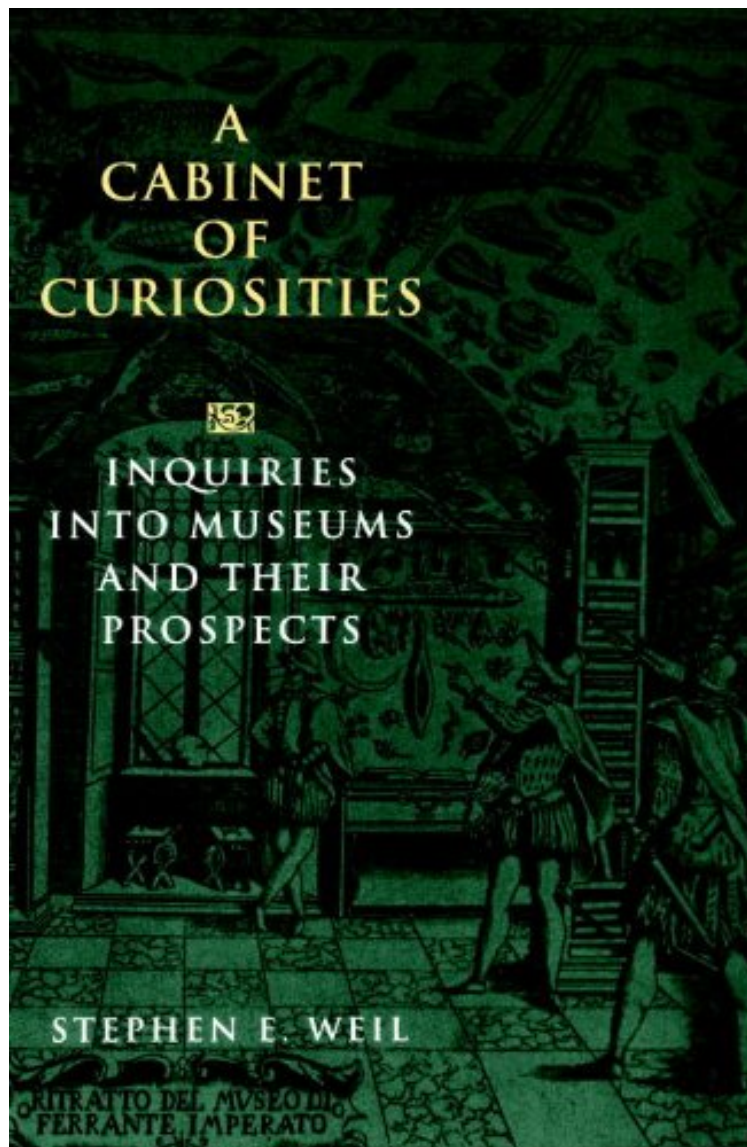


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A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries into Museums and Their Prospects

Stephen E. Weil

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Reflecting critically on the current condition of museums and their possible futures, Stephen E. Weil argues that cultural institutions need to free themselves from a fascination with technique and process to concentrate more intently on purpose. He contends that to succeed, or merely survive, a museum must be able to project clear goals that its supporting community finds of value and must demonstrate its competence to achieve those goals on a sustainable basis.

With this collection of essays and addresses, Stephen Weil proves yet again that he is one of the most versatile and capable minds in the museum world. . . . Read [A Cabinet of Curiosities] from front to back, back to front, or inside out it really makes no difference. The important thing is to encounter and savor the ideas and insights found in every essay. . . . Weil [is] a masterful and convincing advocate of the arts in these times of political and economic instability. Kenneth L. Ames, *Museum News* Weil is one of the museum world's most valuable players. . . . You'll find more common sense, more stimulating ideas, and more insights here than in most books on the art scene. This is a wake-up call. Milton Esterow, *ARTNews* A Cabinet of Curiosities is an important compilation of the thoughts of a cogent critical museologist. It should be carefully read and reread by anyone who is concerned with the survival of museums. MuseAbout the Author Stephen E. Weil is the emeritus senior scholar in the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Museum Studies. He served as deputy director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, from 1974 to 1995 and was previously administrator of the Whitney Museum of African Art. He is the author of *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations* (1990) and *Beauty and the Beasts* (1983), both published by Smithsonian Institution Press, as well as coauthor of several scholarly treatises on art and the law.