A Picture of a Collection – A Collection in a Picture

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- Archiwum wystaw czasowych

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12 December 2023 – **3 March** 2024

Gallery of Masterpieces

An exhibition of several works of European art created in the 17th century, focusing on various aspects of period-specific collections and the very notion of collecting.

In the 17th century, all things rare and peculiar were arousing a lot of interest. It was then that art collections known as *kunstkammers* and cabinets of curiosities referred to as *wunderkammers* were created. 17th century collections focused primarily on natural artefacts, works of art, scientific apparatuses and various exotic items. Such collections were meant to reflect the state of knowledge prevailing at the time and served as a smaller-scale representation of the universe – they were a microcosm in their own right.

The passion for collecting and for science was a source of inspiration for art-related phenomena. A new genre of still life paintings emerged, depicting close-up views of artwork collections and curiosities. Such works were known as cabinet paintings or *kunstkammers*. Another painting genre that originated at the time focused on scientific and natural curiosities, or on exotic shells only.

Contemporary art collections, cabinets of curiosities and libraries created at royal and princely courts, in the homes of burghers, humanists, scholars and artists were an essential part of the cultural landscape of the time. In this context, it is not surprising that they have also become the subject of paintings.

The works on display come from the collections of the Royal Castle in Warsaw - Museum, the National Museum in Warsaw, the National Museum in Kraków and the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Art Museum in Kyiv.

Exhibition curator: **Magdalena Białonowska, PhD**

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