

**HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS
DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

**MANUFACTURE TECHNOLOGIES AND HISTORICAL
RESEARCH OF 16TH–18TH LEATHER-COVERED
CONTAINERS (CASES) IN CONTEXT OF THE ESTERHÁZY-
TREASURY**

Theses of the DLA dissertation

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Among the artefacts of applied arts, relatively little attention has been paid to historical leather objects so far. This holds true even for leather-covered cases (German=Futteral, French=Etui), which were used to protect decorative objects (vessels made of precious stone, rock crystal, ivory, amber), clocks and scientific instruments and are found in most applied arts collections. However, the leather-covered cases of the 16th–18th centuries deserve our interest for both their distinctive form and gilded decoration, and additional information that they can provide about the objects they belong to. Both the archival sources and the analogues suggest that the most significant items are those which belonged to the treasuries of 16th–18th century aristocratic and royal families.

RESEARCH METHODS

In the course of my research I attempted to collect analogues from the Renaissance and early modern treasuries and carry out mainly *in situ* examinations. The starting point for the survey of the analogues was the comparing the gilded decoration (gold tooling) of the cases. The decoration of the cases by gold tooling is technically identical to the technique used on books. The method of bookbinding research is comparable and groups identical stamps, based on the uniqueness of the stamps, I have adopted this method to study the gilding stamps on the cases. Groups of tools (identical in size and similar in every detail) can be used to identify a workshop or a master, even if they are not currently associated with a master's name. In the course of my research, I compared the gilding tools in different collections and grouped cases decorated with the same tools.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

In the first part of the dissertation, I describe the starting points of the research. The second part describes the history and development of wooden cored, leather-covered, gilt-tooled cases, their predecessors, their related object types and the techniques and tools of gilding. A separate section deals with the appearance and main characteristics of hand-gilding on cases and the spread of this decorative technique in Germany. The chapter on the history of objects is supplemented by a brief summary of the history of research in this field.

In the third part of the dissertation, I describe the renaissance and early modern treasuries from the point of view of the types of storage, I analyse the entries of inventories, which mention leather covered cases. The main focus of the dissertation is on the analysis of the development of the Esterházy treasury, the changes in the storage methods and the identification of the cases in the inventories.

The fourth part of the dissertation deals with the history of craft in Augsburg, since the largest group of Esterházy cases belongs to the artwork made in Augsburg. The case analogues found in foreign

collections and the rich archival material allowed a separate discussion of the history of the craft in the city and provided an opportunity to present two Augsburg families practising case-making for several generations (16th–18th centuries).

In the next chapter the cases of the Esterházy Treasury are presented, in a comparison with foreign analogues.

The sixth part of the theses describes the materials, structure and methods of case making from late 16th to the 19th Centuries. The methods and tools of making the wooden core, the types of leather and other materials are presented separately. The 18th century history of the craft is represented by the cutlery cases made in Augsburg, and their technical and iconographic analysis concludes the dissertation.

Finally I present the results of comparing Augsburg cutlery cases and boxes of travel service sets, preserved in the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts and in foreign collections. Their special manufacture technology mirrored in contemporary texts is analysed.

The dissertation is supplemented by an index of illustrations, a bibliography and a summary of the technical examinations.

The results of these scientific analyses and the conservation work carried out on the Esterházy Treasury cases are presented in the *Master Piece* accompanying the dissertation.

THE CHIEF RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION

□ Since the subject of this dissertation has not been surveyed systematically so far, I have attempted to present the historical development of this object type, from the medieval “cuir bouilli” leather cases to the technical and material changes of the 19th century. I have also included in the analysis contemporary tools (Museum of Technology, Vienna) that have not been previously published. I also discuss the craft in the context of contemporary literature (my main source was Christoph Ernst Prediger's *Der in aller heut zu Tag üblicher Arbeit wohl anweisende accurate Buchbinder und Futteralmacher* I-IV. Anspach & Leipzig, 1741–1753), which confirmed that contemporary descriptions together with the examination of objects together provide a comprehensive picture.

□ In line with the survey of objects from the Esterházy Treasury, my primary aim was to conduct a comprehensive research into royal and princely treasuries in the 16th and 17th centuries, achieved by personal surveys. The survey of the cases revealed a previously unexplored network between the collections; consequently they can provide information on the origin of these objects, and can be used as source material, of course with a critical approach. This method of analysis has made possible to construct several groups of cases with identical tools. In addition, the dissertation presents a brief summary of types of the storage in Renaissance and Early Modern treasuries. The descriptions and

entries in the inventories are mainly analysed in the context of the history of objects and the historical techniques: materials and decorations mentioned in the inventories.

□ The large number of surviving analogues (mostly in Esterházy Treasury) and the rich archival sources have suggested a focus on the history of craftsmanship in Augsburg, an important centre for its practice. With the help of research in German archives, generations of the Bruglochers, an Augsburg case-making family, have been included in the dissertation, which, although not yet the final stage of research, could be an important step in the survey of the craft. The archival research in Augsburg was based primarily on 16th–18th century administrative and guild documents, tax and military censuses. Using these sources I attempted to determine their social and economic situation compared to other leather-based crafts and their problematic relationship with other crafts, especially bookbinders. Members of the family worked continuously as case makers in the town from the mid-1500s to the mid-18th century, and as surviving documents prove, they supplied many goldsmiths, noble, civil and ecclesiastical clients. From the mid to late 17th century (from this period I could analyse a number of analogues) they used a typical set of gilding tools. Comparing the archival sources and these analogues I have also attempted to determine the Augsburg origin of the cases and the possible identity of the craftsmen who made them.

□ In the dissertation I deal specifically with the problem of the identification of 18th century cutlery cases, preserved in the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest and foreign collections. From the point of view of the history of craftsmanship, this research unit complements the history of the craft in Augsburg, but I also analyse the cases from an iconographic point of view, attempting to determine the graphic sources of the specific motifs decorating the cases.

THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE MASTER PIECE

□ By sorting hundreds the leather and wood fragments of the damaged Esterházy cases, some 37 cases were formally reconstructed and then conserved. During the conservation process, the fragments were cleaned and disinfected. As a result of this work, the majority of the assembled items can now be associated with the treasury objects to which they belonged.

□ The series of analyses aimed – fibre morphology, shrinkage temperature measurement, scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X-Ray diffraction (XRD), differential scanning calorimetry (DSC), thermogravimetry/mass spectrometry (TG/MS) – aimed to determine the state of the collagen, the effects of the soiling materials, and specific deteriorations, such as water and heat caused damages. In order to decrease the level of the distortion of the leather, I employed a trial treatment, modelling the effect of humidification. The set of samples was composed of leather samples from Esterházy-cases, historical

and artificially aged leathers. The leather samples were analysed through microscopic and thermoanalytical examinations (measurement of the shrinkage temperature (T_s), thermogravimetry/mass spectrometry (TG/MS). The samples reacted differently to humidification, while the stage of the degradation of the collagen has been determined, related to the type of previous degradation and treatments/artificially ageing. Since the change of the state of the collagen has been determined by simple examinations (T_s measurement, microscopically) this could be used as a risk assessment before humidification.

PAPERS, LECTURES RELATED TO THE DOCTORAL STUDIES

- 2021 *Vergoldete Lederfutterale aus dem 16–18. Jahrhundert. Die Relevanz des Objekttyps in der Forschung zu Kunstkammern und Goldschmiedekunst* (Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich, Online-Workshop)
- Leather cases from the Esterházy-Treasury. Foreign analogues and possibilities of conservation* (Online Workshop in the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest: *New results in the research on the Esterházy-treasury*)
- 2020 *Futteralen über Löffel, Messer und Gabel von Silber... Besteckfutterale aus dem 18. Jahrhundert im Budapester Kunstgewerbemuseum, Ars Decorativa* 34 (2020), 33–66.
- 2017 *Historical or archaeological leather? An investigation on the condition of heat and moisture damaged, excavated leather items*, ICOM-CC 18th Triennial Conference, Copenhagen. (Poster presentation)
- 2017 *From fragments to objects. Conservation of leather cases from the Esterházy Treasury.* Lecture. Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest
- 2016 *Altera Theca continens. A research into historical leather cases made for Esterházy Treasury items, Ars Decorativa* 30 (2016): 29–51.
- 2013 *Beyond hope?! Conservation of the leather cases made for the Esterházy Treasury.* XXXIIth International Restoration Conference, Hungarian National Museum, Budapest (Poster presentation)
- 2011 *Into the fibres.* Investigation on the condition of severe damaged leather cases from the Esterházy Treasury. XXXIth International Restoration Conference, Hungarian National Museum, Budapest (Lecture)