

Ali&Cia's Cabinet of Rarities, Curiosities and Exotica

## Canary Island Beaches as a Cabinet of Curiosities

*“Ratio perfecta. Tranquillitas animi”*

Justus Lipsius, Antwerp 1580 – 1590

*“Prisca Sapienta”*

Athanasius Kircher, 1602- 1608

We at Ali&Cia suffer from Archive Fever.

The French philosophers Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida analysed the approach of those who, like Ali&Cia, admire the regularities and exceptions that our complex environment exhibits and strive to apply the art of taxonomy, a pursuit that results in archives replete with series, categories, key words and specimens.

The coordinates of the Archive Fever patient transcend the classical categories of the so-called *Big Picture*. Thus has been named the official scientific paradigm of Aristotelian roots cemented in the methods of natural science adopted by Newton and those of the Enlightenment, going back to the second half of the 17th century.

There are always those who, attracted by the diversity struggling inside the asphyxiating corset of pure, hard rationalism, endeavour to incorporate into the scientific paradigm that which cannot be measured, counted, explained or predicted. They put understanding before all else.

The current validation of formerly vilified cognitive registers such as enthusiasm and amazement, along with the impetus to identify and endow with meaning all surrounding minutiae, revitalises the supposedly irrational approach of 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque science.

Welcome are the Neo-Platonist itineraries, hermetic, magical and mystical. Necessary are the atypical markers that allow us to furnish the *Ars Memorativa*. Essential are the microcosms populated by enigmatic, emblematic, marginal, exotic beings.

To sum up, let's return to Cabinets of Curiosities in which the universe, macrocosm, is reflected as microcosm. They are theatres of the memory of all that inhabits the three classical Realms of scientific observation: *Mineralia*, *Vegetalia* and *Animalia*, not to forget *Artificialia*, the products of the feverish, hyperactive minds and hands of humankind.

Let's restore the exuberant and exaggerated chambers of the courts, palaces and institutions of European culture where from the dawn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century collectors exhibited found objects and artefacts. They turned from encyclopaedism to set up suites of excessive exoticism.

The social function of these sites of the synergy of wonder reflected the complexity of their historical moment. Collectors attracted the attention of patrons and the powerful in showing them the product of their curiosity applied to the discovery of that which is classifiable and exceptional. At the same time, in offering and exhibiting their support and wealth, patrons made a show of their standing and strength. In this manner not only did cabinets of curiosities, the origin of the first museums, proliferate, but also botanical gardens, anatomical theatres and other places that lent themselves to the advance of systematised knowledge.

Brevity doesn't allow us to mention here some of the historical Cabinets that have existed. Instead, we offer you in this remarkable space of the Ermita in Tias, here on the island of Lanzarote, the rarities and curiosities that represent, metaphorically, the circumstantial encounters between locals, tourists and immigrants in the extraordinary context of the beaches of the Canary Islands.

You, our visitors, constitute the maximum rarity of all. Thank you for your surprise.

Ali&Cia, Lanzarote, October 2007

# Taxonomy of Ali&Cia's Cabinet of Curiosities

*Inspired by the writing of the philosopher Porphyry and by the German treatise writers  
Samuel Quiccheberg (1529-1567) and Athanasius Kircher ((1602- 1608)*

## Naturalia vs Artificialia

Mineralia

Flora

Fauna

Nature Recreated

Nature Reinvented

Metaphors

Symbols

Memorabilia

Souvenirs

Topicalia

Surrealia

Paraphernalia