



Parts of this armour (shoulders, cuirass) were made for the Hapsburg king (later Emperor) Ferdinand I (1503-64), brother and successor to Charles V and grandson of Maximilian I. It was made by Michael Witz of Innsbruck.

Innsbruck was one of the most famous armour-making communities in the world at the time, and its products were exported all over Europe. The Kings of Scotland, for example, are known to have bought armour made in Innsbruck.

Armour was one of the richest and most expensive art forms in the Renaissance, it was wearable sculpture and a powerful status symbol, and the services of the great armourers were as sought after as the great painters, sculptors, and architects of the age.

## **Construction:** composite

- Armours in today museums often are made of parts that did not originally belong together.
- The pieces of this armour were possibly assembled into a complete armour by Samuel Meyrick.

While in the Meyrick collection, the armour was seen by Eugene Delacroix and Richard Parkes Bonington during their visit in the summer of 1825; Bonington sketched the armour during this visit. See object file for copy of this drawing (current location unknown).

**Design:** three-quarter armour for light to medium cavalry use. Breastplate fitted with a lance-rest or 'arret'. This both supported the weight of the long and heavy war lance in the charge, and also bore the brunt of the shock of impact, allowing the rider to take the impact through his centre of gravity, rather than just his hand (which is much weaker). With a lance-rest a knight could handle a much heavier lance, and strike his opponent with much greater force.

## Decoration: raised etching

Acid etching was first developed in the 15th century as a way of decorating armour. Only later was it adapted for other less important applications like book printing!

- used acid to assist the graving tool.
- metal surface to be decorated is first covered with an acid-resistant protective coating, often wax.
- an etching needle was then used to cut the design into the coating.
- caustic acid applied, which worked into the exposed parts of the metal. After removing the protective coating, the etched design was blackened, making it clearly visible.
- This technique for decorating arms was the precursor of printed etching.
- By the early 16th century craftsmen expanded on the basic technique, developing 'raised' etching.
- Rather than the design being the intaglio, the recessed and darkened area eaten away by the acid, the design remains in slight relief and stands out against a background that is darkened by small etched dots.
- The protective medium is applied with a brush to the parts that remain elevated, and is dotted with a quill over the
- background. German raised etching, as found on this armour, is easily recognised by its stippled background.
- In Italy the background was cross-hatched rather than dotted, making it possible to identify whether a decoration originated there.
- Similar decoration may be seen on several polearms made for Ferdinand's Imperial Guard, also in the Burrell Collection (on display near the tapestry rooms).

## Composite Maximilian armour, c1520.



While it is made up using pieces of several different armours, this harness is a good example of its type and the only complete armour in the collection.