



Taschen
FREYDAL. MEDIEVAL GAMES. THE BOOK OF TOURNAMENTS OF
EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I

Stefan Krause

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La leggendaria epopea dell'imperatore Massimiliano I

Una ristampa integrale del *Freydal*, il vero antesignano di *Game of Thrones*

L'imperatore Massimiliano I d'Asburgo (1459-1519) considerava spettacoli, tornei (gli *hastilude*) e mascherate una vera e propria forma d'arte. **Fu uno dei sovrani più preminenti dell'Europa moderna** e definì la mappa politica del continente, che rimase in buona sostanza immutata fino agli inizi del XX secolo, non da ultimo per le doti diplomatiche dell'imperatore e per l'estrema consapevolezza che aveva del **potere dato da una buona immagine pubblica**.

Dal 1512 al 1515, Massimiliano commissionò un **corposo manoscritto che racchiude 64 tornei, squisitamente illustrato con minuzia di dettagli**. Le 255 miniature, elaborate e impreziosite d'oro e d'argento, erano molto più di una semplice raccolta di scene della corte asburgica (grand melee, giostre a cavallo, combattimenti a piedi, cerimonie di premiazione...): erano **un'epopea allegorica che narrava le gesta di un eroe intrepido, un cavaliere errante che altri non era se non Massimiliano stesso**. Nei panni del suo alter ego letterario Freyda, l'imperatore partecipava a giostre e tornei per dimostrare il suo amore per una nobildonna, che infine acconsentiva a sposarlo: si trattava nientemeno che di Maria di Borgogna, che divenne sua sposa nel 1477, a Gand.

Realizzato sotto la diretta supervisione dello stesso Massimiliano I, *Freydal* è un inestimabile compendio di cavalleria tardo-medievale, che ci presenta tutti i tipi di tornei riportati in auge o addirittura inventati dall'imperatore, come lo spettacolare *Rennen mit geschiffen Tartschen*, in cui gli scudi venivano catapultati in cielo e disintegrati in lame di metallo. **A oggi si tratta del più grande volume esistente sull'arte dei tornei nel tardo Medioevo e della fonte principale sui festeggiamenti nelle corti europee della prima Età moderna**.

Troppo fragili per essere esposte in maniera permanente, le miniature sono al sicuro nei caveau del Kunsthistorisches Museum di Vienna. In occasione del cinquecentenario della morte di Massimiliano I, tuttavia, TASCHEN ha scelto di rendere **accessibile a tutti per la prima volta il prezioso manoscritto**, che include le **riproduzioni fotografiche a colori di tutte le 255 miniature**. Questa impressionante raccolta si pregia di un'introduzione a firma di Stefan Krause, direttore della sezione dedicata all'arsenale imperiale all'interno del Kunsthistorisches Museum.

"Chi non si preoccupa di come sarà ricordato, verrà dimenticato al termine dell'ultimo rintocco della campana."

—Massimiliano I, imperatore del Sacro Romano Impero, 1513

L'autore:

Stefan Krause ha studiato storia dell'arte a Vienna e, tra le altre, ha ricoperto la carica di Paul Mellon Visiting Senior Fellowship alla National Gallery of Art di Washington D.C. (CASVA). Cura la sezione dedicata alla caccia di corte e alle armature del Kunsthistorische Museum di Vienna e focalizza la sua ricerca sul significato artistico e sociale delle armature e delle armi, in particolare nel Tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento.



ILL. 18
Bernhard Strigel
Portrait of the Family of Emperor Maximilian I, c.1515
Familienporträt Kaiser Maximilian I.
Portrait of the Family of Emperor Maximilian I
Oil on panel, 73.4 x 66.4 cm / 28 7/8 x 26 1/8 in.
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie

ILL. 19
Giovanni Cavallotti
Medal showing the portraits of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy, c. 1477-1479, obverse/verso
Medaille mit den Porträts von Maximilian und Maria
Médaille avec les portraits de Maximilien et de Marie
Silver, Ø 4.4 cm / Ø 1 3/4 in.
London, British Museum



the *Triumphal Arch* of Maximilian (1516-1518) that do not depict a real but an imagined, ideal triumphal procession.¹⁷ Although Johannes Schönerer's jousts appear highly realistic, they are about as far removed from reality as possible. In *Freydal*, too, reality and fiction are conflated in many complex ways. Almost every combat scene lists the name of our hero's opponent, each of whom was a real historical person with whom the Emperor had actually entered in the lists. For many of them, we even have archival records documenting such encounters, among them, Maximilian's fights with Wolfgang von Polheim (fol. 88), Claude de Vaudry (fol. 98) and Count Johann von Montfort-Tettnang (fol. 125). Folio 104 even identifies a particular historical tournament in which the Emperor participated: known as the *Perleweimen* (pearls' flower), it was held on 15 May 1510 during the Imperial Diet at Augsburg, and Maximilian broke a lance with Duke Frederick II, Elector of Saxony.¹⁸ But the miniature depicting this joust in *Freydal* differs from contemporary accounts of the *Perleweimen*: Maximilian's surcoat and the caparison of his mount are not embroidered with countless pearls and precious stones, an attire much admired by contemporaries and from which the encounter derives its name.

Clearly, *Freydal* does not claim to be a pictorial inventory that records Maximilian's jousts as faithfully and comprehensively as possible. Instead, the tournaments function as the basis of a heroic epic designed to glorify the Emperor's life. Folio 232 depicts an Italian *Stechen* (Wiltches Gevöcht) that pitted our hero against his own son,

Philip the Handsome (1478-1506) (f. 24). But according to the book's storyline, he didn't meet Princess Elisabeth, his future wife and the mother of his son, until the end of the second volume (*Theuerlein*). *Freydal* illustrates Maximilian's passion for jousting and functions as an invaluable pictorial source of public festivities and display in the Late Middle Ages, but it is not a faithful report of the Emperor's jousts.

In one important aspect, however, *Freydal* is accurate down to the last detail: the depiction of the jousters' equipment and the actual combat. In folio 108, the knight on the left has raised his right hand. This is not a greeting but an attempt to protect his hand from the recoil of his own lance. In folio 95, the helmets of both knights show the small straps used to fasten the padded caps worn underneath a helmet for added protection (il. 37). These and other precise observations are the result of the Emperor's personal involvement and his interventions because, unlike the artists who executed the miniatures, Maximilian was deeply familiar with jousting and everything connected with it.

One thing that differentiates *Freydal* from other tournament books is its large number of depictions of spectacular falls. *Freydal* contains miniatures in which jousts are flung in the air, are squarished and sprouted on the ground, or just manage to stay in the saddle (il. 18). A joust taking a hit from his opponent's lance must withstand enormous forces, something equivalent to a crash involving two small cars, each travelling at around 40 miles per hour. But the

knights' equipment seconds of their arduous and the fact it bolts together are a joust's grain of war less fearful the crash.¹⁹ In 1483, the the Younger (active for Emperor Maximilian's craftsmanship) with the lists and almost

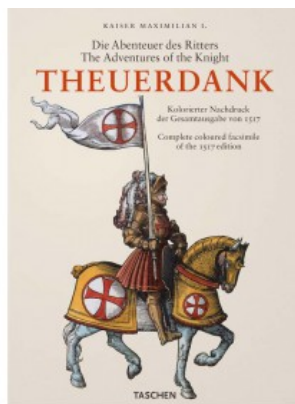
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Boenche, who crash rose. It all rases h 2021, the Canadian die in the ring. In January, the trials to the injuries he cycling event.

But one impor sporting events on lists, injury or eve

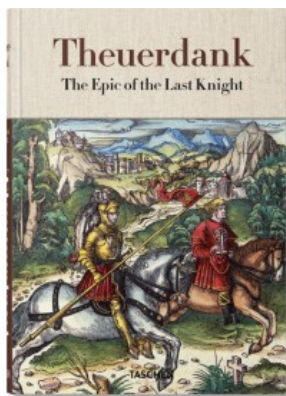
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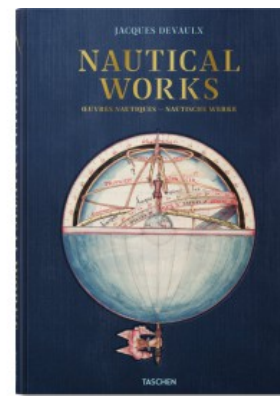
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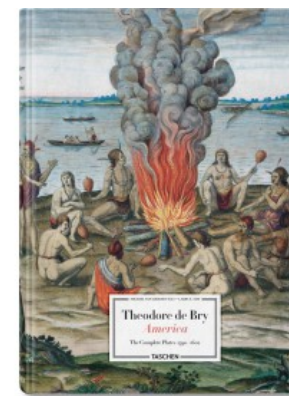
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