

**Selection of most important exhibits**



### **Nessus and Deianeira**

Giambologna (1529 - 1608), Florence, ca. 1586, Bronze  
Sculpture Collection, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art  
Collections), Inv.-No. H<sup>2</sup> 23/95

On the occasion of the transfer of sovereignty to Elector Christian I in 1587 a present was sent from the Florentine Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici to Dresden. This present included three small bronze statuettes made by the famous court sculptor Giambologna which Christian had installed in his father's studio.

This is Giambologna's *Deianeira assaulted by the centaur Nessus*: While crossing a river Hercules allowed his wife Deianeira to be assisted by the centaur Nessus. However Nessus, enamoured by her beauty, wished to run away with the young woman, but Hercules was able to overpower him. This small virtuoso piece combines two different characters using a complex movement motif.



### **Elector August of Saxony (1526-1586)**

Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515-1586), Ca. 1564, Oil on canvas

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery (Portrait Gallery Ambras Castle), Inv.-  
No. 3252

In 1542 August, the son of Duke Heinrich of Saxony resided in the court of King Ferdinand I in Vienna and Prague as a part of his education. This stay resulted in his life-long friendship with the future Emperor Maximilian II and Archduke Ferdinand II. In 1553 August assumed the position of elector of Saxony, dedicating himself extensively to his role as sovereign ("Father August"). He was interested in the arts and sciences. He was even an expert in ivory turning and cartography. In 1560 August founded the Kunstkammer (Art Collection) in the Dresden Residence Castle. The full figure portrait, produced by the Elector of Saxony's court painter, Lucas Cranach the Younger, shows August wearing stately clothing in the Spanish style which was popular at that time.



### **Decorative Belt with 35 Lapis lazuli Spheres**

German, between 1548 and 1585, Lapis lazuli, gold

Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections),

Inv.-No. VIII 279

This decorative belt made from 35 lapis lazuli spheres and 34 gold hearts decorated with the letter “A” comes from the property of Electress Anna of Saxony. It ends in a massive gold knob embellished with angel heads. The combination of the warm shimmering gold with the royal blue of the lapis lazuli underlined the elegant appearance of its owner. 63 decorative belts were found in the jewellery collection of her estate, all representing what one would expect a stylish noblewoman of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to own. The precious stones for her belts were purchased at markets, for example the market in Leipzig. Spherical and spindle-shaped cut gemstones were used in the creation of decorative belts as well as paternosters and rosaries.



### Distance Meter

Christoph Trechsler the Elder (ca. 1546 - 1624/27 Dresden), Dresden, 1584, Signed: "C. T. 1584", Brass, gold-plated, engraved, embossed, etched, iron  
 Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections),  
 Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon (Mathematics-Physics Salon), Inv.-No. C III a 4

The stand for this distance measuring device is a hollow cylinder which could be mounted on a wood shank on Elector August's travelling carriage. A strong chain and a spring-borne lever served as transfer mechanisms between the wheel and the mechanical counter. After each full wheel rotation the lever was pressed down by a stud on the wheel of the carriage, therewith pulling on the chain. Each pull was registered on the ratchet and transferred to the transmitter of the counting mechanism. Christopher Trechsler chose the transmission ratio so that it was possible to read the distance in "ruten" (1 Rute = 4.544 m) and miles (2000 ruten = ca. 9.08 km) directly on the dial-plate.



### Duke August of Saxony's Wedding Suit

1548

Outer fabric: Italian, Tailoring: Saxon (?)

Outer fabric: Lampas, stitched and lanced with silk in white and brown, as well as gold thread in the nap weft and silver wire; silk band pink, rests; border gold thread, woven; pant lining goat natural colour light

Armoury, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (National Art Gallery), Inv.-No. i. 4

Duke August wore this stately suit made of costly gold and silver material for his wedding to Anna, royal Princess of Denmark, in 1548. It consists of a dress coat, dress shirt and breeches made of gold-stitched silver material with a pomegranate pattern and white knitted silk stockings. The pomegranate on the chest of the dress coat symbolises fertility, while the dress shirt with its puffed sleeves, similar to those seen in portraits of Archdukes Maximilian II and Ferdinand II in their youth is consistent with the Spanish style popular at the time.





### Welcoming Cup “Die Alte mit den 14 Jungen”

Valentin Geitner (1551 - 1593/1612), Dresden, 1590, Silver, gold-plated, enamel, reverse glass painting

Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections), Grünes Gewölbe, Inv.-No. IV 187

The cup created by the Dresdner goldsmith Valentin Geitner served as a “welcoming cup” in the electoral chambers in the “Neuen Stall” (New Stall), a building joined by a long tract to the residence castle. Originally there were 14 small cups, each of which was smaller than the next, which were stacked inside each other and hidden inside this large cup. Altogether they “would hold 15 portions of wine which were to be drunk by the person who has been chosen to be “welcomed”. This extremely unique, but unfortunately no longer existent, “inner life” quickly bestowed it with its nickname: “die alte mit vierzehenn Jungen” (“the old one with the 14 young ones”). On the inside of the lid the coat of arms of the electorate of Saxony was placed as a mark of distinction to the commissioner of the piece.



### **Double-walled glasses with reverse glass painting**

Reverse glass painting: likely Virgil Solis (Nuremberg 1514 - 1562 Nuremberg) or Nikolaus Solis (Nuremberg ca. 1542 - ca. 1584 Augsburg)

Goldsmith setting: Hans Selber (1st mentioned 1553, died 1584, Master before 1553)  
Augsburg, ca. 1550/60

Glass, reverse glass painting, silver, gold-plated

Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Inv.-Nos. IV 208,  
IV 273

The glasses are specimens from the personal property of the Electoral Couple August and Anna, which can be seen in the use of the intertwined letters "AA" as well as the Saxon and Danish coats of arms. Both drinking utensils were almost surely not meant to be used as such, but were seen rather as costly treasures. It is above all the time-consuming technique of reverse glass painting used in producing them which makes them exquisite pieces for an art collection. In the course of the production the glass receives gold leaf plating and is then etched with fine instruments. The final procedure is applying the many coloured reverse painting. This painting also has a background of silver foil, which makes these glasses even more precious. Yet another special effect is the double-walled construction of the vessels.





### **Open-worked Ivory Sphere**

Giovanni Ambrogio Maggiore, ca. 1580

Ivory

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Collections in Ambras Castle, Inv.-No. PA 824

The turning lathe was one of the most complicated machines known in Renaissance times. This ivory sphere contains eight spheres each of which is smaller in diameter than the one in which it is placed. Such objects are special manually created works of art; their production requires a high level of expertise. The technique of lathe work, or turning, was developed by the artist-lathe worker Ambrogio Maggiore who worked at the court in Munich. The ivory sphere seen here is quite probably the sphere which, according to an entry in the inventory of the Kunstkammer in Munich, was sent to Archduke Ferdinand II.



### Small Ivory Art Pieces

Electeur August of Saxony and Court Turner

Dresden, between 1576 and 1586

Ivory, wood

Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections),

Inv.-Nos. II 463, II 464, II 465

The 1587 inventory of the Dresdner Kunstammer refers to more than 100 pieces of “artistic turning pieces” made by Electeur August. These works must have been produced under the instruction of the court turners Lobenigk and Wecker. Electeur Christian I had these works of his father brought to the Kunstammer in 1586. He had them set up on a six tiered towering construction placed on a specially made octagonal-shaped table. In 1605 Electress Hedwig had this collection removed from the Kunstammer. The whereabouts of the collection are still unknown. Only 28 very small turned pieces, of which three are shown here, could be attributed to Electeur August.



### Lidded Bowl

Turnery/polishing: Zöblitz near Marienberg in Saxony

Fitting: Urban Schneeweiß (Dresden 1536 - 1600 Dresden)

Dresden, dated 1572

“Noble serpentine”, gold

Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections),

Inv.-No. V 384

The small bowl shown here is made of granite-free, translucent green coloured “noble serpentine”, a rare and particularly valuable type of Saxon serpentinite. It was made as a royal Christmas present in 1572. The coat of arms of the electorate of Saxony and of the Kingdom of Denmark engraved on the inside of the lid give reference to its owners, Elector August and his wife Anna, daughter of King Christian III of Denmark.

The goldsmith Urban Schneeweiß was the head of a goldsmith family and the oldest member of Dresden’s goldsmith guild. He was one of the most important and busiest goldsmiths working for the electoral court.



**Nautilus shell chalice on eagle talons**

Unknown goldsmith, likely Nuremberg, before 1587

Nautilus shell, silver, gold-plated

Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections), Inv.-No. III 197

This showpiece made from a nautilus shell was originally mentioned in a register of treasury pieces commissioned by elector Christian I in ca. 1587. The *nautilus pompilius* lives in tropical waters between the eastern part of the Indian Ocean and the Fiji Islands in depths of 50 - 500 meters. The shells were rarely found as flotsam on the beach and sent to Europe as trading goods.

The goldsmith created a bizarrely formed sea monster out of the shell after revealing its mother of pearl like surface in a complicated procedure. In contrast to the voluminous cuppa the handle in the form of a sea serpent appears delicate.



### Two Salt Cellars

Between 1580 and 1585

Inspector's and master's mark (unknown), key above an "A" and "AH" in oblique rectangle

Silver, gold-plated, coral, turquoise (almost all missing)

Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections),

Inv.-Nos. IV 159, IV 160

Kurfürst August besaß eine erlesene Korallen-Sammlung. Ein erhaltenes Teilinventar der Silberkammer von 1586 nennt im sechsten Sammlungsschrank eine Besteckgarnitur von 24 Messern, 12 Löffeln und 12 Gabeln mit „Corallen gewächs stilen“. Das imposante Bestecksortiment mit Griffen aus roten Korallenzinken und Verzierungen aus Türkisen, das Kurfürst August wahrscheinlich aus Genua bezogen hatte, gehört heute zu den besonderen Raritäten im Besitz des Grünen Gewölbes. Die beiden Salzgefäße, die auf kleinen Korallenästen ruhen, gehören aus stilistischen Gründen nicht zu den Besteckteilen. Ihr Herstellungsort lässt sich nicht genau fassen, da Beschau- und Meistermarke noch ihrer Auflösung harren.



**Ostrich egg chalice in form of ostrich**

Elias Geyer (ca. 1560, † 1634), Leipzig, ca. 1589/95

Ostrich egg, gilt silver

Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections),

Inv. No. III 227

A total of seven ostrich egg chalices, early works created by the goldsmith Elias Geyer of Leipzig, were part of the electoral collections. Five of these still exist today. It is not very likely that this piece, with its removable head and moveable wings endowed with fragile silver sculpture work was used for drinking games. Already in the *Naturalis Historia*, written by the author of ancient times Plinius the Elder, the bird, which could supposedly digest anything, stood for the ability to find something good even in adversity. In Christian iconography the ostrich was a symbol of the immaculate conception because it was said that the ostrich buried its eggs in the sand and let the sun hatch them.





### Rapier-Dagger-Set

Vienna (?), before 1556, Pere Juan Poch (worked in Vienna 1551-1587)

Rapier: Blade: Alonso de Sahagun (?), Toledo, Blade marked: "S", crowned (Mark of bladesmith family Sahagun, Toledo), rhombus blade steel, flattened, hollow ground,

Hammer blow mark; Receptacle: Gold, cast, engraved, multi-coloured enamel

Dagger: rhombus blade, flattened, hollow ground; Receptacle: Gold, cast, engraved, multi-coloured enamel

Armoury, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections), Inv.-No.

VI 414, p. 215

The rapier-dagger-set was a present for Elector August from Archduke Ferdinand II. This set is a valuable oriental influenced Spanish-German goldsmith work with snakes, monster heads, masks, band and scrollwork in gold and blue, white and black enamel. Fitting in with the style of the times the scabbards for the rapier and the dagger were covered with silk velvet. The belt and sword belt were later additions. This rapier and dagger belong to a collection of four gold sets of this type in the Armoury in Dresden which all be attributed to the goldsmith Pere Juan Poch who worked in Vienna at the Imperial Court.



### **Vase with oval-shaped insert**

Court Glassworks Innsbruck, ca. 1580

Decoloured greyish glass, coloured enamel painting, gold plating

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Collection of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Inv.-No.

KK 3309

Inside the vase there is a hollow, oval-shaped insert which is decorated with white fish on a blue background, green "water plants" and small yellow dots.

This is very likely a piece produced in the Court Glassworks in Innsbruck which were established by Archduke Ferdinand in 1570 the works of which were known for having this characteristic slightly grey tone. Glass artists from Murano worked there, however they were not employed for their "fantasy" or ideas, but rather much more for the purpose of acquiring materials and their skills in technical production. Ferdinand, an accomplished glassblower himself, supplied the artistic designs.



### Jousting Armour

Sigmund Rockenberger (Hans Rosenberger?)

Wittenberg, before 1558

Iron etched, gold-plated

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Collection of Arms and Armour, Inv.-No. B 144

Jousting was a tournament competition involving horses in which the opponents raced toward each other in full gallop while holding a sharp lance. The aim was to break the opponent's lance or to hit or knock down his "tartsche", a long, pointed almond-shaped shield. A special feature of the armour used in such jousting competitions is the lack of arm pieces. The left arm was protected by the "tartsche", while the right arm was covered and protected by the so-called crushing plate or buckler. Additional armour included the jousting sallet and buffe, a type of helmet which included a piece which covered the face and neck. This richly decorated suit of jousting armour was a present from the Elector August of Saxony to Archduke Ferdinand II from the year 1558.