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## Museum of Natural History Shows Off Strange Science

*John and Peggy Maximus Art Gallery Exhibit Opens June 7*

**(Santa Barbara, CA – May 28, 2019)** On Friday, June 7, the John and Peggy Maximus Art Gallery at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History will open its curious summer art exhibit, *Strange Science*. The exhibit features a rare combination of original 18<sup>th</sup>-century engravings and taxidermy specimens.

The gallery walls will be lined with colorful 18<sup>th</sup>-century illustrations of snakes, lizards, frogs, shells, insects, birds, and plants based on Albertus Seba's famous cabinet of curiosities. Seba (1665–1736) was a wealthy Dutch merchant and apothecary who became interested in the natural world during a time of exploration and budding international trade which brought exotic plants and animals to Europe.

In October 1731, Seba contracted with a publisher in Amsterdam to produce a four-volume illustrated work entitled *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata descriptio* (in English, "Accurate description of the very rich thesaurus of the principal and rarest natural objects"). To create Seba's *Thesaurus*, thirteen artists were hired to draw his specimens and transfer an impressive 466 illustrations to copperplates for printing. The artists were asked to draw plants and animals they had never seen before, and the specimens were in various forms of preservation (in jars of alcohol) or decomposition. This created fascinating, quirky, and bizarre compositions that sometimes appealed more to curiosity than science.

A display just outside the gallery called "To Contemplate Without Dread" will highlight taxidermy as an important tool for preserving specimens in 19<sup>th</sup>-century museum collections. Taxidermy specimens on loan from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County include a South American ocelot with its prey, a Canadian Lynx, and a Nine-Banded Armadillo.

After engaging with the illustrations and specimens on display, visitors will be invited to color in their own illustrations at the exhibit's drawing station featuring a tableau of unusual subjects, from a pangolin to rat and toad skeletons, lizards, and eels.

The exhibit is included with Museum admission and will be open daily from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM through September 3. For more information, visit [sbnature.org](http://sbnature.org).

### About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

*Powered by Science. Inspired by Nature.* Founded in 1916, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world. The Museum connects people to nature for the betterment of both.

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Portrait of Albertus Seba



Illustrations of an indigo snake, monitor lizards, and a Jaguarundi

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Drawing table for visitors to color illustrations