

at the History of Science Museum
Key Stage 3/4

Philosopher's
cabinet



Teachers' Info

Before your visit

Look at two websites:

History of Science Museum's website - www.mhs.ox.ac.uk
it contains an object data base, downloadable trails, basic and technical information and links.

The Artefact website - www.museums.ox.ac.uk/artefact is a customized site for art students with many images.

Be prepared for an introduction:

Your museum introduction will give valuable background information on the Museum and its collection.

Students' Info

During your visit

A01: Recording Observations, Experiences and Ideas.

The sample sketchbook page with this sheet can be photocopied and will help students in the process of recording their own observations and ideas while in the Museum.

A02: Evaluating artefacts, understanding their contexts.

Students can collect information to annotate their work by looking at object labels, talking to staff and collecting printed guides and postcards.

After your visit



A03 Developing and exploring ideas.

During the 17th Century experimental cabinets were used to demonstrate new discoveries such as the power of electricity or magnetism, to demonstrate a pulley system or explore the wonders of the microscopes. Such toys would be greeted with amazement. Working as a group pupils could design and make their own cabinet filled with such wonders.

A04 Making connections with the work of others.

Pupils can start searching - Jacques Vaucanson's Digesting Duck of 1793, or The Natural Philosopher's Cabinet www.cabinetmagazine.org/issue/19, or Cabaret of Mechanical Theatre.

Extra Info

Art

@

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS
NATURAL HISTORY ASHMOLEAN
PITT RIVERS HISTORY OF SCIENCE

at the History of Science Museum

Philosopher's cabinet

Did You Know?

DID YOU KNOW?
The word 'scientist' was not really used until the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of research laboratories. Before then, the sciences were considered to be different branches of philosophy. Those who studied the natural world around us were called 'natural philosophers'.



DID YOU KNOW?
In the past a common treatment for illness was to bleed a patient. Artificial leeches like little suction pumps were often used to do this, but sometimes they also used real leeches.



DID YOU KNOW?
The famous American statesman Benjamin Franklin was fascinated by natural philosophy and was the first to discover that lightning was a form of electricity. He invented the life-saving lightning conductor.



DID YOU KNOW?
The old fashioned measurement, the inch was originally based on the width of an average man's thumb. By the nineteenth century there were at least sixteen variations of the inch across different countries!



Teachers' Info

Students' Info

Extra Info

Art

@

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS
NATURAL HISTORY ASHMOLEAN
PITT RIVERS HISTORY OF SCIENCE

at the History of Science Museum

Art activity

Philosopher's cabinet

START

Early scientists were sometimes called 'natural philosophers' or 'experimental philosophers'. Some of them collected instruments which they kept in cabinets for display. This activity for KS3/4 is designed to start you making your own philosopher's cabinet. Use the museum map and example sketchbook, follow the four steps and keep to time.

STEP 1

Exploring and selecting. Time: 10 mins.

Using the map find some examples of instruments which could be included in your philosopher's cabinet. You might choose devices which show the power of electricity or magnetism, or they might have been used in early medical experiments and surgery.



STEP 2

Drawing and Recording. Time 30 mins.

Using pencils and pens make drawings of your chosen devices. Notice the fine detail in some pieces such as the brass microscopes, or the simple paper and wire used in the electrical instruments. Try using white drawing ink on black paper or coloured pencils.



STEP 3

Collecting a range of information. Time 15 mins.

Make notes from the object labels about the instruments; how they work, what size they are and what material they are made from. Put this information in your sketchbook in an attractive way.



STEP 4

Record your own ideas and experiences. Time 10 mins.

Make notes of any films or books where unusual scientific devices have been used, such as "The Philosopher's Stone" or "The Golden Compass". Next think of any inventions you have ever dreamed up or seen, and finally make a quick note of these.

Teachers' Info

Students' Info

Extra Info

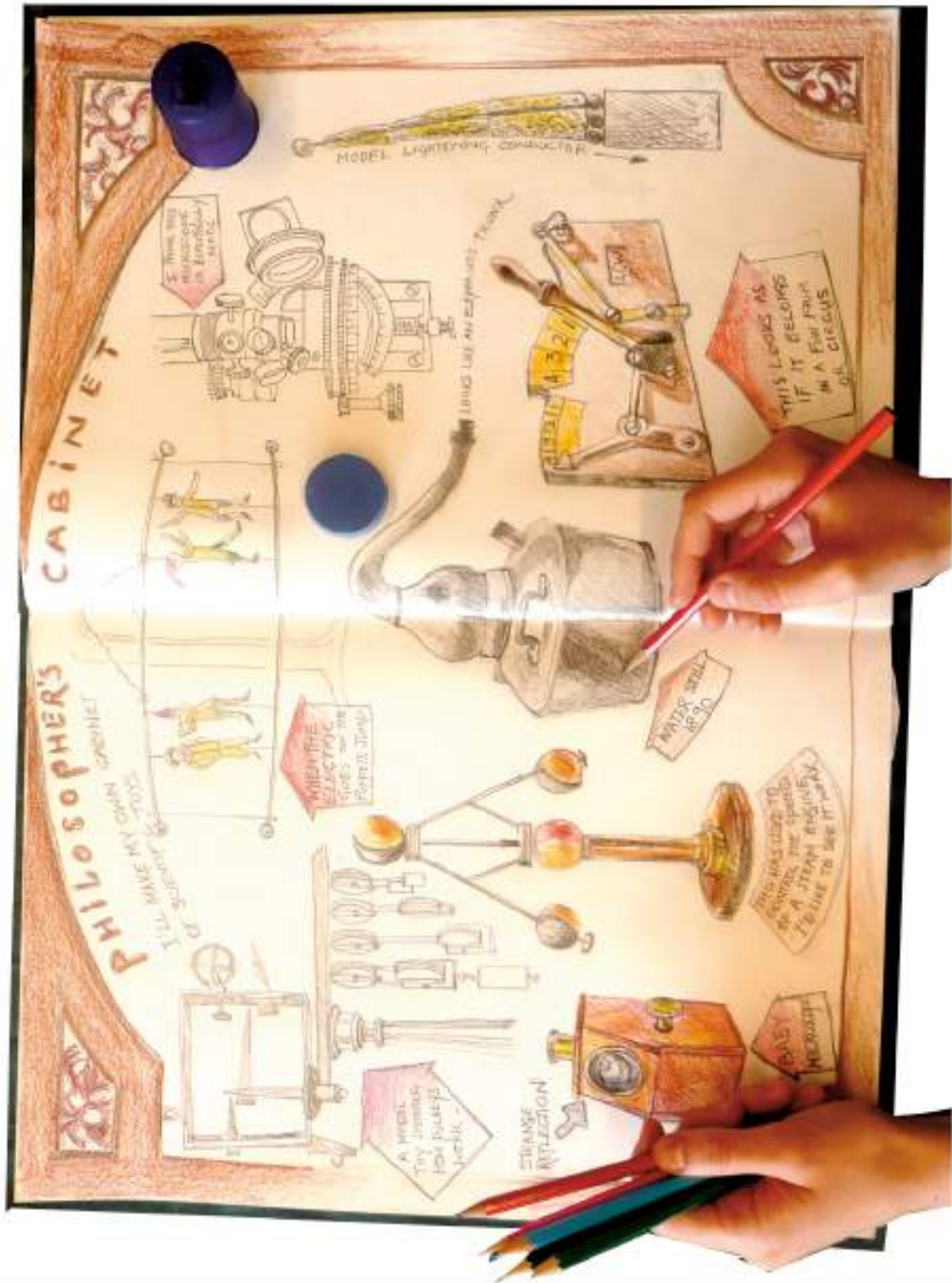
Art

@

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS
NATURAL HISTORY ASHMOLEAN
PITT RIVERS HISTORY OF SCIENCE

philosopher's cabinet

Example sketchbook



Teachers' Info

Students' Info

Extra Info

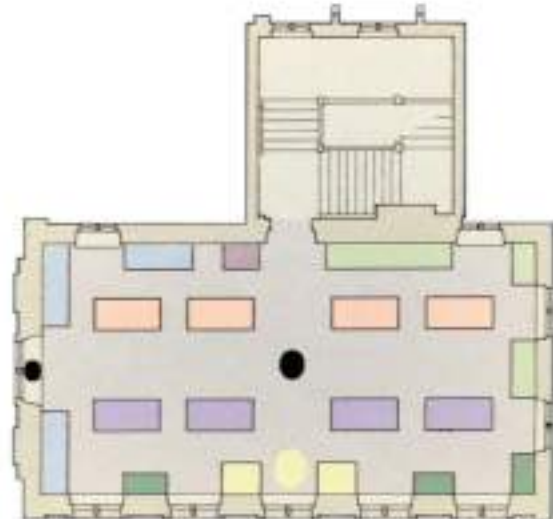
Art

@

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS
NATURAL HISTORY ASHMOLEAN
PITT RIVERS HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Philosopher's cabinet

Map of the History of Science Museum

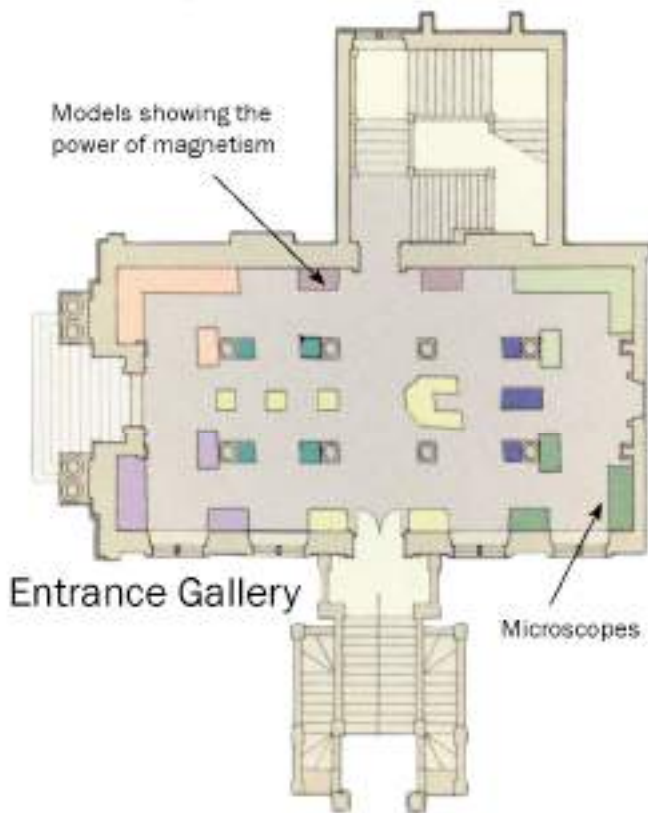


Upper Gallery

Teachers' Info

Students' Info

Models showing the power of magnetism



Entrance Gallery

Microscopes

Table-top models of planetariums and globes

Early medical equipment



Basement Gallery

Extra Info



Models showing lightning conductors and electricity

Apparatus for mechanical demonstrations

Art

@

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS
NATURAL HISTORY ASHMOLEAN
PITT RIVERS HISTORY OF SCIENCE