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Animal Bodies between Wonder and Natural History: Taxidermy in the Cabinet and Menagerie of Stadholder Willem V (1748–1806)

Abstract

How did taxidermy develop, and how was it taught before the appearance of nineteenth-century handbooks on the subject? What role did taxidermy play in early natural history collections? How were taxidermy and taxidermists valued? What is significant about the “life” of commodified dead animal bodies? This article explores the answers to these questions. It takes a contemporary taxidermy course and two eighteenth-century taxidermized monkeys as its starting point, arguing that preserved animal bodies were an integral part of a much larger, complex early modern system of research and entertainment, in which taxidermic practices played an important role, but where the taxidermist, however necessary and appreciated, remained an anonymous craftsman. Moreover, the author demonstrates that in the Stadholderly cabinet, taxidermic practices had to be fitted into a complex whole of analysis, preservation, comparison, and display—interests which sometimes conflicted and had to be carefully balanced. Finally, it is shown that the monkey specimens are an excellent example of how practical knowledge traveled without leaving many textual traces and how the preservation of animal bodies furthered natural historical research.

In the spring of 2015, I attended a three-day taxidermy workshop.¹ Working with historical anatomical and natural history collections as a researcher, I had become increasingly curious about the hands-on skills underlying the objects I studied. In preparation for the workshop, I had studied a number of historical—mostly nineteenth-century—books on taxidermy, and once the workshop started, I soon came to the conclusion that basic taxidermic techniques had not changed much since the early nineteenth century. Although new techniques such as skin replacement taxidermy have been developed more recently, the basic skills and techniques taught in a beginner’s taxidermy class today are not significantly different than they were around 1800. The most important

Journal of Social History vol. 52 no. 4 (2019), pp. 1110–1131
doi:10.1093/jsh/shz012

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Figure 1. Skinning a squirrel in taxidermy class, spring 2015. (Author's photograph.)

innovation is that we no longer use arsenic to preserve the skin; it has been replaced with less poisonous chemicals. Even for a historian who is used to taking historical objects and techniques as a starting point for historical research, this workshop was an eye-opener in terms of how somatic experience, aesthetic considerations, and knowledge of nature come together in taxidermy. Taxidermy is hands-on; it is a craft—you feel and smell flesh, skin, bone, muscle, innards; you handle scalpels and pins; you cut, strip, scrape, clean, wash, and sew; you create a “body” from iron wire, straw, and string; you use clay, cotton, and glass eyes to model. Taxidermy is bloody, and occasionally messy (try removing a squirrel’s brain without damaging its skull), but it also requires you to look at both living and dead animal bodies carefully and extensively in order to mount a specimen in a life-like manner.

The workshop, taught without printed material and without attention to the historical origins of the practice, thus raised a lot of new questions for me. How had taxidermy developed, and how was it taught before the appearance of the nineteenth-century handbooks I had found? What role did taxidermy play in early natural history collections? How were taxidermy and taxidermists valued? What is significant about the “life” of commodified animal bodies?

Nowadays, taxidermy is often seen as an interior decorating quirk, the product of Victorian Orientalism and anthropomorphism. Although its popularity has increased over the past few years, relatively little attention has been paid to the origins of taxidermy as a conservation practice for natural philosophical purposes.² This lacuna should be addressed, as taxidermy played an important role in the assembling and functioning of natural history cabinets such as that of Stadholder Willem V (1748–1806), which will be the focus of this article, and thus in the production and circulation of knowledge. Moreover, studying the role of taxidermy in early modern natural history will provide us with new

insights into the role of craftspeople and into potentially conflicting interests in the realm of knowledge production.

Until the late eighteenth century, sustainable preservation of taxidermic specimens remained problematic, particularly because of insect damage. Jean-Baptiste Bécœur (1718–1777), an apothecary from Metz, was probably the inventor of an effective mixture for the dry preservation of animals, his secret ingredient being arsenic.³ The recipe was not published during his life—recipes calling for arsenic only first appeared in print after 1800—but he did share it with the taxidermists at the *Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle* in Paris. Earlier successful dry preparations of animal skin from other European countries suggest that the recipe circulated outside of France either in manuscript or orally before 1800.⁴ A number of taxidermy manuals were available in the second half of the eighteenth century, mainly aimed at explorers who wanted to bring or send specimens home.⁵ These works vividly reflect the problems taxidermists faced. René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (1688–1757), for example, published a book on the preservation of birds in 1745, which was aimed primarily at amateurs and travelers to the colonies.⁶ Unfortunately Réaumur died before he could publish a more detailed work on the preservation of animal skins as he had hoped to. Another manual, aimed at the preservation of natural historical curiosities more generally, was published by Etienne-François Turgot in 1758.⁷ However, the methods they describe are certainly no guarantee for successful taxidermy.



Figure 2. Sooty mangabey, originally from the Stadholderly collection. (Courtesy of the Musée de l'Histoire Naturelle, Paris. *Simia atys* MNHN-ZM-2005-905.)



Figure 3. Silvery gibbon, originally from the Stadholderly collection. (Courtesy of the Musée de l'Histoire Naturelle, Paris. *Simia moloch* MNHN-ZM-2005-970.)

In the period on which this article focuses, roughly between 1750 and 1820, natural historians first started to compare human and animal form systematically, as an encyclopedic enterprise, and to understand the development of life in general and the concept of species in particular. The development of the discipline as we know it now, the study of adaptive changes that animals have undergone in the course of an evolution from common ancestors, was a lengthy and complicated process.⁸ This is not the place to discuss in detail the intellectual history behind species adaptation in the nineteenth century, nor is such a discussion necessary given Niles Eldredge's recent and excellent book on the topic.⁹ I want to focus instead on the role of taxidermy in a natural history collection in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and on how preparations and descriptions of taxidermized animals influenced ideas both about collecting animal bodies and about animal anatomy.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, taxidermic techniques had developed so much that some of the results are still with us today, as these two monkeys show. These two very old stuffed simians—a sooty mangabey and a silvery gibbon—live in the storage rooms of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, among thousands of other specimens. The old monkeys raise a lot of questions. Where are they from? Who preserved them; which methods did

the taxidermist use; and how and where did they learn to do so? What was the function of the finished preparations? Did it change over time? How did they end up in Paris?

This article takes the two monkeys as a starting point to explore the role that preserved animal bodies played in the development of the study of nature and the discipline formation of zoology just before the great age of popular taxidermy, the nineteenth century. First, I will introduce the Stadholderly cabinet and its keeper, Arnout Vosmaer (1720–1799), and outline how the monkeys ended up in his care. Subsequently, I will discuss the role of taxidermists and taxidermic practices in the various functions of the cabinet. Putting the life cycle of the monkeys in the context of the cabinet and its taxidermic practices enhances our understanding of why and how such animal bodies were commodified and how their meanings were multiple and subject to change over time.

I argue that these preserved animal bodies were an integral part of a much larger, complex system of research and entertainment in which taxidermic practices played an important role but in which the taxidermist, however necessary and appreciated, remained an anonymous craftsperson. Moreover, I demonstrate that in the Stadholderly cabinet, taxidermic practices had to be fitted into a complex system of analysis, preservation, comparison, and display; interests that sometimes conflicted and had to be carefully balanced. Finally, we will see that the monkey specimens are an excellent example of how practical knowledge traveled without leaving many textual traces and of how the preservation of animal bodies furthered natural historical research.

Where the Monkeys Came from, the Stadholder's Collections, and Arnout Vosmaer

Sooty mangabeys (*Cercocebus atys*) are found in forests in what is now Senegal in a margin along the coast down to Ghana. Silvery gibbons (*Hylobates moloch*) occur exclusively on the Indonesian island Java, where they live in the rain forest. In both regions, there was a considerable presence of Dutch explorers and traders in the second half of the eighteenth century. There are no detailed accounts of the capturing of these two particular specimens. It is highly likely they were taken back to the United Provinces by traders, explorers, or diplomats in this period, since the labels indicate they resided in the collection of the Dutch Stadholder William V (1748–1806) before they came to Paris.

On November 22, 1747, the office of Stadholder (governor) of the Dutch Republic was made hereditary. When William IV, Prince of Orange, died in 1751, his infant son William V became Stadholder under the regency of his mother Anna. As with other royal dynasties, the Oranges maintained a cabinet of natural history. Around 1755, this princely cabinet contained insects, shells, and natural historical objects from the East and West Indies. In 1756, princess Anna appointed Arnout Vosmaer as the director of the cabinet. Vosmaer (1720–1799) was the son of a Rotterdam wine seller. His father died when he was fourteen, and after the death of his mother in 1749, he ended a career in commerce and devoted himself fully to the study of nature and the development of his cabinet of natural history. One of his tactics was purchasing parts of collections at auctions: he was one of the principal buyers at the auction of the

collections of the famous Amsterdam naturalist Albertus Seba (1665–1736) in 1752, where he spent a staggering 2,433 guilders, the equivalent of roughly twenty-five thousand euros today.¹⁰ Vosmaer soon developed an extensive network of collectors and wealthy patrons seeking his advice and kept meticulous records of the sales of natural history cabinets.¹¹

Notwithstanding his great network and status as a collector and advisor, it appears Vosmaer only possessed the most basic knowledge about preserving animal bodies. In 1752, he wrote a manuscript for travelers and traders about the preservation of the products of nature for collecting, apparently in the hope he would acquire more well-preserved samples of minerals, plants, and animals.¹² Two versions remain, one a draft and one an apparently finalized version, but there seems to be no direct connection to contemporary printed works on taxidermy. Neither of the books by Réaumur and Turgot on taxidermy mentioned earlier were part of Vosmaer's library at the end of his life.¹³ Vosmaer's manuscript is very brief and seems to have no connection to Réaumur's work (Turgot's book had not been published yet when Vosmaer wrote his instructions). In the third paragraph, on the preservation of quadrupeds, Vosmaer advises to preserve the animals in phials of brandy if possible, and to "subtly" take out the biggest entrails to prevent decay. For the biggest animals he advised a rather crude taxidermy method:

One can also mount the biggest and most suited species in their natural appearance; that is, stuff the skin (after the flesh has been taken out) with straw or flax, lightly dipped in tar or turpentine, after which the belly and neck can be sewed together again, and a thin iron or copper wire pierced through the legs, in this position they can be slowly dried, and done by a good hand they keep their former appearance very well.¹⁴

The draft version of the manuscript mentions the drying can be done in the sun but that a warm oven is to be preferred. Drying had long been a popular way of preserving animal bodies—a late sixteenth-century French manuscript already contains a similar recipe for "drying animals in an oven."¹⁵ Because drying causes shrinkage and obscures many details, this method was also frequently used to create "wonders" like a "dragon" made from fish skin or a "mermaid" from a monkey and a fish.¹⁶ By the second half of the eighteenth century, a divergence between lay and learned attitudes to wondrous phenomena had occurred, and people like Vosmaer and his peers were no longer interested in creating new wonders but in preserving the wonders of nature as well as possible.¹⁷ Yet although Vosmaer described a slightly more sophisticated preservation method than earlier sources, it was still problematic in a number of ways as a method for preserving the wonders of nature.

First of all, skin shrinks in the drying process, so if the stuffing is too big, the skin stretches and tears. Moreover, tar and turpentine-drenched straw or flax are anything but reliable materials for conservation and pest deterrence. Even if an amateur taxidermist managed to avoid shrinkage-related problems, pests, and decay, the "good hand" Vosmaer mentions is crucial for a successful preparation—making an anatomically correct artificial body from flax is anything but easy, as some extant taxidermy specimens prove.¹⁸ However tricky these tips for taxidermy were, Vosmaer appears to have quickly built a good



Figure 4. “Dragon” made from ray skin, ca. 1600. (UZ-4914. Utrecht University Museum. <http://www.universiteitsmuseum.nl/Collectie/Detail/UZ-4914>.)

collection and a reputation to match it. In 1754, he helped one of princess Anna’s ladies-in-waiting in furnishing her cabinet, and, as a result, was introduced to royal circles. Soon after his appointment as keeper of the Stadholder’s cabinet, Vosmaer’s own collection of around fifteen thousand pieces was added to it, a sale for which he received eight thousand guilders.¹⁹ Apart from fish, reptile, and mammal specimens in liquor, insects, minerals, sea crops, shells, medicinal simples, bird’s nests, and eggs, Vosmaer’s collection contained “a mass of stuffed birds.”²⁰ As director of the menagerie and cabinet, he had taxidermic, skeletal, and wet specimens made from animals that died there.

Once Vosmaer’s private collection had become the basis of the Stadholder’s cabinet, he continued to extend it through the purchase and exchange of specimens and by asking governors of colonial settlements for donations. Keeping and collecting animal bodies served both the curiosity of royal collectors and their visitors and the study of anatomy. Vosmaer devoted a lot of time to systematically organizing and describing the Stadholderly cabinet as well as other collections to serve both interests. The Stadholderly cabinet was situated in The Hague, while a menagerie of living animals was kept at the country house “Het Kleine Loo,” about 4.5 kilometers or an hour on foot from the cabinet. A tourist guide to the Low Countries described the estate in 1781 as follows:

It is a small estate belonging to the Prince. Here one can also see his Menagerie. It is full of rare and curious animals; but the humanity of the Prince does not allow him to conserve these malignant monsters [straight away], which wise Nature seems to have constricted to unknown deserts, but which the greed of men has extracted and taken to our climates, to multiply our evils.²¹

From 1766 onward, Vosmaer started publishing detailed and illustrated descriptions of some of the exotic animals that were kept in the cabinet and the menagerie. Between 1766 and 1787, he published thirty-one such descriptions, and in 1804, two more pieces appeared posthumously. The thirty-three descriptions were then republished in one volume in the same year, under the title

Regnum Animale.²² Only three of these pieces were devoted to simians: in 1770, Vosmaer published a piece on what he called the American spider monkey or piper; in 1776, he described a quatto or “forest devil”; and in 1778, he produced a double volume on the orangutan.²³

Unfortunately, the remaining taxidermized specimens in the collections of the *Museum de l'Histoire Naturelle*—the sooty mangabey and the silvery gibbon, those vivid representatives of Vosmaer’s culture of collecting and analysis—were not described in the *Regnum Animale*. However, Vosmaer sometimes mentioned which parts of animals he preserved and how in his descriptions, providing us with valuable hints about the decisions that were made regarding the preservation of animal bodies through taxidermy and other preservation methods. It becomes clear from Vosmaer’s work that the cabinet must have contained taxidermized specimens of a dassie (*Procavia capensis*), an orangutan, a spider monkey, a springbok, and probably a kudu and a sloth by the time it was transported to France. His descriptions indicate that although he understood the basics and appreciated the skills required to make a successful specimen, he did not do the taxidermizing himself.

Vosmaer’s accounts show that while he and other scholars in his circle were interested in the entire animal body—the living animal, the mounted animal skins and skeletons, and dissecting the innards—the Stadholder was primarily interested in living animals and taxidermic and skeletal preparations and less in the natural historical explorations of his employee. For Vosmaer and his colleagues, taxidermized animal bodies played a considerable role in their study of animal anatomy and physiology, but they were only one piece of a puzzle that comprised observations of living animals, dissections, wet tissue preservation, taxidermy, and the making of textual and visual descriptions of these various stages of research and preservation.

Taxidermy in the Stadholderly Cabinet

For Vosmaer and other natural philosophers, the taxidermized animal bodies functioned in a multilayered context of wonder and taxonomical, anatomical, and physiological research. By contrast, contemporary descriptions of the Stadholderly cabinet suggest that it was not primarily the lifelikeness of the animal body or the enhanced understanding of its functioning that were appreciated by visitors but the artful skill of the craftsman. In a 1785 tourist guide to the city of The Hague, a description of the Stadholderly collections was given, recording that it also included paintings and a library. The natural history cabinet was praised as “one of the most numerous, the best arranged, and the best preserved in Europe.” It could be visited on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, on the condition that a note was sent to Mr. Vosmaer in the morning before ten o’clock. In the note, the identities and the number of persons who wanted to visit and the place of their dwelling had to be specified. The cabinet contained over eighteen hundred specimens, and only sixteen visitors at a time were allowed—they had to come on a tour.²⁴ The cabinet consisted of seven rooms in total: one with skeletons of birds and quadrupeds; one with armor, clothing, and other ornaments from exotic countries; one with insects and butterflies; one with marine plants and shells; and one with wet preparations of animals and drawers full of stones and minerals.²⁵ The sixth chamber contained

taxidermized animals, all in wooden cases with a glass front—the author noted that they were so well preserved that they looked as if they came freshly from the hands of the craftsman.²⁶

It thus appears from the tourist guide that one of the primary aims of the cabinet was to impress visitors with a variety of exotic animals, naturalia, and artefacts. Yet the case of a male dassie or rock hyrax (*Cavia capensis*), sent to the cabinet by Mr. Bergmeier of the famous Amsterdam menagerie Blaauw Jan, demonstrates that Vosmaer personally had another interest: the epistemic value of the taxidermized animals.²⁷ According to Vosmaer, it had died from overeating, and he sent its “torso” to the Prussian physician Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811) to be dissected. The latter wrote about it in the *Miscellanea Zoologica* and noted that it was decided that this particular male specimen could be dissected as other bodies had been preserved entirely. Another male was already preserved in the Leiden university museum (the collection housed in the anatomical theater), and the body of a female dassie was kept in liquor in the Stadholderly cabinet.²⁸ Vosmaer concluded his description of the dassie with the remark that “the artfully stuffed body” was now part of His Highness’s cabinet.²⁹ The fact that Vosmaer describes the part of the body sent to Pallas as the torso implies that the skin was stuffed in a similar fashion as described and pictured in Turgot’s 1758 manual on taxidermy.

This still happens today: after skinning the animal almost completely, the extremities (hands and feet or claws) are cut off from the limbs and remain attached to the skin. These are carefully cleaned of flesh, so the claws remain intact. Subsequently, the head is cut off the skinned body, so the skull can be thoroughly cleaned and used to reconstruct the head. The skull is attached to a “body” modeled after the real body, usually made from balled straw, iron wire, clay, cotton wool, and string.

Moreover, the remarks Pallas and Vosmaer made about the dissection and preservation of the dassie suggest a hierarchical order in the preservation of small exotic animals: a unique specimen would primarily be preserved in liquor in its entirety; if another of the same species was available, the skin would be stuffed, and the innards could be shared with other natural philosophers for dissection and description.

That the priorities of Vosmaer the royal collector and Vosmaer the natural philosopher differed is also illustrated by the way in which animal bodies were handled at the menagerie and cabinet in Vosmaer’s absence. For example, when a sloth arrived alive and well from Bengal in the Stadholderly cabinet on June 25, 1768, Vosmaer studied its behavior and dietary preferences. As the animal seemed content and healthy, Vosmaer left for a trip later that summer, confident that he would be able to continue his observations when he returned. But, when he came back, to his great disappointment, he found that the sloth had died on September 26. The skin had already been mounted, and the rest of the body had been disposed of, so he could no longer study its reproductive organs and innards.³⁰ Something similar happened to a meerkat that had lived in the menagerie for three years but which had died and was mounted in Vosmaer’s absence.³¹

These events imply that Vosmaer was not the person who taxidermized animals himself, something which, as we will see, is confirmed by other examples as well. It also demonstrates that, independent of Vosmaer’s presence, there was a



Figure 5. Skinning a rabbit in preparation of taxidermic mount. (From Etienne-François Turgot, *Memoire instructif sur la maniere de rassembler, depreparer, de conserver et d'envoyer les diverses curiosites d'histoire naturelle* [Paris, 1758], Plate 7.)

procedure in place within the management of the cabinet that ensured the preservation and mounting of the skeleton and/or skin of animals that died in the menagerie, but no attempts were made to preserve the internal organs of dead animals for further study in Vosmaer's absence. For the cabinet, the priority was the preservation of the entire animal body or the skin for display and not the thorough study of the animal's anatomy and physiology through dissection.

Vosmaer's role as keeper of the cabinet and intermediary between collector and natural philosophers was not always easy and sometimes led to conflicts, as is evident from Vosmaer's temporary falling out with the Stadholder over the taxidermizing of an orangutan. The female specimen was allegedly the first orangutan to have reached Europe alive and arrived in the Stadholder's menagerie on June 29, 1776. Unfortunately, she died on January 22, 1777, and Vosmaer had her taxidermized straight away. He was unaware that Frans Hemsterhuis, the keeper of the Stadholder's numismatic and antique cabinets, had promised the dead animal to the Groningen anatomist Petrus Camper.³² From Vosmaer's own description of the episode, it appears that the Stadholder, Hemsterhuis, and Camper were angry with Vosmaer because Camper received only the remains of the skinned corpse without the head, hands, and feet. However, Vosmaer explained, it would have been impossible to stuff the body in a satisfying manner if the head and feet had been removed from the skin with the rest of the body:

my taxidermist, surely a very skilled artist, would have sworn to anyone who demanded it (though everyone will readily believe him), that he could not have stuffed this creature without keeping the head and the feet attached to the skin.³³

Eventually, Vosmaer would also persuade the Stadholder that he had tried to balance the interests of both the Stadholderly cabinet and the natural philosophers: by mounting the skin for the cabinet and giving the dismembered, decapitated, and flayed body to Camper, he had made a compromise between the interests of the Stadholder, those of the cabinet, Camper's, and his own. This episode shows that the commodification of dead animal bodies could be a tricky political balancing act. The study and preservation of animal bodies in the Netherlands, and the complicated relationship between the Stadholderly cabinet and natural philosophers, is reminiscent of the situation in the intellectual network of courtiers and scholars in the contemporaneous French Republic of Letters so vividly described and analyzed by Guerrini.³⁴ This seems to confirm that the influence of political and personal relationships on the production of knowledge in the Enlightenment can hardly be overestimated.³⁵

As Margaret Carlyle has demonstrated, a number of factors, such as an increase in the availability of affordable anatomical handbooks in the eighteenth century, meant that it was not strictly necessary for "gentleman (or gentlewoman) anatomists" to be directly connected to a court or institution of higher education.³⁶ This case study confirms that social and geographical proximity to wealth, political power, and urban centers heightened one's chances of being able to access interesting natural commodities such as exotic animal bodies considerably. Yet it also shows that the role of handbooks in the acquisition of practical taxidermy skills was minimal and thus distinctly different from the role of handbooks in the acquisition of skills related to the study of (human) anatomy, such as dissection, preservation, and modeling.

Well-executed taxidermy could serve natural history, as a lifelike taxidermized animal could give a good impression of what the animal looked like and even how it behaved while alive, as the example of the kudu shows. The animal was shipped to the menagerie by the governor of Cape of Good Hope, baron Van Plettenberg, arrived alive and well on September 22, 1776, but died roughly three months later from an "emaciating illness." The "prepared" skin was placed in the cabinet, but it remains unclear whether it was stuffed and mounted or just preserved dry without being mounted.³⁷ In his description of the kudu, Vosmaer critiques drawings of animals made after badly mounted specimens: he describes how in an expensive volume that appeared some years earlier a "very unlucky depiction" of the kudu can be seen from "which you can tell that it was made after a very badly stuffed skin of the animal."³⁸ He was happy to use a mounted specimen to describe the anatomy of a species if the preparation had been done well; when he described the Surinam Trumpeter (*Psophia crepitans*), he did so "from a perfectly stuffed bird, which is placed in the cabinet, and which is presently situated before me."³⁹

Taxidermy specimens, especially when skillfully made, were seen as objects worthy of collecting and studying in their own right. This is underlined by the fact that not all taxidermy specimens in the collection were animals that had first lived in the Stadholderly menagerie, as we already saw in the case of the

dassie. Similarly, a red-faced spider monkey that Vosmaer described was a taxidermized specimen, but it had been part of the private menagerie of Mr. Bergmeier when alive. The menagerie owner had it taxidermized, and it was part of another “special” collection until Vosmaer bought it for “a high price” at an auction.⁴⁰ Another kind of spider monkey, which did live in the Stadholderly menagerie, was also taxidermized, but Vosmaer mentioned that the taxidermist had incorrectly mounted it—with a straight rather than a curled tail, a mistake copied by the draftsman—although Vosmaer had to admit that the mounting was otherwise well executed.⁴¹ This account shows that the taxidermist must have operated fairly independently and that Vosmaer was often not involved in nor directing the mounting process.

Vosmaer’s description of the springbok (which he called “pronk-bokje,” literally “flaunting goat”) confirms once more that as in the case of the dassie cited above, if possible, the preservation process was simultaneously an analytic process. He and the men he employed sought to find a balance between dissection and taxidermic conservation, as both the dissection and the preserved body played a role in the study of natural history. As we will see, the body of this springbok did not function as an isolated object of study but linked together depictions and descriptions of animal behavior, anatomy, and physiology to the physical animal body after the animal died. In July 1774, the Stadholder received two living springboks sent to him by the Cape commander, Mr. Gordon. One of them, an adult female, died soon, but the other, a young springbok, lived for an exceptionally long time compared to most of the other animals in the menagerie. After more than three years, the springbok died in the late summer of 1777, after it had lost its teeth from jumping against the enclosure in panic when a warthog scared it. Its death gave Vosmaer the opportunity to investigate a mysterious characteristic of the animal: its tendency to leap in the air with an arched back and stiff legs, using all four legs simultaneously in the leap and displaying an otherwise invisible patch of raised white hair on its backside. To this day it remains unclear why springboks display this behavior, which is still known as “pronking,” from the Dutch “pronken” (showing off).⁴² Vosmaer and his contemporaries were primarily interested in the physiology behind the display of the white hair, as they had not been able to figure out how the animal managed to change its pelt. So Vosmaer had the animal dissected and taxidermized by the person “most skilled in this kind of thing” and quoted the anonymous taxidermist as saying:

This little bok could easily raise its hairs, as by the removal or separation of the skin, it appeared to me that under the skin of the back there is a stack of closely knitted muscle-like fibres or a fabric of muscles, which is very suitable for stretching or contracting the skin, thus enabling it to show the hair either raised or smooth. Of a sack or pocket lined with white hair on the inside and covered with brown hair on the outside I have seen nothing.⁴³

Although it proved impossible to display the springbok’s white hair as distinctly as when it was pronking, Vosmaer was satisfied that after the animal had been stuffed, one could sweep aside the short brown hair on its back to display the longer white hairs underneath with one’s hand. The reason for this extraordinary feat, he concluded, would remain a secret of the Almighty. This episode

shows that, paradoxically, the taxidermist played a crucial role in the study of the anatomy and physiology of the animal body but remained an anonymous craftsman in Vosmaer's accounts all the same.

By the mid-eighteenth century, artisanal practitioners such as painters had successfully refashioned themselves as intellectuals and philosophers skillfully engaging with nature.⁴⁴ By contrast, the persistent anonymity of taxidermists in the Stadholderly cabinet suggests that although the culture of curiosity relied heavily on the skills of such artisans, many of them remained almost invisible.⁴⁵ The perpetuation of their skills appears to have taken place mostly through oral transmission, as it remains unclear who mounted the animals that died in the menagerie. It seems unlikely that Vosmaer himself was actively involved in taxidermic practice. The manuscript instructions he wrote early in his career were never published and would have made for cruder results than the surviving specimens of the Stadholderly collection. As Vosmaer repeatedly mentioned a



Figure 6. Ceylon forest dog, drawn after a mounted specimen lent to Vosmaer by Adriaan de Klerk. (Plate by A. Schouman in A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eenen zeldzaamen Oostindischen nog niet beschreeven boschhond in Ceylon vallende*. [Amsterdam, 1773].)



Figure 7. Adriaan de Klerk's advertisement for his services as a taxidermist, *Amsterdamsche Courant*, April 23, 1771.

taxidermist and animals being mounted in his absence, it seems likely that one or more taxidermists were hired to preserve and mount the animal bodies.⁴⁶ Although a taxidermist employed by Vosmaer is repeatedly described as a skillful artist, and in the case of the springbok was even quoted, he remains anonymous. However, there is a likely candidate for the role: Adriaan de Klerk. We know little about him, but Vosmaer borrowed a mounted Asiatic wild dog (boshond) from him so that he could describe it and have it depicted in his series of pamphlets on exotic species.⁴⁷

The first trace of De Klerk is in an advert in the newspaper the *Middelburgsche Courant* in 1766, in which he asks for exotic birds, either freshly dead or preserved in liquor, and for insects.⁴⁸ Middelburg, a city close to several sea harbors in the southern Dutch province of Zeeland, was a major trade center, so it is no surprise that a dealer in mounted exotic birds and insects would live there. But Dutch sea power was waning and the economy suffering in the eighteenth century. By 1771, it appears that De Klerk had built a considerable cabinet and had moved to Amsterdam. By April of that year, he advertised his cabinet and services in the *Amsterdamsche Courant*:

ADRIAAN DE KLERK, makes it known, that with him in Amsterdam in the GREEN LION, at the house of J.D. Bosse, Mr. Kok, on the Prinsengracht near the Leidsestraat, is to be seen a CABINET: consisting of 52 CUPBOARDS of various sizes, all filled with beautiful native and foreign mounted QUADRUPEDS and BIRDS, of which many have a NEST, EGGS, and CHICKS, everything artfully prepared and decorated with natural ornaments. The price of entry is six pence per Person. Offers his services to all gentlemen amateurs who want to have animals prepared.⁴⁹

Apparently, the taxidermy business alone was not sufficient to make a living. De Klerk added that he also sold all kinds of real Zeeland chocolate, as well as a "Sphaera Perfecta," a small planetarium, and a grand organ. By November of that year, he had moved in with a cabinetmaker on the Kalverstraat—a potentially lucrative combination of businesses—and again advertised his services as a taxidermist in the *Amsterdamse Courant*:

. . . presents his service to all gentlemen amateurs, who want to have animals preserved or mounted, and buys all exotic animals, both recently deceased and in liquor.⁵⁰

It remains uncertain whether De Klerk was Vosmaer's taxidermist of choice, but it is not unlikely that he was, given the fact that the two men knew each other well enough for De Klerk to lend Vosmaer a specimen for description and that

De Klerk's workshop was so close to Vosmaer's cabinet. De Klerk was also the only entrepreneur to repeatedly advertise his services as a taxidermist in Dutch newspapers during this period. The fact that a skilled taxidermist remained anonymous in the context of the cabinet and that De Klerk had to actively advertise his skills while running another business on the side (the sale of delicacies and curiosities) suggests that, although taxidermic specimens could be valuable for natural philosophy, taxidermy skills were not highly valued, possibly because there was limited demand for them. Moreover, Vosmaer, as keeper of the cabinet, had to carefully balance conflicting interests, and for this position, practical taxidermy skills and observations, however appreciated, would simply not have been enough.

The afterlives of specimens of taxidermy also indicate that the prestige an artisan could garner from being a highly skilled taxidermist stood in no relation to the value of the objects themselves. Apart from the descriptions mentioned before by Vosmaer and other natural historians such as Pallas and Camper, there are few sources that explicitly mention how the taxidermic preparations in the Stadholder's cabinet were used after they were prepared. However, it is not unlikely that they were used as a reference collection by both Vosmaer and visitors of the cabinet, as the determination and comparison of species was an ongoing process in the late eighteenth century. Moreover, Vosmaer's depictions and descriptions of the taxidermic specimens, and so by proxy the specimens themselves, certainly played an important role in natural history. Particularly the different kinds of simians, whose appearances and behaviors were sometimes very similar, were a source of ongoing confusion and discussion. For example, in his *Histoire Naturelle*, Buffon in 1777 used Vosmaer's depiction and description of the "Bengalese sloth" to argue that it was not a sloth but rather a lori.⁵¹

In all the cases of taxidermic preservation in the Stadholderly cabinet, we see that Vosmaer tried to combine preserving the animal skin in a way that represented the living animal as well as possible and allowed for the studying of its anatomy and physiology through the specimen. Vosmaer appears to have preferred to describe animals that he had observed alive, dissected, and seen mounted, but if any of these stages were not available and he suspected that he was the first to describe an animal, he would publish an account of it anyway. However, as keeper of the cabinet he also had to keep in mind the Stadholder's wishes. The preservation process was thus an analytic process with various stakeholders, and Vosmaer continuously had to strike a balance between his own and other's interests. The role of the taxidermist in this balancing act was that of an appreciated yet anonymous craftsman.

The Move to Paris: Conclusion

The discovery, determination, comparison, and classification of as many species as possible remained an important endeavor at the end of the eighteenth century, and living animals, preserved specimens, texts, and drawings all played a part as evidence in discussions among natural historians. The preservation of animal bodies through taxidermy, and the research it enabled, would eventually contribute to a renewed understanding of comparative anatomy. Individual specimens, as well as entire collections, were swapped, traded, and occasionally

changed hands because of political turmoil, as happened in the case of the Stadholderly cabinet. From 1780 onward, the Dutch Republic saw increasing political upheaval. The so-called Patriotic faction, dissatisfied with the political and economic situation, wanted to end the hereditary Stadholderate and rebelled against William V. The Patriots were defeated by a Prussian army in 1787, and many of their leaders were forced into exile. Yet Enlightenment ideals remained popular in the Dutch Republic, where the developments of the French Revolution were secretly followed with great interest. When a French army invaded the republic in January 1794, it was supported by exiled Patriots and a large part of the dissatisfied population alike. William V fled to England, local government bodies were overthrown, and the Batavian Republic, effectively a client state of France, was established. The invasion was followed, among other things, by the arrival of four commissioners of the French Republic, who were put in charge of protecting “national goods.” As a result, the Stadholderly cabinet and menagerie were both claimed for the newly established *Muséum de l’Histoire Naturelle* and its menagerie.⁵²

After the goods and livestock had been carefully packed according to Vosmaer’s inventory and sent to Paris in three shipments, it turned out that the collection was so large that it did not fit into the Museum.⁵³ The expansion of the museum collections was a wonderful opportunity for the natural historians it employed, such as Daubenton, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, and Cuvier, who started classifying the specimens according to the taxonomies of Linnaeus and Buffon.⁵⁴ Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier were particularly interested in the simians, not least of all the orangutan.⁵⁵ However, in their work, they hardly ever mentioned whether the specimens they studied were formerly part of the Stadholder’s collection. Only the backstories of very rare or large animals were ever mentioned, and only in passing, so preparations like our sooty mangabey and silvery gibbon disappeared among the plethora of unspectacular specimens.

This article demonstrates how seemingly unremarkable preserved animal bodies such as the monkeys can help us understand the role taxidermic practices played in natural history, the politics of collecting and displaying nature in the Low Countries in the second half of the eighteenth century, and how taxidermists and their skills were valued. The way animal bodies were handled within the Stadholderly collections shows that they were part of a larger, complex system of learned and social exchanges in which the keeper of the cabinet had to carefully balance sometimes conflicting interests. The role of the taxidermist here was subordinate to the complicated political interests that Vosmaer had to navigate. For the Stadholder and his family, the collections in the menagerie and natural historical cabinet were primarily possessions that satisfied their own curiosity and that served to entertain visitors. Even though Vosmaer attempted to vet the visitors and took them on compulsory tours, as we saw in the tourist guides to *Het Kleine Loo* and *The Hague*, the aspect of wonder and curiosity remained.

The lives of the animal bodies in this article show that for Vosmaer and his network of learned peers, these animal bodies were primarily objects of study, both while alive and after death. They not so much functioned as independent objects of study but linked together depictions and descriptions of animal behavior, anatomy, and physiology to the physical animal body after the animal died. For Vosmaer, the objectified animal body served to “bundle” together

knowledge about the animal. Although there was a lively trade in taxidermic specimens, the fact that the specimens from the Stadholderly collections did not play a significant role in natural historical debate after they were moved to Paris and separated from their descriptions and depictions, suggests that their epistemic value diminished strongly outside of their original epistemic context and in the presence of so many other specimens. The fact that no attempts were made by the new French owners of the collection to reunite the specimens with their background information shows that practices of collecting animal bodies changed profoundly around 1800. The nineteenth century saw an enormous influx of living exotic animals in Europe and the establishment of public zoos and natural history museums, as well as shifting geopolitical forces, discoveries of new species, and the spread of taxidermic knowledge and skills. These changes meant that collections like that of the Stadholder, in which the exact provenance of the specimens was often unclear, and which lacked adequate contextual information, were probably of limited value to nineteenth-century naturalists establishing ever-growing taxonomies. Moreover, there are also the “curious” ways in which these specimens may have been problematic. And as the focus in taxonomy moved from skin to bones and teeth, the importance of taxidermy for anatomy declined rapidly after 1800.⁵⁶

Taxidermy in the eighteenth century was one of several methods to ensure animal bodies were preserved after the animal died, and Vosmaer’s interest in it was purely utilitarian: he knew about the basic procedures and materials in theory but appears not to have been actively involved in taxidermic practice. To Vosmaer, and thus probably also to other natural historians, a taxidermized animal body, if mounted correctly, could serve as a stand-in for the living animal. However, Vosmaer was aware of the wildly varying quality of taxidermy, and *in vivo* observations and dissections remained the preferred modes of studying the animal body, its anatomy, and its physiology.

Taxidermy, although useful for collectors and researchers of natural history, long remained a marginalized practice. Even skilled taxidermists like De Klerk were compelled to seek additional sources of income. Printed books appear not to have played a big role in the circulation of the know-how required for successful taxidermy, but this is a point that warrants further research. The lengthy process of preparing an animal skin, the creation of an artificial body, and the mounting of the skin on it were appreciated by Vosmaer and other learned men as an artful means to an end, not as a relevant way of gaining an understanding of animal anatomy itself. Accordingly, the taxidermist was regarded as a skilled craftsman, who could occasionally provide useful information about animal anatomy, but he was not seen as a learned man who should be identified when quoted. This shows that no matter how crucial well-mounted animal bodies were in the development of comparative anatomy and natural history, the actual hands-on activity of creating a taxidermic specimen remained marginalized until the nineteenth century. Only when taxidermy became popular in fashion and interior decoration in the nineteenth century were the knowledge and skills that were formerly only used to create specimens for the study of natural history and royal cabinets transferred to the popular realm, and more detailed and widely available written instructions on how to skin, clean, preserve, prepare, and mount animal bodies became available. Regardless, the stuffed squirrel that I mounted during that workshop in early 2015, which now resides on our office

mantelpiece, is a daily reminder that taxidermy always was, and probably always will remain, a hands-on, practical art. The product of the hands of a historian, it certainly is no taxidermic masterpiece, yet it continues to incite the curiosity of colleagues and visitors.

Endnotes

This project has received funding from the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 648718). In the process of writing this paper, I have incurred debts of gratitude to Joëlle Garcia and Cécile Callou at the *Muséum National de l'Histoire Naturelle* in Paris and to the members of the Making and Knowing research project at Columbia University—particularly Pamela Smith—who generously shared their annotated transcriptions of BnF Ms. Fr. 640 with me. I thank Alan Ross, my colleagues Jenny Boulboulé and Marjolijn Bol, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Address correspondence to Marieke M.A. Hendriksen, Utrecht University, Department of History and Art History, Drift 6, 3512 BS Utrecht, The Netherlands. Email: m.m.a.hendriksen@uu.nl.

1. Marieke Hendriksen, "A Taxidermy Excursion," *Marieke Hendriksen: Exploring the History of Art, Science, and Ideas* (blog), April 30, 2015, <https://mariekehendriksen.nl/2015/04/30/a-taxidermy-excursion/>.
2. Paul Lawrence Farber, "The Development of Taxidermy and the History of Ornithology," *Isis: International Review Devoted to the History of Science and Its Civilisation* 68, no. 4 (1977): 550–66; Amandine Péquignot, *Histoire de la taxidermie en France (1729–1928): Étude des facteurs de ses évolutions techniques et conceptuelles, et des relations à la mise en exposition du spécimen naturalisé* (Paris, 2002); Merle Patchett and Kate Foster, "Repair Work: Surfacing the Geographies of Dead Animals," *Museum and Society* 6, no. 2 (July 2008): 98–122; Samuel Alberti, ed., *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie* (Charlottesville, NC, 2011).
3. Arsenic compounds were used as therapeutic agents since at least the fifth century BC, so it is possible that they were used in taxidermy before, but we have no definite proof of this. See Fernando Marte, Amandine Péquignot, and David W. Von Endt, "Arsenic in Taxidermy Collections: History Detection, and Management," *Collection Forum* 21, no. 1–2 (2006): 143–50, 144.
4. Farber, "The Development of Taxidermy," 557–66; Kurt Schmutzer, "Metamorphosis between Field and Museum: Collections in the Making," *HoST. Journal of the History of Science and Technology* 5 (2012): 68–83, 75.
5. T. Davies, "A letter from Captain Davies to John Ellis Esq. FRS on a method of preparing birds for preservation," *Philosophical transactions* 60 (1770), L. Dufresne, "Taxidermie," in *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle* (Paris, 1803–1804), 507–65, J. R. Forster, *A Catalogue of Animals of North America . . . To Which Are Added Short Directions for Collecting, Preserving and Transporting All Kinds of Natural History Curiosities* (London, 1771), T. S. Kuckhan, "Four Letters from Mr. T. S. Kuckhan to the President and Members of the Royal Society, on the Preservation of Dead Birds," *Philosophical Transactions* 60 (1770): 302–20; D. J. Manesse, *Traité sur la manière d'empailler et de conserver les animaux* (Paris, 1787); J. P. Mouton-Fontenille, *L'art d'empailler les oiseaux* (Paris, 1811); P. F. Nicolas, *Méthode de préparer* (1801); V. Rosa, *Methodo di preparare* (Pavia, 1789).
6. Réaumur, *Différens moyens d'empêcher de se corrompre les oiseaux morts qu'on veut envoyer dans des pays éloignez et de les y faire arriver bien conditionnez. Quelques-uns de ces memes moyens peuvent etre aussi employez pour conserver des quadrupedes, des reptiles, des poissons et des insectes* (Paris, 1745).

7. Etienne-François Turgot, *Memoire instructif sur la maniere de rassembler, de preparer, de conserver et d'envoyer les diverses curiosites d'histoire naturelle* (Paris, 1758).
8. Roy Porter, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine* (Cambridge, 2009), 62.
9. Niles Eldredge, *Eternal Ephemera: Adaptation and the Origin of Species from the Nineteenth Century through Punctuated Equilibria and Beyond* (New York, 2015).
10. Florence Pieters and Kees Rookmaaker, "Arnout Vosmaer, Topcollectionneur van Naturalia En Zijn Regnum Animale," in *Een Vorstelijke Dierentuin. De Menagerie van Willem V*, eds. B. C. Sliggers and A. A. Wertheim, (Zutphen, Netherlands, 1994), 11–38: 13–14. Historical value of the guilder calculated using <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate2.php>.
11. Hendrik Engel, *Hendrik Engel's Alphabetical List of Dutch Zoological Cabinets and Menageries* (Amsterdam, 1986), 275, 338.
12. Manuscript memorie van Arnout Vosmaer, 's Gravenhage, Algemeen Rijksarchief 2.21.271:68. Contains a dated draft version and an undated copy in a very neat hand.
13. *Catalogue de livres en plusieurs langues [. . .] delaisés par feu M. Arnout Vosmaer [. . .]. Dont la vente publique se fera à la maison du defunt [. . .] le 17 mars 1800. & jours suivans par B. Scheurleer [. . .] ou le catalogue se trouve* ('s Gravenhage, 1800).
14. "Men kan ook de grootste en daar toe bequaamste soorten liever in hunne natuurlijke gedaante opzetten; dat is de huid (na dat het vleesch er is uitgenoomen) met werk of vlasch, in teer of terpentijn, een weinig in gedoopt, opvullen, wanneer den buik en hals weder toegenaaid en door de pooten een dun ijzer of koper draat gestooken werd, in dezen stand werden zij langzaam gedroogt en behouden door een goede hand bestuurd hunne voorige gedaante zeer wel." Manuscript memorie van Arnout Vosmaer, 's Gravenhage, Algemeen Rijksarchief 2.21.271:68, fol. 11 in the dated draft version, fol. 4 in the undated copy. The draft version mentions the drying can be done in the sun, but that a warm oven is to be preferred.
15. In BnF Ms. Fr. 640 fol. 130r, an anonymous, late sixteenth-century French manuscript containing descriptions of techniques for a number of processes that we would now classify as part of the fine arts, of craft, and of technology, we find an instruction for "*Animaux seches au four*." This recipe only calls for the eyes and guts to be removed, after which the animal is hung upside down from a plank to dry in the sun, and subsequently dried further in a warm oven.
16. BnF Ms. Fr. 640 fol. 130r implies the creation of new wonders was actually an important use of this recipe: it concludes with the sentence "One can add a painted tongue, or horns, or wings or anything you may imagine, same goes for rats or any animal." For the mermaid, see Jan de Hond, "Grijpvogels, Eenhoorns en het Visken Remora. Monsters en Fabeldieren uit de Rariteitenkamer," *Bossche Bladen: Cultuurhistorisch Magazine over 's-Hertogenbosch* (2003).
17. Lorraine J. Daston, "The Cold Light of Facts and the Facts of Cold Light: Luminescence and the Transformation of the Scientific Fact, 1600–1750," *Early Modern France* 3 (1997): 1–27, p. 21–24; Lorraine J. Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 142; Michael Bycroft, "Wonders in the Academy: The Value of Strange Facts in the Experimental Research of Charles Dufay," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 43, no. 3 (2013): 334–70, 334–5, 342.
18. One of the oldest examples of successful taxidermy is a stuffed bird, believed to be an African Grey parrot from 1702, which belonged to Frances Stuart, the Duchess of Richmond and mistress to King Charles II of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1649–1685). The bird, of which she was inordinately fond, can still be seen in Westminster Abbey Museum in London, perched next to a life size wax effigy of the Duchess herself. It could also go very wrong though. See P. Morris, "The Antiquity of the Duchess of Richmond's Parrot," *Museums Journal* (November 1981), and

- <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/frances-teresa-stuart>. King Frederik of Sweden ordered a lion, received as a gift from the Dey of Algiers, to be stuffed in the eighteenth century. The shockingly badly mounted specimen is colloquially known as “the lion of Gripsholm Castle” and has become an internet meme with its own Wikipedia page (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion_of_Gripsholm_Castle). The exchange of gifts between King Frederik and the Dey is listed in C. F. Wandel, *Danmark og Barbareskerne 1746–1845* (Copenhagen, 1919).
19. Pieters and Rookmaaker, “Arnout Vosmaer,” 14–17.
 20. Het Leeven van A. Vosmaer, ’s Gravenhage, Algemeen Rijksarchief 2.21.271: Archief van de familie Vosmaer (no. 57), MS fol 6.
 21. “C’est une petite Campagne appartenante au Prince. On y voit aussi sa Menagerie. Elle est remplie d’animaux rares & curieux; Mais l’humanité du Princene lui permet pas d’y conserver de ces monstres malfaisans, que la sage Nature sembloit avoir confirmé dans des déserts ignorez, mais que la cupidité des hommes y a déterrez & emmenez dans nos climats, pour multiplier nos maux.” *Guide Des Voyageurs En Hollande* (’s Gravenhage, 1781), 68.
 22. Arnout Vosmaer, *Natuurkundige Beschryving Eener Uitmuntende Verzameling van Zeldsaame Gedierten, Bestaande in Oost- En Westindische Viervoetige Dieren, Vogelen En Slangen, Weleer Leevend Voorhanden Geweest Zynde, Buiten Den Haag, Op Het Kleine Loo van Z.D.H. Den Prins van Oranje-Nassau* (Amsterdam, 1804).
 23. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eene zeldzaame Amerikaansche nog niet beschreeven slinger-aap-soort, genaamd de Fluiter uit de Hollandsche volkplanting Surinamen, bewaard wordende in het museum van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid den heere prinse van Oranje en Nassauw* (Amsterdam, 1770). A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eene zeldzaame Amerikaansche langstaartige aap-soort, by den inlander gewoonlyk genaamd Quatto en by de Hollanders Bosch-duivel of Slinger-aap: uit de Hollandsche volkplanting bewaard wordende in het museum van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid den heere prinse van Oranje en Nassauw* (Amsterdam, 1768). Vosmaer’s piper was probably a brown spider monkey (*Ateles hybridus*), his quatto a red-faced spider monkey (*Ateles paniscus*).
 24. *Guide Ou Nouvelle Description de La Haye et de Ses Environs* (La Haye, 1785), 256.
 25. *Guide Ou Nouvelle Description de La Haye et de Ses Environs* (La Haye, 1785), 257–59.
 26. *Guide Ou Nouvelle Description de La Haye et de Ses Environs* (La Haye, 1785), 259: “par les attentions & les soins continuels qu’on donne a leur conservation, on droit qu’ils viennent defortir des mains de l’empailleuse, quoique la plupart y aient déjà été depuis plusieurs années.”
 27. Florence Pieters and Jan Velten, *Wonderen Der Natuur: In de Menagerie van Blauw Jan Te Amsterdam Zoals Gezien Door Jan Velten Rond 1700* (Amsterdam, 1998).
 28. Peter Simon Pallas, *Miscellanea Zoologica: Quibus Novae Imprimis Atque Obscurae Animalium Species Describuntur et Observationibus Iconibusque Illustrantur* (’s Gravenhage, 1766), 33: “Qua ex eo specimine masculino, ex juniore alio itidem masculino in Museo Academiae Lugduno-batavae asservato, atque ex femella, quam liquore spirituosissimo conditam, in Museo Serenissimi Principis Auriaci lustrare licuit, de animali nostro addidici, jam minutim enarrabo.”
 29. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van het basterd-mormeldier, zich onthoudende op de Steen- of Klipbergen van de Kaap de Goede Hoop; bewaard wordende in het Museum van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid etc.* (Amsterdam, 1767), 6.
 30. A. Vosmaer, *Beschrijving van een tot nu toe onbekende vyfvingerige luiaard-soort, in Bengaalen vallende en van daar levendig overgebragt in de Diergaarde van zijne doorluchtigste hoogheid* (Amsterdam, 1770), 16. Vosmaer’s disappointment about not being able to dissect the sloth was no critique on the taxidermist: on page 18, he remarks that the sloth had been “very well mounted.”

31. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eene zeldzaame Afrikaansche, nog niet beschreeven kat-soort, genaamde de bizaam-kat, op de Kaap de Goede Hoop vallende, en bewaard wordende in het Museum van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid etc.* (Amsterdam, 1771), 6.
32. B.C. Slingers and A.A. Wertheim, eds., *Een Vorstelijke Dierentuin. De Menagerie van Willem V (Zutphen, 1994)*, 29.
33. "Myn Opzetter, wezendlyk een zeer bekwam Konstenaar, zoude elk, die hem zulks vergde, zekerlyk gezwooren hebben, (doch elk zal hem lichtelyk gelooven) dat hy dit Schepzel, zonder den kop en de pooten aan het vel te behouden, niet konde opzetten." Vosmaer, *Natuurkundige Beschryving* (1804), 20.
34. A. Guerrini, *The Courtiers' Anatomists: Animals and Humans in Louis XIV's Paris* (Chicago, 2015), 43–49.
35. On this debate, see, for example, S. Shapin, "Vorurteilsfreie Wissenschaft und gute Gesellschaft. Zur Geschichte eines Vorurteils," *Transit – Europäische Revue* (1999) 16, 51–63, and P. H. Smith and B. Schmidt, "Introduction: Knowledge and Its Making in Early Modern Europe," *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe. Practices, Objects, and Texts, 1400–1800* (Chicago, 2008), 1–18.
36. Margaret Carlyle, "Cultures of Anatomy in Enlightenment France (c.1700–c.1795)" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2013); M. Carlyle, "Artisans, Patrons, and Enlightenment: The Circulation of Anatomical Knowledge in Paris, St. Petersburg, and London," in *Bodies beyond Borders. Moving Anatomies 1750–1950*, ed. Kaat Wils, Raf de Bont, and Sokhieng Au (Leuven, Belgium, 2017), 23–50.
37. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van de nog genoegzaam onbekende en een der grootste soort van harte-bokken genaamt coudou; van de Kaap de Goede Hoop, voor de eerstemaal, in Europa, leevendig overgebracht in de diergaarde van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid etc.* (Amsterdam, 1783), 11.
38. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van de nog genoegzaam*, 6. His critique concerns Knorr and Muller, "Coetoe," *Deliciae Naturae selectae. Of Kabinet van zeldzaamheden der Natuur*, (Dordrecht, Netherlands, 1771): II Deel, Tab. K. 5. XI. p. 50, 54.
39. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van den Amerikaanschen Trompetter, zynde een genoegzaam onbekenden, en eene zonderlinge eigenschap hebbende Vogel, koomende uit Surinamen, en zich thans bevindende in de Diergaarde en het Museum van zyne Doorluchtigste Hoogheid, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1768), 7–8.
40. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eene zeldzaame Amerikaansche langstaartige aap-soort, by den inlander gewoonlyk genaamd Quatto en by de Hollanders Bosch-duivel of Slinger-aap: uit de Hollandsche volkplanting bewaard wordende in het museum van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid den heere prinse van Oranje en Nassauw* (Amsterdam, 1768), 10.
41. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eene zeldzaame Amerikaansche nog niet beschreeven slinger-aap-soort, genaamd de Fluiter uit de Hollandsche volkplanting Surinamen, bewaard wordende in het museum van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid den heere prinse van Oranje en Nassauw* (Amsterdam, 1770), 4, 6.
42. Michael Allaby, ed., "pronking," *A Dictionary of Zoology* (Oxford, 2014), accessed March, 12, 2017, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199684274.001.0001/acref-9780199684274-e-9880>.
43. "Dit Bokje kon zyne hairen gemakkelyk doen opryzen, vermits by de ontwyding of de separatie van het vel, my gebleeken is, dat hetzelfde, onder het vel van den rug, eene opeenstapeling van digt inëen gewerkte spierachtige vezelen of samenweefzel van spieren had, zeer geschikt om de huid uit te rekken of te doen inkrimpen, om dus het hair opgericht of glad te vertoonen. Van eene zak of beurs, van binnen met wit en van buiten met bruin hair, heb ik niets hoe genaamt, kunnen bespeuren." A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving eener nieuwe soort van kleenen hartebok, by de Hollandsche volksplanting aan de Kaap de Goede Hoop bekend, onder de naam van pronkbok, voor der eerste maal, in Europa, leevendig overgebracht in de diergaarde van zyne doorluchtigste hoogheid etc.* (Amsterdam, 1784), 9–10.

44. On the refashioning of painters and sculptors from the Renaissance onward, see, for example, F. Quiviger, "Renaissance Art Theories," in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. P. Smith and C. Wilde (London, 2008), 49–60, 52–3, 59.
45. On the persistent invisibility of technicians in scientific practice, see Shapin, Steven, "The Invisible Technician," *American Scientist* 77, no. 6 (December 1989): 554–63.
46. Vosmaer, *Natuurkundige Beschryving* (1804), 20.
47. A. Vosmaer, *Beschryving van eenen zeldzaamen Oostindischen nog niet beschreeven bosch-hond in Ceylon vallende* (Amsterdam, 1773), 4.
48. "Adriaan de Klerk, woonende in de Langevyllé, op den hoek van de Beddewykstraat, ten huize van Juff. de Wed. Smoor, koopt Uitlansche Vogelen, die korts afgestorven zyn, of op Liquor staan, alsmede Uitlandsche Insecten," *Middelburgsche Courant*, February 25, 1766.
49. *Amsterdamsche Courant*, April 23, 1771.
50. *Amsterdamsche Courant*, November 12, 1771.
51. Georges Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle: Générale et particulière* (Paris, 1777), vol. 33, 62–80.
52. Emma C. Spary, *Utopia's Garden. French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago, 2000), 92.
53. M. Lemire, "Frankrijk en de stadhouderlijke collecties van Willem van Oranje," in *Een vorstelike dierentuin. De menagerie van Willem V*, ed. Sliggers and Wertheim (Haarlem, Netherlands, 1994), 87–97.
54. Lemire, "Frankrijk en de stadhouderlijke collecties van Willem van Oranje," 105.
55. Lemire, "Frankrijk en de stadhouderlijke collecties van Willem van Oranje," 107–8.
56. See Alan Ross's article in this issue.