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CURRENTS

Elaine Louie

COLLECTIONS

Beware, if You Dream That Unicorns Lived

Bronze anatomical figures studied by 17th-century scientists, early hourglasses and a whale's tusk that once passed for a unicorn's horn are among the items on exhibit at "A Collector's Cabinet of Curiosities: Objects for a Wunderkammer From the 16th to the 19th Centuries." The show runs through Jan. 29 at Peter Freeman Inc., a SoHo gallery.

In the 16th century, monarchs and popes started collecting exotic and assembling them in wunderkammern, or rooms of wonder. "It was the beginning of collecting and the beginning of our museums," said Georg Laue, whose Munich gallery is presenting the 120 objects in the show.

Collectors were sometimes deceived. One of Mr. Laue's exhibits is a whale tusk (priced at \$25,000) that was labeled a unicorn's horn in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Other objects were valued more for their intricate artisanship than their imagined rarity. The 17th-century German lathe-



Jens Bruchhaus

turned sphere in the upper right corner of the cabinet shown houses a cube, which in turn holds another sphere; the work (\$15,000) was carved from a single piece of wood. The gallery is at 560 Broadway (Prince Street); (212) 966-5154.