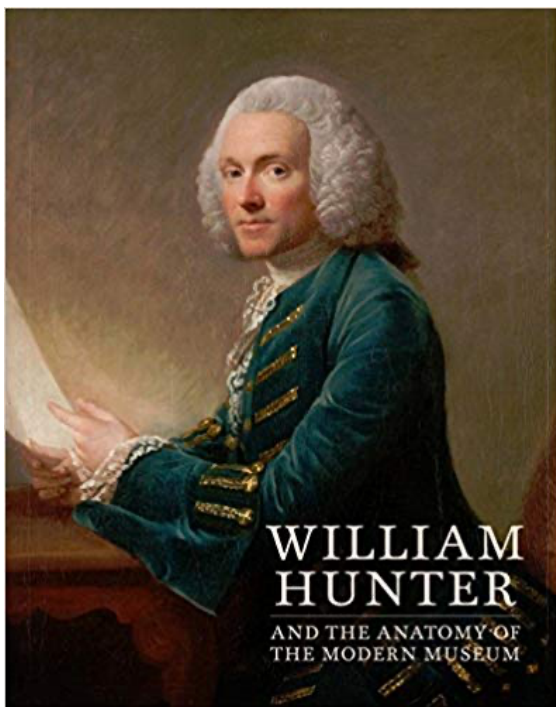


## William Hunter and the Anatomy of the Modern Museum

edited by Mungo Campbell and Nathan Fils. Yale University Press, November 2018. 400 p. ill. ISBN 9780300236651 (h/c), \$65.00.

Reviewed March 2019 Virginia Roberts, Director, Rhinelander District Library, [director@rhinelanderlibrary.org](mailto:director@rhinelanderlibrary.org)



William Hunter and the Anatomy of the Modern Museum is a comprehensive guide to both the man and his studies and how they related to his collecting and their ultimate impact on the modern museum. This book is a companion to the exhibit of the same name organized at the Hunterian at the University of Glasgow, in collaboration with the Yale Center for British Art.

The publication is a detailed overview of the life and times of the Scottish physician and obstetrician to Queen Charlotte, Dr. William Hunter (1718-1783). It examines his work as a physician and obstetrician, his library collection, and his interest and study in the natural world and collection of ethnographic artifacts from Spain, the Middle East, China, and the South Pacific. His areas of interest and holistic and comprehensive collection techniques contributed to the development of modern

museology.

The director's forward does an excellent job of describing the man who was at the frontier of both modern medicine and the exhibit's art and "first contact" artifacts in regions, such as the South Pacific, not well known to Europeans. A thorough chronology of Dr. Hunter's life, work, and collections are placed into an appropriate and important historical context. Brief biographies of each contributor are included.

Clear, extensive essays precede a wealth of beautiful photos and descriptions, which allow Hunter's medical practice, book and manuscript collections, and art and other collections to

emerge in the context of the social, historic, and scientific period. His informed use of all he collected shaped one of the most important “dynamic” library collections in the eighteenth century; he discarded inferior volumes, taking his role in curating seriously and creating a model lending library for others. Hunter’s collecting and preservation techniques created the basis of modern public museum practices. Both his studies in anatomy, particularly his well-known work, *The Anatomy of Human Gravid Uterus*, and his medical studies, as well as his collection of items for the South Pacific and other ethnographic collections, are discussed and analyzed in historical context for greater understanding of what otherwise might be problematic for today’s audience. The endnotes for each essay provide an exhaustive list of sources. The book’s index supplies a detailed, consistent guide to the ideas, people, and places found in both the illustrations and in the text.

This oversized hardcover successfully celebrates a larger-than-life man and his body of work. It features sewn signatures and opens flat.

*William Hunter and the Anatomy of the Modern Museum* is recommended for all libraries. This book is especially appropriate for collections that focus on the history of museology and natural, ethnographic, art, and antiquarian library collections.