



## **Elegant Burgonet Helmet, Nuremberg circa 1570.**

Weight: 1,44 kg.

Height: 30 cm.

The skull is forged in one piece and shaped at the top into an originally blank polished high comb running from front to rear. It extends elegantly into an eyeshade at the front. There is a neck plate riveted to its back side. Above it you can find a row of rivets that enclose portions of the original lining. Corresponding to this row further lines of rivets are shown at the crossing between the skull and the eyeshade, and at the hinged cheekpieces respectively. All plates of the helmet are finely roped and corded at their edges, and further visually separated from the inner spaces by wide chamfers.

Particular attention deserves the ornament of this helmet. The skull is decorated with a group of forged chamfers at both sides, which is repeated at the neck plate and foreshadowed at the eyeshade. This channelling contrasts the surface that was left hammer rough and still shows its original blackening. Due to its sensitivity against friction these surfaces are rarely preserved on armour, the majority of existing examples found in museums today. Normally this type of blackening has disappeared in the course of time as a result of cleaning and the armour parts are either blank now or show a blackening refreshed by paint. One famous example for this phenomenon of originally blackened armour which has a mirror bright facing now is the famous Mühlberg garniture of Emperor Karl V. made by Desiderius Helmschmid (Augsburg 1544). A portrait of the emperor wearing his armour, painted by Juan Pantoya de la Cruz back in 1608, shows the actual original appearance.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the surface also the type of channelling used to decorate the present burgonet is rare. There is a breast plate exhibited at the Fitzwilliam Museum of similar appearance, dated to circa 1560 and probably of Nuremberg origin.<sup>2</sup> Also a half armour at the Museo d'Arti Applicate in Milan is comparable. Made in Nuremberg about 1570, it has the same type of ornament, though the channelling runs parallel from top to down at the breast and back plate.<sup>3</sup>

Our helmet can easily be identified as a work from Nuremberg by the mark at the eyeshade. It is the punch used about 1570, also present at a morion of highly skilled workmanship at the

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<sup>1</sup> Campo, S. (2010): *The Art of Power, Royal Armor and Portraits from Imperial Spain*, pl. 42 and 45, pp. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Eaves, I. (2002): *Catalogue of European Armour at the Fitzwilliam Museum*, p. 214 and pl. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Allevi, P. (1998): *Museo d'Arti Applicate*, pp. 28.

Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin.<sup>4</sup> A few centimetres apart on the opposite side of the eyeshade there is also an armourer's mark. Our own research has not yet led to the identification of other objects bearing this stamp. It is also presently unknown to scholarship (we do thank Dr. Eser from the German National Museum in Nuremberg for his appraisal). Our hope is that the burgonet might contribute to the further research regarding the armourer's craft of the city of Nuremberg.

Last but not least the present burgonet shows a damage of diamond section on the left side of the comb as an interesting distinctive feature. The flash had for aesthetic reasons been folded back at a later date. Presumably the reason for this penetration was the impact of a thrust weapon during combat, like the acute point of a halberd or a war hammer. Similar traces can be studied at a close helmet at the armoury in Graz.<sup>5</sup>

## **Background**

The burgonet had developed at the beginning of the 16th century from the sallet and soon became a very popular helmet worn in many parts of Europe by infantry and later cavalry units. A clear advantage of this helmet is unifying a good protectoral function against cut and thrust weapons with a free sight field, unhindered ventilation and wearing convenience, due to the small weight and the fact it is worn independently from an armour. Besides the morion the burgonet is the most popular helmet of the 16th century for field use.

## **Condition**

Oxidation at the channelling and the formerly polished comb, blackening partly rubbed. Overall very well preserved.

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<sup>4</sup> Müller, H., Kunter, F. (1984): Europäische Helme, p. 174 No. 103 and pp. 268.

<sup>5</sup> Höft, T. (1990): Shiny Shapes, p. 67.

## **Literature**

Allevi, P.: Museo d'Arti Applicate, Milan 1998.

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