

The morphology of Art

Collecting can be a way of human enquiry, a way of formulating questions and a method of doing research. In early human history collecting food was a way of survival based on the knowledge of edible and poisonous plants.

In order to focus on the subject of collecting as a way of enquiry we look through the eyes of two different tribes - scientists and artists. They are both collectors: of data, of facts, of objects or even of situations. Do scientists and artists build their collections in different ways and are there similarities in their specific ways of collecting and arriving at answers?

In science data are collected, categorized, analyzed and interpreted in a strict system, i.e. statistics, in order to answer questions and to add to a specific body of knowledge, for example quantum physics or medicine. How do artists collect material for their work in order to do research with the aim to make visual works of art? Do they collect on intuition only or by setting a specific framework or even a special state of mind? How do both professions make choices about what to keep and what to throw away?

However - in order to build a meaningful collection and to formulate questions there has to be a background of knowledge or even a system. In natural sciences *morphology*, i.e. the study of forms, can be used as a grid to bring order into a collection. Charles Darwin who found the answer to *the origin of species* was the ultimate collector of forms. He constructed a system in which to organize, categorize and analyze his huge collection of data about life forms in order to arrive at a conclusion about the evolution of life on earth. Without a consistently built *morphology* he would have drowned in his data.

How do artists work and build grids or systems for their collections? Does this comparative way of looking at collecting by artists and scientists by employing the idea of *morphology* shed new light and insights on artistic works?

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