented it to Emperor Charles VI in 1721, it had been brought to the city by the same Volusianus who, according to the *Legenda Aurea* (or rather the *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii*), had been sent to Jerusalem by the ailing Emperor Tiberius to escort Jesus back to Rome and thus advance his (the Emperor's) return to good health. However, as the Crucifixion had already taken place when Volusianus arrived, he returned with Veronica and her veil instead. As soon as Tiberius set eyes on the veil he was cured. We now know that the Vienna version was copied in 1617 from the Veronica in St. Peter's.

Edmund de Waal:

*She wipes his face. The sweat holds in the cloth. The cloth holds an image of a man in pain; four brown marks.*



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PORTRAIT OF  
A LADY

Lucas Cranach the  
Younger  
Dated 1564  
Limewood panel  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Picture  
Gallery

We still do not know the identity of the presumably noble sitter whom Cranach portrayed in 1564 together with her husband (his portrait is also now in Vienna). A curtain was added at a later date to hide the crest on their respective portraits, and it, too, has not yet been deciphered. As well as idealizing the lady's features, Cranach has created a respectful distance between subject and beholder, mainly by depicting her in a rigidly formal pose and focusing on her sumptuous high-necked attire. Note also how he sets off her almost incorporeal figure against the pictorial space evoked by the strong shadow cast on the wall behind.

Edmund de Waal:

*Her hands are folded, just so. It has taken the maids several hours to dress her, arrange the folds and pleats, draw the sleeves over her arms, plait her hair, pin her hat. She sits and looks at us. Her shadow looks at her.*

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PALIMPSEST:  
ÁPANTA TÀ TOÛ  
PLÁTŌNOS // OPERA  
PLATONIS OMNIA

Venice, Aldus Manutius  
1513  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Library



Dedicated to Pope Leo X, this first edition of the collected works of the Greek Philosopher Plato (427–347 BC) was printed and published by Aldus Manutius in Venice in September 1513. The book's vellum cover is a palimpsest – the archetype of recycling: as a costly and thus precious writing material, parchment was reused repeatedly. Remnants of the original inscription cover a total of nineteen lines running from right to left. Reflected in light, the symbols turn into Latin letters, which here and there make up Latin words. However, the many missing and illegible sections render the text too fragmented to be deciphered.

Edmund de Waal:

*Unsteadiness of texts. Losing and refinding. Doubleness. Voices. Nothing lasts in one form.*

LIMESTONE SLAB  
WITH A FOSSILIZED  
FISH AND A CENTO  
FROM VIRGIL

Engraved in 1543  
Fossil: *Anaethalion  
knorri* (de Blainville,  
1818), ray-finned fish  
Solnhofen, Germany,  
150 million years old  
(Jura)  
Vienna, Natural History  
Museum, Geological-  
Paleontological  
Department

The verses engraved into the lower section of this slab are a Virgilian cento, a patchwork poem made up of lines from the Aeneid and the Georgics. In it the anonymous author gives an account of a death-bringing deluge that destroys all in its path; he clearly regards the fossilized fish as a victim of the (biblical) Flood. At a time when most scholars interpreted fossils as Nature playing games (*ludi naturae*) and explained them in terms of Earth's mysterious powers (*vis plastica*), this was a truly revolutionary viewpoint. The Roman numerals M.D.XLIII date the artefact to AD 1543, making it the oldest physical evidence of the correct interpretation of fossils as formerly living organisms.

Edmund de Waal:

»Hereupon, the almighty father descended from the high ether in wild rage: he sends surges into the country, sending floods and unbinds heaven to hell. He destroys the land, annihilates the farmland, the endeavour of oxen is in vain. The ditches fill up, the rivers are swelling, and he condemns all domestic and wild animals to death.«

OLD WOMAN

Balthasar Denner  
Before 1721  
Canvas  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Picture  
Gallery

Already during his lifetime the artist was famous throughout Europe for the astounding verisimilitude of his character faces and was known – half-admiringly, half-mockingly – as »pore Denner«. The *Old Woman* now in Vienna is undoubtedly the best and the most famous example of these highly detailed virtuoso portraits; in 1721 Emperor Charles VI paid 4,700 guilders for it, an outrageously high price, and counted it among his greatest treasures. Years later the Habsburg ruler commissioned the artist to produce a male counterpart, which is now also in the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Edmund de Waal:

*Mesmerism is the ability to own someone else. She owns you. Her gaze excoriates. You are judged.*

## 23

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### ROCK CRYSTAL NIGHT LIGHT

Salzburg?, c. 1700  
Rock crystal, silver gilt  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstammer

Medieval craftsmen used glass spheres filled with water to collect light and focus it on their workplace; this made it possible to enhance the light cast by a candle or to direct daylight deep into the interior of the workshop, allowing work to continue during the darker hours of the day. Entries in old inventories suggest that this rock crystal sphere was not produced only to provide light: it is also in itself a depiction of the contrasts between day and night, light and darkness, as the circular opening of the hollow sphere, which is on a swivel, is framed by an aureole, and a crescent moon is incised into the opposite side. The faint moon is thus contrasted with the much stronger sun. It may possibly have been intended to project images of the two heavenly bodies.

Edmund de Waal:

*In the depths of the night, light is precious. Starlight, embers from the fire, a candle. During the day you cannot remember what the watches of the night feel like.*

## 24

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### THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Follower of  
Hieronymus Bosch  
c. 1540/50  
Oak panel  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Picture  
Gallery

A steep mound pierced by a bizarre fountain dominates an animated ideal landscape. In the foreground we see Adam and Eve seated inside a fantastic hollowed-out fruit, a motive frequently encountered in Bosch's compositions. Additional composite plants grow around the fountain, which is decorated with figures and ornaments and has attracted numerous animals. This *Garden of Eden* is clearly informed by Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (Madrid, Museo del Prado); the anonymous artist has made use of motifs invented by Bosch but has varied and altered them in his composition.

Edmund de Waal:

*Whose paradise is this? This hill is alive, unsteady, leaning, propped, contingent. There is a fountain cut into the hillside. Some creatures, a random pig. A naked man and a woman are taking shelter. Stuff is happening. The fountain looks like an eye. In the distance a mountain is on fire.*

## 26

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### FIBULA

Late antique Roman (?),  
second third of  
5<sup>th</sup> century  
Gold, onyx, garnet,  
amethyst, glass paste  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Collection  
of Greek and Roman  
Antiquities

## 27

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### ONYX FIBULA

Roman, 3<sup>rd</sup> century  
Gold (pierced work),  
multi-layered onyx  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Collection  
of Greek and Roman  
Antiquities

A number of extant depictions show that the rulers of the late Roman/early Byzantine Empire wore cloaks gathered and closed with a fibula at their right shoulder. These sumptuous pieces of jewellery typically feature a large centrally mounted precious stone and delicate pendant gold chains. Not a single imperial fibula has come down to us but similar artefacts were found at sites located outside the borders of the Roman Empire. They functioned as Rome's gifts to allied or friendly rulers. This onyx fibula, for example, was included in the richly endowed burial of a (presumably) Germanic prince.

Edmund de Waal:

*This is your third eye. They are apotropaic: they turn back malevolence. Wear this and watch.*

## 27-29

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### MAGICAL GEMSTONES

Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum,  
Collection of Greek and  
Roman Antiquities

#### HARPOCRATES ON A LOTUS FLOWER

Medium-brown sard



#### A RIDER WITH A DOUBLE AXE VAN- QUISHING AN ENEMY

Heliotrope

#### A SERPENT AND THE INSCRIPTION »ABRAXAS«

Light-grey chalcedony,  
mounted in a modern  
gold ring



In classical antiquity, precious and semi-precious stones credited with special powers were worn as amulets and talismans; it was believed they would protect or cure the wearer, or ensure the assistance of the gods. They were decorated with hybrid creatures combining elements taken from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Jewish (less frequently Christian) images as well as magical inscriptions and signs or symbols. For example, the seven letters of the name Abrasax (or Abraxas) allude to the seven days of the week and the seven planets then known; furthermore, their numerical values amount to 365, the number of days in a year.

Edmund de Waal:

*Condensed power: a snake, a lion, a horse-man with a double axe, some numbers and letters, all the years.*

## 30

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### AMULET WITH LOVE CHARM

Roman, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century  
Gold foil  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Collection  
of Greek and Roman  
Antiquities

This paper-thin gold foil is inscribed in Greek with a twelve-line love charm: after evoking the »name of Aphrodite« (»ónoma Aphroditēs«), it lists magical names and calls upon the god Mithras. A line separates this first section from a second that includes a request for the favour of »all men and women« and especially for the affection of the wearer's beloved. Tiny inscribed plates like this one were often worn around the neck, rolled up in a capsule, as amulets. This one was found with other pieces of jewellery in a small wooden casket placed inside a sarcophagus.

Edmund de Waal:

*Wanting someone is boundless. It is dangerous. To invoke Mithras brings all kinds of danger in its train. What are you creating with this sliver of gold? What happens of gold? What happens next?*

## 31

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### BEZOAR MOUNTED IN GOLD FILIGREE

Goa, 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Bezoar, gold filigree  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstkammer  
(Ambras Castle  
Innsbruck)

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### BEZOAR GOBLET

Jan Vermeyen  
Prague, c. 1600  
Bezoar, gold, partially  
enamelled  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstkammer

A bezoar is an indigestible mass found in the intestinal system of bezoar goats, lamas and other ruminants. The term derives from the Persian word for antitoxin, *bâd-sahr*. During the Middle Ages and the early Modern Era popular superstition regarded the bezoar as a »health stone« and ground bezoar mixed with some liquid was therefore prescribed by doctors for such ailments as the plague and depression; Emperor Rudolf II, for example, set great store by it as a remedy for his melancholy. Elaborately mounted bezoars were used at princely banqueting tables and were frequently dipped in food and drink in order to detect the presence of poison.

Edmund de Waal:

*Look at them again. Their shape is ungainly. Wrap them up, hold them tight, try to keep their power safe.*



### ADDERS' TONGUES CREDENCE

Nuremberg?, c. 1450  
Silver gilt, fossilized  
sharks' teeth, citrine  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstammer

This piece of late medieval tableware, crafted as a bouquet of flowers spiked with fossilized sharks' teeth, bears witness to an ancient superstition: the petrified teeth were long thought to be adders' tongues, which were credited with the power to identify poison in food. These precious artefacts were placed on a prince's banqueting table to warn him should his food or drink be tainted. Their use declined once the true nature of these petrified objects gained acceptance. Only two other such pieces have survived: one in the Grünes Gewölbe in Dresden, and one in the Treasury of the Teutonic Order in Vienna.

Edmund de Waal:

*This is a strange flowering. The blooms are tongues. It is speaking of the dense secrets of poison. Every day at court, every evening at the table, there is a press of people. How do you protect yourself when you are surrounded by so much talking, so many people who wish you ill?*

### SCREAMING MAN

Trophîme Bigot  
c. 1615/20  
Canvas  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Picture  
Gallery

This exceptional painting was only recently identified as a work by Trophîme Bigot, not least on account of the watermark visible in the paper of the lampshade, which functions as his trademark in a number of his compositions. Celebrated for his Caravaggesque nocturnal scenes, Bigot was known as »Trufemondi« – someone adept at deceiving or fooling people with his compositions. The panic-stricken reaction depicted here has been caused by a harmless but effective illusion: a candle placed in a hollowed-out pumpkin so scares a man that he is taking to his heels. The spectator becomes the accomplice of the boy playing the trick and is invited to share his enjoyment in having successfully pulled it off.

Edmund de Waal:

*The artist Bigot paints Judith and Holofernes, Saint Laurence Condemned to Torture, Saint Sebastian. Everything he paints is night-time, a guttering candle, lit by a lantern. His speciality is shock. Just how funny is a screaming man?*

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**MARTYRDOM OF  
SAINT CATHERINE**

Joachim Patinir  
c. 1515  
Oak panel  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Picture  
Gallery

Legend has it that at the age of eighteen, Catherine of Alexandria, the erudite and beautiful daughter of King Costus, tried to convert Emperor Maxentius to Christianity. When the Roman emperor had her tortured, God sent an angel to destroy the instruments of torture. Patinir depicts this drama in miniature format but with great verve. The sword hovering over the saint's head is a reference to her subsequent beheading. The painting is regarded as one of Patinir's early works, and probably dates from before he became a member of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke in 1515.

Edmund de Waal:

*A blue day. The boats at sea. A shepherd. A man ploughing a field. A young woman is being killed.*

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**RED CORALS**

Southern Italy (Trapani), third quarter of 16<sup>th</sup> century; presumably 18<sup>th</sup> century (base)  
Corals, plaster, wood  
Innsbruck, Ambras Castle

ADOPT  
A MASTER-  
PIECE

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**BLACK CORAL**

Southern Italy (Trapani), third quarter of 16<sup>th</sup> century; presumably 18<sup>th</sup> century (base)  
Corals, plaster, wood  
Innsbruck, Ambras Castle

ADOPT  
A MASTER-  
PIECE

Renaissance collectors loved corals, presumably because scholars were still debating whether coral was animal, vegetable or mineral. Even in antiquity corals had been harvested off the coasts of Sicily and Liguria, as well as off Corsica and Sardinia, which still boasted large stocks in the sixteenth century. At Ambras Castle Archduke Ferdinand II (1529–1595) assembled the period's largest and most fantastic coral collection, rivalled only by the *Kunstkammer* in the Residenz in Munich: it comprised corals in all shapes and sizes, from unworked pieces to carved figures, all of which were arranged in display cabinets constructed like little theatrical stages.

Edmund de Waal:

*Ovid tells the story of coral. Perseus has killed Medusa. After his victory he washes his hands in seawater drawn for him and, »so that Medusa's head, covered with its snakes, is not bruised by the harsh sand, he makes the ground soft with leaves, and spreads out plants from below the waves and places the head on them. The fresh plants, still living inside, and absorbent, respond to the influence of the Gorgon's head and harden at its touch, acquiring a new rigidity in branches and fronds. And the ocean nymphs try out this wonder on more plants, and are delighted that*

# 41

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## BLACK CORAL

Origin unknown,  
presumably 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Corals, wood  
Vienna, Natural History  
Museum, Old Collection

*the same thing happens at its touch, and repeat it by scattering the seeds from the plants through the waves. Even now corals have the same nature, hardening at a touch of air, and what was alive under the water, above water is turned to stone.»*

# 42

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## DRAGON WITH FOUR LEGS (BROKEN)

Milan?, second half of  
17<sup>th</sup> century  
Rock crystal  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kammer

The smaller, two-legged rock crystal dragon is superior in quality compared to its companion, but it has lost its wings: only the pegs to which they were once attached remain. Though chipped in a number of places, the larger, four-legged dragon has retained its wings and is in a more complete state. With their raised heads and wide-open mouths these monstrous creatures of fable seem to be spewing fire – an ingenious play on the precious and clear yet hard and intractable material from which they are carved: since antiquity, rock crystal had been regarded as the never-melting ice of the gods.

# 43

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## DRAGON WITH TWO LEGS (BROKEN)

Milan?, second half of  
17<sup>th</sup> century  
Rock crystal  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kammer

Edmund de Waal:

*I found this pair of broken dragons in the museum store and thought of the Book of Revelation: »And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.«*



## RELIQUARY (THE ANNUNCIATION)

Germany?, second quarter of 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Rock crystal, silver mount, black paint  
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Ecclesiastical Treasury

This silver-mounted faceted rock crystal »jar« rests on four elegant claw feet; set into the lid is a circular gilt plaque showing an Annunciation originally executed in polychrome enamels. The reliquary holds a cap said to have belonged to St Stephen, King of Hungary († 1038); although presumably worn under a crown, it was, in fact, produced later. As a reliquary the jar was admired more for religious than for artistic reasons but deprived of its relic it has now been reduced to its precious materiality.

Edmund de Waal:

*An empty space. The storied air.*

## DEVIL IN A GLASS

German, first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Glass, iron?  
 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstammer (Ambras Castle Innsbruck)



This small figure of a devil incorporated into a solid glass prism was originally in the collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614–1662); the 1659 inventory lists it as a »small square glass, with a pointed top, that contains a black figure in the shape of a devil« (»klein viereckende[s] Glasz, oben gespitzt, war in ein schwarcze Figur in Gestalt eines Teüffels«, fol. 472v). By 1720 it was in the Treasury in Vienna and was described as a »*spiritus familiaris* in a glass that was driven out of one possessed and banned to this glass« (»spiritus familiaris in einem Glas, so ehemals von einem Besessenen ausgetrieben und in dieses Glas verbannet worden«). In the Middle Ages it was widely believed that the Devil could take possession of a human body. This artefact was regarded as evidence of a successful exorcism.

Edmund de Waal:

*As Freud reflected, »No one who, like me, conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human beast, and seeks to wrestle with them, can expect to come through the struggle unscathed.« Keep your devils in close sight.*

LANDSCAPE WITH  
ANIMALS (IN THE  
BACKGROUND  
ORPHEUS AND THE  
THRACIAN WOMEN)

Roelant Savery  
c. 1618  
Oak panel  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Picture  
Gallery

Fascinated by nature both animate and inanimate, Savery produced countless landscapes featuring a wealth of domesticated and wild animals for his many aristocratic patrons. As well as paying tribute to the huge variety of species known at the time, he also expanded his paradisiac settings by including miniature-like scenes. In the background to the right, we see a group of Thracian women emerging like shadows from a cave; they are attacking Orpheus, who has withdrawn into solitude to grieve for his beloved Eurydice. Roused by the screams of the rampaging women, the frightened animals are dispersing in all directions.

Edmund de Waal:

*What do you know of the death of Orpheus? The river Helicon sinks underground where they have tried to wash their bloodstained hands. They threw sticks and stones at him. He kept playing. They tore him apart. His head and lyre float away. Music is dangerous.*

NATURA FORMATRIX

CRUCIFIX  
(MANDRAKE)

German?, 16<sup>th</sup> century  
Wood, grasses  
Innsbruck, Ambras  
Castle

HANDSTONE WITH A  
BEARDED MAN

Workshop of Caspar  
Ulich  
Sankt Joachimsthal  
(Jáchymov), second half  
of 16<sup>th</sup> century  
Acanthite, silver gilt,  
minerals  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Kunstskammer

EPPENDORF  
MANDRAKE

Hamburg, before 1480;  
17<sup>th</sup> century (crown of  
pearls)  
Cabbage stalk?, pearls  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Ecclesiastical  
Treasury

Mandrakes (*Mandragora officinalis*) were regarded as magical plants and the shape of their roots made them especially susceptible to interpretation as humanoid figures. Both the »Eppendorf mandrake« and the mandrake crucifix, however, are carved from a different, as yet unidentified wood. Their »wondrous« character earned them a place in the *Kunstskammer* collections of Emperor Rudolf II and Archduke Ferdinand II. The handstone with a bearded man also features a deliberate blurring of distinctions between Art and Nature: various ores have been worked into a figure that at first glance appears to comprise a natural unworked body and an artificial head.

Edmund de Waal:

*These scare me. They are barely human. They are totemic, their strangeness increased by the crown of pearls, the gilded stand.*

## 50

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### BUST OF ELECTOR JOSEPH CLEMENS OF BAVARIA

South German, first  
quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century  
White coral  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, *Kunstkammer*

## 51

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### BUST OF EMPEROR JOSEPH I

South German, first  
quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century  
White coral  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, *Kunstkammer*

These portraits of Emperor Joseph I (1678–1711) and Elector Joseph Clemens, Duke of Bavaria and Archbishop of Cologne (1671–1723), are carved into the coral in such a way that the natural shape of the precious material remains clearly visible. Before our eyes Nature seems to evolve into a work produced by man, a formerly living organism turns into an artefact. This places the two busts in the tradition of the »transformative artworks« produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth century that evolved out of the concept of the *Kunstkammer* as a place for learned discourse on the relationship between Art and Nature.

Edmund de Waal:  
*Watch carefully.*

Full fathom five thy father lies  
Of his bones are coral made.  
Those are pearls that were his eyes.  
Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.  
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.

## 52 & 53

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### VANITAS HEADS (MEMENTO MORI)

German, first half of  
17<sup>th</sup> century  
Ivory  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, *Kunstkammer*

The human skull has always been regarded as the symbol *par excellence* of life's transience. The Baroque loved virtuoso artefacts that functioned as a reminder of death. Perhaps the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' ever-present *vanitas* allegorising was but the converse of their frequently noted sensuality and joie de vivre. Particularly terrifying are heads with faces half-preserved and/or crawling with serpents that remind us of man's certain death and ultimate decay. The intention here is to appeal directly to the beholder's emotions.

Edmund de Waal:

»When you have lost your closest human being every thing seems empty to you, look where ever you like, everything is empty, and you look and look and you see that every-thing is really empty and, what is more, for ever.« (Thomas Bernhard)

## 54-57

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### RELIQUARIES

South German, c. 1600  
Gold, silver, partially  
gilt, brass, enamel,  
hardwood, ebony,  
precious and semi-  
precious stones, pearls,  
glass, textiles  
Vienna,  
Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Ecclesiastical  
Treasury

ADOPT  
A MASTER-  
PIECE

These reliquaries were commissioned at a time when the House of Habsburg, firm in the belief that God had assigned it a leading role in both the Empire and the Church, was acting as vanguard and sponsor of the Counter-Reformation. Initially the Reformation had swept the Habsburg domains, but from the second half of the sixteenth century the imperial house forcibly encouraged its subjects to return to the Catholic faith. In a conscious effort to distance the faithful from the »Protestants«, they promoted a typically Catholic practice: the veneration of relics. Catholic dignitaries and princes presented each other with sumptuously mounted reliquaries to strengthen ties and alliances. The imperial family received the »Stanislaw Reliquary« on show here from the bishop of Cracow Cardinal Jerzy (George) Radziwill, while the table reliquary was a gift from Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria.

Edmund de Waal:

*These are obsession. Keep a fingernail, an eyelash, a scraping of bone, a tooth, and hold it tight with glass and gold and silver and ivory and prayer.*

## 58

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### DURING THE NIGHT

Edmund de Waal  
2016

55 porcelain vessels,  
porcelain shards, tin  
boxes, lead shot, lead  
and COR-TEN steel  
elements in an acrylic  
glass and aluminium  
vitrine  
Courtesy Gagosian  
Gallery

Edmund de Waal:

*Not all objects give solace. They metamorphose in the passages of the night, they bring anxiety with them. In this vitrine are broken pieces of porcelain, silver aluminium boxes, lead shot, cut pieces of lead sheet and black vessels glazed with oxides. This is my own kind of Kunstkammer, my site of wonder, beauty and danger.*

## EDITION

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Edmund de Waal on his edition, which he designed on the occasion of his exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna: *fault line is my first ever edition using porcelain. I made a very substantial porcelain vessel and glazed it with a soft, dark, black basalt glaze, its texture like stone. And then I broke it into fifty shards. Each of these has been gilded on one of its edges. There is a beautiful tradition in Japan of marking the moment of fracture for a special object with a seam of gold: each one more valuable for its brokenness than before. fault line will be scattered around the world, but in its memory is a single, complete vessel.*

The *fault line* edition of Edmund de Waal can be purchased through Bärbel Halaus (+43 1 525 24 - 4035, baerbel.halaus@khm.at) or at the gift shop in the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Price: € 600 apiece



FAULT LINE, I-L

2016  
50 gilded porcelain  
shards from one broken  
vessel, each on a wood  
and felt plinth  
Plinth: 2 x 12 x 12 cm

## **ADOPT A MASTERPIECE**

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Did you perhaps fall in love with a particular artwork during your visit and would like to become its patron?

Your Adopt-a-Masterpiece Membership is a substantial contribution to the preservation of our artistic heritage for future generations.

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Instruments, inv. no. SAM 237

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Library, inv. no. 5500

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 1,000

### **27 MAGICAL GEMSTONE: A SERPENT AND THE INSCRIPTION »ABRAXAS«**

Collection of Greek and Roman

Antiquities, inv. no. IXb 1213

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 300

### **29 MAGICAL GEMSTONE: HARPOCRATES ON A LOTUS FLOWER AND MAGICAL INSCRIPTIONS**

Collection of Greek and Roman

Antiquities, inv. no. IXb 1194

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 300

### **32 BEZOAR-GOBLET**

Kunstkammer, inv. no. KK 3259

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 1,200

### **36–39 RED CORALS**

Ambras, inv. nos. PA 972, PA 985,

PA 990, PA 995

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 500 apiece

### **40 BLACK CORAL**

Ambras, inv. no. PA 966

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 500

### **45 DEVIL IN A GLASS**

Kunstkammer, inv. no. KK 6211

(Ambras Castle)

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 800

### **57 RELIQUARY OF SAINT STANISLAUS**

Ecclesiastical Treasury, inv. no. D 112

Adoption of the masterpiece: € 800

**LATE NIGHT**

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Join us on a fascinating night-long journey through the new exhibition by Edmund de Waal and look forward to guided tours, readings and lectures on the subject »During the Night«...

Sat 26 November, 7pm – 3am

**GUIDED TOURS**

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Thu, 7pm

Sat/Sun, 11am and 15pm

Duration: c. 60 min.

Meeting point: Entrance Hall

Fee: € 3

In German

**CURATOR'S TOURS  
WITH JASPER SHARP**

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9 November

14 December

18 January

Wednesdays, 4pm

Duration: c. 60 min.

Meeting point: Entrance Hall

**GUIDED TOUR  
LED BY ANDREAS  
ZIMMERMANN**

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*Albrecht Dürer*

Meeting point: Entrance Hall

Wed 30 November, 4pm

In German

**STUDIO**

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*Nach(t)-Bilder – Traum-Bilder*

Art class in the context of the exhibition

10, 17 and 14 November

1, 8, 15 and 22 December

Thursdays, 6pm – 8.30pm

In German

Costs: € 210 (incl. material)

**CHILDREN'S  
WORKSHOP**

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*Nacht-Gestalten – Eine bunte Welt im Dunkeln*

Age: 6 – 12 years

23 and 30 October

13 and 27 November

4 and 18 December

15 and 29 January

Sundays, 2pm – 4.30pm

In German

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Fees: children € 4, accompanying adults € 11

Material costs: € 4

Reservations:

Mon–Fri, 9am – 4pm,

+43 1 525 24 – 5202,

kunstvermittlung@khm.at

## **PRIVATE TOURS**

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Do you want to learn more about our exhibition?

Book a private tour for yourself, for your friends or for your company! Contact us: Education dept.

T +43 1 525 24 – 5202

kunstvermittlung@khm.at

## **EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**

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## **OPENING HOURS**

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11 October 2016 – 29 January 2017

Tue–Sun, 10am – 6pm

Thu, 9pm

## **GREETINGS FROM THE KUNSTHISTORI- SCHES MUSEUM**

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We will post this postcard for you to an EU address. Just drop it into the postbox in the museum shop.