





An Extremely Rare Buckler or Target, Germany or Italy, 16th Century

Diameter: 43 cm.

Height: circa 13 cm.

Weight: 1390 g.

Wood, sinews, leather, painted. In the center a forged iron cone.

Provenance: Uiberacker family, castle Sighartstein.

The corpus of this buckler is made of wood, its surface being abraded in order to facilitate the adhesion of an applied layer of feazed sinews. In the centre a forged iron cone is riveted to the wood, showing a leather covered handle on the back side. Within the cone the wood is cut out ensuring enough space for the hand grabbing the handle. Above the layer of sinews there is leather, its surface with remains of paint. Leaves in white on a green background in triangular shape alternate with areas that appear red and brown and do show remnants of white and green colour. The iron cone has still an ornament comparable to a blossom in black, partially filled with white paint against a red background.

The manner in which this buckler is constructed can also be observed on 15th century pavises. This technique is examined in detail and published in an essay by the restorer Anja Alt.¹

Condition

In order to preserve this extremely rare piece for future generations our buckler has been conserved professionally by an expert for the treatment of leather and textiles, who works for leading European museums. We might provide a documentation of the measures to the interested client.

Background

A buckler can be defined as a small and light shield that is center gripped, with a maximum diameter of 45 cm.² This allows for quick manoeuvres at combat and a certain wearing comfort when carrying it.

The buckler was used in different situations, both military and civilian. These encompassed the equipment of life guards³, the battle field, but also protection for travellers, sports in fencing schools and duels.⁴ In the 16th century famous Italian fencing masters like Antonio Manciolino⁵ and Achille Marozzo⁶ taught fighting techniques with sword and buckler and illustrated these in their fencing books. The art of fencing was learned by noblemen on the one hand for the purpose of self defense on

¹ Alt, A. (2013): Zwei mittelalterliche Schilde. Technische Untersuchungen zum Aufbau im Vergleich, in: Waffen- und Kostümkunde, 2013, volume 1, pp. 73.

² Schmidt, H. (2022): The Medieval and Renaissance Buckler, pp. 19 – 22.

³ Blair, C. (1958): European Armour, p. 182.

⁴ Schmidt, H. (2022): The Medieval and Renaissance Buckler, pp.45 – 56.

⁵ Manciolino, A. (1531): Opera Nova.

⁶ Marozzo, A. (1536): Opera Nova de Achille Marozzo, Bolognese, Maestro Generale, de l'arte de l'Armi.

the streets, since the times were insecure. On the other hand, duelling was an important aspect that could be fought for the honour but also to determine a judicial ordeal. A known example for an arranged judicial duel with sword and buckler was the one between Guy Chabot, baron de Jarnac and Francois de Vivonne, sieur de La Châtaigneraye back in 1547.⁷

The vast majority of preserved 16th century bucklers is made of steel. While those constructed of wood, sinews and leather like our example presumably were used at least as much as those of steel, surviving examples are extraordinary rare. These materials simply deteriorate rather quickly so only a handful have been conserved over the course of more than 400 years.



Source: Manciolino, A. (1531): *Opera Nova*, front page, depicting a judicial duel.

⁷ Brantôme de Bourdeille, P. (1584 – 1614): *Discours sur les duel*, in Lalanne, L. (1864): *Oeuvres completes*.
Billacois, F. (1990): *The Duel: Its Rise and Fall in Early Modern France*, pp. 49 – 56.
Hutton, A. (1901): *The Sword and the Centuries*, pp. 45 - 53.

Comparative Examples

Bucklers made of wood and leather:

- I. Wallace Collection, London, Inv. A316.⁸
- II. Museo Arqueologico, Madrid.
- III. Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery.
- IV. Royal Armouries, Leeds, Inv. VI 5.

Bucklers made of steel:

- I. Veste Coburg, Inv. I.D.36.
- II. Wallace Collection, London, Inv. A317.
- III. L'Armeria del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna, Inv. N. 3280 und n. 13.⁹
- IV. Museo Stibbert, Firenze.¹⁰
- V. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milano.¹¹
- VI. Armeria Reale, Torino.¹²
- VII. Museo d'Arti Applicate, Milano.¹³

Provenance

Our shield belonged to the property of the descendants of the Uiberacker family, being cared for at castle Sighartstein outside of Salzburg. The Uiberacker, who were in charge of the armed forces of the archbishops of Salzburg, inhabited the castle from the 15th century until 1964. Untroubled from war and devastation our buckler survived the centuries at Sighartstein as one of the very few examples made of wood and leather.

⁸ Discussed in Capwell, T. (2012): *The Noble Art Of The Sword*, p. 35.

⁹ Boccia, L. G. (1991): *L'Armeria Del Museo Civico Medievale Di Bologna*, pp. 97 and fig. 181, 182.

¹⁰ Boccia, L. G. (1975): *Il Museo Stibbert a Firenze*, pp. 88, no. 183 – 186 and fig. 176 – 179.

¹¹ Museo Poldi Pezzoli (1986): *Armeria I*, pp. 137, No. 352 – 355, fig. 389 – 392.

¹² Bertolotto C. et al (1982): *L'Armeria Reale di Torino*, no. 111 – 113.

¹³ Allevi, P. (1998): *Museo d'Arti Applicate*, pp. 88, no. 147 - 148.



Source: Marozzo, A. (1536): *Opera Nova de Achille Marozzo*. Woodblock images illustrating the use of sword and buckler.



Literature

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