



Cantle Plate for a Saddle

Date

probably first half of 1800s

Primary Maker

Northern Italian

Medium

fire-blued steel, embossed and incised with portions fire-gilded and with silver and gold false-damascening

Description

Of two plates of steel, overlapping at center. Halves are irregularly trapezoidal in form, concave to body. Surface has bluish-black hue, which may in part be the result of bluing, but the natural

iridescence of this appears only at the upper left corner beneath the gilding. The patination does not seem to be a russeted one resulting from aging of a fire-blued surface. Upper and outer side edges are hollow-flanged and shallowly chisel-roped, and retain traces of gilding. Inside is a shallow silvered recessed band which is finely cross-hatched and false-damascened with foliate tendrils of gold, copper & silver wire. This is broken at broad intervals by a single, incised and gilded five-petalled flower. The same tendril decoration, less the flowers, extends across the lower edge within a raised band. The bands are bordered on their inner edges by a thin gold line and another of pointille. Both halves are pierced with a single mounting hole at outer sides and at mid-height on the inner side, where the left overlaps the right and is secured by a modern cross-headed bolt and nut. The decorated area framed within the borders is embossed with a pseudo-classical battle scene of warriors both on foot and on horseback in combat before a skyline dotted with buildings and turretted structures. The repousse areas are cross-hatched, and the terrain rendered is hammer-roughened and incised with flora. The warriors wear antique casques and molded cuirasses, decorated in a variety of designs rendered in gold and silver false-damascening, for example: quatrefoil motifs in a trellis-work pattern, mannerist drapery swags or tendrils and combinations, or overall gold dots. The lower leg hose matches the decoration of the cuirass. Most of the figures also wear cloaks. They are armed with falchion-like swords (one warrior carries a rather non-descript standard on a haft) and have oval or teardrop-shaped shields. The flesh and other decoartive details are silvered. The repousse is enhanced with chasing. The background terrain is coppered (?) and gilded. The very high skyline is set with poorly-rendered turretted structures, some rather modern-looking buildings, and others apparently Eastern-influenced. The scene is embellished with silver and gold false-damascening.

Dimensions

20.2 x 53.3 x 21 cm (7 15/16 x 21 x 8 1/4 in.), 1 lb 12 oz (weight)