

BREASTPLATE

Circa 1650.
Dutch.
Maximum Width 35 cm.
Maximum Length: 43 cm.
Weight: 5880 g.

Heavy breastplate of bulletproof thickness, covered in punched and incised decorations, comprising trophies of arms with shields, lions' heads, helmets and swords on a stipled ground.

Background

The present breast plate was worn with a matching back plate and Zischägge or lobster tailed pot helmet, often on a buff coat. Due to its thickness, the breast plate protected against the impact of contemporary firearms. Still, combining these elements did not compromise flexibility, ventilation and field of vision. In the middle of the 17th century this kind of protective equipment was the favorite one worn by harquebusiers on the battlefield, allowing to maneuver quickly on horseback, both using firearms and executing shock-capable attacks in close combat with the sword.

Due to its rich decoration, the present piece was probably worn by an officer. Interestingly enough, a strikingly similar example was offered by our London based colleagues Peter Finer back in 2020.[1] Obviously,

[1] Peter Finer, Catalogue of 2020, no. 32, A Harquebusier's Breastplate.

there must have existed a group of protective weapons in the same design, probably for the officers of a single regiment or civic guard, respectively. Peter Finer ascribes the overall decoration as coming from Antwerp. According to the catalogue entry, punched and engraved decorations were typically Dutch, whereas etched ones were of Flemish origin. Both Dutch armour decoration and the military systems are said to have been imitated in Britain during the Civil Wars.



Harquebusier's Armor of Pedro II, King of Portugal, 1683.

LENNART VIEBAHN
ARMS ARMOUR

Richard-Wagner-Str. 17 · 28209 Bremen · Germany
T+49 (0)421 4093 6994 · info@lennartviebahn.com
www.lennartviebahn.com