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## **Abstract**

Transformation and Imitation – Aspects of Materiality in the Collection of Frederik III of Denmark (working title)

In my dissertation, I plan to explore collections assembled during the reign of the Danish king Frederik III (1609–1670, r. 1648–1670). On a broader level, I am interested in questions concerning the interrelationship between collecting activities, dynastic ambitions, cross-cultural trade, and aspects of materiality. I will re-examine published inventories of the Royal Danish *Kunstkammer* to trace the specific interest of Frederik who spent his youth travelling Europe. Particular interest will be given to objects and artefacts collected during his reign as they are understood as transmitters of values and sovereignty.

So far, I have selected three distinctive object groups from the Royal Danish *Kunstkammer*: First, I will examine Frederik's interest in natural sciences based on an ivory skeleton which was produced by the keeper of the *Kunstkammer* Niel Gyntelberg. This object will be understood as an artefact oscillating between artistic virtuosity and medical knowledge as well as an imitation of human bone. Second, I focus on the international exchange of objects which will be shown through the case of a Japanese bronze mirror, which is already listed in the first inventory of the *Kunstkammer* of 1674. This object not only highlights Frederik's interests in exotic objects but will be used as well to show the potential of transformation inscribed into the object. This will be emphasised through the case of the wall decoration of Frederik's Audience Chamber at Rosenborg Castle which was based on the mirrors ornamentation and material. I will thus examine this peculiar imitation of the mirror as well as the artistic knowledge needed for the manufactural process of the wall decoration. In the third case study, attention will be given to the trompe l'oeil paintings by Cornelis Gijsbrechts (1630–1683) a renowned painter who was invited to Copenhagen by the king in 1668. Deceiving the eyes of the beholder the paintings give the illusion of real objects but deny their materiality as well as the traces of their production. In his paintings Gijsbrechts refers consciously to Frederik's *Kunstkammer* when he uses existing objects from the

collection transforming them into an artistic representation created by the material of oil painting and the personal virtuosity of the artist.

Focusing on these three case studies the project aims at shedding new light on the Royal Danish *Kunstkammer* with a specific focus on materials and materiality. I want to investigate the distinctive usage of said materials, the values and meanings connected with them as well as aspects of imitation, transformation, and translation. Furthermore, sensory and emotional qualities of these materials will be examined. In conceptualising the collection as a *site* with a distinctive *site specificity* (i.e. quality), the objects will receive a new analysis stipulated by current research. Situated within an interdisciplinary research project the dissertation aims at connecting art historical, historiographical, anthropological, and sociological methods and concepts to provide a new insight on the Royal Danish *Kunstkammer* under the reign of Frederik III.