



Bead-Hilt Spadroon, probably for a Naval Officer

Date

about 1782–1801

Primary Maker

Thomas Gill

Medium

steel with blueing and gilding, brass with traces of later silvering, ivory

Description

Steel single edge straight blade, with a flat back, hollow-ground on both faces to point. Very short ricasso, stamped on the obverse with "G" (see Marks). The upper half of both faces is fire-blued, and either face is decorated with three ornamental etched & fire-gilded motifs vertically aligned to the eye. Those of the obverse consist of the American eagle with a scroll bearing the motto "E PLURIBUS UNUM" on a scroll emanating from the beak, with an oval cartouche above, having a field of 15 Xs representing stars (implying a date of 1792-96, though this cannot be entirely relied on). Above and below this are decorative treatments of leaved and floral tendrils and drapery swags, also etched and gilded. The reverse treatment is similar but with a central group of martial trophies and Phrygian cap atop a spear. Near the shoulder of the blade both faces have an acanthus-leaf motif extended down the blade and bearing traces of gilding. The stirrup hilt is Norman's type 110. It is of cast brass, and retains traces of a later, electroplated silver coating. The guard is of rectangular section, with a short rear quillon that has a slightly downturned, comma-shaped scrolled disc terminal. At the opposite end is a straight stirrup knuckle guard of octagonal section with a mid-height treatment of five "beads"-- two of graduated size above and below the larger fifth. The crosspiece ends are linked on the obverse by a downcurved side-ring fabricated like the knuckle-guard. The side-ring is bent towards the blade, perhaps a working-life modification. The top of the guard curves to the base of the pommel into which it fits via a short lug and terminates in a rounded pierced lobe that is fitted with a brass ring for a sword knot. The grip is one piece of vertically striated uncolored ivory. This is of squarish section, and tapers top and bottom where it is fitted into the base of the pommel and a tapered brass square ferrule, respectively. The pommel is octagonal in section, with an obliterated top that is of pillow-shape, flattened and fitted with a small-necked bottom over which the blade tang is peened; there is a small ring for sword knot. The stand is bi-level, with deeply concave sides.

Dimensions

2.9 × 96.8 × 82.6 cm (1 1/8 × 38 1/8 × 32 1/2 in.), 1 lb, 7 oz (weight)