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Review of 'Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond: From the Kunstkammer to the Current Museum Crisis

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Published in:
Sixteenth Century Journal

DOI:
10.1086/731176

2024

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Haidenthaller, Y. (2024). Review of 'Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond: From the Kunstkammer to the Current Museum Crisis. *Sixteenth Century Journal*, *55*(1-2), 380-382. https://doi.org/10.1086/731176

Total number of authors:
1

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Download date: 11. Nov. 2026

his estate once stood, Wunder effectively reconstructs the social reality of his time (194–95).

Wunder's work is restricted to Madrid and consistent with the individual tastes of nobility. It self-admittedly elides the reception of fashion trends in Spain's colonies (209). Nonetheless, it contains broad-reaching implications that will benefit social historians, art and theater historians, and fashion scholars of early modern Europe and Latin America. For example, Wunder's demonstration that *relaciones* contain mimetic descriptions may shed light on fashion research in the Andes that is so heavily reliant upon information reported in these records. Additionally, her emphasis on the adherence to royal sumptuary ordinances and materials sourced to comply with or circumvent these ordinances will help fashion historians of Latin America and the Philippines to determine subtle forms of resistance to colonial proclamations from the metropolis. Most importantly, this book enriches a growing body of art historical scholarship to establish that textiles cannot remain inconsequential to the discipline. They are not peripheral, specialized, or niche: all art historians must be attuned to textiles' sheer importance within their respective cultural milieu.

Colonial Objects in Early Modern Sweden and Beyond: From the Kunstkammer to the Current Museum Crisis. Mårten Snickare.
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. 216 pp. €117.00. ISBN 978-946372806-5.

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During the last decades and, particularly in the previous years, the discussions concerning colonial legacies and the display of forcefully retrieved artworks in the grand museums of the Western world have been omnipresent. Who owns these objects, and whose story do they tell? Here Snickare's *Colonial Objects* provides a fitting contribution to the current queries. According to Snickare, colonial practices are shaped by objects as much as writings. He argues that objects, such as the tomahawk strikingly displayed against a green background on the book cover, can play an essential part in reenvisioning the Western museum, and this reviewer is inclined to agree.

The book is divided into three parts, organized into eight chapters, and the first two parts include thorough introductory chapters that give the theoretical background to Snickare's analysis. All chapters can be read individually, yet they work better as a whole since the author pursues a chronological and thematical approach while following the colonial objects from their start to their current places in Swedish museums. Based on sources like letters, court records, and inventories, Snickare traces the lives of a tomahawk from Nova Suecia on the Delaware River in America, or a Sámi drum, a *givrie*, from the seventeenth century to today. A reader might wonder

why Sweden would be a fitting case study to examine colonial practices and objects but is quickly convinced as Snickare points out early modern Sweden's wishes to exploit the riches of the colonized lands like other kingdoms did. In fact, the colonial encounters are particularly worth reviewing because Sweden's colonial legacy is often considered nonexistent or hushed.

In the first part, Snickare departs from the colonial endeavours of mid-seventeenth century Swedish monarchy and discusses how and under which circumstances colonial objects found their way to the Kunstkammer. The theoretical discussion starts with the role of the Kunstkammer as a prototype of our museums. It represented the microcosmos of the world that tested the borders of reality and imagination. Like museums today, the Kunstkammer encapsulated the desire for collecting and knowledge. The following chapter touches on the extensive collections of Queen Christina and Sweden's global interest and curiosity towards unknown parts of the world. She received a stone pipe that was meant to demonstrate the artistic skill of the Indigenous craft persons. A gift for the queen was not to be something that represented America but something unusual and unique. The next chapter examines the colonial views dominant at court during the time of dowager Queen Hedwig Eleonora. Snickare narrates how the dowager and courtiers dressed up as folks from different parts of the world while colonial objects, people and animals, were used as props during the festivities. This chapter thoroughly points out the blurred lines between the court culture of collecting and colonialism. Snickare ends the first part with the Kunstkammer of scholar Johannes Schefferus, elaborating on the scholarly attention given to Sámi objects. Schefferus's Kunstkammer and his text *Lapponia* summarize the wish to understand and examine all that was different and colonial practices in early modern Sweden.

In the second part, Snickare shifts the focus from the Kunstkammer and royal collections to colonial objects in time and how they have been exhibited in Swedish museums. The introductory theoretical discussion is set on agency and object itineraries. Snickare draws on concepts of agency and material culture, established theories that have broadened our understanding of objects. It leads the reader to the next chapter and back to the tomahawk that sparked his interest in the first place. He starts by thoroughly describing the object and continues its story, from having initially been gifted as a souvenir from a colonizer to his Swedish patron, moving to the royal armory and ending up in the Museum of Ethnography. The reader is presented with the voices of seventeenth century colonizers who underline the flaws of the colonized while simultaneously pointing out the beautiful things that the people produce. Snickare further ponders how we encounter the object and how the display determines our gaze and understanding. In its museum display case, the tomahawk is given little opportunity to tell its story or say anything about its origin and who made it. The following chapter has a similar approach but focuses on a Sámi drum, a goavddis, and its journey to Nordiska Museet and the various exhibitions it has been a part of. The goavddis has been exhibited as a foreign object, something wild and strange and mysterious, and has been shown as a specimen—one of a type. Snickare

touches on the difficulty of exhibiting material and visual objects designed to be used, played like the goavddis. How ought we experience a drum in a display case, detached from its original purpose, a drum that we can't hear? In the exhibitions, the dominant voice of the Swedish colonizers stifles the voices of colonized and the displayed objects; however, the colonial objects might tell us more than we could guess at first sight.

In the third part, Snickare summarizes his conclusions by discussing colonial objects' past, present, and future. He challenges previous claims of the dichotomy and hierarchy of Western art and non-Western cultural objects. Why is a Raphael altarpiece considered art and a Sámi drum perceived as a cultural object when both originated and experienced within a religious context? Snickare stresses the importance of reevaluating our conceptions of art. He elaborates his argument by touching on exhibitions in the Bode Museum in Berlin or the Biennale in Venice that juxtapose and highlight the possible relationships between Western and colonial objects. The third part ties together the problematics and epistemological plurality of understanding the colonial past. Thereby, Snickare lifts the gaze from the ethnological context to a broader art historical discourse. Snickare urges us to approach colonial objects nonhierarchically and openly, even with playfulness, like the Kunstkammer. The Kunstkammer, Snickare argues, could aid in dissecting and working with the legacy of colonialism as an integral part of the development of the museum and the traditions of exhibiting and displaying things. Hence, this book should be read not only by those interested in Kunstkammer and colonial objects or early modern scholars but also by students of museum studies and curators who wish to get a nuanced understanding of how and why these colonial objects are displayed in Western museums.

Colonial Objects is well-founded and thoughtful in its attention to the objects whose stories it entangles. It points to an essential discussion within early modern art history. Snickare's insightful analysis of an extensive array of written sources and objects provides a fresh view of the Kunstkammer and debate on colonial objects within Western museum traditions. The analysis is methodological and theoretically thorough, although his concern to enforce clarity sometimes appears overmuch. The aim resurfaces steadily in slightly different wordings, but it is a minor concern given the book's otherwise clear structure. Overall, *Colonial Objects* offers dense and tangible case studies of colonial objects, which synthesizes Sweden's colonial history in an approachable manner. Snickare ends his introduction with the hope that his study will contribute to opening up a space where more voices will be heard than those of the colonizers and collectors. Thus, the next step would be to widen the scope. Perhaps it is time to write such a book with a Sámi scholar.