Curiosity is more important than knowledge.

—Albert Einstein
What is a curio? A curio sparks curiosity. How?

The dictionary tells us that a curio is a rare, unusual, or intriguing object. But a curio’s capacity to spark sustained curiosity demands a patient, fully engaged and embodied act of musing.

In other words, curiosity initiates a personal and cultural, intellectual and physical, intimate and worldly encounter, mingling memory, imagination and a desire for knowledge and change. Such curious encounters, simultaneously delightful and unsettling, can lead to meaningfully and transformative events. What motivates this shift from strange objects to events of meaningful change? Care!

If we trace the root meaning of curio, we discover that curiosity’s underlying activity is to care. A curio not only holds our interest, it provokes growing concern, stirring us to more courageous thought and a renewed sense of urgency in the shared act of discovery. Collecting, creating and sharing curios is a way of musing more carefully on our curious relation with one another and the world.

Inspired by their own questions and a set of strange and exciting precedents, students gathered, swapped, made, arranged and displayed eclectic collections of objects, artifacts, specimens, fragments, models, text and images. Students simultaneously studied an inspiring variety of exemplary museums (“archi-curios”), alongside stimulating art works (“meta-curios”), carefully re-interpreting the “ready-mades” of Marcel Duchamp, “combines” of Robert Rauschenberg, and wonder-inducing box constructions of Joseph Cornell, whose works act as “window-poems,” “dream-factories,” and “theaters of the mind.” Students incorporated replicas of these archi- and meta-curios with other curious phenomena into mixed media assemblages in the form of interactive cabinets of curiosity, or wunderkammer, designed to cultivate public interest and concern. These cabinets were collaboratively exhibited to large audiences on four unique occasions:

- Nuit Blanche / Winnipeg Design Festival (Sept. 29, 2018)
- the GoSA Gallery of Student Art (Jan. 28-Feb. 8, 2019)
- the Pool Room Gallery, Arch2 Building (Feb. 9-25, 2019)

Over the year, Studio Curio gradually expanded its scope: from collecting and exchanging personal Curios, to building interactive Cabinets of Curiosity, to designing elaborate public Institutions for Collective Musing.

The studio included amazing local and international field trips—to Philadelphia and Washington DC—where we toured more than two dozen museums (including the Barnes Foundation, designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture by David Adjaye), and met many inspiring architects, curators, and museum administrators. Motivated by these adventures, the future architects of Studio Curio began translating their cares and curiosities into comprehensive architectural proposals: researching sites and precedents, developing detailed programs, and devising public institutions for musing, around curious collections and caring missions, opening onto the great Wunderkammer of an ever-expanding and meaningfully sustainable world.

Instagram: #studio_curio
CABINETS OF CURIOSITY  
Left-to-right, top-to-bottom:  
1-2 Alix Lanyon-Taylor, Living Archive of Everyday Gestures & Impressions;  
3-4 George Vincent, Augmented Zoetrope, [re]Muse;  
5 Melissa Folk, Growth/Decay;  
6 Power Odudu Umoessien, Space-Time Odyssey;  
7-9 Jessica Piper, Quaero (Cabinet of In(Qu)iry);  
10-11 Connery Friesen, Quarry-Time Capsule;  
12 Fatima Naeem, Bakasana-Balance.
Left-to-right, top-to-bottom: 1-3 Teron-Jordan Richard, Reveal (in action at GoSA and Nuit Blanche); 4-6 Michael Bellstedt, Brown Box Incised (where Duchamp’s Large Glass, Eisenman’s Wexner Center, and myriad other urban-artistic curios meet); 7-8 Eric Decumutan, Cabinet of Polysynthesis, Smell-Light-Touch-Sound; 9-10 Jessica Leon D’Toste, Cohesión; 11-12 GoSA Exhibition Opening - curiosity captured by photographer Dylan Hewlett.
Connery Friesen - Capsule Museum. Sited at the edge of Stoney Mountain Quarry (closed ca.1987), this speculative future-history museum-machine re-interprets the abandoned site as fertile grounds for critically musing on society’s dependency on gadgetry and resource extraction. Capsules displaying decades of material culture within a reclaimed public park are lowered by cranes into Piranesian galleries, lit by an array of skylights and reflections.
Michael Bellstedt - Desire Institute. This multifunctional cultural arts centre is sited at Provencher & Archibald, the former site of Central Grain. Inspired by the mechanical-erotic operations of Duchamp's Large Glass or The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, and the surreal prairie-industrial landscape, it rises as a collage of salvaged grain elevators and railway infrastructure, it's architecture of Desire blurring the lines of dream and reality.
Musing Institution This vision of urbanity deploys amorous mechanisms of immersive inter-dimensional biomorphic neo-reality, to provoke questions of society’s mundane routines, while empowering artists and visitors to experience shared desires. Maker-spacers are intertwined with galleries and exterior neighborhood pocket parks. As the Desire Institute grows, new realities and surreal architectures form, and the mundane is transformed to the wondrous.
Jessica Leon D'Toste – Museum of Oblivion Memory. This adaptive reuse project reinvents the labyrinth of private and collective memory. Architectural strategies of spatial, thermal and hydrological delight invite liberating emotional responses, healing the minds and bodies of visitors, while purging traumatic memories and rescuing the city's forgotten infrastructure.
Musing Institution

Spaces filled with therapeutic machines frame dream-sequences of release and immersion, escape and encounter: in a library, café, garden or market; in saunas, hot tubs or a hidden lap pool. At the center, visitors can climb a vertical plaza, or a tower overlooking the city. This “space for cogitation” is a museum for meditation, contemplation, daydreaming and intellectual struggle, aiming to rejuvenate body, soul and city.
Jessica Piper - Quaero Institute for Sustainable Urbanism. Located near the intersection of Portage & Main, this interdisciplinary, research institution aims to enhance economic, environmental and social sustainability in Winnipeg. Quaero facilitates collaborations between industry, academies and politics, while fostering community outreach and inclusion via public space, an interactive map room and temporary satellite exhibitions in storefronts across the city.
Odudu (Power) Umoessien - *Space-Time Odyssey*. Sited at FortWhyte Alive (a former clay and gravel pit, now wildlife foundation), this museum creates intimate relationships with the moon and the immensity of outer space. Guided by fascinations with Wenzel Jamnitzer’s 16th-c. geometrical universe and personal curiosity in the cosmos, this museum celebrates the universe of human imagination. It exhibits astronomical instruments and cosmological phenomena, while fostering shared experience in astronomical events and profound awareness of our natural world – near and far.