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A Deadly Art: European Crossbows, 1250–1850 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Dirk H. Breiding

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The advent of the crossbow more than 2,500 years ago effected dramatic changes for hunters and warriors. For centuries, it was among the most powerful and widely used handheld weapons, and its popularity endures to this day. *A Deadly Art* presents a lively, accessible survey of the crossbow's "golden age," along with detailed descriptions of twenty-four remarkable examples.

Beginning in the middle ages, the European aristocracy's enthusiasm for the crossbow heralded shooting competitions and pageants that featured elaborately decorated weapons bearing elegant embellishments of rare materials and prized artistry. In addition to being highly functional, these weapons were magnificent works of art. *A Deadly Art* includes fascinating descriptions of crossbows used by Margaret of Savoy and Holy Roman Emperors Maximilian I and Charles V, among others.

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