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Imagining Chivalry: Charles V’s Suits of Steel

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Erin Jeannine Machado

June 2012

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who keeps me sane and never wavers
in his support of me and belief in my work,
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INTRODUCTION

A bibliographic overview of scholarship on arms and armor would prove a longstanding interest in the field by historians and art historians alike. A wealth of published materials exist from the first half of the twentieth century, and it would stand to reason that there has continued to be developments in research and scholarship since that time. This is certainly true, but compared to the study of other artistic media, there really has been a dearth of academic study. Most of what has been published on armor has come out of museums across the world, generally in the form of catalogs aimed at the average museum visitor. There are so few professional arms and armor scholars in the world today that one can list each and every one of them in a matter of a minute. It is no wonder, then, that the existing scholarship on armor barely scratches the surface of what remains to be undertaken.

This study aims, quite boldly, to fill a tiny space in the enormous gap in armor scholarship that exists today. Taking on the context and purposes for the commissioning, wearing, and collection of armors during the sixteenth century, my hope is for this work to act as a supplement to the existing, straightforward connoisseurship that describes most of the work that has been done in the field thus far. In order to limit the scope of this work to a manageable size, I have chosen to focus on the armors belonging to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-1558). This collection serves as a good example for several reasons: first, that it can be argued that Charles’s paternal grandfather, Holy Roman Emperor
Maximilian I was a pioneer in the commission of aesthetically brilliant armors, rather than armors created merely for protection in battle or tournament. Charles's familial ties to Maximilian I allow for the relevant discussion of Maximilian as an influential figure in armors, as well as in the tastes of his grandson, and this places Charles within an important lineage of armor patrons. Second, Charles ruled an immense kingdom, spanning most of Europe, so his tastes in armor and his methods of collection and display were unlikely regional in character, therefore allowing for a general model to be made from his practices. This model can be applied, in part or in whole, to his contemporaries across Europe. Third, armors from Charles's collection eventually made their way into the first systematic collection of armors purely for display, which coincidentally resulted in the very first published, illustrated museum catalog of any kind. Additionally, Charles V is a well-known historical figure and information on his life and reign is widely available. As arms and armor is a generally unknown field in art history, it was important for this study to have an element of familiarity, as I hope it will help in making the case for the necessity of further research in the field. The type of collecting set forth in this study was by no means unusual during the sixteenth century, and the use of a well-known ruler as the pivotal historical figure will hopefully lead readers to the conclusion that such a widespread medium deserves more attention.
The most comprehensive theoretical work to date on early modern armors is Carolyn Springer’s *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance*.¹ Springer looks at two Italian nobles, Guidobaldo II della Rovere of Urbino and Cosimo I de’Medici, alongside Emperor Charles V, who controlled much of Italy during his reign, and their tastes in armor. Using three bodily classifications taken from work by Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin, Springer breaks down the relationship of armor to the body, then focuses on each of the men, explaining the armors worn using gender theories and ideals of masculinity. While *Armour and Masculinity* is an excellent publication, the scope, focused on Italy specifically, is quite narrow, and most of the armor examples come from a single workshop. The armors, most made by the workshop of Filippo Negroli, are fantastic and highly theatrical, but this style is not indicative of the early modern period as a whole. While Springer does address that the armors discussed in her work are an “essential component of political theatre” and that they “enabled fiction” for the wearers in her conclusion, these ideas are not at the forefront of her argument.²

The theoretical approach discussed here is not common to the study of armors. The idea that, well after the Middle Ages, rulers and noblemen were fascinated by the ideas of knighthood and chivalry is common to the study of armors, but to further explicate these ideas I would like to introduce the theory of Kendall Walton set forth in his book *Mimesis and Make-Believe: On the

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Foundations of the Representational Arts. Walton speculates that many art forms, those he refers to as “representational,” initiate a make-believe with the viewers. In his explanation, he uses examples of individuals who imagine themselves in situations, with or without props, and many of these personal imaginings lead to group imaginings involving others. Because of the popularity of chivalric romances during the sixteenth century, the medieval knights’ code of chivalry was well-known in Europe. Renaissance rulers were able to incorporate decorated armors as props to invoke make-believe that they, too, were possessed of these qualities, not only as personal imaginings but also as social imaginings with their audiences.

Walton’s theory allows for a connection between the fantasy of the chivalrous medieval knight and the mass collecting of parade and ceremonial armors during the sixteenth century. To be interested in the ideals of a previous era is one thing, but when that interest is manifested in elaborate costumes that cost the equivalent of what a private jet would cost today, that interest must be explained as something more significant than merely “enthusiasm.” While most of Walton’s examples do not incorporate such involved props as these armors, his approach aims to make similar connections and also to explain the reasons behind art such as rulers dressed as gods in portraiture. Walton explains that art

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4 Daniel Eisenberg, Castilian Romances of Chivalry in the Sixteenth Century (London: Grant & Cutler Ltd, 1979), 35 and 110.
objects like this initiate make-believe not only for the ruler in the portrait, but also for viewers of the portrait. The implementation of make-believe in portraiture has been used by rulers and politicians for hundreds of years as propaganda to persuade audiences to believe (or imagine) specific ideas about the subjects. But *Mimesis as Make-Believe* takes these ideas a step further, explaining why these propagandistic tactics work by relating their use to familiar childhood games of pretend.

A wealth of research is available on ruler representation, including seminal works like Ernst Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies* and Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. The theories set forth in each of these works, and in many, many others, are certainly relevant to the use of armors, but I chose Walton’s theory because it brings something new to scholarship on ruler representation, and also because after reading Walton’s book, I could not help but think that armors were the most perfect example of his theory. *Mimesis* is a scholarly work through and through, but in a work based on make-believe it is impossible to escape the implications of whimsy. My own attraction to armor was initially based on the magic I felt standing in front of a full-sized, armor-clad horse mannequin with a mounted armor for man, imagining the splendor of a procession of dozens of similarly appareled riders making their way to the tournament lists. The connection seemed too perfect, both theoretically and on the basis of the enchantment I felt toward Walton’s work and the armors on which I chose to focus.
Rather than create an entirely theoretical work that veers completely in a different direction from existing armor scholarship that focuses on the objects almost exclusively, I aimed in this study to allow the objects to lead the explanations. Detailed visual analyses of the five most important armors to my arguments are included with the theoretical discussion, hopefully bridging the gap between purely object-based scholarship and that which is purely theoretical and so often tends to relegate art objects to a subordinate role. The purpose of this study is to be interpretive. Rather than explanations of the objects, as is the case in most museum publications, my work attempts to answer the “why” of the armors, rather than the “how” addressed in many publications. In laying out my arguments, I chose three of my favorite armors for Chapter 2, allowing them to lead the discussion and building my ideas around them. For Chapters 1 and 3, I included an analysis of each of the example armors that fit into the chapters, in hopes of reminding the reader that this work is about the incredible armors and attempting to bring them to life in the pages.

The collection of armors, which is covered in Chapter 3 of this thesis, is not something that has been studied in depth. A few scholars have written single chapters within journals or larger edited volumes concerning the construction and display of the collections of Philip II and Ferdinand II of Tyrol, but they are

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5 Although there have been studies of armor published since the early twentieth century, the field remains in its infancy and there is a dearth of material on the subject (relative to other art historical fields). The lack of interpretation and theoretical scholarship is largely a result of the field being so new and while I hope, in this study, to bring interpretation and theory into the discussion of armors, there certainly remains much work to be done to cover the more straightforward “how” of armors.
historical accounts, without interpretation or the consideration of what I refer to as “collection theory.” This theory involves the models used to explain private collecting during the early modern period, such as amassing a collection of naturalia to symbolize the collector’s control over a microcosm of the world, or assembling an extensive library in order to show that one possesses knowledge. Another example would be the collecting of Roman antiquities to in response to the renewed interest in the study of classical scholarship which drove the humanist movement of the Renaissance. The armor collections discussed here do not fit the multiple molds that have been developed within the existing “collection theory” scholarship. Here, I again turn to Kendal Walton’s theory, as I believe the reasons for the initial commissions of armor are similar to the reasons for their collection, and continue today to be the reason millions of visitors flock annually to arms and armor collections within museums.

Armors were worn during the early modern period as a way for rulers to embody and project chivalric values of medieval knighthood. These ideals were subsequently projected into the past to ancient Roman rulers and then invoked

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through decorations on Renaissance armors. The reasons for personal commissions of armors and those for collecting armors as *objets d’art* very much overlap. Armors were collected as a way not to embody but to possess chivalric qualities. Additionally, armors’ connection to specific battles also allowed the collector to possess not only the knowledge of a historical event, but also the perceived qualities of the original wearer.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to current scholarship of this study will be that it serves as the impetus for further research. Although this work attempts to explain why armors were worn and collected during the sixteenth century, it is by no means a comprehensive study, and I hope that it will inspire more questions than it answers. In the following pages, I will lay out my argument that decorated Renaissance armors were both worn and collected as a way to embody and possess the qualities of chivalry of the medieval period that were romanticized through novels during the Renaissance period. In the field of academic art history, I hope that this work will illustrate the importance of armors during the Renaissance, and help to break down the prejudice against armors as objects of “material culture” rather than objects of “fine art” as they were considered at the time of their creation.
The use of armor dates back to the ancient period, when it was used by the Imperial Roman army and the hoplites, or citizen-soldiers, of ancient Greece (Figure 1). Some type of armor, though not the plate armor we think of today, was used by the Vikings, the Franks under Charlemagne, and the Vendel people of Scandinavia. From approximately 1066 CE to approximately 1250 CE, mail was the most popular form of armor. This was made from a series of interlinking rings, with alternating rows of solid and riveted rings (Figure 2). The origin of mail is unclear, but it is likely that it was copied by European armorers from Eastern models. Plate armor has been in existence since approximately 1150 CE, but it did not come into general use until after 1250 CE. Most evidence of plate armor, and of mail, from before the fifteenth century is pictorial, existing in many artistic formats, including tapestries, manuscripts, and sculpture (Figure 3). Though archaeological fragments of arms and armor exist from the fourteenth century and earlier, it is extremely rare to see even objects from the early fifteenth century on display in museums. Today, armor is often thought of as a medieval art form, but most of the European armor collections extant in museums today, and subsequently the armor in paintings since 1500 and in movies, is from the Renaissance period or later.

Armor in the Sixteenth Century

The first half of the sixteenth century saw the commencement of the decline of armor as it had been used extensively in the medieval period, due to developments in warfare, most notably the widespread use of firearms, but also tactical improvements such as the use of pikemen.\(^2\) Although the first half of the sixteenth century was the last period during which full suits of armor were worn as protection in battle, it was also one of the most prolific periods of armor production.\(^3\) It is due to this extensive production that so many fine quality examples from this period are still extant in collections today. Prior to 1500, the styles and development of armors in the two main production centers of Italy and Germany were fairly distinct. During the sixteenth century, stimulated by the Italian Wars, these styles began to merge and the two styles, thereafter, followed nearly the same course of development.\(^4\)

Many of the armor production centers of the sixteenth century had been in existence since the fifteenth century or earlier.\(^5\) While there were several armor production centers across Europe that supplied munitions armor to various groups, the main centers for the more artistic armor production were Southern Germany and Northern Italy. Various other production centers in France,

\(^2\) Blair, *European Armor*, 112.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid., 112-113.
\(^5\) Ibid., 113. See page 113 for a list of armorers and workshops active during the sixteenth century. See also 48-55 of *Armourers* by Matthias Pfaffenbichler.
Flanders, and other locations existed during this time, likely carryovers from the previous century. Because Charles V was a patron exclusively of the centers in Germany and Italy, it is on those regions this study will focus. In order to create a profitable armory, specific natural resources had to be available, such as iron ore and other raw materials, and nearness to running water. For the custom decorated armors which are the focus of this study, these armories also had to be located in, or very near to, centers of commerce, in order to attract an affluent clientele and to facilitate exports. Unlike sixteenth-century court painters, who would have moved to the court where they were employed and worked solely for a single ruler, court armorers remained at their workshops, were often quite affluent and held significant political power in their cities and guilds, creating armors not only for the court but for other patrons as well.

In 1504, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (r. 1493 - 1519) founded one of three sixteenth-century royal armories in Europe at his court in Innsbruck, Tyrol, Austria. Maximilian’s intention in creating this armory was for his armorers to create munitions armors for his armies, as well as finely decorated armors for himself and his court. Maximilian was an expert on chivalry and from his court in Innsbruck he established rules for chivalric games and festivities,

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6 Blair, *European Armor*, 113.


8 The other two were that of Henry VIII in England, founded in 1515, and another in Arboga, Sweden, founded in 1551 by King Gustav Vasa. Each of these armories imported German armorers, and neither of them were particularly successful or noteworthy. CB. 114-115.

such as jousts and other combat for entertainment in tournaments. Maximilian worked closely with his armorers to develop a distinct, and more importantly, artistic style of armor. For the first time, under Maximilian’s patronage, armors were designed to specifically serve nobles, incorporating iconographic programs and symbolic visual language. It was under the guidance of his grandfather that Charles V developed his sense of style and taste for finely decorated armors.

The methodical collection of armors began while they were still in use, by noblemen who were both enthusiasts and patrons. King Charles VIII of France (r. 1438 - 1498) was the first recorded collector, Maximilian I being the second and better known of the two. It was Maximilian’s collecting that influenced future generations of Habsburgs, whose collections are among the most well-known in Europe. The majority of armor that is extant today has been amassed and passed along through dynastic collections. The collections of the Spanish and Austrian branches of the Habsburgs both include significant works from the personal armory of Maximilian I, who, it can be argued, started it all.

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11 Claude Blair, on page 115 of European Armor, states that there is no evidence to show that Emperor Maximilian I was responsible for the introduction of what is now termed “Maximilian armor.” He then, however, goes on to reference a well-known engraving by Hans Burgkmair from the emperor’s semi-fictional biography Der Weisskunig in which the emperor is shown directing his armorers. Because a great deal of this style of armor was certainly owned by the emperor, and created in his workshop in Innsbruck, it is my position that there is ample evidence to credit Maximilian I with the style.

12 Blair, European Armor, 115.


14 Fliegel, Arms and Armor, 32.
The decorative armors of the sixteenth century developed from styles popular in the previous century. From approximately 1510 to 1520, fluting, a defining characteristic of ‘Maximilian’ armor, was popular. The later the armor was crafted, the more narrow the fluting became, often interspersed with delicately embossed scales. By 1520, fluting was no longer popular for Italian armors, but continued to be indicative of German work until the 1530s. Brass edging, which had been fashionable in the late fifteenth century, turned into decorative rope turns at the edges of plates. Another pivotal revolution in armor in the sixteenth century was the inception of pieces of exchange. Armors were constructed with interchangeable reinforcing and alternate pieces that could be used to change the purpose of the armor, from field to tournament, foot to mounted combat. Elaborate etching and embossing, the use of the Near Eastern technique of damascening, and the extensive use of grotesques to decorate armors, now made to a large extent for parade, rather than protection, became popular during the sixteenth century.

In addition to the armor he commissioned for himself, Emperor Maximilian I also commissioned armors for his grandsons, Charles V and Ferdinand I, and his English ally, Henry VIII. The most stunning harness

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 117.
18 Ibid., 116-117.
commissioned by Maximilian for Charles is now a part of the collection in Vienna, called the “pleated skirt armor,” or *Faltenrockharnisch*, created between 1512 and 1514 by Konrad Seusenhofer, who came from Augsburg to run Maximilian’s armory at Innsbruck (Figure 4). The armor is in the style of a Dutch *Schaube*, a long, cinctured, open-front coat that was stylish during the fifteenth and early part of the sixteenth centuries.\(^{20}\) The skirt of the armor is expertly fluted to imitate the folds in the coat’s fabric, and the entire upper portion of the armor is trimmed with gilded designs that have been cut into the steel, giving the trim a lace-like appearance. The design is a repeated motif of St. Andrew’s cross and firesteels, the symbols of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

The cannons, which come from beneath the pauldrons as if a shirt worn beneath the overcoat, resemble the puffed-and-slashed style of clothing that was popular at the time (Figure 5). The cuisses, too, are in a puffed-and-slashed style, and the full greaves have an etched “stitching” detail, to mimic the hose that would have been worn under breeches. The gauntlets are in the mitten style, exquisitely detailed with a combination of fluting and embossed scallops, with gilded bands to break up the silver of the polished steel. The vents in the close helmet are rimmed with gilded bands, like the rest of the harness, and the lames of the gorget come together to form golden rings encircling the neck. The armor is a truly magnificent work of art, and although it mimics the contemporary men’s fashion, the armor itself is unlike any other in its detail and construction.

Charles of Habsburg: King and Emperor

Charles of Habsburg was born in 1500 in Ghent to Philip I, or Philip the Handsome, and Joanna of Castile, or Juana la Loca. He was raised in the French-speaking court of his aunt, Margaret of Austria, near Ghent, as a prince and heir apparent to the thrones of his grandparents. On his mother’s side, he would inherit the united kingdoms of Aragon and Castile under his grandparents, the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. On his father’s side, he was a strong candidate to succeed his grandfather, Maximilian I, as emperor, and would inherit the Duchy of Burgundy from his grandmother, Mary of Burgundy, the only child of Charles the Bold. His parents left for Spain in 1506, leaving him in the care of his aunt, to be trained in princely ways by tutors, including Erasmus of Rotterdam. Likely more so than with his parents, young Charles, the archduke, as he was called, spent a significant amount of time with his paternal grandfather, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I.

As Philip I had died suddenly in 1506, at the death of Ferdinand II of Aragon, Charles’s mother, Joanna, became Queen of Spain. Her poor state of mental health, however, required that Charles travel to Spain to act as regent on her behalf. From 1518, he ruled jointly with Joanna as Charles I, though her rule was largely in name only, as she was a recluse and suffered from what is now believed to have been severe depression. Upon the death of Maximilian I in 1519, Charles was unanimously elected Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, though he was not crowned by Pope Clement VII until 1530. Charles’s vast territories proved
difficult to manage, and he met with resistance from his Spanish subjects, especially after appointing foreigners to high-ranking positions. Due to the immensity of his territories and the numerous military and political encounters he dealt with during his reign, Charles’s court was largely itinerant, as Maximilian I’s had been before him.

Charles inherited many of the conflicts he would face as a ruler, including the Italian, or Habsburg-Valois, Wars with France over Italian sovereignty and a multitude of confrontations with the Ottomans centered on the Mediterranean. His issues with the Protestants were new developments during his reign, with the Reformation ignited by Luther’s Ninety-five Theses, posted in 1517. On top of these military offensives, Charles spent a great deal of time and energy campaigning for his son’s, Philip II, election as the next Holy Roman Emperor. All the while, the emperor suffered an array of physical ailments, leading ultimately to the abdications of all his titles in 1555 and 1556. He then retreated to a monastery in Yuste, Extremadura, Spain, where he lived the remainder of his life, involved in political and military affairs only through letters with his son, the King of Spain, and his brother, who became Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. Charles died in the monastery in Yuste in 1558 of malaria, leaving a tremendous military, political, and artistic legacy.

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Armor as an Outward Expression of Chivalry During the Renaissance

During the reign of Charles V (1516-1556), some pieces of armor were still very much in use during battle, but the use of full armor on the battlefield became a relic of the past. Armor became increasingly thick to compensate for continual advancements in fire power. The increased weight correlated to decreased functionality, and munitions armor eventually went into complete disuse during the seventeenth century. During the sixteenth century, the emperor’s armies would have worn armors for protection against the pikes and firearms used by their enemies. These munitions armors, however, would have been undecorated, unlike the elaborate armors commissioned and worn by the emperor himself (Figure 6). The emperor was an accomplished soldier and did lead his armies, though it would have been from a location well out of the way of any real danger. While a medieval knight would have charged into battle among his men, the Renaissance ruler could not afford to participate in the action as during the Middle Ages. Knights during the Middle Ages held authority on the battlefields, but their deaths would not have resulted in heredity battles or vast numbers of temporarily leaderless peoples, considerations which made the active participation of Renaissance rulers in warfare impractical.

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22 Blair, European Armor, 112.

23 Ibid.
Medieval knights followed a strict code of chivalry that emphasized courage, honor, and service. For a ruler during the Renaissance period to wear a suit of armor as a costume, rather than for protection in battle, the armor itself was intrinsically symbolic of these chivalric values of yore. While the armor served as an outward expression of the wearer upholding the principles of a medieval knight, he also appeared as a warrior, whether or not this was actually the case. With the donning of a suit of steel, he became a protector of his lands, his people, his ideals, while at the same time projecting the qualities of chivalry that he may or may not have possessed. The wearing of an armor represented an alter ego for the wearer, and also projected this image to his public. Without having to prove oneself in battle, the armor worn by Charles V and his numerous contemporaries alluded to ideals of leadership that could be read by a wide audience including their peers, enemies, subjects, and rivals. To the present day, viewers can read this imagery as it was reproduced in various art forms.

The style of armor worn in battle during the Renaissance was most closely related to the styles worn during the medieval period. In contrast, the style of armor used in parades, tournaments, and depicted in royal portraiture (both painting and sculpture) was either similar to medieval armors, or of the *all’antica* style, relating back to ancient Roman armors (Figure 7). In addition to evoking images of fearless knights in battle, these armors also created a link between the wearer and Imperial Rome, often mimicking the armor of the Praetorian Guards.
of the ancient Roman emperors. Like the greatest knights of the Middle Ages, the Praetorian Guards were elite warriors whose merit was likely proven on the battlefield prior to selection for service. Not only did these all’antica (alternatively, alla Romana) armors create a visual tie between the wearer and the ancient Romans, who were thought to have created the greatest civilization of all time, but they also made a statement about the wearer’s martial capabilities in their imitation of the ancient emperors’ elite battalion of servicemen. Whether this link to the Guards would have been readable to the emperor’s general public, it may have acted as a wearable affirmation of the wearer’s own strengths and abilities, real or imagined.

While the iconography on many armors created for rulers and nobles during the Renaissance and Baroque periods can be described separately from the armor as a visual program relating to the rulers’ identity, it is important to remember that the imagery chosen for these art objects worked in conjunction with the fundamental symbolism of armor itself. The meaning of armor, therefore, is always multivalent and complex. What is often overlooked in studies of these incredible armors, is that much of the imagery etched into the pieces would not have been visible to anyone save the wearer himself and those in extremely close proximity to him. Much of the designs were so intricate that it stands to reason they were there only for the wearer’s own gratification. I believe that the symbolism in Charles’s armors had multiple layers, beginning with

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smaller embellishments meant only for himself, through the armor as a whole, acting as a prompt for even a distant audience during tournaments, battles, or triumphal processions.

During the Renaissance, armor was commissioned and worn by rulers for battle, but also for parades, ceremonies, and tournaments. Often, armor was commissioned only for the attendance of tournaments, not necessarily for participation. Charles V’s grandfather, Maximilian I, created a court culture of tournaments and other chivalric festivities, and Charles continued that tradition in his own court. While armors created for noblemen in battle during the Renaissance were often incredibly detailed and magnificently crafted, armors for tournament and parades were even more spectacular. Tournaments were theatrical displays of sportsmanship and splendor. They were often arranged as a part of a celebration such as a wedding, a war triumph, or a visiting noble, and cities across Europe went to great effort to impress the attendants and participants. Because tournaments often coincided with other events, they often included parades or triumphal processions.

Armors created for tournaments had to be functional during the activities for which they were created. Jousting and foot combats were two of the most popular tournament games, each demanding a specific type of armor to protect the wearer. Functionality certainly did not stop artists from embellishing the armors in extravagant ways, but nonfunctional parade armor allowed for even

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more incredible decorative techniques. Embossing an armor, which meant hammering a design from the underside, weakened the steel, rendering it useless in battle. Embossing was, however, the great coup of armorers across Europe, and the technique was used to create some of the most magnificent armor in existence.

Conclusion

The Emperor Maximilian I was instrumental in revolutionizing medieval armor styles, contributing greatly to the stylistic advances made during the sixteenth century. He was also a great collector, and was arguably the influencing factor that led his grandson Charles V to assemble one of the finest armor collections in Europe. It is this family tie to one of the great innovators of armor production and his exquisite taste in his own commissions, as well as the financial resources to bring such a collection to fruition, that makes Emperor Charles V’s collection a superb example for a study such as this one. That is not to say, however, that he is by any means the only Renaissance ruler to explore the ideals of chivalry through the use of armor as costume. Henry VIII, Francis I, the della Roveres, Gonzagas, and Medicis, to name a few, collected magnificent armors. All over Europe, noblemen and rulers commissioned armors for use in
tournaments, parades, processions, and in battle.\textsuperscript{26} The concepts discussed in Chapter 2 pertain, at least at some level, to all of these men who collected suits of steel, either for their own personal use or for display, as discussed in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{26} These armors for battle were generally used as the Emperor Charles V used his battle armors; that is, from a safe distance. Many of these armors, though structurally would have served to protect their wearers, were far to expensive to have been meant for combat. Additionally, some decorative techniques, such as embossing, would render an otherwise structurally sound armor ineffective against swords and especially blunt weapons.
CHAPTER 2

CHIVALRY EMBODIED: CHARLES V’S USE OF ARMORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PUBLIC IMAGE

Following a long-standing Renaissance tradition, Charles V used extensive iconographic programs in constructing his own image, including motifs used by his father and grandfathers, symbols of important chivalric orders, and those of the territories over which he had inherited control. In 1515, Charles’s tutor, the great humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam, wrote, “...let the prince learn to take a philosophical interest in the very insignia with which he is adorned.”¹ It is this personal interest which Erasmus mandated as a part of the duties of the Christian prince in Institutio principis Christiani, dedicated to the young archduke, that Charles took with him as he commissioned his own armors. Like his grandfather before him, Charles was personally involved with the design and decoration of his armors, each of which was crafted with specific messages in mind.

Decorative Motifs

During the Middle Ages, heraldry developed as a way to identify oneself as a member of an elite group, whether that meant wealth or noble bloodlines. This visual language became important, as knights’ helmets worn during battle most often covered their faces, rendering them unidentifiable. Coats of arms bearing a

family or personal crest enabled identification of enemies as well as friendly forces. During tournaments, elaborate headpieces depicting heraldic symbols were used to differentiate jousters whose helmets concealed all but the eyes. For rulers and members of royal families, such as Emperor Charles V, heraldry was a way to display the numerous regions controlled by a dynasty.² In addition to traditional heraldry, Emperor Charles V used iconography to connect himself with mythological heroes, such as Hercules, warriors and rulers of Ancient Rome, such as Marcus Aurelius, and to the ideals of knighthood, using, for example, the imagery associated with the Order of the Golden Fleece, to which he belonged through his noble bloodlines. Each of these symbols held their own meaning, but coupled with the inherent symbolism in a suit of armor worn for ceremonial purposes, the meaning of the symbols is reinforced by the similar meanings conveyed by dressing up as a knight.

Medieval knights followed a strict code of chivalry that emphasized courage, honor, honesty, dignity, and service.³ During the Renaissance, knighthood became a membership within an order, rather than a lifestyle encompassed by a warrior. Similar to titles of knighthood today, these titles were granted by monarchs for outstanding service to the monarchy, on the battlefield

or otherwise. No longer did being a knight in a particular order mean that one
donned a suit of armor before mounting a steed and riding to defend his master.
For a ruler during the Renaissance period to wear a suit of armor as a costume,
rather than for protection in battle, the armor itself was intrinsically symbolic of
these chivalric values of yore. In addition to being an outward expression of the
wearer also upholding the principles of a medieval knight, he also appeared as a
warrior, which was most often not the case. With the donning of a suit of steel, he
became a protector of his lands, his people, his ideals, while at the same time
projecting the qualities of chivalry that he may or may not have possessed. For
many rulers, the wearing of an armor may likely have represented an alter ego
completely unlike themselves. Without having to prove oneself in battle, the
armor worn by Charles V and his numerous contemporaries alluded to ideals of
leadership that could be read by a wide audience including their contemporaries,
enemies, subjects, rivals, and still to the present day, viewers of this imagery as it
was reproduced in various art forms.

Armors and Imagination

This “reading” of armor by anyone in the audience of the emperor relates
to what philosopher Kendall Walton terms “social imagining” in his book,
Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts. Walton sets forth a theory that debunks the disappearance of make-believe as one enters adulthood, explaining that childhood games of imagination evolve into more sophisticated, more subtle imaginings as adults. Kendall refers to physical tools used by one person to facilitate “social imaginings” as “prompts,” which is exactly how Emperor Charles V used his fantastic suits of steel; to engage his public in a group make-believe that he was a knight, possessed of all the chivalric qualities of the medieval period that went along with that title.

Walton uses specific examples of well-known paintings to elaborate on his theory that these depictions create “fictional truths” and that collections of “fictional truths” function as entire “fictional worlds.” As I propose that armors were costumes that effectively functioned as props to generate an imagining among the emperor’s audiences and retinue, his collection of armors served as elaborate props to facilitate his own “fictional world.”

Defender of the Faith: Charles V’s Mühlberg Armor, Titian’s Equestrian Portrait, and a Historic Parade Shield

One of the most famous of Charles V’s armors is the so-called “Mühlberg armor” by German armorer Desiderius Helmschmid (Figure 8). The armor is named after the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547 in Saxony, in which Catholic forces

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6 Walton, Mimesis, 57-69 (Chapter 1.9).
led by Charles V defeated the Schmalkaldic League of Protestant princes. The armor, which dates to 1544, was likely made for the fourth war against France, and whether it was actually worn to the battle at Mühlberg is unknown. At the time of production, however, Charles would have been forty-four years old, suffering from painful spells of gout. This armor, the last made for him by Desiderius Helmschmid, the emperor’s court armorer in Augsburg, was specially constructed with the emperor’s health issues in mind. Although Charles had new armors commissioned for most of his military campaigns, Charles may have worn parts of this garniture for both occasions. The only evidence of this armor being worn at Mühlberg is the equestrian portrait by Titian, commissioned by the emperor, to which I will return.

This armor is intricately decorated with scalloping and finely-etched vegetal decorations. The pauldrons, or shoulder protections, couters, or elbow covers, and gauntlets are trimmed in these elaborate details. There are bands of the design running down the center and sides of the breastplate and backplate, and the tassets, or thigh protections, are also lined. The center portion of the scalloping contains some representational details, including a grotesque figure and a cow skull, its horns draped in cloth. These figures closely resemble decorative motifs employed by artists during the ancient Roman period to adorn

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objects such as sarcophagi. This use of ancient imagery links the emperor to Imperial Rome, subtly reinforcing his position in the lineage of emperors, beginning with Augustus before the first millennium.

Having been created for the fourth war against France, which ended for Charles in 1544 with the Treaty of Crépy, the Mühlberg armor may have been worn again for the occasion of the Schmalkaldic Wars as a symbol itself of the emperor as victorious. For those in his immediate military entourage, the armor would have created an association with the small triumph over France three years earlier. Perhaps even for the wearer, an armor that had been a part of a favorable encounter may have bolstered spirits going into this important battle.

Emblazoned in the center of the breastplate of the armor is a depiction of the Virgin of the Apocalypse, an early manifestation of the Immaculate Conception. This Marian apparition relates to the Virgin of Guadalupe from Extremadura, Spain, a region encompassing the provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz. With this representation on his armor, the emperor not only carries with him an emblem of the kingdom of Spain, long known as one of the most staunchly Catholic kingdoms in Europe, but also the Virgin herself as protector. With its onset in the first half of the sixteenth century, adherents of Protestantism eschewed images of the Virgin and saints. As a reaction to the Protestants’ renunciation of the Virgin as an object of worship, Catholics began to frequently include her image on the breastplate of their armors. Since this armor was not made specifically for the Schmalkaldic Wars, it is doubtful that the
imagery was created with an anti-Protestant agenda, but that is exactly how it served against Protestant forces. Such a small image would not have easily been seen from the emperor’s position on horseback, but this image may have been a prompt for the wearer to imagine a physical closeness with a figure he believed could protect him and his troops, even perhaps aiding his cause. Rather than being a propagandistic image meant to agitate the Protestant forces he faced, the Virgin’s image served as an apotropaic device.

During Charles V’s lifetime, he would have been viewed in any one of his ceremonial armors by dozens, perhaps even hundreds of viewers, depending on the circumstance of his appearance. His itinerant court assured that the emperor, in his armors, was viewed by a vast group of subjects from all over his empire. Commissioned court portraits would have been seen by relatively few people outside the emperor’s court. Today, however, the opposite is true. The Mühlberg armor remains on display in the Royal Armory in Madrid, to be experienced by those who are fortunate enough to visit. It can be seen in pictures in books, but as a sculptural object, the experience is lost in two-dimensional reproductions. Portraits, though, can be easily reproduced in two-dimensional formats without losing their integrity to the same extent. The Mühlberg armor is most famous today for its inclusion in the *Equestrian Portrait of Emperor Charles V* by Titian, who served as the emperor’s court painter at the time (Figure 9).

Functioning on the same level as the small embellishments on the armor itself, only seen by the wearer and his personal companions, this portrait is itself
a manifestation of make-believe, utilizing prompts within its imagery. The composition of the painting is an imitation of the ancient Roman equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome, now in the Capitoline Museum (Figure 10). For centuries, early modern rulers copied this statue, both in paintings and sculptures, attempting to imitate the power captured in the Roman emperor’s image. In Titian’s work, Charles V sits effortlessly atop an active mount, his gaze fixed, unfazed by the horse’s movement. He holds a lance at his side, a traditional medieval weapon for a mounted warrior, but generally popular during the Renaissance only in its modified form for jousting. The emperor, in full regalia, holding the lance as if preparing to face an opponent over the tilt in a joust, at once encompasses the power and prestige of Marcus Aurelius, his ancient Roman predecessor, and the glory and dignity of the medieval knight.

Although the armor worn by the emperor in the Battle of Mühlberg was not specifically commissioned for the engagement, there was an unusual shield created following the event in order to commemorate the surrender of the Elector of Saxony, John Frederick I (Figure 11). This shield, by an anonymous artist, is based on a drawing by Maarten van Heemskerck done in 1554 (Figure 12). The drawing shows three mounted horsemen in the foreground, the emperor in the center. Mounted troops and trees fill the remaining space to the right; to the left is the Elector of Saxony, dismounted and helmet in hand, his left knee bent deeply as if in the process of kneeling before the emperor. Behind him is a drop off, and below are the vestiges of a battle that fade into a faint landscape.
Embossed on the shield, the background becomes more prominent, although it is in lower relief than the figures in the center. Van Heemskerck’s image has been adapted to fit into a circular, rather than rectangular, space, but the integrity of the original representation is in tact.

This is the only known Renaissance shield of its kind, depicting an actual, historical moment.10 While the equestrian portrait by Titian commemorates both the triumph experienced by the emperor at Mühlberg, as well as the armor worn during the battle, the shield allows the victory to become a part of a ceremonial armor itself. Represented flanked on one side by the Duke of Alva, and on the other by his brother, Ferdinand I, Charles V wears armor of a Roman style. This is curious for several reasons, one being that the actual armor likely worn by the emperor was known and had been painted by Titian several years earlier. Also peculiar is that the armor depicted on the shield would not have served Charles V on the battlefield, instead being entirely ceremonial in nature.11

The armor depicted on the shield, referring to warriors of Imperial Rome, removes the connotations implied by armor in a medieval style. Because the scene depicts a factual victory by Charles V in his role as warrior and protector of the faith, the allusion to knighthood and excellence as a warrior created by a medieval-style armor would have been unnecessary. Instead, with that message

10 This image is not entirely historically accurate, but it is, nonetheless, the only known example of a particular historic moment depicted on an armor. See Stephen V. Grancsay, “A Parade Shield of Charles V,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 8 No. 4 (Dec. 1949), 122-132.

11 The harness worn by the Elector of Saxony on the shield is also not the actual armor worn by him during the battle. See Grancsay, “A Parade Shield of Charles V.”
already in place based on the historical scene, Heemskerck, and subsequently the creator of the shield, have added the link to the ancient Roman period in order to maximize the visual significance of the piece. The designs around the edge of the shield, depicting Roman Emperors wearing laurel wreaths refer to the emperor as part of a lineage of rulers dating to ancient times, particularly Marcus Aurelius, with whom Charles V identified himself.  

Charles V as Sportsman: Armor for Horse and Man

There are several portraits of Emperor Charles V wearing armor, each one alluding to his having the qualities of a medieval knight, just as his physical body dressed in armor suggested. “In every Western European language except English the word for knight also means horseman.” The use of ceremonial armor during the Renaissance was generally in conjunction with the wearer on horseback, the horse wearing a ceremonial covering of some kind. Some of the most spectacular examples of ceremonial armor, however, are those that are commissioned along with coordinating horse armor, or bard. The image of horse and man as one, insinuated by the words for knight that are synonymous with rider, is the ultimate representation of the imaginary, heroic knight.

Coordinating armor for horse and man (Figure 13) brings this etymology to life. The edges of the chanfron, peytral, flanchard, crupper, and pommel of the

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bard, as well as the armored reins and stirrups are all decorated with small, matching rows of bosses, encased on either side by a row of roped turns. Even the upper portion of the ocular openings in the chanfron have this detail. In addition to the small bosses, the front sides of the peytral feature two large bosses each with the face of a lion, a symbol of strength and an allusion to Hercules. This symbolism would have been visible to opponents and spectators alike, being large and prominently placed. Much of the decoration on these armors would have been solely for the benefit of the wearer. A large, leafy design is featured along the lower, flared edges of the peytral and crupper of the bard. The same foliate pattern adorns a strip of the outer leg protections on the emperor’s armor, combined with a smaller, leafy decorative band up the front of the leg as well.

The upper portion of the crupper, the rear protection for the horse, is covered with scenes of Samson fighting the Philistines and David conquering Goliath. These images cover both vertical and horizontal space on either side of the ribbed tail-guard. These biblical heroes most certainly referenced the emperor as a Christian hero himself, and defender of the Catholic church and Christianity within the empire. The biblical figures referenced in the imagery possessed romanticized qualities that overlapped with those of a medieval knight, such as great courage and military skill. Combined with the armor itself and the emperor on his mount, these images reinforced the idea to viewers that the wearer, too, was associated with such characteristics. As with the Virgin on the Mühlberg armor, these images would have hardly been visible to anyone, and
may have served as a prompt only the emperor himself, a reminder of his own perceived greatness.

The decorations on the targe, or target for the opposing jouster’s lance, would have been visible to other mounted participants in the tournament. Divided into roughly twelve sections by raised strips of steel to keep the lance tip from sliding toward the wearer, each diamond of the targe is detailed with firesteels, a symbol of Burgundy, used in conjunction with the emblem of the Golden Fleece. The Order of the Golden Fleece is a chivalric order dating to 1430, its prestigious membership passed through noble bloodlines. A very important symbol of his position at the time as heir-apparent to the emperor and as a Habsburg, the collar of the golden fleece was often worn over or etched onto armors. While the incorporation of this symbolism into the armor design is not unusual, the detailing of the chanfron, or protection for the horse’s face, is the first of its kind.

Rather than the short, decorative ear protections that are common on sixteenth-century chanfrons, this particular bard has curled, ribbed ram’s horns, a symbol of the winged ram from which the golden fleece was procured. With the curling horns that would have obscured the ears, the mount becomes the Golden Fleece, the rider his master, or sovereign of the order. Charles is the premier knight of the order, a proclamation that would have been understood by all in

14 The chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece is made of interlocking firesteels that encircle the neck of the wearer, with the Golden Fleece itself hanging from the chain of firesteels. For example, see the chain in the Schatzkammer, Vienna.
attendance to the tournament for which this armor was created. The audience would have undoubtedly been a large number of Charles’s new subjects, as this armor was made just two years after his arrival for the first time in Spain to take his position as king after the death of his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand II of Aragon. Clad as a knight, taking part in a tournament to showcase his athleticism and combat skills, atop a horse transformed into the mythical Golden Fleece, a symbol of royal power, Charles created a narrative that set the tone for his kingship that would have been unmistakable to the people of Spain. With the horse as the ram, adorned with the images of the Nemean lion, the fleece is a symbol of the emperor’s power, as Hercules wore the pelt of the Nemean lion as a symbol of his power and strength.

The Emperor as Spectacle: Masks Garniture

The so-called “Masks Garniture” of Charles V is not only one of the emperor’s most beautiful armors, but also one of Milanese armorer Filippo Negroli’s masterpieces (Figure 14). The name of the garniture comes from the embossed grotesques on the front of the burgonet, the pauldrons, and the couters. The armor, now polished to a reflective silver, was originally black, as

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15 The garniture was made by Filipo Negroli and his brothers in their workshop. It is the only surviving armor that is known unequivocally to have been made by Negroli and his brothers. The name of the garniture was coined by Valencia de Don Juan, the director of the Royal Armory in Madrid, in 1898. (Stuart Pyhrr, Heroic Armor, 160.) The pieces of the garniture discussed here are those features in Heroic Armor, though more pieces of exchange exist. Those described here are a burgonet with hinged cheekpieces, detachable buffe, breastplate, a single skirt lame supporting tassets of seven lames each, backplate with two waist lames and a single cuilet lame, asymmetrical pauldrons, couters, articulated cuisses with poleyns and half-greaves. See Pyhrr, Heroic Armor, 160-170.
can be seen in the watercolor illustrations in the *Inventario Iluminado*, a pictorial inventory of Charles V’s armors, which is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3 (Figures 15 and 16). The detailing of the armor is spectacular, whether viewed up close or from a distance.

In the center of the breastplate is a small mandorla of gilded steel encircling the Virgin Mary holding the child Christ. A common declaration of faith on armors worn by Catholics following the Reformation, the image is not large enough to be read from even a short distance. Possibly akin to holding a rosary in one’s pocket, this image of the Virgin was likely a personal talisman for the emperor, a reminder of his faith and representative, if only to himself, of his role as defender of that faith throughout his empire. The backplate features the image of Saint Barbara, now a darkened silhouette, but what would have once been of brilliant gold damascening. Saint Barbara was a virgin martyr, and the patron saint of armorers and firearms because she was associated with unexpected and sudden death. Her father, a pagan, built a tower and locked her inside to dissuade suitors. She persuaded the workmen building the two-windowed tower to include a third window, symbolizing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Barbara was also successful in sneaking a priest, disguised as a doctor, into her tower to baptize her a Christian. When her father found out, he

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16 The black color of armors was achieved through a heat treatment and used for aesthetic purposes, and also to protect from rust.

17 Stuart Pyhrr, *Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance: Filippo Negroli and his Contemporaries* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 166. The Virgin and Child and the image of Saint Barbara were part of the emperor’s “personal iconography,” which had appeared on all his harnesses since 1531. *Heroic Armor*, 168.
executed her, then instantaneously was struck by lightening, his body burning in flames. Barbara fought to become a Christian in the face of adversity, which may have alluded to the emperor’s campaigns as Defender of the Faith.

The cult of Saint Barbara was very popular in the Middle Ages, connecting the use of her image on armor to romantic associations with the medieval knight. While the use of a saint in iconographic programs responding to Protestant adversaries makes perfect sense, the use of Saint Barbara, the patron saint of death in battle is curious when used in ceremonial armor. Again, I argue that the idea of armor was to imagine wholly that the wearer was a participant in battle, from the armor itself to the imagery of “protection” used to decorate it. This small image, which would have been nearly invisible to anyone if the wearer were mounted, is similar to the Virgin on the front of the breastplate, a small, personal prompt for the emperor.

The entirety of the Masks Garniture, save for the greaves and vambraces, is covered with thin horizontal bands of gold and silver damascening. On the cuisses, tasset lames, and pauldrons, this decorative band is at the overlapping edge of the articulated lames. On the burgonet’s peak, this damascened border appears to wrap around a floral medallion just above the temple, then continues up toward the comb, framing the grotesque, then turning back, running parallel to the comb, which is an embossed rope of acanthus leaves, forming a scale-like

ridge, interrupted in the center by a bunch of spherical fruits (Figure 17). On the cuirass, the bands give the illusion of articulation, though both pieces are solid. The bands consist of acanthus leaves entwined with vines and flowers; in the wider portions, such as along the comb of the burgonet, there are insects, birds, and quadrupeds among the vines.

The use of decorative vines continues in the embossed portions of the garniture, surrounding the grotesques on the burgonet and couters, and creating the majority of the decoration on the pauldrons (Figure 18). The vegetal scrolls under the grotesques on the couters end in grape-like bunches, following the bowed edges of the plates. The poleyns are embossed with intertwining acanthus leaves that crisscross at the center to form a symmetrical design (Figure 19). The large grotesques, of which there are three different designs, are all partially humanoid and partially vegetal in form (Figures 20, 21, and 17). The forms are possibly meant to be reminiscent of the grotesques adorning the corners of medieval Gothic architecture, or perhaps are another nod to ancient Rome, similar to the decorative bands of the Mühlberg armor. These figures would have been visible at a close distance, and would have been a clear indicator of the grandeur of Charles V.

The Masks Garniture, with its pieces of exchange, was designed to serve multiple purposes, included mounted as well as foot combat.\textsuperscript{20} The embossing of the steel, however, thins it considerably, to the point that the majority of its

\textsuperscript{20} Pyhrr, Heroic Armor, 160.
protective value is lost. To someone in the emperor's audience who was familiar with armor construction, this suit would have appeared to be fully functional in combat circumstances, although the lavish decorations rendered the steel impractical for use in the field. It is unlikely, also, that a sum of money that a garniture such as this one would have cost would have been spent on something to be possibly damaged in combat. The garniture is therefore a very expensive, highly realistic costume for the role of a knight, a part played by Charles V while wearing it.

*Steel on Textiles, Steel in Bronze: Art Perpetuates Imaginings*

Emperor Charles V's make-believe as a knight was not restricted to public appearances. Also an avid collector of paintings, sculpture, and tapestries, much of what the emperor collected included depictions of armor. In addition to Titian's equestrian portrait of the emperor in his armor from Mühlberg, Charles V was represented in many other paintings wearing armor, both actual and imagined. The emperor also collected tapestries and sculptures, many of which

21 It is noteworthy that this garniture, as several others belonging to Charles V, included “certain features of construction [that] were undoubtedly prescribed by Charles V when he ordered the garniture, notable the hinged side plates on both cuirasses and the breastplates’ double gussets held by internal springs.” These modifications, which also appear on the harness discussed in Chapter 3 as well as the Mühlberg armor, “reflect not only Charles V’s personal preferences as an experienced soldier but also an accommodation to his physical ailments, notably gout and spinal curvature.” Pyhrr, *Heroic Armor*, 168.

22 The study of Charles V's artworks depicting armor is a dissertation-length project that cannot be undertaken here. The objects mentioned in this section are meant simply as examples of a much larger group that reinforces the image of the emperor in armor that he worked to create. For a more comprehensive study and list of artworks, see Hugo Soly's *Charles V, 1500-1558, and his Time.*
depicted him in armor as well. These depictions of himself as a knight, wearing armors, is something Charles may have learned from his grandfather. Maximilian I commissioned many works on paper to celebrate himself and his position as emperor, as well as fictional biographies. One of his book projects, Freydatal, which was never completed, contains fictional accounts of the emperor’s tournaments (Figure 22). Before Freydat was started, the emperor commissioned a woodcut by court artist Hans Burgkmair to commemorate his crowning as emperor-elect (Figure 23).23 Each of these woodcuts depict Maximilian as a knight, one in the “arranged warfare” of a tournament, and one as a medieval knight, mounted and dressed for battle. In the Burgkmair print, the emperor wears a full suit of armor, as does his mount, and his image is surrounded by an arch in an ancient Roman architectural style.24 Like Charles V’s equestrian portrait by Titian invokes Roman ideals by drawing on the composition of the statue of Marcus Aurelius and the ideals of chivalry through the emperor’s depiction in armor, Maximilian I’s woodcut, too, connects both periods.

Being prints on paper, the works commissioned by Maximilian I would have served to perpetuate his image as knight and warrior, which he embodied while dressed in his armors, even when he was not physically present. The social imagining could have taken place by viewers who would never have seen the emperor in person, and reinforced the make-believe created in person long after

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24 Ibid.
a public appearance. Although Maximilian’s projects would have been duplicated and highly mobile, Charles V’s creation of his own image in art wearing his armors served a similar role as reinforcements of his imagined knighthood.

Charles V commissioned several series of tapestries during his reign, the most expensive of which was *The Conquest of Tunis*, designed by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and Pieter Coecke van Aelst, and executed in the workshop of Willem de Pannemaker. The tapestries commemorate the emperor’s expedition to and attack on Ottoman-controlled Tunis in 1535. In the second tapestry in the series, *The Review of the Troops at Barcelona*, the emperor sits atop a mount draped in the same burgundy caparison as the horse depicted in Titian’s equestrian portrait (Figure 24). The emperor wears a complete harness, except for a helmet, wearing a visored cap instead.

There is not sufficient detail to determine whether the armor is meant to be one belonging to Charles V, but the gold orphery that run vertically down the tassets and greaves are suggestive of several armors in the emperor’s collection. The troops closest to the emperor, outfitted with halberds and matching uniforms, are not wearing armors. Although an armor-clad cavalry is depicted in the tapestry (Figure 25), the emperor is surrounded by infantry, which highlights his mounted position. These tapestries would have been used in ceremonies such as christenings, marriages, and peace agreements, as was the fashion in the

Burgundian courts. Whether Charles V was present for these events, clad in ceremonial armor, or was unable to be present, his image as knight and warrior was represented in tapestries such as this one.

The emperor also commissioned several bronzes by Italian sculptor Leone Leoni and his son, Pompeo (Figures 26 and 27). In both the bust and the statue, the emperor is represented in armor. The armor of each sculpture is an amalgamation of Roman style, or *alla Romana*, armor and contemporary armor, and the compositions of the statues are reminiscent of antique styles. The full-length statue is one of two that are identical; one stood at the center of the interior courtyard of the Alcázar in Toledo, Spain. Charles V converted the Roman fortification into a palace during his reign, and since he did not remain in Toledo for extended periods, the statue, “emperor as ancient warrior and knight” carried on his social imaginings in his stead.

**Conclusion**

Emperor Charles V commissioned and wore armors that incorporated a multitude of images with various meanings. The complex iconography emblazoned on his garnitures were carefully selected to weave a history, genealogy, and a public image about the man who wore them. From the smallest

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27 There are many other sculptures of Charles V in armor than those discussed here. Again, see Soly’s *Charles V, 1500-1558, and his Time*. On page 392 of his study, Soly suggests that *Charles V and Fury* is meant to metaphorically refer to the emperor’s triumph over the Protestants at the Battle of Mühlberg, and thus a thorough comparison of the statue and Titian’s equestrian portrait is necessary.
details, to the armors themselves, to their reproduction in other artistic media, they worked together to form a larger picture. Charles V never physically led his troops onto a battlefield; he never participated in a joust or foot combat with a mortal enemy. The armors he wore functioned as costumes in a very expensive, very sophisticated dress-up for a complex game of make-believe, involving not only himself, but those around him.

Through the dissemination of romances of chivalry, the values of chivalry and the idea of a knight in armor were well-known to Charles’s subjects. In what was a brilliant public relations venture, the emperor used armor and the decorations on them to mediate his own image in the minds of his audience. Relying on the prevalence of the knight’s code of honor, loyalty, and courage through popular fiction, Charles played upon these desirable characteristics, becoming the knight as he donned his suits of steel. In a time before televised press conferences and political websites, Charles V promulgated his image, his ideals, his strengths, his plans, and his powers through a visual vocabulary in steel (Figure 28).

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28 Eisenberg, *Castilian Romances of Chivalry*, 35 and 110.
CHAPTER 3

CHIVALRY TRANSLATED: ARMORS ON DISPLAY, FROM RENAISSANCE COLLECTIONS TO THE MODERN MUSEUM

Charles V was certainly a collector of armors, although not in the same sense as he was a collector of art. To collect artworks based purely on their aesthetic value, with the ultimate goal of using the collection as propaganda, or to display the collector’s wealth, social status, etcetera, is very different from collecting armor for one’s own use. A collection of armor such as the emperor’s is an accumulation of objects to wear on one’s own body; a collection most personal. Although Charles was in possession of armors belonging to his ancestors and some diplomatic gifts, the majority of his collection was for personal use. It was the emperor’s son, Philip II, King of Spain, who became a collector of armors as art objects. Though he owned several of his own garnitures, upon the abdication and subsequent death of his father, the bulk of his armors were not his own, but his father’s. It was Philip’s cousin, however, who was the first to collect armor in the way other forms of art had been collected, and most similar to the way modern armor collections have been assembled. Rather than a collector by happenstance, as was Philip, Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol purposefully set out to create a most magnificent armor collection, worthy of the Habsburg dynasty and his role as a prince.
Charles V: Collector and Patron

The beginning of Charles V’s armor collection dates back prior his birth and long before his positions as Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain. His grandfather, Maximilian I, was the first ruler to work directly with armorers to produce armor that went beyond protection on the battlefield and stepped into the realm of fine art. Maximilian set up a royal armory at Innsbruck in 1504.¹ Although his maternal grandfather also had a collection of armor, it is usually Maximilian’s influence on Charles V to which Charles’s interest and lavish taste in armor is credited. By 1519, after the deaths of his two grandfathers, Charles V had inherited not only the rule of Spain from Ferdinand and the lands under Maximilian’s control and been elected Holy Roman Emperor, he had also inherited a great deal of armor belonging to both men, as well as his father, Philip the Handsome.²

While Charles V maintained palaces in various locations in Spain and across Europe, his entourage and his collection of armor traveled with him.³ Because there was no need for a permanent location within a palace to house his

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¹ Blair, European Armor, 114.

² Ferdinand I of Aragon died in 1517, leaving the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile to his daughter, Joanna, or “Juana la Loca.” Due to his mother’s mental condition, Charles V arrived in Spain to serve as her regent, quickly becoming king himself. Maximilian I died in 1519, and Charles was elected emperor the same year.

³ I have been unable to find in print that Charles V’s armor collection traveled with him. This information is based on conversations with multiple arms and armor scholars, including Pierre Terjanian, Álvaro Soler del Campo, Jonathan Tavares, and Matthias Pfaffenbichler.
armor collection, Charles V’s armors were never on display in the same way many of his contemporaries housed collections of curiosities or sculpture, or even paintings. His constant travel was useful in his collecting practices, but it was not conducive to the display of his treasury. Armor could not be commissioned as simply as a religious or historical painting. It was more akin to a portrait, although a single “sitting” would not have been sufficient, as a garniture involved careful fittings and construction in order for the wearer to have full range of motion in the finished product. Passing through or near the main production centers he patronized at Augsburg and Milan, the emperor could meet with the artists for measurements, fittings, and to pick up completed products.

Unlike paintings or tapestries, however, a constantly-moving collection of armor was not entirely hidden from public view. In many cases, the armor collection of Charles V would have been more accessible to the public than the libraries, painting collections, studiolos, and Wunder- and Kunstkammers of other nobles during the Renaissance. Generally, the collections of European nobles which were housed within grand palaces would only be accessible to other nobles with whom the collectors socialized, and perhaps visitors of significant social status. Though these collections were often laid out in such a fashion as to showcase the objects within them, the number of people who would have seen them on display was fairly small. In contrast, as the emperor traveled throughout Europe during his reign, his luxurious armors would have been viewed by hundreds, if not thousands of his subjects and contemporaries. With parades and
triumphal entries, tournaments and genuine battles, the garnitures made for Charles V would have been highly visible when worn by the emperor. This high visibility, however, was reserved only for the armors worn by Charles V himself. The armors he inherited from his father and grandfathers were likely packed away and seen only by a few members of the emperor’s court, namely the court armorer. It was not until after Charles’s death that the historic armors he collected would be put on display by his son, King Philip II.

Charles V was a patron of the arts. Regardless of his artistic tastes or the extent to which he cared for the art in his possession, he amassed a large collection not just of armor, but of paintings, tapestries, and sculptures. Many of these were commissioned by the emperor himself, while some were gifts. The works that were commissioned by Charles V were strategic in nature, contributing to a very specific “political representation” he wanted to perpetuate. These objects very often included representations of the emperor in armor (Figure 29). What makes Charles’s armor collection stand out from the rest of his collection is not only the quantity and quality of armor collected, but also that the only inventory Charles had drawn up during his lifetime cataloged his armor holdings, but none of his other art possessions.

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4 I find this title a bit confusing, as the Helmschmids, who actually made the Emperor’s armors, are also referred to as the court armors. It makes more sense to call the Helmschmids armors, and for this title to be “keeper of arms” but I have left it as this is how the role is described in The Art of Power on page 40.

5 Checa Cremades, “The Image of Charles V,” 482.
The Inventario Illuminado

The *Inventario Illuminado* is a series of watercolor paintings recording the armors owned by Charles V. Not only were his personal armors included in this catalogue, but also the armors he had inherited from his father and grandfathers. The artist of the inventory, which has been dated between 1544 and 1558 based on the creation date of the latest armors depicted and the death of the emperor, is unknown. The care with which the armors are depicted is stunning and shows great attention to detail (Figure 30). Charles V, like Maximilian, worked closely with the armorers in his employ to develop garnitures that were more functional and more comfortable than most had been previously. These minor modifications, including greaves that were cut away at the inside of the calf in order for the wearer to have better purchase on his horse, can easily be seen in the *Inventario*’s exquisite images.

In addition to being an inventory of the emperor’s armor collection, the *Inventario* was also an organizational system. The armor contained multiple garnitures of more than twenty pieces of exchange, from helmets to gauntlets, pauldrons to greaves, and even several armors with numerous interchangeable toe covers (Figure 31). While generally these garnitures had a recognizable

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6 I have not found information stating that all of his inherited armors were depicted in the *Inventario*, but it is certain that some of them were, for example Philip the Handsome’s pomegranate helmet.
decorative motif that would have made the pieces easily identifiable, smaller pieces such as these numerous sabatons, reinforces, and detachable visors often did not have the space to carry these decorations, making the pictorial inventory invaluable in keeping the pieces together and accounted for. Along with these fabulous garnitures, the Inventario includes pages of plumes meant for attachment to helmets during tournaments or parades, shields, and weapons of every type (Figures 32, 33, and 34). The depictions are not simply of the weapons themselves, but often are depicted with accessories and corresponding parts. Firearms are depicted alongside their cases, hafted weapons are shown with the interchangeable heads, and crossbows are painted along side cranequins.

What is unusual about the Inventario Illuminado is that there is no written information to accompany the pictures. There is no value assigned to the works, there are no dates or artists listed. Instead of being a list of assets, as collection inventories often are, it is possible that the Inventario was meant strictly as a visual guide for the emperor’s keepers of his armor. It may also be a reflection of Charles’s feelings toward his armors: the emperor did not have inventories, especially pictorial ones, of any of his other artistic possessions.7 In order to show off his armors, he may have used the Inventario as a means to display his collection on diplomatic visits with other nobles and armor connoisseurs; with his itinerant court and constant traveling, this unparalleled collection would likely have remained packed for relocation. These drawings may

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7 All written inventories of Charles V’s art objects were created after his death in 1558. The Inventario Iluminado is the only inventory created during his reign.
have been the Emperor’s solution to the inconvenience and near impossibility of displaying his prized collection.

As much as it served as an inventory of his holdings, the *Inventario*, being pictorial, also served as a catalog of the emperor’s armors. These images would have been a way for him to show off his armors to other noblemen, as well as keep track of what he owned and what parts were part of which garnitures. It has been recorded multiple times that the emperor had requested replicas of armors belonging to other nobles with whom he met. While visiting Urbino, the Emperor took a liking to the “Batwing armor” belonging to Guidobaldo II della Rovere and requested a copy (Figure 35).\(^8\) This was the emperor’s first commission from the workshop of famed Milanese armorer Filippo Negroli. In Mantua, Charles saw a helmet belonging to Federico II of Gonzaga and had a replica made for himself immediately.\(^9\) Based on this, it would seem as though armors were displayed for or at least shown to the emperor during his visits. Certainly Charles would have wanted to show off his own exquisite armors to fellow collectors. With his own armor packed away, the *Inventario* could have served as an album of his own masterpieces, convenient for traveling with him to nobles’ palaces.

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\(^9\) Based on a conversation with Álvaro Soler del Campo, Director of the Real Armería in Madrid.
Philip II: Keeper of his Father’s Armory

Just as Charles V had grown up influenced by Maximilian’s tastes and affinity for luxury armors, Philip II grew up under the influence of his father’s enthusiasm for armor. Unlike Charles, however, Philip did not seem to share in his father’s passion. During his “Grand Tour” of Europe, which Charles V facilitated in hopes of securing votes for his son’s campaign to become the next Holy Roman Emperor, Philip wore several incredible armors. As his grandfather had done before him, Charles had many of these armors commissioned for Philip by his court armorers, the Helmschmid dynasty of Augsburg (Figure 36). By the time he took the throne of Spain in 1556 following Charles’s abdication, Philip had himself accumulated a substantial group of armors, both for ceremonial and tournament uses.¹⁰ At this time, all the armors in his personal collection had been commissioned and created at the behest of his father. As king himself, Philip chose to commission armors from Wolfgang Grosschedel of Landshut, rather than continuing patronage of the Helmschmids (Figure 37).¹¹ This new relationship, despite the shift in armor fashion trends it caused throughout

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¹⁰ Charles abdicated for health reasons in 1556, with Philip II taking his place as King of Spain. In a verbal agreement that was not upheld, his brother Ferdinand I was to inherit the Habsburg Dynasty (and therefore the role of Holy Roman Emperor), leaving it to Philip II upon his death. Instead it went to his own son, Maximilian II.

Europe, was short-lived, as Philip ordered very few armors for himself after the
death of his father.¹²

Neither the charismatic politician nor the accomplished sportsman his
father was, Philip did not have as much need for armors as did Charles.¹³ While
Philip focused his collecting efforts on art forms other than armor, his treatment
of the inherited armor, likely to honor his father whom he very much admired, is
important in the history of armor collecting.¹⁴ Habsburg dynastic policy was for
the belongings of the previous ruler to be sold off at the time of death to pay
outstanding debts.¹⁵ Instead of allowing his father’s armor collection to be sold,
Philip II negotiated with the executors of Charles V’s will to purchase the armory
in its entirety for 12,000 ducats in 1559.¹⁶ In 1594, Philip stipulated in his will
that the contents of the armory were not to be dispersed, but instead should

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¹² Soler, *The Art of Power*, 41. Seven garnitures that belonged to King Philip II survive today. All
but one of them were commissioned during Charles V’s lifetime, so it is possible that none of
them were personally commissioned by Philip. See *The Art of Power*, 37. The seventh is dated
between 1555 and 1560 on the basis of style.


¹⁴ Rosemarie Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, Ltd.,
2004), 1-50.

¹⁵ This information is based on personal conversations with Álvaro Soler del Campo, Director of
the Real Armería in Madrid and Christian Beaufort-Spontin, Director of the Hofjagd- und
Rüstkammer in Vienna. Both, September 2011.

¹⁶ Soler, *Art of Power*, 27 and 41. A single ceremonial garniture in the mid-sixteenth century could
cost nearly double the 12,000 ducats paid by Philip for the armory of his father. Pricing
information based on personal conversation with Álvaro Soler del Campo, Director of the Real
Armería in Madrid.
remain the property of his descendants, which has kept the collection more or less in tact until the present.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to procuring his father’s armor collection and ensuring that it would remain intact from his lifetime forward, Philip II’s important contribution to Charles V’s collection was to build a space for its permanent display. In 1562, Philip began construction on an armory above the royal stables in Madrid, in order to consolidate his own armor collection there with his father’s collection, which had remained in Valladolid when the emperor traveled to Yuste.\textsuperscript{18} The year prior, Philip had made Madrid the capital of his kingdom and permanent seat of his court. The space was completed in 1565 and the armor installed by the end of 1566 (Figure 38). The following year a complete inventory was created for the combined collections which allows reconstruction of the armory from that time.\textsuperscript{19} The armor belonging to Charles filled the first through tenth wooden cabinets, which were affixed to the two longest walls of the space. Cabinets eleven through seventeen held Philip’s own armors, and spaces in between held other objects of significance, like papal swords, diplomatic gifts, war trophies, and weaponry and armors inherited by Charles V.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 27. Many items have been removed from the collection by various means, owing to the fine examples of armors from the Spanish armory in American collections, but the majority of the collection belonging to Charles V and Philip II remains in Madrid.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 40-41. The emperor had abdicated in Brussels, traveling then back to Spain by boat with his armory. From the port of Laredo, he traveled to Valladolid, where his armory remained as he continued to Yuste, where he took very few possessions.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 41. The original 1567 inventory is now lost, but was the basis for a subsequent inventory in 1594.

\textsuperscript{20} Soler, \textit{The Art of Power}, 42.
Although Philip II did not commission any armors after the construction of the armory at Madrid, he did continue to collect armors and weapons as diplomatic gifts. In addition to gifts, he obtained war booty, most importantly that seized by his half brother, Don John of Austria, during the battle of Lepanto. Don John retained those items belonging to naval commander Ali Pasha, but in 1582, three years after Don John’s death, Philip secured those items for the Spanish Habsburg armory as well. This collection that Philip had brought together, in the space he created for it, continued to grow with contributions from Charles V’s descendants into the eighteenth century.

Archduke Ferdinand II: Armory of Heroes

Archduke Ferdinand II was the son of Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I, nephew to Charles V and first cousin to Philip II (Figure 39). Upon his father’s death in 1564, Ferdinand inherited Tyrol and the Vorlande in accordance with his father’s will, while his elder brother became Emperor Maximilian II. In 1573, after taking over Schloß Ambras, a medieval castle in Innsbruck, Tyrol, Ferdinand began to construct what would eventually hold an extensive art

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 44.
collection. Of the spaces created during the renovation that would eventually house the Archduke’s extensive collection, three quarters were devoted to his collection of historical arms and armor. Ferdinand, like many other noblemen during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, pursued collecting for pleasure and also for the entertainment of guests. While the archduke’s collection was certainly of excellent quality, it was overshadowed by the larger collections of the time, including those of his nephew, Emperor Rudolf II, his cousin, Philip II, the Duke of Bavaria, and the various Italian dynasties including the Gonzagas, d’Estes, and Medici. Because he could not compete with these dynastic collections of paintings and sculptures by great masters, and decades of curiosities and exotica, the archduke set forth to create a collection of arms and armor belonging to famous warriors and noblemen.

As no collector had previously sought to amass such a collection, Ferdinand knew he would not have any major competitors. He entrusted his secretary, Jacob Schrenkh von Notzing, with building the collection. In addition to the armor he solicited, he also requested portraits of the wearers. The

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28 Ibid.
collecting of portraits of famous men, and the idea of courtly hero worship were not novel, existing in Italy in the form of the Nine Worthies, and also ancestral portrait galleries. The archduke himself had a collection of portraits of the various governors of Tyrol, beginning with Albrecht I and ending with himself, twenty-seven portraits in all. What made Ferdinand’s collection unique, aside from his focus on the armor as well as portraits of these men, was his disregard for alliances. He included the armors of men from ranks such as emperor to men of the humblest births, focusing only on their significance as military strategists, regardless of whether their adeptness had been directed against the Habsburgs.

Some of the objects in what became known as the “Heldenrüstkammer” were purchased, although some were given freely as the archduke’s conception for the collection spread. It became honorable to be represented in the collection, or to have one’s ancestor included. Donors were also promised two copies of a picture catalog the archduke planned to create to promote his collection. In a report from 1577, two Venetian diplomats who had traveled to Ambras recorded Ferdinand’s idea of an illustrated catalog. This catalog, which came to be called the Armamentarium Heroicum, was first published in Latin in 1592, with a


31 Beaufort, “Die ‘Ehrliche Gesellschaft’,” 127. Archduke Ferdinand tried for two years to obtain the armor of Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma and Piacenza, and in 1580 Farnese himself sent both a tremendous half harness and a portrait to Ambras.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 126.
German edition following. His faithful secretary, Shrenkh von Notzing, wrote the biographical text that accompanied each of the 125 figures in the catalog. The images of the “heroes” clad in their armor, their likenesses taken from the collected portraits, were designed by Ferdinand’s court artists, Giovannia Battista Fontana and Simon Gartner, and etched in Augsburg by Dominico Custos. The figures in the catalog are depicted within architectural niches, similar to how they were displayed at Ambras, copying a common convention for displaying sculpture. Each is depicted with his helmet at his feet, and a short biography on the facing page (Figure 40).

Included in the Archduke’s collection, and also in his catalog, are armors from the Spanish branch of the House of Habsburg. In 1571, in anticipation of the space at Ambras castle, and again in 1585, after its completion, the Archduke acquired three armors in total from the Royal Armory at Madrid. One of the armors had belonged to Ferdinand I of Aragon, Charles V’s maternal grandfather (Figure 41), one to Charles himself (Figure 42), and another to Philip (Figure 43). The armor belonging to Charles (Figure 44), a single harness from a larger garniture which remains in the Royal Armory in Madrid, is associated with a failed attempt to invade Algiers and suppress the Muslim threat in the

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34 Curiously, the Latin edition is printed from woodcuts, while the German edition is printed from copperplate engravings. None of the texts that mention the catalog speculate on this difference in materials, but this is something of note for further investigation.


36 Soler, Art of Power, 214. Note #37.

37 Ibid.
Mediterranean. This connection with a failed military campaign makes it a curious choice for representation of his uncle’s greatness, but it is likely that the harness was offered by Philip, rather than selected by Ferdinand.

The half harness was made by Desiderius Helmschmid around 1543, the burgonet was completed around 1540. Visually similar to the Mühlberg armor, also by Desiderius Helmschmid, the Algiers garniture features gilded bands of decorative floral motifs running vertically down the armor. A gilded image of the Virgin is the prominent decoration on the breastplate, appearing much larger than the Virgin on the Mühlberg armor. It is likely that this armor, created for an encounter with Muslim forces, utilized a larger emblem of the Virgin as a religious proclamation, rather than simply as a reminder of the wearer’s own faith. It is certainly large enough to be seen from a distance, at least by the emperor’s own troops, reinforcing their faith and the purpose of their mission in Northern Africa.

On the backplate, a golden depiction of Saint Barbara is framed between the pauldrons, the three-windowed tower just taller than her head, looming in the background. This image, like that of the Virgin, is also one of the largest appearing on the emperor’s armors. The pauldrons are edged with the same floral bands that appear vertically on the cuirass. The tassets, too, are edged with bands, which meet at the rounded ends with the vertical bands. Similarly to the

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38 Label accompanying armor from the Hofjagd- und Rüstkammer, Vienna. “Leichter Halbharnisch aus einer kleinen Harnischgarnitur, geschlossens Sturmhaube (A 426) zur Algiergarnitur. Kaiser Karl V. (1500-1558), Desiderius Helmschmid (1513-1579); Halbharnisch: Augsburg, um 1543, Sturmhaube: Augsburg, um 1540.”
Mühlberg armor, again, this harness features special accommodations for the emperor’s ailments. These modifications are evidence of Charles V’s involvement in the creation of his armor, meaning it was likely his choice to include the Virgin and Child and Saint Barbara large enough to act as prompts for his servicemen.

The burgonet is also edged with the decorative gold border at the base, where the helmet meets the cuirass. Gilded, etched vegetal scrolls adorn the skull, and underneath each rivet securing the plates to one another is a four-petaled flower of gold. Perhaps the most striking feature of the burgonet is the inclusion of the life-like steel ears on either side, just beside the latch and hinge, respectively, for the visor (Figure 45). Although the harness itself was commissioned for what amounted to a failed invasion, the aesthetic details of the armor, along with the customized construction are indicative of Emperor Charles V’s tastes. It is not, because of its involvement in battle, an example of the emperor’s military legacy. It is, however, based on its physical qualities, the ideal object to encompass the emperor’s feats in their entirety, and his greatness as a whole.

Archduke Ferdinand II’s castle at Ambras functioned as a museum from its inception. His ideas for organization of his collection were quite innovative for the period, and the catalogue he created to accompany his collection was one of the first of its kind. Not only did he collect and display armor belonging to “heroes” of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, he also displayed his own personal armor and armor for jousting competitions (Figure 46). While he collected
curiosities and *naturalia* in his *Kunstkammer*, he collected curiosities of armor as well, such as that belonging to one of the archduke’s foot soldiers who was over seven feet tall, and that of the court dwarf (Figure 47). Although many early modern nobles, such as Gustav II Adolf of Sweden, displayed their substantial armor collections and allowed access to a large number of visitors, Archduke Ferdinand was the first, and his “*Heldenrüstkammer*” was the very first museum arms and armor collection.

*Collecting Chivalry*

Many artistic collections throughout Renaissance Europe were put together in order to display wealth, or personal taste, or to show that the collector was educated. A collection of armors, unlike a collection of natural objects, would certainly not represent a microcosm of the natural world in one’s own estate. These displays of wealth and taste would likely have been based on one’s collection as it compared to another. Since Ferdinand’s collection was the first of its kind, using it to showcase his exquisite taste as compared to his competitors would not have been possible. Inviting viewers to view the quality of his collection, including harnesses from the most current, most popular armorers, as might be the case with a collection of paintings, would not have had the same effect.

As Ferdinand was also a patron of armors, he was a participant in Walton’s imaginings, wearing his steel costumes in front of audiences who then
participated in social imaginings of the archduke as knight. Perhaps even more so than his uncle, his lesser station within a powerful family lent itself to a make-believe that he was a great ruler, his minor successes more important than perhaps was the reality. These ideas of chivalry and what that meant were connected with the armors which facilitated the make-believe. Even without the bodies to display them, the armors Ferdinand collected are intrinsic prompts of these ideas. Just as a library of scholarly texts and a Wunderkammer of natural curiosities and scientific phenomena was thought to reflect upon the collector as being learned and holding the knowledge of the cosmos, Ferdinand’s collection of armors reflected on him as the ultimate chivalrous knight. By possessing the armors, he, too, was possessed of the qualities they symbolized, the triumphs they had seen on the battlefields, the military ingenuity they represented.

The Heldenrüstkammer did not represent a microcosm of the universe, but an encapsulation of all of the feats and accomplishments and successful exploits of the men who had worn them, who had owned them, who had commissioned them with their own make-believes in mind. Ferdinand had brought together the qualities of the men whom he admired by bringing together the tangible, corporeal representations of those qualities. Additionally, the armors served as memorabilia of the battles during which they were worn, and like a microcosm of the natural world, Ferdinand became, through his collection, the master of a historical microcosm. As a collector of these armors, these vestiges of military history, he was the controller of all they stood for, from their
commission, as they were worn, as symbols of great triumphs, either specifically or in relation to their wearers in general, and as relics of heroes long since passed.

Conclusion

While there is extensive documentation on early modern collections from all over Europe, few of these collections included armor. For the collections that did, more emphasis is placed on other art forms within the collections—paintings, sculpture, prints, naturalia, and even books—than on the armor and weaponry. Charles V did not collect armor in the same fashion other Renaissance rulers collected art and exotic objects. Much of his collection he commissioned for himself, to be worn for important occasions during his rule. Others among his inventory were gifts, and many objects were inherited from his father and grandfathers, these objects imaginably holding more sentimental or symbolic value than anything else. While Charles’s collection did include some pieces obtained as war booty, there is no evidence that he looked at these works as exotica as did other Renaissance collectors. Instead, these items were merely war trophies, significant to the emperor for the victories they symbolized, and not for their rareness or aesthetic value.

Once Charles’s collection was passed along to Philip II, the armors became more of a collection in the traditional sense: Philip created a space for their

display, and most of them, having belonged to his father, no longer possessed any functional value and became aesthetic objects. Philip did not choose to collect armors, however, in all likelihood displaying and maintaining them as an homage to his father’s great love of the art form. It was Archduke Ferdinand II who first began to collect armor as an art form, and to collect it specifically. His “Armory of Heroes” was the precursor to dozens of private collections across Europe and, eventually, the United States. The objects from these private collections now comprise the public collections of many fine art museums across the world, specifically those in the United States. Though the art of arms and armor continues to be eschewed for the more “traditional” genres within the field of art history, arms and armor collections are among the most popular in many of the museums where they are held.40

Despite the popularity of arms and armor among the museum-going public, the amount of scholarship on the subject is dreadfully small. There is still much work to be done on all aspects of arms and armor, especially on collecting and collections. Armor was collected at the time it was still in use, and continued to be collected on a large scale well into the twentieth century. The romantic ideals of medieval chivalry are what drove collectors to choose armor over other art forms, and what drive museum-goers to galleries filled with mannequins of horses and men, shining weaponry and heraldic banners. Although seeing these

40 Conversation with Pierre Terjanian, Curator of Arms and Armor, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Pierre’s position came about due to the popularity of the arms and armor department at the PMA, as it is one of the museum’s biggest draws. The same can be said for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Cleveland Museum of Art.
suits of steel on a pedestal encased in glass is not the same as dressing as a knight, certainly there are instances of make-believe by many visitors who imagine what life would have been like as a knight, or even as a Renaissance nobleman. As they did centuries ago, these collections of magnificent armors act as prompts for those who dare to imagine, sparking not only personal games of make-believe, but continuing to create the social imaginings about the original wearers, who may or may not have upheld codes of chivalry, but who presented themselves as heroic and honorable men at arms.
Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was by no means a revolutionary in terms of his collection and use of armors. His nephew, however, absolutely was, being the first to actively, methodically seek and collect armors as art objects, creating a planned space for their public display, and publishing a catalog of his holdings. Philip II acted more as a facilitator for his cousin’s collection, but his contributions to his father’s armory cannot be overlooked. In addition to constructing a space to permanently house the armors he purchased after his father’s death, his will stipulated that the armory in Madrid become an heirloom collection, remaining in the estate of the Spanish branch of the Habsburg family. Each of these men were instrumental in some way to the history of Renaissance armor by which many academics, curators, and museum visitors are so captivated today.

Rulers of the Renaissance commissioned armors for themselves in order to embody the ideals of a bygone era, creating a make-believe that enabled their audiences to believe they were courageous warriors like medieval knights had been. Although wearing these armors and embodying these ideas allowed men to transform into the archetype that had been romanticized through literature, the objects themselves held similar meaning, even without a wearer. As a vast library would have been evidence of a learned man, so, too, was a collection of armors belonging to great men evidence that the collector was versed in military tactics,
history, and himself possessed of the courage and loyalty of the chivalric codes intrinsically embedded into the suits of steel. The idealistic notions of knighthood, and similarly those of ancient Roman society, were at the root of the desire during the early modern period to wear and to possess these fantastic armors.

The study of armor lends itself to a wide array of theoretical applications, including self-fashioning, ruler representation in all its forms, gender studies and masculinity, and dozens more. This study is meant only to suggest one facet of the complex field, of which there are many, many more. It is my hope that this thesis will enlighten the reader, provide a basic background on Renaissance armors in Chapter 1, then posing a reason for its use and popularity among the Renaissance elite in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 introduces the first of a multitude of non-dynastic armor collections, and ends with a call for further scholarship on European and American collections from the Renaissance through the twentieth century. Most importantly, I hope that the reader will take with him or her a profound respect for the craft of the armorer and an understanding of the importance of armor as an art form.


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Figure 1. Anonymous, Hoplite soldier in combat, Greek, ca. 330 BCE. Marble relief. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. Crested helmet and brass plate armor are depicted.

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APPENDIX A

DIAGRAM OF ARMOR FOR MAN

[Diagram of armor with labels for each part]
APPENDIX B

DIAGRAM OF ARMOR FOR HORSE (BARD)
**APPENDIX C**

**GLOSSARY OF ARMOR TERMS**

**armet.** A helmet completely encasing the head, with hinged, movable cheekpieces overlapping on the chin and a visor; replaced by the *close helmet* in the sixteenth century. An “armet à rondel” had a small round disk affixed to the neckpiece by means of a short rod; most likely the disk anchored and protected the supporting straps.

**backplate.** An element protecting the back; corresponds to the *breastplate*, to which it is attached by straps or hinges; normally forged in one piece to fit the body, with additional plates (*lames*) attached to protect the lower back.

**bard.** A comprehensive term for equestrian armor—made first of mail, later of metal plate.

**bevor.** An element protecting the lower face and throat; can be either a separate piece worn with a helmet such as a *sallet* or an attached piece worn with a *close helmet*.

**bluing.** The process of applying heat to metal to achieve a deep blue color.

**breastplate.** An element protecting the chest and abdomen; normally worn with a *backplate* and fitted with flexible plates (*lames*) below to protect the lower abdomen.

**buffe.** A separate, usually detachable, element worn with an open helmet to protect the face and throat.

**burgonet.** A light, open helmet characterized by a peak, a fall over the eyes, and hinged earpieces; used by cavalry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sometimes worn with a *buffe*.

**chanfron.** The headpiece for a horse, first introduced in the fourteenth century. The complete chanfron was fitted with cheekpieces and a crestpiece, and by the sixteenth century was often elaborately decorated.

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1 All definitions, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the Glossary of Arms and Armor in *Arms and Armor* by Stephen Fliegel, 179-181.
close helmet. A helmet fitted with a visor and a bevor completely encasing the head. It has no cheekpieces and all elements function from a common set of pivots at the temples.

comb. The ridge running fore and aft along the skullpiece of a helmet.

couter (also cowter or elbow-cop). An element protecting the elbow; normally riveted between the rerebrace and lower cannon of the vambrace and designed with movable lames for flexibility.

crinet. An important component of full bard, light horse armor, and armored caparison protecting the horse’s neck. In the full bard, it was comprised of two combinations of lames that were articulated on loose rivets, on covering the crest and the mane and the other covering the neck below, connecting to the peytral.\(^2\)

crupper. An element protecting a horse’s hindquarters; part of a bard. In its complete form, the crupper is composed of three heavy, oblong plates: one was keeled and shaped to the top of the horse’s rump, ending in the tail guard; the other two plates were riveted to the top plate and hung down on each side to form a kind of “flounce” all around the hindquarters.\(^3\)

cuirass. The armor for the body as opposed to the head and limbs; a combination of breastplate and backplate.

cuisse. The upper part of the legharness worn by mounted troops and men-at-arms as a thigh defense, usually riveted to the poleyn.\(^4\)

culet. A piece of armor worn in both foot and mounted combat to protect the buttocks, consisting of several articulated lames loosely riveted together.\(^5\)

damascening. The technique of inlaying gold and silver into grooves gouged out of a metal surface, often favored for decorating sword hilts; originated with Muslim artists of the Near East and later adapted by North Italian and Spanish craftsmen in the fifteenth century, from whom it spread into the rest of Europe.

embossing. The decoration of metal plate by hammering it up in relief from the inside.

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\(^3\) Ibid., 147.


\(^5\) Tarassuk and Blair, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Arms and Weapons*, 407. Entry under ‘rump guard.’ Label on diagram is misspelled and should be ‘culet,’ not ‘cutlet.’
**engraving.** The application of ornament to metal by cutting the pattern directly into the surface with special tools such as a burin and graver.

**etching.** The decorative technique most commonly used on arms and armor. The process consists of tracing a design into the metal with an etching needle through a previously applied acid-resistant substance such as varnish. The application of acid “bites” into the exposed surface, leaving a permanent pattern that can be blackened or gilded after the varnish is removed. A variation of this technique known as “raised” etching involves applying varnish with a brush to cover those areas to be decorated with a design. Subsequent application of acid leaves the decorated areas slightly elevated to achieve relief.

**fauld.** The element attached to the breastplate that protects the abdomen, usually composed of horizontal lames.

**field armor.** Armor designed for use in war, as opposed to “tournament” and “parade” armors.

**flanchard.** An oblong plate attached to the base of a saddle protecting the flanks of a horse. It closed the gap between the crupper and the peytral.

**gardbrace.** A reinforcing element closely fitted to the pauldron, providing additional protection to the combatant’s left shoulder (the principal point of impact) during a joust.

**garniture.** A complete armor with related or exchange pieces, especially double pieces for converting the basic unit to sporting and various field uses.

**gauntlet.** Part of a complete armor to protect the hand and wrist. A gauntlet normally comprised a cuff covering the wrist, a back or metacarpal plate (or lames), and fingers, either joined or separated from each other.6

**German joust (Deutsch Gestech).** A form of joust fought with blunted lances in an open field without a tilt, requiring special equipment for both rider and horse; popular in the German-speaking lands.

**gorget.** An element protecting the neck, throat, and upper part of the chest; normally consists of two parts, front and back, joined by a hinge on the left shoulder and fastened with a stud on the right.

**greave.** An element protecting the lower leg from the knee to ankle. Can be “closed,” completely encircling the calf, or “open” to the inside, allowing for better purchase while riding.

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**harness.** A complete suit of man’s armor.

**joust.** A sporting combat between mounted knights. The combatants charged each other with “couched” lances, and often required special armor and equipment. Jousts frequently took place within a *tournament.*

**lames.** Overlapping plates forming flexible protection. Mobility was achieved by riveting the plates to straps at the back or using sliding rivets.

**lance-rest.** A support for the lance, when couched under the right arm, consisting of a bracket riveted to the *breastplate* and sometimes hinged so that it could be folded away when not in use.

**lists.** An enclosed area, usually fenced off, where tournaments were held.

**mace.** A short hafted weapon used as a club and carried by infantrymen and knights alike. The shape of the head, usually metal, varied but often features flanges or spikes.

**mail.** Flexible armor fashioned from interlocking rings; commonly used throughout Europe until its replacement by plate armor in the fourteenth century.

**mitten gauntlet.** A *gauntlet* in which the finger protection is joined, as opposed to separated.\(^7\)

**munitions armor.** Armor mass-produced for the common soldier, usually cheaply.

**pauldron.** An element protecting the shoulder and upper arm.

**peytral.** A breastplate which from the 13\(^{th}\) century was part of the full *bard* and of light horse armor. In full *bard*, it consisted of plates attached to the sides of the *crinet* that hung over the shoulders and chest but jutted out below to allow freedom of movement for the forelegs. The peytral was frequently provided with large bosses designed to deflect blows.\(^8\)

**poleyn** (also *knee-cop*). An element protecting the knee.

**pomme plate.** Plates attached to the upper curl of the saddle bow; designed to protect the rider’s upper thighs.

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\(^7\) Author’s definition.

**Rennen.** A German term for a form of *joust* in which sharpened or pointed lances were used to unhorse one’s opponent. Points could also be scored for the splintering of lances.

**rerebrace.** Element protecting the upper arm; sometimes known as an upper cannon.

**rondel.** An accessory of certain types of helmets, especially the *armet*, consisting of a small, round iron plate attached to the neckpiece by means of a short rod.  

**sabaton** (also **solleret**). An element protecting the foot.

**sassets.** Plates protecting the hips and upper thighs, suspended from a *breastplate* by rivets or straps.

**tilt.** A wall or fence, often of cloth-covered wood, that separated mounted participants in a *joust*; introduced during the fifteenth century to prevent head-on collisions between riders.

**tournament.** A generic term for mock combat held between teams of contestants either mounted or on foot. This useful form of practice for real combat, as well as for entertainment, became a formal event during the twelfth century.

**vambrace.** Element protecting the arm comprising three parts: a lower cannon for the forearm, *couter* for the elbows, and *rerebrace* for the upper arm.

**visor.** The movable plate or plates attached to a helmet to protect the face.

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