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DISSERTATION 2019 / ABSTRACT English

KUNSTKAMMER AND NATURALIENKABINETT

THE COLLECTION OF THE CISTERCIAN ABBEY NEUKLOSTER IN WIENER NEUSTADT HISTORY, COLLECTION ITEMS AND PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

Summary:

Richly ornamental art cabinet objects, minerals and shells bear witness today to the collecting activities in Neukloster Abbey, Wiener Neustadt, in the eighteenth century. The holdings were completely unknown to the public and experts until a short time ago. From 2013 to 2018 the Vienna University of Applied Arts initiated a collection care programme that led to the setting up of an exhibition and new depots/storages. This thesis ties in directly with the practical project. It is devoted to detailed research of the Neukloster Abbey collection and to the analysis and evaluation of conservation strategies. It characterises the individual holdings – first and foremost the art cabinet and the naturalia cabinet – and describes representative objects in a catalogue. In order to gain an in-depth view into the contemporary eighteenth-century context, it compares the Neukloster collection with that of the Habsburgs in Vienna and of other monasteries and ecclesiastical organisations, and discusses the concept and character of Kunst und Wunderkammer – art and curiosity cabinets. Finally, the part of the dissertation devoted to the scientific aspects of conservation focuses on preservation – the “theory of practice”; in the context of a conservational collection survey and risk assessment analysis, it examines the state of the collection before and after the implementation of the collection care project and evaluates what influence the implemented measures have on the probability of damage and losses. The thesis documents and critically reviews the individual steps of preventive conservation and collection care – for instance inventory procedures, the set-up of new depots, the lighting, and so on. Thus this thesis is on one hand a first-time art-historical investigation into the Neukloster collection, on the other, a model analysis of current strategies of preservation.