

Speculum made of wooden



A mystifying gift

They could be regarded as masterpieces of artistry wood design, emerged from the quest for the ideal shape. But really they are appliances for gynaecological examinations, namely so called specula. These are used to dilate the vagina, allowing the doctor to examine the cervix and the inner tissues of the vagina. To put it precisely, we have received two similar superior blades; a speculum consists of one superior and one inferior blade.

The Latin word `speculum´ means `mirror´ and refers to the fact that blades of steel, which is commonly used for specula, capture the light and allow a better sight. Another reason for using steel or glass for specula or, like recently, plastic for the disposable ones, is the need of sterilisation.

Wood – in our case presumably lime or beach wood – therefore appears rather

inappropriate for an object that serves as a gynaecological instrument. So arose the question of why and we haven't found the ultimate answer yet.

One potential guess has these two artful pieces serving as prototypes for reproduction in metal after their optimisation. As many gynaecologists tend to further develop their 'tools' this assumption appears quite plausible. A glance at <http://www.m-e-dical.com/english/vs.htm> proves that a whole range of many different specula came into being this way.

Another, equally plausible surmise based on international research was provided to us by the Viennese gynaecologist Prof. Christian Dadak, MD. He assumes that our wooden specula came in for Galvano-caustic treatments – for more information (in German) see also [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galvanokaustik_\(Medizin\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galvanokaustik_(Medizin)). Being a good insulator, wood seems particularly suitable in this case, as it doesn't distribute heat and so prevents the vaginal walls from burns.

For this generous gift we most warmly thank Mr HR Hans Kremser, MD, retired head of the obstetrician and gynaecological ward of the Villach state hospital and disciple of the legendary Austrian gynaecologist Hermann Knaus (1892-1970).

Inventory number: 3042

Material: lime wood

Dimensions, in cm: 24 x 3