

ETCHING  
ON  
ARMS AND ARMOUR



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## FOREWORD

Etching was probably the most important decoration on European arms and armour from the early 16<sup>th</sup> to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. An acid is used to remove a thin layer of metal around the motif or the sketch itself. In order to obtain a sharp contrast, the recessions in the surface are highlighted by blackening or gilding. Reflecting elements of Renaissance and Mannerist art, the designs encompassed not only foliate scrollwork and strapwork patterns, but also figural compositions of biblical stories, classical history, myths and legends and secular imagery. These were often derived from pattern books and prints.

Compared to other types of decoration like embossing this process had two significant advantages. First, it allowed for a great flexibility regarding the designs and artistic expression. Second, the metal was not weakened, since the acids are not removing significant amounts of metal. As a consequence, you can find both arms and armour for ceremonial use and those intended for battle decorated with etching. In the field it was important to identify the leaders. Richly decorated weapons served as a status symbol, often used as non-monetary incentives by the sovereign to control the officers of mercenary units. So, there were a wide range of suchlike arms for battle use that varied in quality according to the rank of their owners.

From the collector's point of view etched arms and armour belong to the most desired and valued pieces. These can be regarded as works of art, often exhibited in the context of the *Kunst- and Wunderkammer* (cabinet of curiosities) of the Renaissance period. For me it is a particular pleasure to present a selected group of objects decorated with etching in this catalogue, made for both ceremonial purposes and field use. Each one is of distinguished quality, rarity and condition alike, coming from prominent provenances, among them the collection of Lord Astor of Hever, the Royal House of Hanover and the Bavarian Electoral Court in Munich.

Lennart Viebahn









## MORION

for a high-ranking commander.

Italy, last quarter of 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Height: 33 cm.

Length: 36 cm.

*“The skull wrought in one piece with high comb, the brim with roped edge, original plume holder, the surface decorated overall with blued strapwork, enclosing panels etched and gilt with trophies of arms, the central medaillons on each side with classical warriors.”<sup>i</sup>*

### Condition

Rusted in parts, the comb perforated.

### Comparative Pieces

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Acc. No. 04.3.220.

Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia (Collezione Odescalchi),  
Rom.<sup>ii</sup>

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 1977-167-127.

Wallace Collection, London, Inv. No. A127.

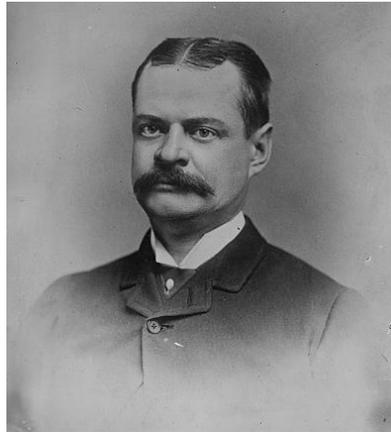
### Background

The morion helmet developed from the 15th century war hat, in particular the Spanish type that was called cabacete. As a very popular

helmet the morion came into use all over Europe and was found on the battle fields until the first half of the 17th century. Especially among the infantrymen like those wearing the pike, the monarch's personal guards and town or city defenders it formed an integral part of their equipment.

## **Provenance**

I. The Hever Castle Collection, circa 1903 – 1983.



*Fig. 1 William Waldorf Astor, 1848 – 1919.*

“William Waldorf Astor of Hever assembled one of the most important collections of European arms and armour in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Elements from three well-known 19th century collections have been recognised: the Hefner-Alteneck, much of which was obtained in the middle decades of the 19th century, the Brett Collection and the Magniac Collection. Of these, the Brett, which is probably the largest private collection ever assembled in this country, was the most important

source, but owing to the poor quality of the illustrations in the 19th century catalogue it is not possible to recognise many of the pieces, especially the armours, with any certainty. Records survive of the names of the dealers who supplied the major items; the leading arms and armour dealer at the time was M. Bachereau of Paris. This name appears in relation to some of the major purchases for the Hever Castle collection and is, of course, well known in late 19th and early 20th century auction records. The most frequently listed name is F. Robert, also French, but otherwise unknown in the annals of English armour collecting. That of Robert Partridge of St. Jame's, a leading London dealer in furniture and works of art also figures largely."<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co (1983): *The Hever Castle Collection*, p. 34.

<sup>ii</sup> Barberini, M. G. (2002): *Belle e terribili. La collezione Odescalchi*, p. 67.

<sup>iii</sup> Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co (1983): *The Hever Castle Collection*, p. 4.





## RONDACHE

north Italy, last quarter of 16<sup>th</sup> century.

56 cm diameter.

*“With central spike, the surface divided by radiating bands, etched and gilt with figures and trophies of arms into panels etched and gilt with cartouches enclosing figure subjects, including Perseus and Andromeda and Victory, the outer border decorated with animals, monsters and human figures, roped outer border.*

*From the Arsenal of Turin. The shield is stamped with the arms of Savoy, the mark of the city of Turin, the date 1719 and a fourth mark, probably referring to the Arsenal of Turin.”<sup>i</sup>*

The rich etchings and fire gilding of the present piece argues for a use by a high ranking commander.

### Provenance

Arsenal of Turin, Italy.

The Hever Castle Collection, circa 1903 – 1983.



*Fig. 1 Use of Sword and Rotella<sup>ii</sup>*

## **Condition**

Surface Corrosion, a crack to the border.

## **Comparative Pieces**

Cleveland Museum of Art, Inv. No. Severance 1916.1504.<sup>iii</sup>

## **Background**

The Rondache (Italian: Rotella) was very popular in Italy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and spread to many other regions in Europe, its use lasting into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mainly made of steel, it measured between 50 cm and 75 cm in diameter and was attached to the forearm by a strap handle. This way of grabbing it distinguishes the rondache from the smaller buckler (Italian: brocchiere) that was held with the free hand on a grip only. While fencing with the latter allowed for more dynamic movements, with the rondache you could still exert active shield attacks like hits towards the armed hand. Rondaches were mostly carried by infantry men together with the sword, both in the field and in the civilian context of dueling.

Infantry equipped with sword and rondache played an important role in the Spanish orderly, the so called Tercio. It was introduced by emperor Karl V. of Hapsburg in 1536 and readily adopted by other European powers due to its success. It consisted mainly of a large group of pikemen, positioned in a square, that was accompanied by smaller groupings of riflemen at its edges. In this context swordsmen allowed for a certain flexibility. They could undermine the opponent's pikes during a fire pause in order to attack their musketeers and massacre them in close combat. Whenever the large square groupings of pikemen became wedged, these units quickly crouched below the first line of

opponents and stabbed them in large numbers. In a defensive situation the fighters could move around and support the flanks of riflemen under attack. Of course these flexible units attracted fire whenever they tried to initiate suchlike actions. Therefore, a special type of heavy rondache was developed in bullet proof thickness, appearing in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Besides Spain it is known that the archduchy of Austria, the Electorate of Bavaria and the Kingdom of Poland recruited mercenaries equipped with shield and sword.

Rondaches used in the manner described above were not decorated in an elaborate manner, with the exception of those, which belonged to military leaders. In this context we do know several Italian garnitures of armour decorated en suite that also encompass this type of shield.<sup>iv</sup> These might have served in parades for representative purposes or could have been used by their owners for dueling.

The latter purpose is a rather civilian one. Several Italian fencing masters travelled through Europe teaching noble men and the aristocracy the use of sword and rotella in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Some of their beautifully illustrated books still exist today and open a window for us, to learn more about the complex art of fencing in Renaissance Italy.



*Fig. 2 Spear and Rotella.<sup>v</sup>*



*Fig. 3 Parrying a Pikeattack.<sup>vi</sup>*



*Fig. 4 Duel.<sup>vii</sup>*

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<sup>i</sup> Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co (1983): *The Hever Castle Collection*, p. 24.

<sup>ii</sup> Marozzo, A. (1536): *Opera Nova de Achille Marozzo*, fig. 13.

<sup>iii</sup> Fliegel, S. N. (2007): *Arms & Armor. The Cleveland Museum of Art*, p. 116, 186.

<sup>iv</sup> Bertolotto, C. et al. (1982): *L'Armeria Reale di Torino*, No. 18-18a; Mann, J. (1962): *Wallace Collection Catalogues, European Arms and Armour*, No. A 57.

<sup>v</sup> Marozzo, A. (1536): *Opera Nova de Achille Marozzo*, fig. 53.

<sup>vi</sup> Marozzo, A. (1536): *Opera Nova de Achille Marozzo*, fig. 29.

<sup>vii</sup> Lovino, G. A. (1580), *Modo di cacciare mano all spada*, fig. 46.











## MORION

for the leader of a lansquenet squad, circa 1580, Germany (Nuremberg).

Height: 30 cm.

Length: 36 cm.

Nuremberg control mark and maker's mark of Mart Rotschmied (died 1597).<sup>i</sup>

*This morion is wrought in one piece, with a hemispherical skull rising to a high medial comb slightly roped along its apex, and an integral brim turned down at the sides, rising to an obtuse point at the front and rear, its edge decorated with a roped inward turn. Sixteen round-headed lining rivets with iron washers encircle the base of the crown. There are etchings all over the surface. Seven vertical bands, each separated by two narrow and one wide stripe left blank, show scrollwork on a blackened stippled ground. Acanthus leaves and scrolls on the brim, which is strucked with the Nuremberg control and maker's mark of Mart Rotschmied.*



Fig. 1 A Musketeer Wearing a Morion Helmet.<sup>ii</sup>

At a very first glance one might be inclined to consider the helmet being Italian on the grounds of its ornamental composition. Indeed the structuring of the present etchings was an Italian influence that spread into Germany like so many other fashions did in art history. This style became very popular in Nuremberg about 1580, an important center for the production of large numbers of arms and armour for field use. Besides the maker's and control mark it is also the execution of the etching on the stippled ground which reveals its origin.

Richly decorated morion helmets like this example served in field use. During the sixteenth century it was common practice to employ lansquenets as armed forces. Usually this led to severe problems of pillaging and plundering troops whenever these mercenaries were unemployed. In order to control lansquenets somehow, the sovereign used both money and attractive pieces of arms and armour like the present helmet as incentives for the officers of these combatants.

### **Condition**

Some traces of corrosion and cracks in the metal. A dint at the apex of the comb, which is probably combat impact of its time in use. Etchings in a good condition. The inner face is conserved with a black lacquer.

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i Dudley, S., Gyngell, H. (1959), *Armourers Marks*, p. 29, 33.

ii Jacques de Gheyn II (1587). After Hendrick Goltzius, (1558 – 1617).







## HALBERD

South Germany, 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

Overall length: 241 cm.

Length of head without langets: 62 cm.

Maximum width: 27,5 cm.



*Large axe head and blade of hollow diamond section decorated with etchings against a blackened ground in typical 17<sup>th</sup> century style, depicting foliate scrollwork and the electoral coat of arms of Bavaria, the latter against a fire gilt ground, and a later etched dating 1762 with the inscription MICHIB (Maximilian III Ioseph Churfürst Herzog in Bayern); weapon number 11 on the base, wooden haft preserved in full length with ferrule; head attached to the pole by its four langets with brass covered nails.*

This halberd was commissioned by Elector Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria (1636 – 1679), called the piece - loving, for his life guard. He became elector in 1651 only shortly after the thirty years war (1618-48). This conflict had devastated Bavaria like no other war had done before - and since then till our days! For the sake of his state Ferdinand Maria implemented a very intelligent policy, meaning on the one hand a strategy of neutrality against both France and the Holy Roman Empire let by the Hapsburg family. On the other hand, his economic policies were very successful which encompassed the consolidation of the courtly finances.

Against this background it becomes clear, why the original dating of this halberd had been replaced by the year 1762 and the inscription MICHIB added. Elector Maximilian III Joseph of Bavaria carried on with the politics of Ferdinand Maria, facing severe economic constraints. While a certain representation was indispensable for an Elector – that is the reason why the present halberd is so fine and elaborately decorated- he had to save money. So, he simply reused the halberds of his predecessors Ferdinand Maria and Maximilian I by adding his initials and the dating 1762, a both highly unusual and interesting measure.

Besides the monetary background he might also have taken it to signal continuity in his geopolitics. In the year 1762 Maximilian III declared neutrality against Prussia, an important step and precondition to ending the seven years war between Austria, Saxony and Prussia in 1763.

### Provenance

Residence Munich, later Bavarian Army Museum.

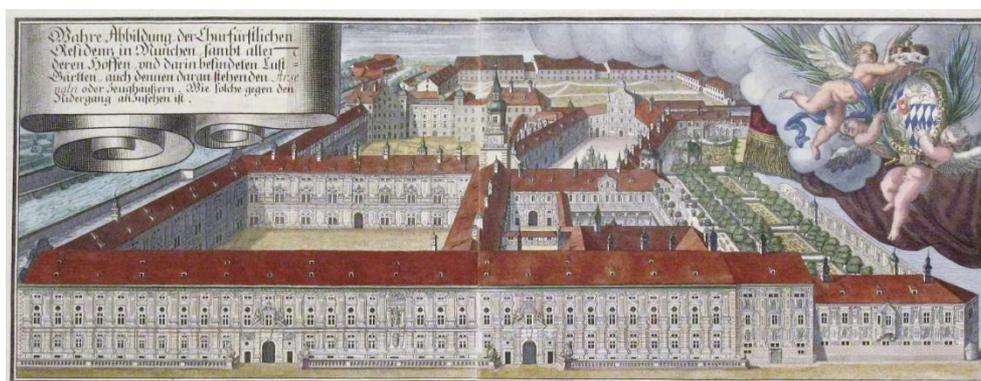


Fig. 1 Residence Munich.<sup>1</sup>



*Fig. 2 Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria.*



*Fig. 3 Maximilian II of Bavaria.*

### **Condition**

Very fine. Patina on the surface, etchings very well preserved with intact blackening. Original wooden haft in full length with ferrule. Two nails missing.

### **Comparative Pieces**

Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich. Inv. No. W2775.

Bayerisches Armeemuseum, Ingolstadt. Inv. No. A2136, 2138, 1049, 2145, 2165, 2171, 2142, 2163.

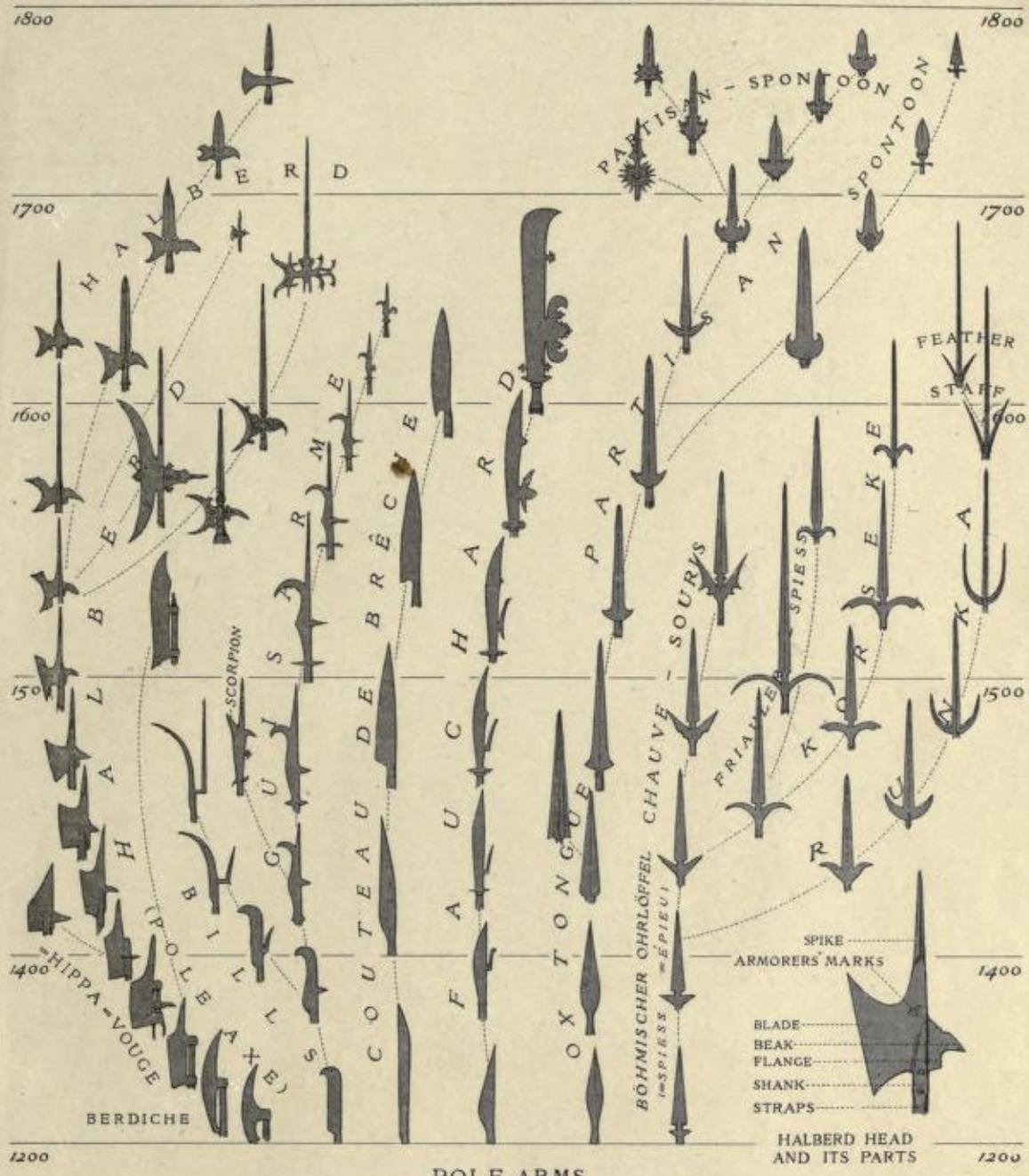
## **Background**

The term halberd, in German called Helmbarte, developed from the word Halm (staff) and Barta, meaning a broad axe blade. At the beginning this staff weapon could be considered a combination of a spear and axe.

Early documents allow tracing back the origins of this arm to the last quarter of the 13th century, when it first appeared in Switzerland. It became a staff weapon typical for this region especially during the liberation wars of the 14th century but also for the following two centuries. It was the battle of Morgarten in 1315 where this deadly instrument proved its effectiveness against the armoured knights of Leopold I. of Austria. So it became the arm of first choice for the Swiss who succeeded both at Sempach in 1386 and Näfels 1388. Due to its success the halberd soon spread all over Europe.

Why was this staff weapon so effective? The construction of it allowed a combatant charging a blow with an enormous amount of energy, a sword could never compete with. Due to the length of the haft its blade attained both a velocity and impact by far greater and could penetrate plate armour. For example, it was an ordinary warrior equipped with a halberd, who deadly hit Charles the Bold of Burgundy by splitting his head albeit being protected by a helmet at the battle of Nancy in 1477.

Besides hacking the halberd could also deliver effective thrusts in order to fight the armoured knight and keep the enemy at a distance. A fluke on the back side of the blade was added at about 1400 and served to pull



POLE ARMS  
 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COMMONER FORMS  
 DURING THE CENTURIES

BASHFORD DEAN D.R.

STANLEY J. ROWLAND DEL.

the opponent off his saddle. It was also useful for concentrating the energy of a blow in an acute point and pierce armour.

In order to provide this functionality a complex construction of the head was necessary that can already be observed at the earliest preserved examples dating from the 13th century. Several components were manufactured separately and joined. While the edges, the spike, the fluke and the nozzles that served to attach the head to the haft had to be forged of hardened steel, the axe blade was made of a softer iron. All components were welded together. By this construction it could be avoided that the hardened edges splintered when they hit plate armour. Like other weapons also the halberd underwent a development in the course of time in order to adjust to improvements of defensive arms and changing fighting techniques.

The earliest type had a long blade and was optimised for delivering strong blows. At the 15th century the smiths started to shape a socket at the lower end where the wooden haft was inserted from now on, instead of the two nozzles which had attached it on the back side of the blade before. Langets extended downward that were riveted to the haft. Their function was mainly to provide additional stability and were not intended to impede cutting off the head, as it is occasionally written in the literature. Until the 15th century the axe's outline was straight, sometimes a little bit convex or even shaped like a half moon. The spike was edged on two sides and followed the extension of the back line of the head. During the sixteenth century the shape of the head changed, since the halberd was increasingly used for thrusting. So the spike became longer and was of diamond or square section, while the axe

shrunked, its edge getting more and more concave. Also the beak got smaller. This development continued in the seventeenth century, when the blade often fulfilled pure decorative functions. Some examples showed skilfully open-worked designs, others, especially those manufactured for lifeguards like our present example, were etched with extensive ornaments. The haft often had passaments, was covered by silk and decorated with gilded brass capped rivets. These weapons served predominantly for representative purposes.<sup>ii</sup>



*Fig. 4 Trabanten.<sup>iii</sup>*

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<sup>i</sup> Copper engraving by Michael Wenning, 17th/18th century; *Wahre Abbildung der Churfürstlichen Residenz in München sambt allen deren Höffen und darin befindeten Lust-Gärten.*

<sup>ii</sup> Müller, H., Kölling, H. (1990): *Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen*, pp. 41 – 44.

Seitz, H. (1965): *Blankwaffen I*, pp. 221 - 228.

Seitz, H. (1965): *Blankwaffen II*, pp. 213 – 216.

<sup>iii</sup> Life Guard of the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I. on their way to a tournament place in 1614.







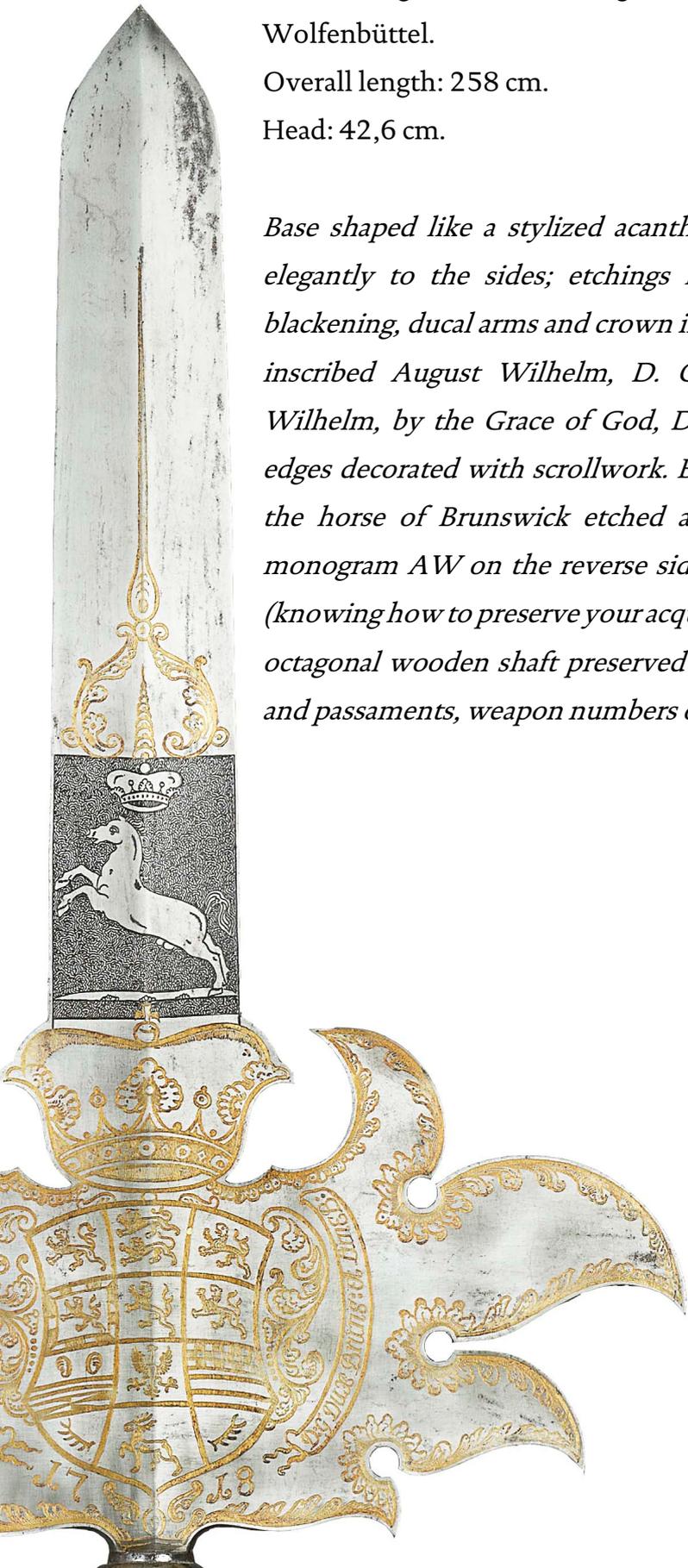
## TWO PARADE PARTIZANS

for the life guard of Duke August Wilhelm of Brunswick-Luneburg in Wolfenbüttel.

Overall length: 258 cm.

Head: 42,6 cm.

*Base shaped like a stylized acanthus leaf, the flukes swinging out elegantly to the sides; etchings highlighted with fire gilding and blackening, ducal arms and crown in the center, below dated 1718 and inscribed August Wilhelm, D. G. Dux Bruns Et Luneb (August Wilhelm, by the Grace of God, Duke of Brunswick and Luneburg); edges decorated with scrollwork. Blade of flattened diamond section, the horse of Brunswick etched against a wavy blackened ground, monogram AW on the reverse side, inscribed PARTA TUERI below (knowing how to preserve your acquisitions); two langets riveted to the octagonal wooden shaft preserved in full length with original ferrule and passaments, weapon numbers on langet and edge of the head.*



### **Provenance**

Collection of the Royal House of Hanover at Schloss Marienburg, before Schloss Blankenburg.

### **Condition**

The condition of these partizans is extraordinary well. It is a stroke of luck that the passaments are preserved completely and undamaged and the head shows only slight traces of oxidation. All the etched and fire gilded ornaments and inscriptions have survived the centuries unblemished. Compared to the majority of preserved polearms our example still has the original passement (!), unshortened wooden pole and ferrule. This untouched condition is owed to the provenance, where the previous owners had taken care for them with utmost conscientiousness within the last 300 years.

### **Comparative Pieces**

Cleveland Museum of Art.<sup>i</sup>

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Acc. No. 41.146.

### **Background**

The partizan belongs to the group of polearms and originates in early 15th century Italy. Partizan is a term that has its roots in the Italian word *partigiana* (*partigiano*) for party supporter. Obviously mercenaries of the Italian wars of the 15th and 16th centuries had been equipped with the early types of this weapon. Its period of use lasted until the 18th century. As a rudimentary form the so called spontoon was prevalent well into the 19th century, being an officer's sign of rank.

Like other types of arms the partizan underwent technical changes in the course of time (see the sketch of Bashford Dean in the preceding dossier). The original form that was also called oxtongue features a blade of arm length tapering evenly to an acute point with straight edges. At the base it was about a hand wide. In order to reinforce the head it was often forged with a midrib. While early examples predominately lacked parrying devices soon two hooks were molded at the base of the blade. In this way it became feasible to parry the opponent's attacks and a skilful combatant could also clamp the enemy's weapon and snatch it away. Like other polearms an advantage of it was keeping the adversary at a distance. In the course of the 16th century the parrying hooks became larger and the blade shorter. Officers now carried partizans as signs of rank.



*Fig. 1 Assassination of Wallenstein in 1634.<sup>ii</sup>*

An important function of this polearm was its use by life guards of European monarchs. Suchlike pieces were flamboyantly adorned and meant to express the status and wealth of the ruler. By the 18th century these polearms served a representative and ceremonial purpose since their practical value for the protection of the sovereign became rather limited.<sup>iii</sup>

## Function

Never intended to be used as a weapon the present partizans functioned to communicate the ducal wealth, power and status. Originally there were more than 60 of these, which must have cost a fortune. Whenever there was wedding, a diplomatic event or any other occasion to celebrate a great feast these partizans formed part of the event. They can be seen as an interesting reference to 18<sup>th</sup> century courtly culture in general, and dining culture in particular. Duke August Wilhelm was famous all over Europe for his extravagant lifestyle and the feasts he celebrated.



*Fig. 2 Accession to power of Karl XI. of Sweden in Stockholm, 1672.*

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<sup>i</sup> Fliegel, S. N. (2007): Arms & Armor. The Cleveland Museum of Art, p. 151, no. 120.

<sup>ii</sup> Merian, M. (1639): Theatrum Europaeum, 1. Edition, vol. 3, pl. 7.

<sup>iii</sup> Seitz, H. (1968): Blankwaffen II, pp. 216- 231.

Müller, H., Kölling, H. (1990): Europäische Hieb- und Stichwaffen, p. 44.



## INSTITUTIONAL CLIENTS

In the last years, we have welcomed several museums of international significance among the circle of our valued clients. We are grateful for the confidence these institutions have placed in our services.

**2019**

The *European Hansemuseum* in Lübeck loaned our 15<sup>th</sup> century breech-loading swivel gun for their special exhibition *Störtebeker and Company*.

**2017**

*Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* from Malta purchases a group of rare antiquarian books on artillery and fortification, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**2016**

The *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* in Munich enhances its collection with an important hunting hanger.

**2015**

*Schloss Moritzburg* near Dresden acquires from us a partizan of the lifeguard of Elector Friedrich August I., Saxony 1694 – 1697.

**2015**

We sold the drawing of an unknown bronze barrel by Albert Benningk to the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin.

**2013**

The *Cleveland Museum of Art* secures a savoyard helmet, dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. We were able to trace back its provenance to the collection of Rutherford Stuyvesant.