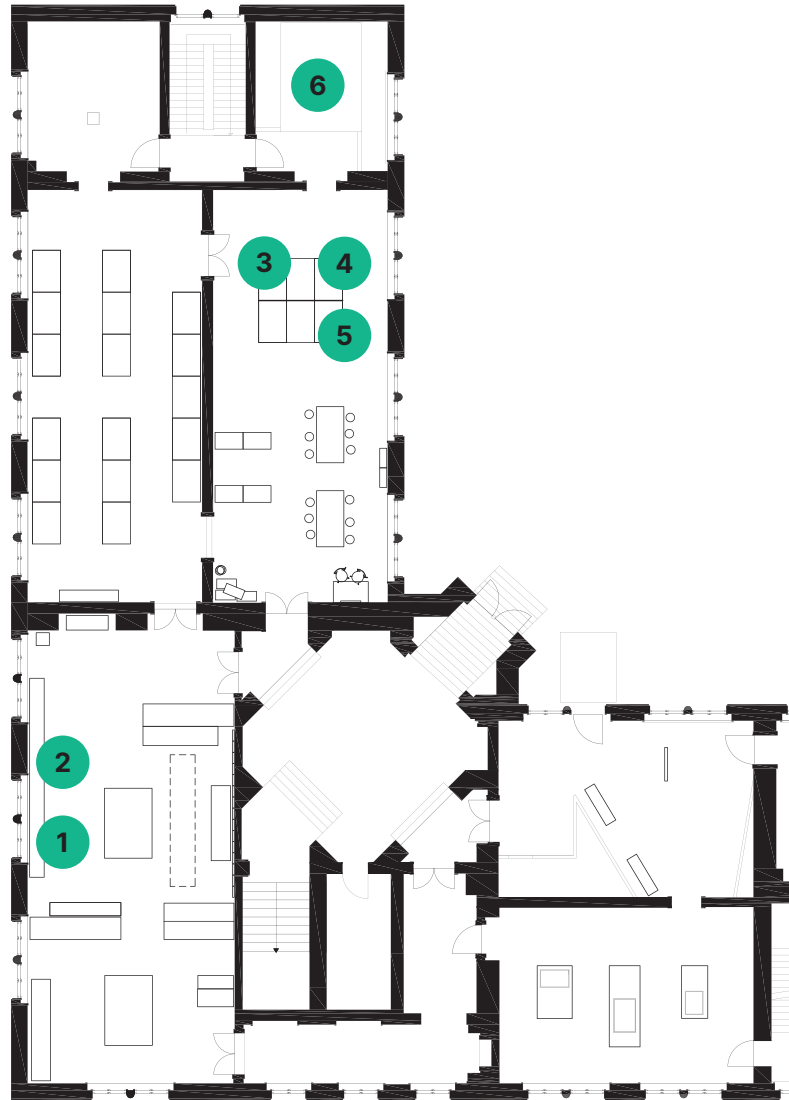


Discover the exhibition

Wild Wonderful World



Exhibition floor plan

A changing view of nature and science

In the exhibition, you can explore many objects that illustrate how our understanding of nature has evolved over time. These artifacts showcase the changing perspectives and knowledge about the natural world throughout history.

DENMARK
NATURAL HISTORY
MUSEUM

UNIVERSITY OF
COPENHAGEN

1 Unicorn's horn

For many centuries, narwhal tusks were highly valued and sold as horns from the mythical creature, the unicorn. In the early 17th century, naturalist Ole Worm examined skulls from narwhals and discovered that these 'horns' actually came from them. However, King Frederick III instructed him to keep this discovery secret so that lucrative trade in unicorn horns could continue unabated.

2 Aphrodisiac of nature

The Danish physician and naturalist Ole Worm collected objects from nature to investigate their potential medicinal uses. He believed that the form of objects indicated their potential functions. In his collection, there was a coconut from the Maldives that resembled a human buttock. Because of this resemblance, Worm believed that the coconut could act as an aphrodisiac.

3 Cassowary or tiger?

The bone is the chest bone from a cassowary, a large bird that lives in Australia. It is unclear how the bone came into the collection, but it is noted that it was originally purchased and mistakenly identified as a tiger skull. This suggests that the buyer likely had not seen either a cassowary or a tiger skeleton before, leading to erroneous assumptions about the bone's origin.

4 Nature's play

In the 17th century, naturalists were fascinated by natural objects that exhibited unusual shapes, often interpreting them as nature's mimicry of other things. This particular root or branch was collected because it resembled a human hand.

5 Prehistoric tales

Until about 150 years ago, the understanding of Earth's and life's development was largely based on religious creation stories. Many Western scientists believed that fossils were remains of animals or giants that drowned in the Biblical flood, and they held the view that the Earth was only about 6000 years old. With the acceptance of the theory of evolution and advancements in geological research, this perspective changed. Fossils of animals like saber-toothed cats and mammoths came to be understood as remains of prehistoric creatures that are related to modern-day animals.

6 Museum Wormianum as art

In the art installation 'Museum Wormianum', you can experience how one of the first museums was organized. There wasn't a strict distinction between natural history, history, and art, as is common in many museums today. The collection includes both man-made objects and natural finds. For example, there is a chair made from whale bones, figures resembling humans, and natural objects that are beautiful or unusual. This blending of human artifacts and natural specimens reflects a time when curiosity and wonder drove the collection of objects, regardless of their origin or classification by modern museum standards.