

FDegEcCons Module Code: EC041

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The Importance of Biodiversity for Inspiration

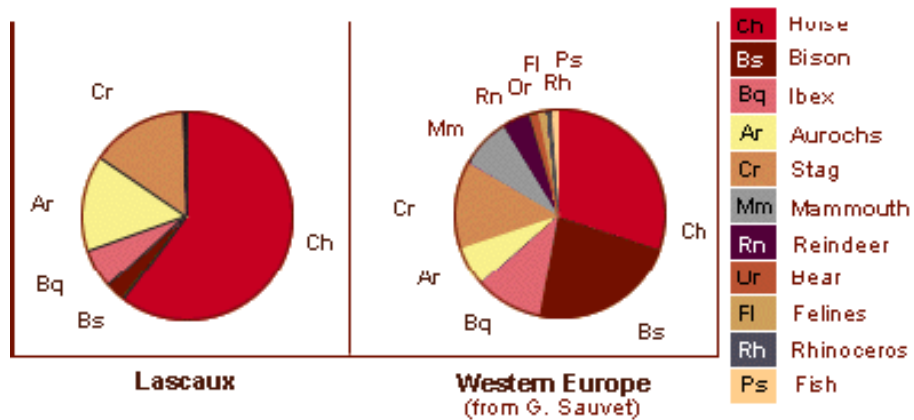
This collection is part of a tradition that dates back at least to the Renaissance, when, spurred on by the great voyagers and navigators, collectors created curio rooms in which fauna, flora, minerals, fossils, skulls, shells, and insects were classified and arranged. (Kerchache *et al*, 2000)



(jfroud.org.uk/museums/pantry, 2008)

Man’s early ancestors were inspired to depict useful or frightening animals

- see French cave paintings at Lascaux, near Montignac, about 17,000 years ago. (Culture Ministry, 2008)



The diversity of life was not reflected in the art of this period, although they were evidently inspired by the horse.

Potatoes - Master or Servant? –

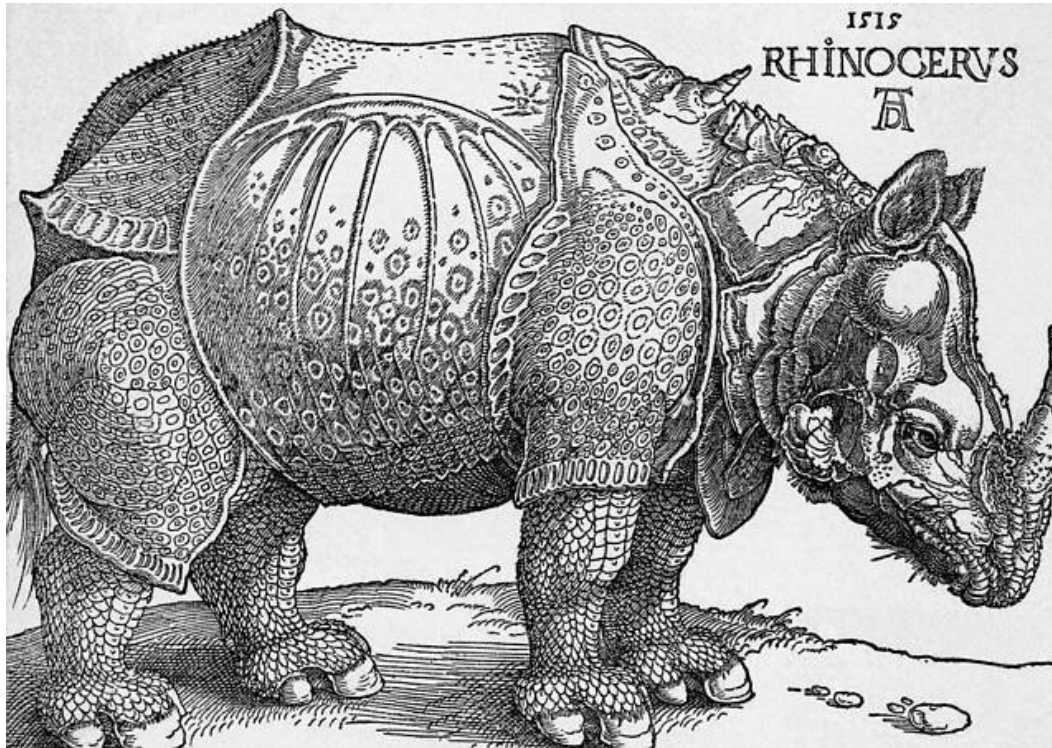


Chimu and Inca pottery, found in Peru depicts early potatoes, (200-800 AD), with human features, disfigured by ritual sacrifice.(Salaman, 1945)

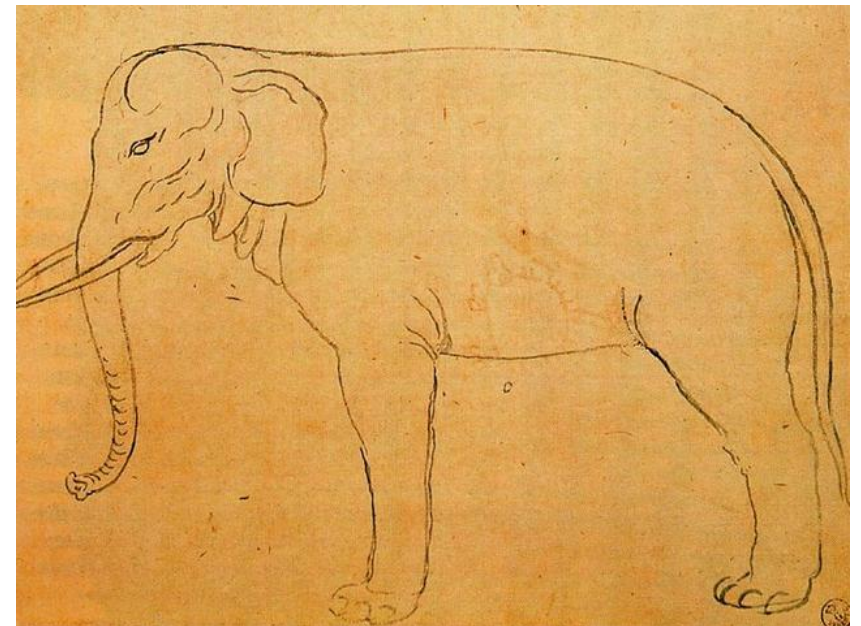
Dependence on a single, delicate staple food plant resulted in extremes of cultural behaviour.



Durer's Rhinoceros – 1515 (British Museum, 2006) was a major marketing inspiration for the new printing industry of the time. Later Arcimboldo, (1527-1593), and others depicted animals “lost” in Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire, as they were rediscovered in the Renaissance.



Elephant 1570 (Kriegeskorte, 1987)



Arcimboldo, like Leonardo da Vinci before him, was inspired by all life- see his many depictions of people as plants, and other life forms.

(Kriegeskorte, 1987)



(Kriegeskorte, 1987)

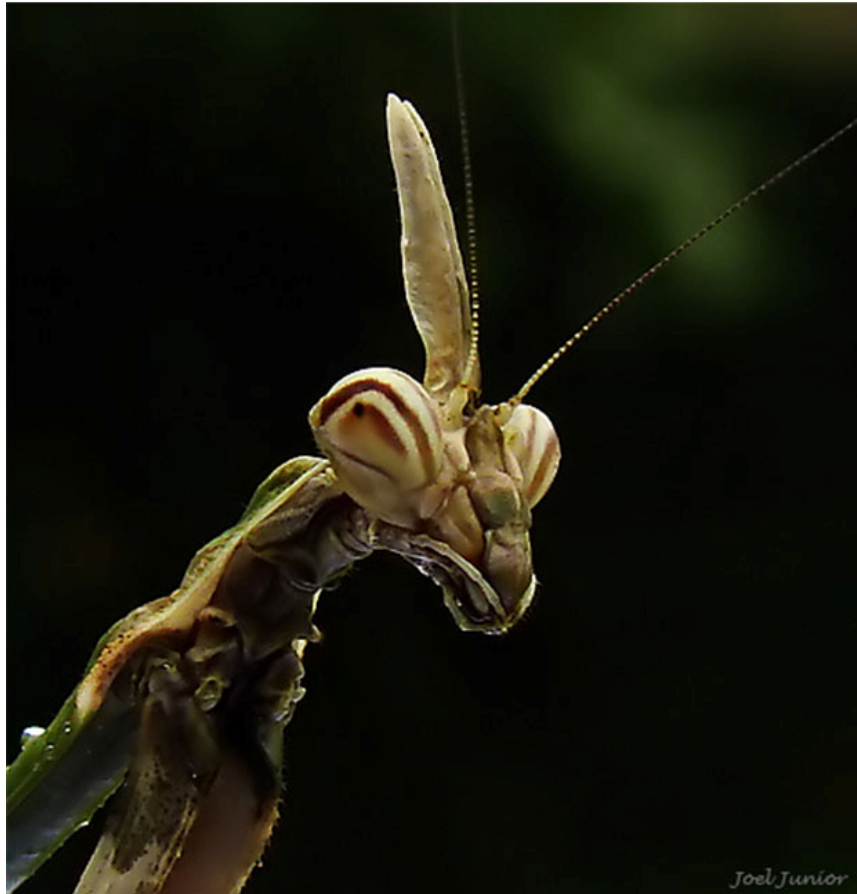


(Kriegeskorte, 1987)

Count the species, if you think you can!

That sheep looks hungry!





Arthropods

can
inspire!

Praying Mantis

Alien III.



At the entry of the Museum HR Giger: Alien III. Photo: © Carmen Scheifele Giger

German designer Till Nowak has created a masterpiece “Salad”, a fantastic digital image of Alien made out of vegetables.

It is his tribute to HR Giger and Giuseppe

Arcimboldo

(Laughing Squid, 2007).



Victorians such as Joseph Hooker, plundered the world for orchids and other plants, while lamenting “the loss of habitat to the axe and the plough”. Plant, bird and insect collectors were often also artists (Mabey, 1988).



Many museums only show botanical works on request, and rarely allow browsing.

Until this year, when the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art was opened at Kew, there was no London (or other!) gallery where both old and new botanical paintings could be easily viewed.

As Prof. Hopper, the Director, said, “Through art ... people will understand our dependence upon plant life.” (Sherwood, 2008)

Sunflower dissection (Original, 2008)

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) were introduced to Europe by the early 17th Century, and have been a popular and inspiring motif in art ever since.

(Sherwood, 2008)



Francesca Anderson, 1946, Washington

Most direct inspiration tends to arise from the human aspect of biodiversity -

“Aren’t they like us!”

(Blossfeldt, 1908)



Inspiration is expressed in so many ways -

Literature and Poetry

Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner – 1797-8 – tells how our fate may depend on the life of a sea-bird – a superstition or an allegory? "*For all averred, I had killed the bird / That made the breeze to blow.*" (Coleridge, 1798).

Goethe – German poet was an inspired botanic explorer and illustrator in the early 19th Century (Backyard Nature, 2008).

Edward Lear, a poet famous for nonsense limericks,
was a prolific illustrator of birds. (ANSP, 2008)



What is not discussed here.

Australian Aboriginal X-ray paintings,

Children's book illustrators,

Dance – primitive emulation of animals?

Music – emulating birds?

In conclusion

As Claude Levi-Strauss rightly observed:

"A bird, a beetle, a butterfly invite the same rapt contemplation that we reserve for a Tintoretto or a Rembrandt". (Kerchache *et al*, 2000)

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