





HEAVY TARGET

forged in shot-proof thickness.

Nuremberg, circa 1600.

Diameter: 58,5 cm.

Weight: 7,61 kg.

Forged of iron in shot-proof thickness, the surface left hammer rough with remains of the original blackening, faceted outer edge, the center fitted with a bud-shaped spike, on the inner face the original leather (!) and purple white silk fringe, fitted with rivets showing floret-shaped fire-gilded brass washers on the front side. Eight further rivets served to fit the strap handle, each covered with grotesque masks of fire-gilded brass. Nuremberg mark near the outer edge.

Background

There are different hypothesis in literature regarding the use of targets at the turn of the 16th to 17th centuries. In the context of the Spanish orderly (Tercio) infantry equipped with round shields and swords, so called *Rondartschiere*, were intended for special operations.

It was emperor Karl V. of Habsburg who designed the Tercio back in 1536 that spread all over Europe due to its success. A large group of pikemen lined up in a square, with smaller ones of musketeers positioned at each corner. During the battle *Rondartschiere* underwent the contact line of fighting pikemen and attacked the enemy's first line with their swords. They also provided a certain flexibility in battling the small groups of musketeers in close combat, especially during the

complicated and time-consuming process of reloading. On the other hand these units were sometimes placed near the musketeers for protection against these attacks.ⁱ

The shot-proof version of the round shield that we are offering is a special type that was often used by corporals who stood in the first line of their squad (*Rottmeister*).ⁱⁱ Geibig mentions the equipment of assault detachments for attacking a breach in the fortification's wall or defending narrow passages.ⁱⁱⁱ According to Martin suchlike targets were also used during the construction of entrenchments in the context of a siege.^{iv}

Comparative Pieces

At the Landeszeughaus Graz there are still 85 of 90 „schußfreie Rundartschen mit mössingnögeln“ (shot-proof targets with brass nails) preserved. These were bought by the Styrian estates from a Viennese merchant in 1610.^v As you can see on the image below the similarity to our present example is very close. Each one is stamped with the Nuremberg mark.



Shot-proof targets at the Landeszeughaus Graz.

These targets differ from our only in small details like the central spike and the mask shaped brass washers covering the rivets that fit the strap handle.

Another example in the Art Institute Chicago is also identical in the latter two aspects and suggests that our present piece originates from the same primary source.^{vi}

At Veste Coburg there is a shot-proof target with a folded edge and polished surface that has similar floret shaped brass washers and also a Nuremberg mark.^{vii}

Condition

Compared to the majority of preserved shot-proof targets the present one shows a very good condition. There are still remains of the original blackening in the recessions of the hammer rough surface. Some corrosion has been restored professionally. The surface is protected by a very thin layer of clear lacquer.

On the back side there is still the original leather (damaged) and silk fringe. This is very rare. Even the majority of comparative pieces preserved in museums collections lack the leathers. The strap handle is missing.

Shot-proof targets were obviously even rare during their time of use compared to other types of arms and armour. Those that have survived the centuries are predominantly found in museums collections today. Among the comparative ones in private hands our example convinces due to its favourable condition.









Notes

- i Ortenburg, G. (1984): Waffe und Waffengebrauch im Zeitalter der Landsknechte, p. 91.
- ii Geibig, A. (1996): Gefährlich und Schön. Eine Auswahl historischer Waffen aus den Beständen der Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, p. 60; Krenn, P. (1987): Harnisch und Helm, p. 44.
- iii Geibig, A. (1996): Gefährlich und Schön. Eine Auswahl historischer Waffen aus den Beständen der Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, p. 60.
- iv Martin, P. (1967): Waffen und Rüstungen, p. 203.
- v Krenn, P. (1987): Harnisch und Helm, p. 44.
- vi Art Institute Chicago, Ref. No. 1982.2460, <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/112056/circular-target>, viewed Dec. 1st. 2022.
- vii Geibig, A. (1996): Gefährlich und Schön. Eine Auswahl historischer Waffen aus den Beständen der Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, p. 60 and fig. 45-47.
- viii Van Breen, A. (1618): De Nassausche Wapen-Handelinge, van Schilt, Spies, Rappier ende Targe, pl. 18, 21, 23 and 9.



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