

A brief history of the art museum

- the word museum comes from the nine muses
 - the museion of ancient alexandria
 - a university with a library of important things
- there were places in ancient rome where some things were exhibited

Wunderkammern

- cabinets of wonders
- displays that people would have in their homes
- sometimes a literal cabinet, sometimes a room
 - full of different treasures and things from around the world
- usually owned privately, only really a thing that rich people did
 - shown off to their friends and family
- seen as a reflection of the universe

the british museum and the enlightenment

- the enlightenment
 - a movement aimed to learn more about the world
 - a guide to modern science
 - proving things based on testing and evidence
 - led by the colonizing europeans
- the british museum began as a gift from sir hans sloane
 - with things from when he was a doctor in the west indian colonies, also some things that he got from other explorers
- the museum was built to resemble a classical temple, which were places of protection and prestige
 - it had an image of britannia, a symbol of the british empire
 - this image showed who controlled the objects inside the museum
- it was like a giant wunderkammer
 - had many obscure objects along with many normal ones

The rise of museums

- the enlightenment brought museums that were dedicated to art
 - the calitoline (rome)
 - the louvre (paris)
 - the alte pinakothek (munich)
- there were also botanical gardens, plant museums
- zoological gardens, animal museums
- eventually museums had historical objects
 - they were laid out in order, to tell a story of progress over time
 - subdivided by nation or artist
 - this also often led to some art forms being considered more primitive than what european people were used to

The “white cube”

- in the US, museums weren't really a thing until the late 19th century
- the white cube refers to an all white room with art pieces in it
 - this was meant to remove as much distraction as possible
 - "to direct viewers toward a pure experience of the artwork"
- US museums replicated classical European museums
- the white cube approach might do more harm than good
- John Cotton Dana
 - rejected the made-to-order museum
 - museums that replicated classical European museums
 - believed that local museums should serve the local communities
 - with their own art from local artists
 - and their cultures
 - many art museums today are working in this way