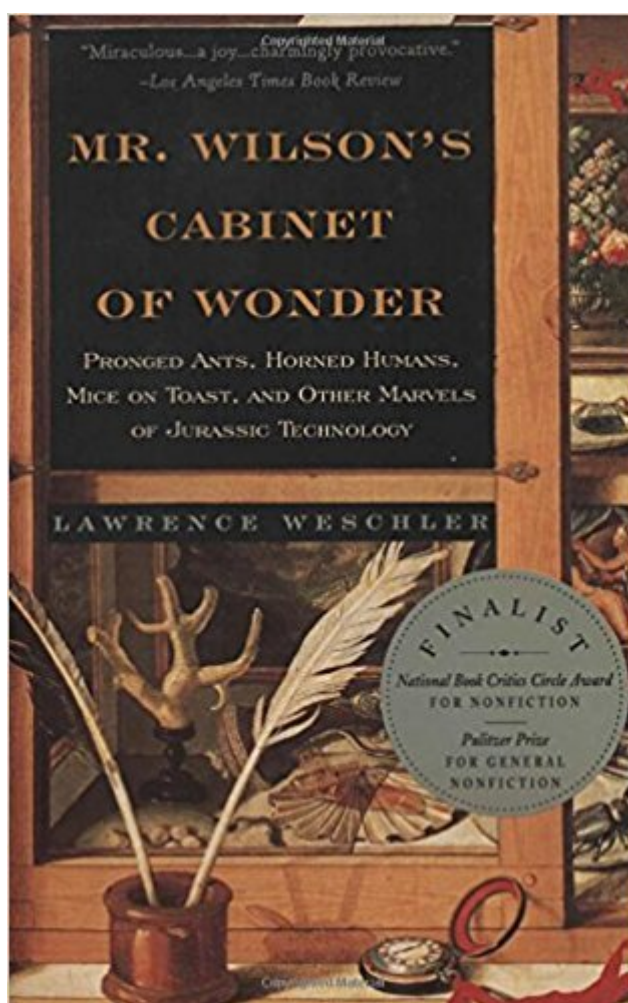


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# Mr. Wilson's Cabinet Of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice On Toast, And Other Marvels Of Jurassic Technology



## Synopsis

Finalist for Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction  
Finalist for National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction  
Pronged ants, horned humans, a landscape carved on a fruit pit--some of the displays in David Wilson's Museum of Jurassic Technology are hoaxes. But which ones? As he guides readers through an intellectual hall of mirrors, Lawrence Weschler revisits the 16th-century "wonder cabinets" that were the first museums and compels readers to examine the imaginative origins of both art and science.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the non-Aristotelian, non-Euclidean, non-Newtonian space between the walls of the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles exist bats that can fly through lead barriers, spore-ingesting pronged ants, elaborate theories of memory, and a host of other off-kilter scientific oddities that challenge the traditional notions of truth and fiction. Lawrence Weschler's book, expanded from an article for Harper's, is, at turns, a tour of the museum, a profile of its founder and curator, David Wilson, and a meditation on the role of imagination and authority in all museums, in science and in life. Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder is an exquisite piece of "magic realist nonfiction" that will prove utterly captivating. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

New Yorker staff writer Weschler probes into L.A.'s highly unusual Museum of Jurassic Technology in this NBCC finalist. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I went to the Museum of Jurassic Technology a few months ago, and immediately fell in love. I didn't understand much, but was fascinated by every exhibit. When I found out there was a book about it, I had to have it. Weschler does a great job tracing the history of the museum, similar museums, and trying to uncover the mysteries behind the MJT's curator. The book can be a little longwinded at times, and I'm not a fan of the footnote system (they should have been footnoted on the actual page, rather than making the reader flip to the end of the book and find the page number). Still, the book is entertaining and informative. It ruins a bit of the magic of the museum by providing answers/background to some of the exhibits, but I hope this will only amplify my curiosity on my next visit.

This odd little book celebrates the odd little Museum of Jurassic Technology (MJT) in Los Angeles. Really, the book celebrates wonder itself. I have not been to the MJT, but this book has certainly put it on the itinerary of my next trip to LA. Presenting itself as a natural history museum, the MJT features meticulously detailed exhibits that may or may not pertain to "real" phenomena. The pronged ant of the title, for example, may be unknown to science under the name *Megolaponera Foetens* but, as Wechsler discovers, its odd life history is perfectly plausible: a large ant, and the only one that produces a cry audible to humans, normally forages on the forest floor; however, after ingesting the spore of a fungus, it climbs upward and then waits to die as the fungus consumes its body from the inside, finally generating a spike about an inch long from the place where the ant's head was, which distributes spores downward, to be breathed by other *Megolaponera Foetens*. The book (and, presumably, the MJT) makes you think about the purpose of museums, and whether the relative "truth" of things that astonish you matters. In other words, since reality routinely trumps imagination, why quibble?

A look at the purpose of museums- specifically the unconventional Museum of Jurassic Technology. A very exciting and thought provoking read! Funny, informative and surprising! Historical examples help to form an understanding of how museums have evolved and poses the question what should they become.

I was led to this book through a StumbleUpon the Museum of Jurassic Technology. Besides an in depth look at the museum - no details, there's too much fun to spoil - the author also looks at the phenomenon of collecting, especially during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The author is

a compelling writer with a great sense of absurdity. It was easy to see why the book, although slim, was nominated for literary prizes. Readers who enjoy Nick Bantock's *The Museum at Purgatory* (Byzantium Book), Griffin & Sabine: *An Extraordinary Correspondence* and Barbara Hodgson's *The Tattooed Map: A Novel*, *The Sensualist: An Illustrated Novel*, will revel in this non-fiction sidebar to collecting and museums

Good

Let me start by saying that this book is excellent. Though readers might be a bit confused to begin with, if you stay with this novel it is absolutely worth it. This was required reading for one of my classes, otherwise I would have never even known to pick it up on my own spare time. I am extremely glad I had the opportunity to read this book, even as a person who normally does not read non-fiction. The book is extremely well written and delightfully entertaining. I recommend it to everyone.

Visited the museum, then read the book. Both were fun and thought-provoking.

Very curious. To be taken in small doses to be savored.

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