

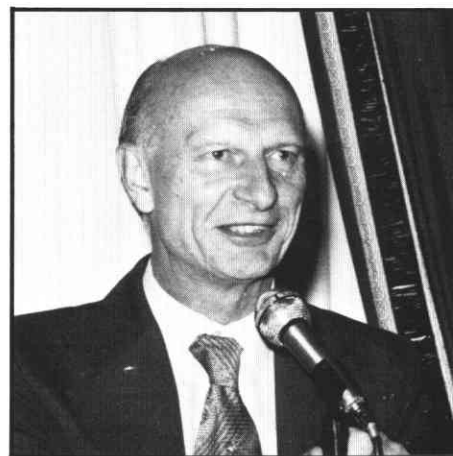
The Keinbusch Collection

by: John Hayward

The Arms and Armor Collection of Carl Otto Kretschmar von Kienbusch. In titling this talk I have purposely used the full name of the late Mr. Kienbusch; he was intensely proud of his Saxon ancestry and reminded me of a Prussian gentleman of the old school rather than a twentieth century American. His great-grandfather, Frederick Kretschmar, was chief forester in the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and the family emigrated to the United States in 1849. He had retained a number of family relics dating back to the pre-emigration period and these were displayed in his dining-room. Among them were swords and elements of uniform; these did not form part of the collection and are not going to the Philadelphia Museum. An old print of the family residence in Saxony has, however, been presented to the Museum and is already displayed in the gallery with his armor.

Kienbusch was a collector of armor for no less than sixty-five years; he began in 1910 when he made the acquaintance of Bashford Dean, who later became Curator of the Arms and Armor Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When, after Bashford Dean's death, a catalogue of his collection, most of which eventually went to the Metropolitan Museum, was published, the introduction was written by Kienbusch. Though I knew him for some twenty-five years, our relationship was always formal. I was first introduced to him by Dick Randall, now Director of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, who had recently catalogued the fire-arms in his collection, and it was through Randall that I was asked to catalogue the armor and the *armes blanches*, the pole arms being dealt with by Miss Reinhard. Descriptions of items acquired later were supplied by Professor Hans Schedelmann. Unfortunately Kienbusch decided not to place the catalogue on sale so it has never been available to the collectors, though copies were presented to all the international museums with important displays of arms and armor. The catalogue is, therefore, one of the rarest books in the literature of the subject.

The catalogue, at any rate that part for which I was responsible, was prepared under conditions that were far from ideal. Mr. Kienbusch was very sensitive to criticism and was not prepared to admit that any piece in his collection might be less than perfect. Certain critical observations that might have been made were, therefore, suppressed. According to a strict rule that he had formulated, the armors might only be taken down for cleaning in the Spring and, as my visit to New York was not at this time, I was not allowed to dismantle any of the complete armors. This implies that I did not see the underside of many of the elements composing them, while the horse armors



proved quite inaccessible. A satisfactory catalogue could not be achieved under such conditions. I had the great advantage of being able to discuss the problem pieces with my good friend Stephen Grancsay, who was not at the time admitted to the armory at E. 74th Street on account of some very minor disagreement which Kienbusch held against him for many years. It is nevertheless much to be hoped that the Philadelphia Museum will distribute those copies of the catalogue which are still available. Though it does not cover the large number of pieces he acquired between 1962 and his death in 1976, it does rank as one of the larger publications on the subject in existence. I believe that funds were left in the Kienbusch Bequest to pay the salary of a Curator of the collection; he will have an important task in bringing the catalogue up to date and perhaps it is not too much to hope that at some time a revised edition may appear, in which the *armes blanches* and the firearms are illustrated on a considerably larger scale.

Kienbusch first collected Japanese swords, but soon turned his attention to European and, of course, American weapons. Within this field he recognized no limit of period and his collections extended from the bronze age to the nineteenth century, including superb examples of the helmets of classical Greece. As a result of careful vetting of all his later acquisitions by one or more experts the standard of authenticity of the collection is exceptionally high. There are no more than a handful of pieces that may eventually prove to be spurious.

The whole collection, now amounting to over 1000 items, including 30 suits of armor, and his splendid library, has been bequeathed to the Philadelphia Museum, together with a substantial sum of money to provide for its preservation in the future. The bequest includes the furnishings of the armory in the Kienbusch New York house,

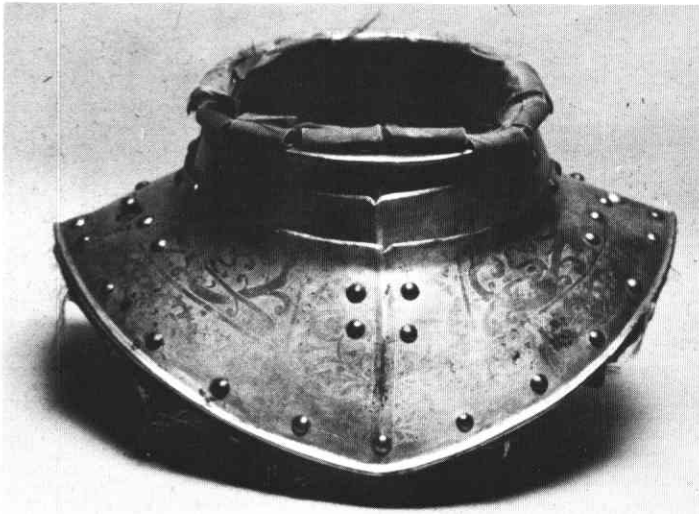


Fig. 1.: Gilded gorget of the Elector Johann Georg of Saxony, en suite with a set of four foot combat armors believed to have been made by Jakob Jöringk after 1650, retaining original lining and crimson silk piccadils. From the Historisches Museum, Dresden.

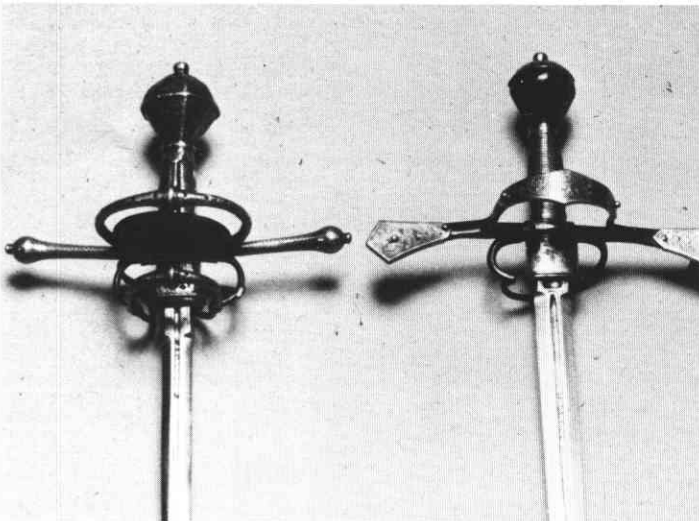


Fig. 2.: Two rapiers of the bodyguard of the Electors of Saxony, the hilt of one covered with silver engraved with scrollwork inhabited by birds against a blackened ground, the other of blackened iron, to which are riveted plaques of silver engraved with foliage. Last quarter of 16th century. From the Historisches Museum, Dresden.

which will be re-united with the weapons they so long accompanied when all is re-installed in Philadelphia. He was determined that the collection should be preserved intact and his will gave a list of other institutions to which the collection should be offered should Philadelphia be unable to fulfill his conditions. He was indeed a devoted collector; this is indicated by the courage with which he continued to make acquisitions after he had the misfortune to lose his sight. He was helped by members of the Arms and Armor Department of the Metropolitan Museum during this last period of his life. Before the Second World War, most of his purchases were made in the U.S.A., but after 1945 he turned to Europe and bought consistently at the auction sales of Sothebys and Christies in London and the Galerie Fischer in Luzern. Kienbusch was always actively occupied as a tobacco merchant and lacked the time to make frequent visits to European sales. He was, therefore, guided in his purchases by Professor Schedelmann and to a lesser extent in London by myself.

While it is not difficult to understand a collector's wish that his collection should remain intact, one cannot but regret that so large a quantity should be consigned to a Museum. The collecting of armor has given way to fire arms during the last few decades, partly because of modern living conditions but also because of the great rarity of good examples, nearly all of which were bought by Kienbusch. Now that all these are out of reach of the collector it is to be feared that few will pursue this study which has a history going back to the Ambras Collection of the Archduke Ferdinand of Tirol in the second half of the 16th century.

The most remarkable section of the collection is the armor with its impressive array of thirty harnesses, mostly composed of original elements. The problem for armor collectors is that the complete armors which now appear on the market are with few exceptions put together from elements which did not originally belong together. The reason for this lies in the way in which armors were composed, the parts being held together by straps and buckles. While the armor plates were fairly indestructible although subject to surface rusting, the leather straps perished and broke and the armors fell apart. During the second half of the 17th century armor went out of fashion apart from its use as a costume accessory in official portraits, and it was not until the mid-18th century that the first armor collector since the 16th century appeared, the best known in England being the nobleman-author and letter-writer, Horace Walpole, later Earl of Oxford. His contemporaries were few and it was only when the Romantic Movement got under way in the early 19th century that a demand arose for armors to fill the great halls of the reproduction Gothic Castles of the period. The hundred and fifty years of neglect between the mid-17th and early 19th centuries was a disastrous time for armors outside the ancestral collections of the European reigning houses and of those noble families — not by any means all of whom cherished these relics of their forebears. Most were allowed to fall apart in rust and decay and so to lose

most of their original splendour of colour and decoration. Wars have also contributed greatly to the breaking up both of family armories and of individual armors; in the 18th and 19th centuries through the removal of arms and armor as legitimate war booty and in the twentieth century through the impoverishment of the noble families. The officers of the Napoleonic armies plundered the armories of the countries they invaded, removing both complete armors and also detached pieces; the Carlist wars in Spain resulted in shipments of detached elements from the armors of Charles V and the Kings of Spain being sent to England for auction at Christies in the 1830's, and finally a number of pieces from the Dresden Historisches Museum were lost after the Second World War. Four of these were acquired by Mr. Kienbusch; namely four gorgets (Fig. 1) made for the Electors Johann Georg I and Johann Georg II of Saxony. They are illustrated in Haeffel's *Kostbare Waffen* on pl. 36 and listed by Ehrental in his guide to the Historisches Museum. The circumstances in which these gorgets were removed from Dresden have never been cleared up and it is at least possible that the title of the Philadelphia Museum to them may eventually be questioned.

A large number of the pieces of armor in the collection are fragments from known harnesses. Some optimists still retain the hope that it may eventually be possible, through exchange, to re-unite some of these suits and a start has indeed been made in Europe through a permanent loan arrangement between the Runthistorisches Museum, Vienna, and the Musee de l'Armée, Paris, and also on a smaller scale between the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Louvre.

After the Second World War Mr. Kienbusch was the chief collector of arms and armor. He benefited through the impoverishment of the war-torn Europe and the strength of the dollar and was able to purchase at prices far below those ruling when Hearst and Mackay of the previous generation had been in competition. While he was prepared to pay high prices for fine armor, he never accepted the huge rise in value of firearms which took place during the 1960's and early 1970's. Rather than pay excessively for what he regarded as articles of lesser importance, he ceased to buy and for this reason the firearms do not equal the other sections of the collection in quality or range. He was, on other hand devoted to the arms of the German province from which his family came and no price was too high in order to secure a fine Saxon piece. As a result the collection is exceptionally rich in arms from the former armory of the Electors of Saxony, particularly in the superb swords that were carried by the Electoral bodyguard. (Fig. 2) It is impossible in the course of this talk to do more than refer to a few of the more outstanding pieces, and I begin with an Italian, probably Milanese barbute (Fig. 3). The second half of the 15th century was a period in which craftsmen showed an extraordinary skill in combining function with beauty of form, and no artifacts illustrate this point more effectively than armor. This helmet closely resembles the classical Greek



Barbute, the skull struck with a crowned monogram A.S. Milanese, Mid-15th Century.



Sallet, the back of the skull struck with a demi-lion rampant, South German, late 15th century.



Close helmet from a field armour with etched and gilt borders, attributed to Wolf Gross Schedel of Landshut. Mid-16th Century.

Corinthian helmet, but whether this resemblance was fortuitous or due to conscious imitation has yet to be established. The protective qualities of the helmet can be readily recognized, and the illustration of a profile view establishes its claim to rank as a work of sculpture. North of the Alps another form was developed which offered an equally satisfactory aesthetic solution, while providing additional protection to the back of the neck. The sallet (Fig. 4) is one of the pieces of armor that came from the imperial armory in Vienna, passing through the collections of Count Breuner, the Duke of Ratibor and William Randolph Hearst. These late Gothic helmets are appreciated today as major works of art and valued accordingly. After the helmet the element of armor that offers the greatest aesthetic appeal is the gauntlet. Some of the late fifteenth century German gauntlets, of which there are outstanding examples in the collection, display the same highly sophisticated elegance that is characteristic of the last phase of Gothic art in both painting and sculpture.

In the sixteenth century there is more diversity between the armor styles on the two sides of the Alps. Whereas in Italy the Renaissance introduced, at any rate for pageant purposes, conscious reproductions of classical armor, in Germany more functional, sometimes even abstract, forms were preferred, both for the battlefield and for wear on parade. In every period of man's evolution some degree of decoration has been applied even to the more humble and everyday artifacts. In the case of armor it was important that this ornament should be executed in low relief so that it could offer no purchase to the enemy's weapons. The mid 16th century helmet (Fig. 5) from Landshut — with Augsburg and Nürnberg one of the great centers of armor working in South Germany — shows how a narrow band of etched and gilt ornament achieved a decorative effect without prejudicing defensive qualities. In looking at armor today, we lose much of the original effect as the original color of the ground, either blue or purple, has been lost as a result of oxidization. The etched borders provided further color contrast with the gilding set against a ground that was partly blackened and partly polished bright. The variety of ornament found in these etched borders is considerable; only rarely were the designs repeated. This is shown by surviving pattern books maintained by master-armorers or etchers to record the work they had done. That of the Augsburg etcher (*Atzmales*) Jörg Sorg, which with remarkable efficiency records the name of the armorer for whom the decoration was done, the name of the client who had commissioned the armor, and finally the year when it was completed, shows little repetition and one can be sure that if the general design of two armors was identical there would have been variations in the detail of the etched borders. The same applies to the other surviving illustrated record of armors, that of the harnesses built by Jacob Halder, master of the English royal Armories at Greenwich. The etched ornament has in recent times been of great importance to students and collectors since its presence has made it possible to identify

parts of armors that were broken up long ago and distributed all over the world.

Local styles of etching have made it possible to establish the place of origin of some armors, as for instance those decorated in Brunswick. While the Augsburg and Nürnberg schools of etching tended to follow textile design for their ornament, their Brunswick contemporaries had a good supply of Flemish prints as a source for ideas, and the bands are peopled by a host of creatures from mythology, animals, monsters, etc. The artists were not always sufficiently instructed in classical iconography and one of the Brunswick armors in the collection shows a winged Venus accompanied by a wingless Cupid (Fig. 6) as the main figures in the central band of the breastplate! It also has an etched frieze along the top of the breastplate of two groups of knights in full armor charging at each other with leveled lances. The Kienbusch collection is particularly rich in Brunswick armor, the best being one of the set of 'wedding' armors made in connection with the marriage of Duke Julius of Brunswick to Princess Hedwig of Brandenburg (Fig. 7). The quatrefoil etched on the breast shows the scene of Daniel in the lions' den with the Duke's personal motto round the border. The association of themes on these Brunswick armors is not always easy to follow, presumably because the etcher has picked out first one print and then another without caring much about their relevance to each other. Another of the Brunswick armors has a crucifixion scene on the breastplate, but this pious note is not continued on the borders which show hunting scenes and fantastic monsters. Such crucifixion subjects on sixteenth century armors are not always trustworthy, for a skilled Viennese artist in the early years of the present century had the idea of etching them on otherwise plain armors, thus adding greatly to their apparent interest. To provide supporting evidence, he etched a figure of a kneeling knight before the crucifix together with a coat of arms which he picked out of an early 17th century (i.e. nearly contemporary) edition of the Siebmacher Wappenbuch. There is an armor in the Kienbusch collection which may have been 'improved' in this way. The style of the etching is faultless but there is no wear at all on the etched area, whereas the borders of the armor show definite signs of wear through oxidization and subsequent cleaning.



Fig. 6.: Breastplate from a composed Brunswick armour etched with Venus and Cupid, figures in contemporary dress and a tournament scene, derived from various contemporary prints, dated 1564.

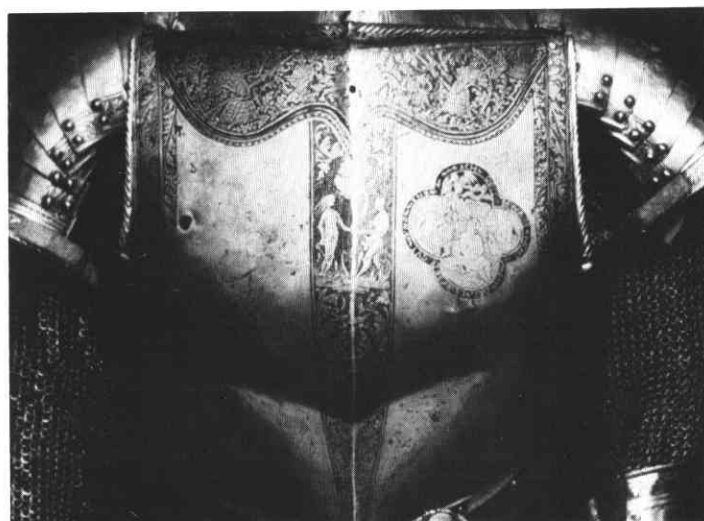
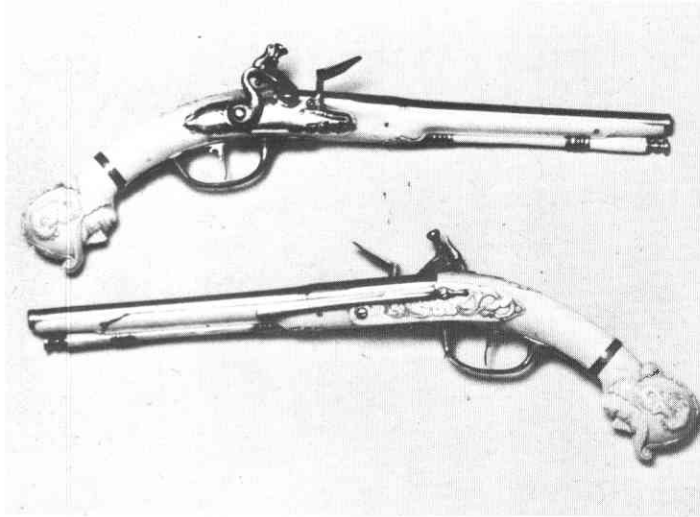
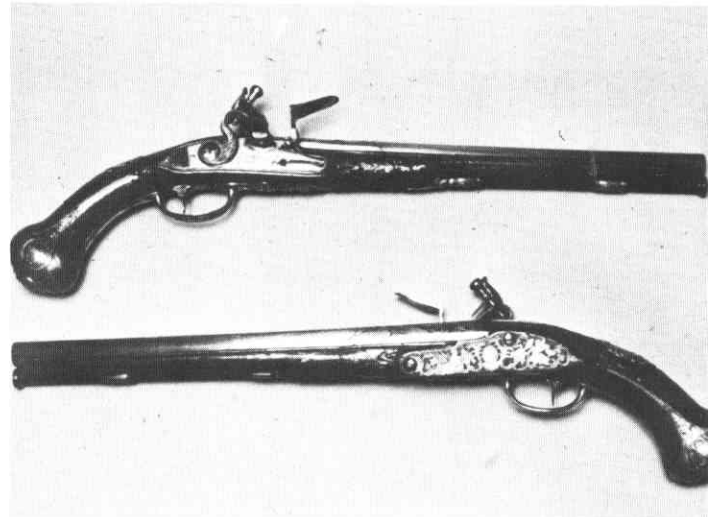


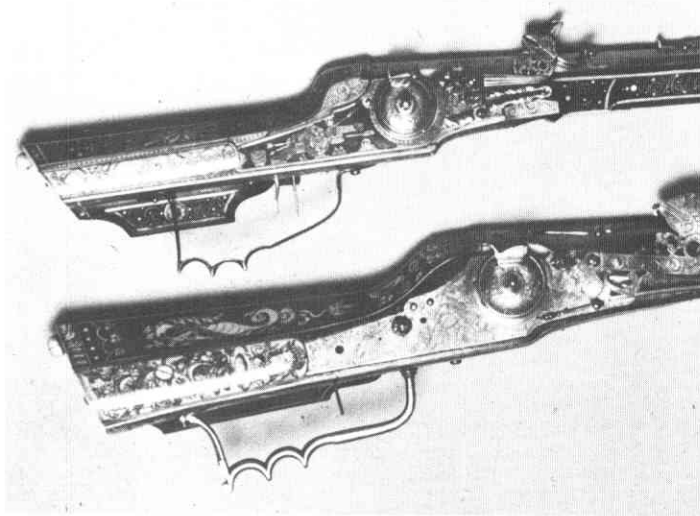
Fig. 7.: Detail of breast-plate from an incomplete Brunswick armour, one of a set made at the time of the marriage of Duke Julius of Brunswick and Luneburg in 1560.



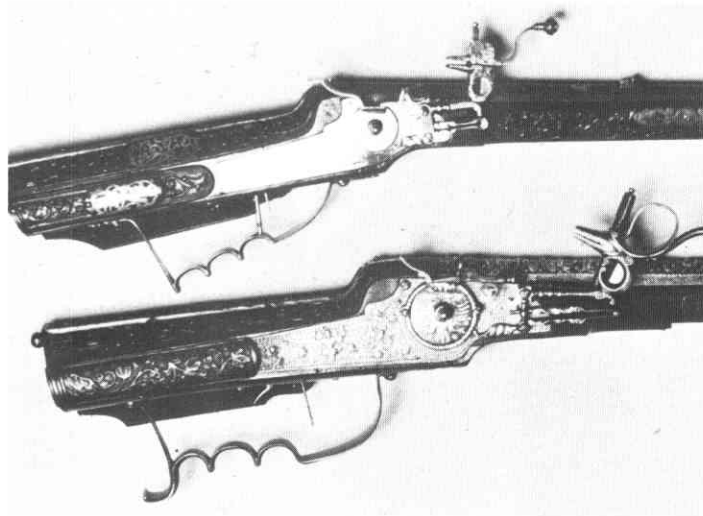
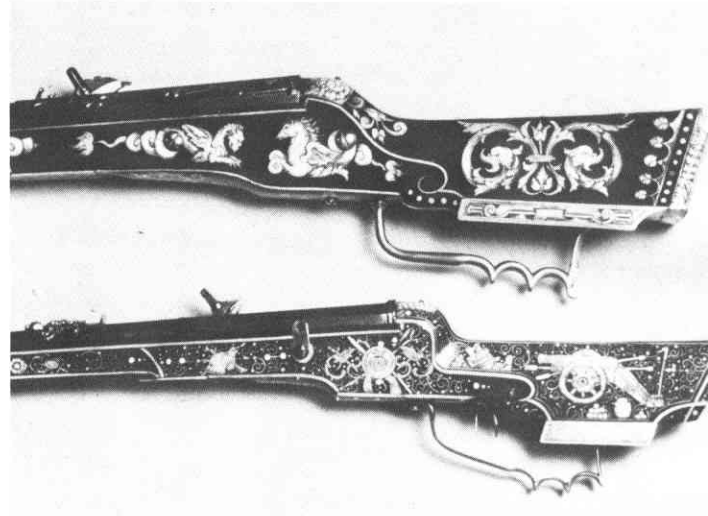
Pair of ivory stocked flint-lock pistols, attributed to Maastricht, the locks signed Brescia but perhaps of Dutch make. Last quarter of 17th Century.



Pair of flint-lock holster pistols, with silver-gilt mounts, the locks signed WITTEMAN a GIESSEN, by Peter Witteman, court gunmaker of the Dukes of Hess-Darmstadt. The barrels chiseled with the arms of Hesse and Brandenburg, and dated 1726.



(Above) wheel-lock gun, the stock signed by Hans Fleischer, the barrel by Christian Trechsler, both of Dresden. The wheel cover engraved with the arms of Christian I, Elector of Saxony, and his wife, Sophie. Dated 1589. From the Historisches Museum, Dresden. Guns reversed in position in right hand picture.



(Above) One of a pair of wheel-lock rifles made for Ferdinand, King of Hungary (later Emperor Ferdinand III), and later stocked by the Meister der Tierkopfranken, about 1631. (Below) Wheel-lock rifle stocked by the Meister der Tierkopfranken, Austria, second quarter of 17th Century.

