The Zymoglyphic Museum
Collection as Creation:
An Art Historical Journey Through the Zymoglyphic Region

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1 June 2025

The Zymoglyphic museum sits unassumingly in a two-story garage on a quiet street in the idyllic Mount Tabor neighborhood of Portland, about a ten-minute walk from a small main street lined with trendy coffee shops and upscale bars, and just a short drive away from some of the best views in Portland at the top of the mountain. The museum is marked by a sign with whimsical lettering that points the way to a small door into the garage museum. When I knock, I am greeted by a reedy voice telling me to "come on in!" I oblige, and am met by curator and artist Jim Stewart, a small man with a white beard who looks at me as if he's subtly searching for my ulterior motives. He's enthusiastic about his work and enthusiastic about my interest in the museum, despite my lack of knowledge at it at this point.

The first floor of the museum is reserved for Stewart's workspace, the museum's gift shop– which features postcards that offer "greetings from the Zymoglyphic Museum", and an extensive reference library of art and science books from every discipline. A few signs around the museum define the word "zymoglyphic", which is a neologism Stewart created to define his work, and apparently the most common source of confusion for museum-goers. It means, "of, or pertaining to, images of fermentation, specifically the solid residue of creative fermentation on natural objects", or rather, "the collection and arrangement of objects, primarily either natural or weathered by natural forces, for poetic effect". This aforementioned "creative fermentation" is clear to see even in the first floor– a fisherman's mermaid (dried fish manipulated with eyes glued on them), a spiky neon ball in a plexiglass display mysteriously entitled ZMOV MAINC, and various specimens in jars reminiscent of Frederik Ruysch's dioramas peer out at me as I sit in the library.

The second floor is where the museum lives. Stewart goes up ahead of me to flick on a few lights and turn on a TV screen in which digital fish and other artificial organisms bob around in a "Cybernetic Aquarium", and then I am left to look around.

The Zymoglyphic Museum is a fictive museum created by artist and curator Jim Stewart to house and display his decades worth of art and contextualize them within an imagined culture– the people of the Zymoglyphic region. The aforementioned region, according to Stewart's machinations, is an imagined part of the world, shrouded in dense fogs and surrounded by strange currents that cause it to be completely insulated from the rest of the world, and thus containing some rather strange creatures. The museum, partially due to its ironic promotional materials and the deadpan nature of its curator, has most often been understood as an oddity museum or a tourist attraction, rather than a work of art to be studied in the academic sense.

Because the museum has been unjustly overlooked by the art world, the following paper aims to academically analyze the museum and its various works of art within the context of its art historical influences and dialogues, while also providing a narrativized "tour" of the Zymoglyphic region in keeping with the poetic spirit of the museum.

The museum is divided into four sections, which were created by Stewart in part to better narrativize the imagined culture of the Zymoglyphic region and in part to organize the museum in a more comprehensive manner. The visitor circumambulates chronologically through the museum's four sections from left to right, which gives the feeling of being able to see the evolution of the art of a culture over time. It all begins with the Rust Age, which, as the name suggests, is largely composed of natural materials combined with rusting metal, and figurines made of bones, gears, and mud. Next is the Age of Wonder, which boasts fantastical displays of mysterious or otherwise intriguing objects in glass cabinets, dioramas that have both natural materials and wires, and remains of various animals turned into art. In the corner after the Age of Wonder is the museum's Natural History section, which features species endemic to the Zymoglyphic region, such as the *Happy Fish*, a creature made of various bits of dried seaweed, and the *Zymoglyphic Mermaid,* a creation which appears to be a dehydrated stingray with eyes glued to the bottom. The combination of the eyes and the mouth-like gills give the mermaid a simultaneously disturbing and alluring quality– a theme that can be traced throughout the many macabre constructions of the museum. The third section is the Era of Oriental Influence, which comprises a few shelves in which figurines and viewing stones are displayed on lacquer stands, accented by "plant cuttings" that recall the traditions of *bonsai* or *ikebana*. Finally, in front of the stairs to the first floor lives the Modern Age, one of the main focal points being a large dollhouse shoebox gallery with tiny works of art including stones that recall modern art and windblown sculptures hung overhead.

It would be amiss to discuss the Zymoglyphic museum without discussing its creator. Jim Stewart is the heart and soul of the Zymoglyphic Museum, the artist whose work the museum displays, and the mind from which the Zymoglyphic region emerged. Due to the structure of this paper, in which each of the ages are analyzed individually with regards to their art historical influences and dialogues, this paper is inherently also about Stewart and the various experiences, travels, and academic interests that have shaped his work, and thus, the museum itself.

Stewart's innate desire to collect, create, and display is evident throughout his life as outlined in the Curator's Tale on the museum's website. His interest in Natural History and diorama began in his childhood in the Redwoods of Northern California, where his father was a naturalist. He says he grew up in the back rooms of a museum, and that this fundamentally shaped his worldview and informed his love of dioramas. He fondly recalls visits to the California Academy of Sciences and his travels to the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco and the Seattle World's fair in 1962, both of which introduced him to the wonders of science. As a child, he collected stamps, languages, pets, and crab shells, among other things, and would sometimes create his own version of a Natural History museum with his collection. He studied literature and soft sciences in college, and was fascinated by surrealism and the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. Later, he married Judith Hoffman, another artist,

whose whimsical fish sculptures were the catalyst for the construction of Stewart's first diorama.

Stewart's first fanciful museum was inspired by the Alien Zoo in Superman's Fortress of Solitude, in which he exhibited a lump of multicolored plastic as a "Rainbow Jewel from Another Planet". The museum's website states that the jewel, which can still be seen displayed today, came to the Zymoglyphic region "carrying with it the seed of the museum". In college, Stewart created ironic art displays with his friends, and from 1989-1993, when he participated in the Open Studios program in San Francisco, he presented his work as "exhibits from some imaginary natural history museum". Finally, in 2000, the Zymoglyphic Museum was born in a shed in the driveway of Stewart's San Mateo property, and later reopened in 2016 in Portland in the two-car garage where it still stands to this day, a testament to a lifetime of inspiration and creation.

The Rust Age (The Oxidocene)

Though little is remembered about the prehistory of the Rust Age, its people made sure to leave their mark on the world they inhabited. As you travel through the Rust Age, it becomes clear to you that nature, in all of its forms, is the most potent presence here– craggy mountains, boggy marshes that house the remains of life forms long-gone, the beautiful quiet of a forest clearing, the shock of river water on your legs. Its people have little need for art– they are surrounded by the divinity of nature every day, why should they have a need to create artificial beauty? However, like many of those that live at the mercy of the wonder and terror of nature, they are a deeply religious people. Ceremonies and rituals, enhanced by the use of figurines, masks, and other spiritual items, are the most prevalent markers of daily life in the Rust Age, and it is not unnatural to hear the chanting of many voices as you walk through its villages. You stop to look at a particularly evocative ritual mask and wonder if someday someone will pick this up and see in it a piece of art instead.

Indigenous and so-called "primitive" art can be partly characterized by two main focuses– the practice of animism within spiritual cultures, and the reassessment of ritual items as art and appreciation of ritual items for their aesthetic value. According to Hannah Rachel Bell and Martin Porr in their article "'Rock-art', 'Animism' and Two-way Thinking: Towards a Complementary Epistemology in the Understanding of Material Culture and 'Rock-art' of Hunting and Gathering People", the practice of animism can be typically defined as "the belief that inanimate objects are animated by some life-energy, that they can act like 'persons' and participate in social interactions" (161). Sometimes this takes the form of a figurine that has been associated with some sort of protective purpose or other importance, as can be seen in the many spiritual figurines of African and Oceanic indigenous cultures. These aforementioned social interactions can also be understood to encapsulate ritual or some other sort of spiritual practice, a theme which is seen through much indigenous art. Another theme that can be connected to this tradition of animism is the concept of shamanism, in which a shaman acts as an intermediary figure between the world of the living and the spirit world, often aided by ritual objects which are said to amplify the presence of these spirits, or other methods such as trance states or extreme

physical exertion. Shaman figurines emerge as a combination of these two traditions, a ritual object that is supposed to act as the spiritually amplifying shaman without the presence of a separate individual.

Similarly, ritual objects have been recontextualized as art throughout history. For example, cult statues from the Greeks, Neolithic cave paintings, or Ethiopian iron crosses. Amanuel Sahilu offers the perspective that "art frees the individual to take a semblance–just a meager reminder–of the ritual experience to a distant location, or… to the distant future" (2021). To this end, the physical existence of the ritual object suggests the ritual itself, and allows those who view it and use it to, in some way, experience the intended effects without being in the physical space where the ritual occurred. It is natural that ritual objects would be recontextualized or understood as art because art has a similar impact– it allows groups of people from all over the world and throughout different periods of time to experience the emotions and rapture associated with an image that may be from centuries before. In this way, spirituality and art are intertwined in the ways that they aid us in seeing the world through different lenses and transcend space and time to unite those who view or use them.

The Rust age emerged from Stewart's fascination with the creation of objects with "compelling imagery" (zymoglyphic.org) not necessarily as pieces of art, but for spiritual use, loosely inspired by Indigenous art of the American Southwest, Africa, and Oceania. The art from this age largely consists of anthropomorphized figurines made of various natural materials and rusting metal, as well as masks and other spiritual objects. It echoes Indigenous traditions of using symbolic materials from the land and invites viewers to consider the fluidity of the distinction between art for art's sake and art as a vehicle for spirituality. According to Douglas Newton's *Masterpieces of Primitive Art*, "In primitive art, the human figure almost invariably represents an ideal of some kind, usually spiritual, and only rarely physical" (Newton 106). In this way, anthropomorphized ritual figures embody animistic vessels or purposes rather than physical beings, and this principle is clearly reflected in the spiritual figures of the Rust Age, who are often protective or shamanistic figures.

Stewart's work displays a profound fascination with art as a conduit for spiritual practice, specifically the ancient traditions of shamanism and animism. Many of the pieces in this collection are described as having protective or otherwise amplifying purposes– protection against certain demons, shamans represented in spirit form, or talismans to help with certain parts of daily life. In placing these figures in the fictitious museum of the Zymoglyphic region, Stewart asserts that the interpretation of art is an ongoing conversation, a process that changes and develops over time. Historical context is important to consider when looking at a work of art, but it is also important to analyze art from a modern perspective– recontextualizing and reassessing works of art to not only acknowledge its historical influence but to understand its place in the world today.

Guardian Figure is a construction that is indicative of many of the Rust Age's artistic conventions– the use of materials endemic to the region (in this case, decaying metal), anthropomorphic talismans for protection, and animism. The figure is a cube of rusted metal, with a sort of head indicated by a cowrie shell haloed by a circular panel of rust. The figure itself

is balanced on two orange “feet” that resemble mittens with the thumbs facing inward. Attached to the torso-cube of the guardian is a rusty appendage suggesting an arm, which clutches a staff-like twig, occupying a defensive posture which reflects its status as a protective figure. The outside of the torso-cube of the figure has chipped off in multiple places, exposing its rusty insides and leaving a small circle of rusty dust around the “feet”. The *Guardian Figure* was supposed to act as protection “against certain demons” (zymoglyphic.com), which carries the concept of the Rust Age’s imbibement of inanimate objects with spiritual or protective purposes.

Stewart’s caption states that the “fragility and constant state of decay have transformed it into a symbol of the futility of relying on such talismans”, emphasizing the changing contexts and meanings of the work over time. Here, Stewart’s work argues that intention is not necessarily what makes a piece of art– it is the changing symbolic value and messages of the work that gives it meaning. Works can be recontextualized, reassessed, and understood through different lenses and by means of the different worlds of the people who enjoy them, and the Rust Age is indicative, even celebratory, of this possibility.

The Age of Wonder

As you walk through the typical Zymoglyphic city during the Age of Wonder, you can hear mechanical clicking all around you. You get the sense that nearly everything in this landscape is made of an intricate system of interlocking gears and whirring mechanisms, all powered by the oil that sits deep in pockets of the earth. Hot-air balloons and blimps circle overhead, likely travelers headed to some distant land, where they will no doubt bring back souvenirs of their travels– shards of ruined temples, fossilized remains of strange creatures, the curled shells of long-gone nautili– to display in glass-paneled cabinets to prove to their peers that they’ve truly been *somewhere. If you were to step into the Town Museum, you’d come across art reflecting the fascination with the relationship between life and death, where bones and gears and moss come together to create something haunting and beautiful– where you can be reminded to admire the splendor of the world around you while you still have time.*

During the Renaissance, curiosity cabinets and dioramas emerged as a reflection of new technologies that allowed for the exploration of places previously unknown, and the fervor for collection that attempted to create a singular image of the ever-expanding world. Patrick Mauries describes this phenomenon as the enlightened person’s effort to collect “liminal objects that lay on the margins of charted territory, brought back from worlds unknown, defying any accepted system of classification (and most notably the conventional categories of ‘arts’ and ‘sciences’) and associated with the discovery of ‘new worlds’” (12). This urge to collect, and therefore possess, those artifacts which are deemed ‘unfamiliar’ or ‘exotic’ is one that has been repeated over the centuries, leading to the imperialistic conquest of indigenous peoples and cultures, and has led to the development of museums whose collections consist partially or mostly of stolen cultural artifacts. Many of these displays reflected an intriguing commentary on life and death– the immortalization of those figures which long ceased to exist.

The diorama is another example of the urge to collect, classify, and display. Amy Herzog

acknowledges that “there is something profoundly fetishistic, and mildly necrophilic, at the heart of the diorama: an apparent desire to encapsulate and reanimate those items on display” (48). The diorama presents an interesting duality in which the artist attempts to capture and contextualize that which is unknown to them, while still never being able to understand or experience this vision of the unknown during its actual lifetime. The diorama additionally represents the combination of the natural with the artificial– figures frozen in what is assumed to be their natural habitat, but without completely or perfectly reflecting a scene of the living. This apparent fascination with death and the immortalization of the dead is something that often disturbs modern sensibilities, but our current-day attitudes toward death are primarily due to our separation from it. Death was an everyday part of life for those living in the past, particularly in the 19th century when dioramas first came to be– childhood mortality rates were extremely high, and diseases ran rampant due to poor sanitation practices. What we now deem morbid was, in fact, simply a part of life for many of the artists involved, and the art of the time perhaps reflects even a desire to immortalize loved ones or preserve the memories of something that they viewed as beautiful.

Zymoglyphic Museum curator Jim Stewart defines the Age of Wonder as being “based on a mix of Renaissance curiosity cabinets and 19th-century Natural History museums, whose dioramas were given a surrealist twist” (Zymoglyphic.com). The artifacts of this age reflect both the conflation of naturalia and artificialia as well as the concept of *memento mori* present in the creation of past curiosity cabinets and dioramas in the ways they preserve life even after death.

One poignant example of this phenomenon is the piece *Self-Destroying Automaton*, which is a vaguely anthropomorphic construction consisting of a rusting clock face, iron curlicues making up the “legs” of the figure, a crab pincer as the left arm, and a hinged doll arm as the right arm. The automaton “holds” in one of its hands a rusting gear and in the other, some sort of spring, suggesting that it has been systematically deconstructing its own internal mechanisms and holding them aloft as if offering them to museum-goers. Automata occupy a space between the animate and inanimate– while they are clearly made of inanimate parts, they have an often unsettling semblance of life, bringing up the possibility that living creatures are merely mechanical devices deep within (zymoglyphic.com). Humanlike movement being created by an inanimate object which we know is simply powered by a series of gears and chains, embodies the concept of the uncanny– a sight at once familiar and unfamiliar. Simultaneously, because the automaton essentially self-destructs, the viewer is reminded that all things– even those that are inanimate– can die, echoing the sentiments of *memento mori* which are central to the creations of the Age of Wonder.

The Age of Wonder also contains Stewart’s answer to Renaissance dioramas– a cross between the natural and the artificial, but with the aforementioned surrealist twist. In one of these dioramas entitled *Curiosity*, Stewart has created a landscape of natural materials: wood, moss, clods of dirt, dried lichen, and animal and insect remains including the bones of a cat and bird and the shell of a beetle. In addition, however, Stewart has added what the piece’s description calls “nosy plastic creatures”, which seem to be discarded bits of childrens’ toys, and a mass of colorful wires, which spill out from the left side of the scene and echo the strings of dried grass

in the rest of the diorama. In seamlessly integrating the natural with the man-made, Stewart's dioramas manage to take the founding concept of curiosity cabinets and dioramas a step further, emphasizing the already-present motifs of death, decay, and preservation.

The Era of Oriental Influence

The Era of Oriental Influence permeates some areas of the Zymoglyphic region more than others. As you travel through various cities, you can sometimes see the beautiful simplicity of Japanese Shinto architecture sandwiched between two elaborately columned marble buildings. In other places, houses resemble Chinese palaces, with sloped roofs, bolstered corners, and guardian figures set in place to intimidate any evil spirit that dares cross the threshold. Natural landscapes that previously went unnoticed are now appreciated with a new fervor– it's not uncommon to see a neighbor crouched in their garden, deep in thought as they examine a peculiarly shaped rock. You call on a friend from long ago, and they invite you in to show you their art collection. The star of the show? A stone that perfectly echoes the mountain range behind the city, complete with striations that recall snow capped peaks. "Isn't it wonderful?" they ask, beaming. You have to agree.

The art of stone viewing– *suiseki* in Japanese and *gongshi* in Chinese, emerged during the Tang Dynasty in China and spread to Japan during the Asuka period. Viewing stones are "small, naturally formed stones admired for their beauty and for their power to suggest a scene from nature or an object closely associated with nature" (Covello and Yoshimura 15). The symbolism of viewing stones is often associated with religious beliefs– those who observe Shinto believe that the stones represent the forces of nature spirits, or *kami*, present in the world around them. To the Buddhists, to become one with the stone is to become enlightened, as one can come to understand nature through its miniature representation. The influence of zen Buddhism led to the appreciation of more smooth, austere stones rather than their jagged, mountainous counterparts.

In the Japanese tradition of *suiseki*, there have been many different classifications of viewing stones, such as distant landscape stones, object stones, plant-pattern stones, celestial pattern stones, weather pattern stones, abstract pattern stones, and various other categories based off of where they were found, each with their own meanings and symbolisms. Scholar Richard Rosenblum posits that the stone viewing tradition of *gongshi* originated from the inward focus of Chinese culture: "Chinese culture looked for paradise inside of things, just as western culture looked upward and outside. In Chinese art, this orientation caused a search for a 'world within a world', for imagery in surprising and unpredictable places" (1999). For many, viewing stones represented a small piece of the wonder of nature or of the divine they could collect and place inside their home, and we see this theme continued in the Era of Oriental Influence's displays.

Display is another focus of many Asian art practices, especially in viewing stones. It is imperative to consider "the visual power of the table, determined by its visual heaviness and by the complexity of its design" and ensure that it works "in harmony with the visual power of the object" (Covello 80). In a sense, it is the careful aesthetic assessment of the display that designates the viewing stone as a piece of art, not just a piece of natural material. Especially

when combined with bonsai to create a tiny landscape, viewing stones can encompass the monumental size and beauty of nature in a compact form for *suiseki* collectors, as well as demonstrating the fluid boundaries between art and the natural world. In this way, these forms of Asian art posit that art depends in part on its physical place or its context– a beautiful stone can become art when it is removed from its environment and placed on a stand in a museum. Anything can be art if it is simply deemed worthy of contemplation and acknowledgment, and we see this theme carried throughout the Era of Oriental Influence, and into the Modern Age as well.

According to the Zymoglyphic museum's website,"the Era of Oriental Influence in a sense plays off the European fascination with the Orient, but really results from [Stewart's] own fascination with the way Asian cultures use nature in art (tray landscapes, *bonsai, ikebana*, viewing stones, and so forth) without really calling it 'art'". Stewart's collection comprises three Japanese-style shelves which are filled with objects– one with various curios, another with viewing stones, and the third with assembled items that recall the Asian fascination with finding tiny landscapes in nature. There is a clear statement here: the divine can be found, as evidenced by the viewing stones, and furthermore, it can be echoed in creations made from found items as well.

Many of the stones in Stewart's collection would have gone unnoticed to the non-artistic eye. However, they have been plucked from their natural habitats by Stewart and placed on stands, deemed by their collector as worthy of contemplation. As such, each viewing stone is personal to its collector– much like the rest of the museum– and represents his own conception of the divine in nature. For example, some may see only a piece of coral or a sharp piece of petrified wood. However, to Stewart's discerning eye, that piece of coral becomes *Whirlwind*, and the petrified wood becomes *Jagged Mountain* when placed on their stands and thus deemed as art.

Stewart's collection also departs from the traditional viewing stones to assemblage pieces that assume similar visual principles to those of Japanese *bonsai* and *ikebana* while giving them their own Zymoglyphic twist. Stewart's work which he calls a "cutting of a bubble plant" is clearly based on the simultaneous vertical and horizontal movement of bonsai arrangement. The plant has twisted and gnarled vines which emerge from a thick tube of bark. The plant itself looks like a bunch of grapes, but instead of fruit on the ends of each stem, clear plastic bubbles are affixed. In positing that this plant is native to the Zymoglyphic region, Stewart applies the concepts of the surreal or extraordinary in nature present in many traditional Asian art forms to his own work and considers the ever-present question of *what is art?* The answer? Anything that inspires feelings of the divine in the mundane.

The Modern Age

The Modern Age in the Zymoglyphic Region is not unlike ours today, where art imitates life –or perhaps life imitates art. In a Modern Age Zymoglyphic Art Museum, you can find whispers of bygone eras– modernist sculptures in the form of viewing stones that echo the Era of Oriental Influence, or dioramas that recall the Age of Wonder's displays. Here, art is made for

art's sake, not merely found and interpreted. But do not be mistaken! Craft is not what is important. Abstraction trumps all here, and this is obvious as you step through the galleries of the Modern Age. Computerized fish dart past you on huge LED screens, while above your head hangs a jumble of windblown debris the artist calls a "cloud sculpture". Around you, canvases are splattered with paint in a manner almost naturalistic, bringing to mind that constant theme of primordial ooze from which the Zymoglyphic region emerged. Here, art is created on purpose, to remind you that art has always, and will always exist.

According to Stewart, the Modern Age began as a spoof on modern art, and then evolved into a catch-all category for whatever artworks did not necessarily fit into any of the other three designated "ages". However, this age emerges as a mode of commentary on the nature of art, and provides the answer in the form of "art for art's sake". Art becomes more formalised in this era, less for spiritual or ritual function or as a part of nature, or as a collection, but for the purpose of creating something beautiful or something that has narrative meaning. We also see a lot of self-reference in this age– constructed cloud sculptures parallel naturally formed ones, and traditions of diorama and viewing stones are carried on from previous ages.

It is difficult to pin down just a few concrete influences for the Modern Age, especially because it encapsulates the broad horizons of modern art and the fast-changing trends that come with the digital age. However, the most clear inspiration that carries through the Modern Age is modernist sculpture that echoes the curves and natural shapes of Constantin Brancusi and Barbara Hepworth as portrayed through displayed viewing stones that have been smoothed by tides and sand and bored through by various sea creatures. Other sculptures in the Modern Age consist of what Stewart calls "Natural Abstraction", which is a group of sculptures made of windblown debris that has been picked up, fluffed up, and placed on a stand for display. Interestingly, Stewart also displays constructed sculptures based off of this natural abstraction, made from dyed wool, dryer lint, and bits of yarn, suggesting that the Modern Age is intensely self-referential and that it is slowly shifting towards creating art for art's sake, rather than recontextualizing previous objects or simply displaying found items.

Another section of the Modern Age, which Stewart calls "Biomorphic Abstraction", comprises a series of acrylic paintings that embody the museum's core concept of the "primordial ooze" and the cycles of evolution. They are reminiscent of the Abstract Expressionism movement best exemplified by Jackson Pollock and are also an example of biomorphism, the artistic method of portraying natural forms through abstract images. One of these paintings, *Undersea Growth,* uses drips and contrasting reds against a background of green and blue to evoke the growth patterns of algae and other underwater organisms. The swirling, somewhat mycelial lines remind the viewer of the definition of "zymoglyphic" itself– creative fermentation, or the creative process taking hold of natural forms and creating something new. The intersection of art and the natural world has never been so clear as it is in the Modern Age.

Conclusion

One of the most interesting aspects of the Zymoglyphic museum, and part of why it

deserves to be appreciated and acknowledged within the art historical community, is the multitude of ways in which it answers the age-old question of "what is art?". Each age presents a different answer, and provokes visitors to think about their own conceptions of what art is and what it can be. The Rust Age presents ritual objects as art, and art as a conduit for carrying spiritual experiences throughout time and space– functional objects recontextualized. The Age of Wonder presents collections and displays as art, and as a mode of collecting and preserving beautiful things from around the world. The Era of Oriental Influence proves that natural forms can be appreciated as art, a mode of possessing a small piece of the divine, and also emphasizes the importance of display. The Modern Age presents art as a self-referential mode of expression, echoing the art of the past while simultaneously creating new artistic trends and themes simply for the sake of making art. The Zymoglyphic museum itself is a work of art, Stewart's own "personal cathedral" of inspirations and influences that he has collected throughout his life, and simply by existing, proves that collection is indeed a method of creation. To this end, the Zymoglyphic Museum represents just how wide the boundaries of art are, and it invites visitors to think about what they think makes a work of art, or perhaps, what their own museum would look like.

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