



Close Helmet modified for the "Gioco del Ponte"

Date

about 1580, modified early 1600s

Primary Maker

Italian

Medium

iron with traces of paint on the interior

Description

Helmet modified for use as "morione" in the "Giuoco" of Pisa. Skull and bevor from close-helmet, probably Italian, c. 1580. Skull of 1-piece construction, with chisel-roped comb of medium height, accented by single line on each side, & pair at skull proper. The

lower sides of the skull are pierced with eight holes in a circular pattern around a ninth hole. Below these, extending transversely across the base of the skull is a row of six holes, four with domed lining rivets with irregularly-shaped washers within, and a restored oblong buckle at the right side, and a contemporary modification of a flat-headed stud with incised spoke-like decoration at the left. The buckle formerly received a throat-strap for holding the bevor in place; the strap is now lost. Base of skull drawn out in narrow flange, which is pierced at the ends for the lost nape defense; one rivet and squared washer remains at the left. At base of comb is a broken leaf-shaped escutcheon with incised chevronic decoration simulating the veins. Crude, tubular plume-pipe, above and below which are single holes transversely piercing the comb for securing a panache. Near mid-length of the comb are two pair of similar holes. This plume-pipe and holes likely date to the period of use in Gioco, to judge by the cruder execution. The edges of the skull are plain and unturned; that across the brow has been cut back, as evidenced by partly-cut holes for lining rivets. There are additional empty holes at the anterior side edge below. The temples are pierced for the large, round studs and circular washers within which secure the bevor and associated visor assembly. Bevor has pronounced chin with medial ridge, & oval facial opening, the edge of which is bordered with lining-rivets and inwardly turned and crudely roped. An incised line follows the upper edge straight back to the rounded terminals at the pivots, and arches down to the basal edge which is drawn out in a narrow, curved flange. This is also pierced for a gorget defense, but was modified for the Gioco by the addition of a narrow, flat curved plate without turns, riveted to the flange at four points on the upper edge. The interior of this lame and both flanges are red-painted. The right side of the bevor is pierced with three holes in a row, and one slightly forward and above, the purpose of which is unknown. An isolated hole above this group probably retained a visor-prop. On the same side, just before the medial ridge, is a large pivot-hook, a later addition which secures the visor closed. Opposite this is a vertically-fixed spring-catch riveted at its basal end to the bevor. The catch is activated by depressing a mushroom-shaped button which pushes in a riveted L-shaped catch that locks over the band of the barred visor from the inside. On the same level as the button, near the rear edge of the bevor is an empty hole; to the rear of this, on the skull is another hole. These probably held a hook-and-eye, added when the helmet was modified. The visor assembly is an apparently seventeenth-century modification which is comprised of modified pre-existing pieces, as well as those fabricated for the purpose. There is a deep brow-plate which has been cut down from an original visor of perhaps slightly earlier date than that of the helmet. It is embossed to accommodate anterior end of comb at which point it is chisel-roped with pair of incised lines to either side. The top edge is bracket-cut at the embossing, and the cut-back edge to either side bears traces of a bordering narrow incised line and file-marked roping. Riveted to the anterior edge, and extending across the brow is a thick iron band which angles up to the rounded terminals pierced for the visor-pivots. This band conceals the leading edge of the brow-plate, which has been cut back in a toothed fashion. Riveted to the band across the brow, just to the inside of the bend, is a second band, this curving down over the edges of the facial opening. Riveted between the two bands, and forming a faceguard, are ten iron bars of roughly circular section with rounded, flattened terminals, curving asymmetrically outward. A rounded, tab-like lug pierced for a pivot-hook is riveted to the curved band between the first and second bars to the right of center. Damage at the brow midpoint and on the visor and the corresponding location on the skull underneath are evidently from the Gioco.

Dimensions

27.9 × 20.3 × 34.3 cm (11 × 8 × 13 1/2 in.), 6 lb 7 oz (weight)