





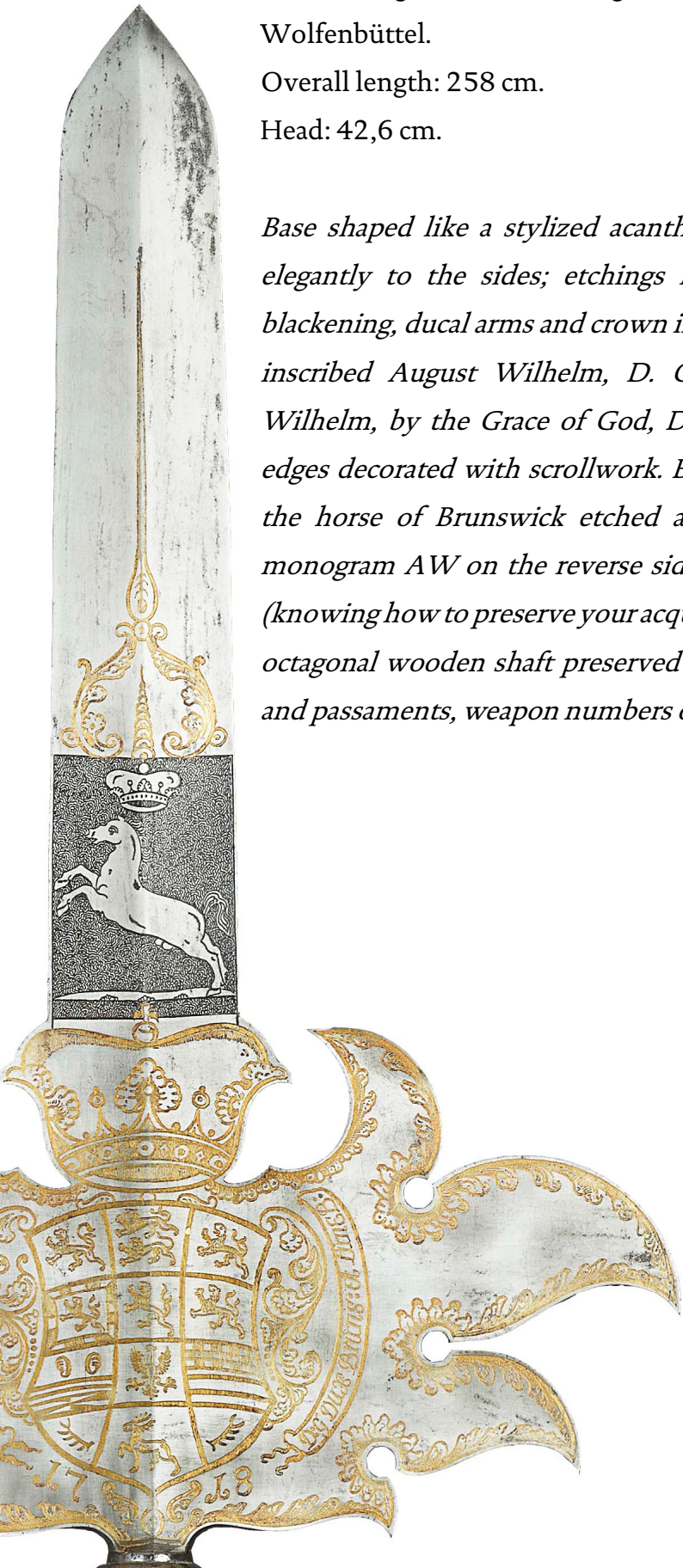
TWO PARADE PARTIZANS

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.ⁱ

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.ⁱⁱ

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.ⁱⁱⁱ

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 18th 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.

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

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

ⁱⁱⁱ Seitz, H. (1968): Blankwaffen II, pp. 216- 231.

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





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