



# **The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quiccheberg's Inscriptiões, 1565 (Texts & Documents)**

*Samuel Quiccheberg*

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Samuel Quiccheberg

Samuel Quiccheberg's *Inscriptioes*, first published in Latin in 1565, is an ambitious effort to demonstrate the pragmatic value of curiosity cabinets, or *Wunderkammern*, to princely collectors in sixteenth-century Europe and, by so doing, inspire them to develop their own such collections. Quiccheberg shows how the assembly and display of physical objects offered nobles a powerful means to expand visual knowledge, allowing them to incorporate empirical and artisanal expertise into the realm of the written word. But in mapping out the collectability of the material world, Quiccheberg did far more than create a taxonomy. Rather, he demonstrated how organizing objects made their knowledge more accessible; how objects, when juxtaposed or grouped, could tell a story; and how such strategies could enhance the value of any single object.

Quiccheberg's descriptions of early modern collections provide both a point of origin for today's museums and an implicit critique of their aims, asserting the fundamental research and scholarly value of collections: collections are to be used, not merely viewed. *The First Treatise on Museums* makes Quiccheberg's now rare publication available in an English translation. Complementing the translation are a critical introduction by Mark A. Meadow and a preface by Bruce Robertson.

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