FC: Well, I am very happy to meet you again, here in Maastricht, Linda, and thank you for this interview. I would like to know first, from where came this idea to rebuild one day a cabinet of curiosity, or something different in a museum?

LR: I had been thinking about creating a gallery for ten, fifteen years.

FC: Of course.

LR: But I didn’t have an opportunity. So in 2007, I said “Let’s try something.” I put the Nuremberg cabinet, and the ostrich, and, you know, the green glass with the mounts. So I put, so I made essentially a table scape with sea shells, that kind of thing. So it was kind of a first try at a cabinet. But it wasn’t the whole thing. And people really liked it. But when we, you know, as we were planning to redo the entire European wing, I said I really wanted to do it more ambitiously. When we started planning for that whole reinstalling of the European wing, you know, we talked about the whole installation. And we wanted to do something a little different. So we had long discussions about how we wanted to organize the collections. But we did want to embed certain themes into what we were doing throughout all the galleries. And so, we chose four themes: patronage, nature and science, belief, and artistry. But of course, those became perfect themes for the cabinet. So, in a way, the cabinet actually could create in one gallery the whole story.

FC: The whole story—yes, of course.

LR: Right.

FC: It’s an abstract for all of this.

LR: Right, right.

FC: Do you have an idea the public’s reaction where they… they caught the spirit of the cabinet or not?
LR: One of the things that I thought was really important to convey, and to encourage in people is the concept of curiosity. But not curiosity like, “Look at that strange thing” but curiosity to know more. And so, one of the reasons we wanted to have the drawers that opened…

FC: I made the same things.

LR: …it was to get people to “oh!”, and it’s the sense of discovery and exploration, and curiosity. That was really important to me. I don’t know if we convey it concretely, but the idea of walking into an environment that is evocative.

FC: Yes, quite!

LR: But I didn’t want it to look like a museum space. I wanted it to give you the feeling of maybe what it would have been like to walk into a cabinet. I looked at the old prints, the image of the Kircher cabinet, you know, with the table and the scholars, those kinds of things. So, it was that concept of wanting people to get engaged with learning about something. So, a lot of the decisions we made in terms of the design were about that too. That concept of the desk, with the cases of the nautilus and the glass. I was adamant that we have a place where people could sit down…

FC: Yes, yes, yes.

LR: …and engage at eye level. It’s about gaining knowledge, using your natural curiosity to want to know more. Those were the big ideas on top of the, to me very interesting, more concrete thing about the historical aspect of the cabinet, and the cabinet as the predecessor to the modern museum. But if we… if we go beyond that… It’s also that interconnectedness, you know that global idea, which I think does correspond more to our day. You had, you know, new and wondrous objects from South America, and from the East, and creatures that you couldn’t explain, and… All that rolled into one place. You know, the cabinet was kind of like the 17th-century Internet.

FC: Yes, of course.