For more than a century, published scholarship on the arms and armor of late medieval and early Renaissance has been limited to enthusiast small presses and a few journal articles, most notably the perfect-bound *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society*, published in Britain, and the *Royal Armouries Yearbook*, published irregularly by the Royal Armouries at Leeds. The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art has long published articles about its collection in the *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, while the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum’s *Jahrbuch des kunsthistorischen Museum* has published a number of articles relating to its own superb collection also. A host of earlier articles appeared in *The Antiquaries Journal* and *Archaeologia*.

Most publications catalog surviving collections, only occasionally drawing the connections between contemporary social, political, cultural, and economic trends. Even the finest catalogs, including Count Oswald von Trapp’s *Armour from Schloss Churburg* (1929), Bengt Thordemann’s two-volume *Armour from the Battle of Wisby* (1939), Arthur Richard Dufty’s *European Armour in the Tower of London* (1968), and even Lionello Boccia’s superb *L’Armature di S. Maria delle Grazie* (1982) only make the barest mention of context. And, regrettably, while descriptive, they fall short in terms of discussing details of construction, such as material thicknesses and composition.

The metallurgical study of surviving armor is one area where scholarship productivity has run high, driven by the work of Alan Williams, whose decades of work with some of the most famous surviving armor resulted in the monumental 2002 work, *The Knight of the Blast Furnace: A History of the Metallurgy of Armour in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*. Some technical aspects of construction have been addressed in my own *Techniques of Medieval Armour Reproduction* (2000) and Albert Collins’s *The Making of a 16th Century Armour: The Masterpiece Project* (2021). Other interesting academic treatments include Matthias Pfaffenbichler’s pamphlet, *Medieval Craftsmen: Armourers*, published by the Univer-

Another long-accepted approach has been to survey the history of armor development, sometimes connecting or sourcing examples from contemporary art, a trend that began in earnest during the late nineteenth century, as industrialization sparked an interest in an idealized Middle Ages, spawning the neo-Gothic movement in architecture and furniture. Such books as Charles Boutell’s *Arms and Armour in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (1871), Charles Ffolkes’s *The Armourer and His Craft* (1912), and Sir Guy Laking’s *A Record of Arms and Armour through Seven Centuries* (1920) gradually gave way to better scholarship, especially the still-cornerstone work of Claude Blair, *European Armour, circa 1066 to circa 1700* (1957), and even David Edge and John Miles Paddock’s *Arms and Armour of the Medieval Knight* (1988).

The catalog approach continues in the most recent works, such as the hauntingly beautiful museum series published by Hans Prunner—*The Churburg Armoury* (2006), *The Wallace Collection* (2008), *The Royal Armouries* (2011), *The Gwynn Collection* (2016), and *The Bavarian Army Museum* (2017)—which are more photo essays than catalogs, approaching armor from the artistic perspective through the lens of the refined, though modern, photographic eye of Carlo Paggiarino. While intensely satisfying from the visual perspective, these works say little about the technical details of interest to many enthusiasts or scholars, nor do they attempt to place works in their historical context—though that is clearly not their purpose. These are new works of art based on new perspectives of surviving artifacts.

Post-2000, a new category of works that seeks to blend the beautiful photography and explanatory technical illustration that characterized the best of the survey and catalog works has begun to appear. This began really with Tobias Capwell’s *Armour of the English Knight, 1400-1450* (2015) and its companion of the same name which covers 1450-1500 (2021). Capwell’s efforts place the development of armor firmly within the development of military trends, essentially blending military history with an antiquarian and enthusiast’s attention to detail for the surviving artifacts.

Stefan Krause’s *Fashion in Steel: The Landsknecht Armour of Wilhelm von Rogendorf*, published by the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and astutely distributed by Yale University Press, is a beautiful blend of the trends noted above. Springing from the study of a single exquisite harness made by Koleman Helmschmid, and owned by a famous *landsknecht* (literally, “land-knight”) commander of the early sixteenth century, the suit was made during a period of extensive military activity in Europe, and by presenting the harness in its cultural, social, and military context, the authors shed light on a turbulent era with both skill and a profound sense of art.[1] In a compact space, the reader will come away with a solid basis of understanding, while the notes give welcome directions for future study and research.

The book revolves around a thematic organization, as the author notes, “this book poses a simple question: why does the Wilhelm von Rogendorf’s armour include puffed and slashed vambraces made of steel in imitation of some rich textile?” (p. 19). It succeeds in answering that question. Using this harness enables the authors to explore larger historical questions, raising the value of the study beyond that of a simple antiquarian curiosity.

Mixing artistic photography with subtle lighting in both color and black and white with eight chapters, the book covers the armor’s military-historical context; the use of the outlandish slashing in early sixteenth-century German fashion; parallels between armor and clothing design, “fashion in steel”; armor as a garniture—a collection of plates enabling the use for different purposes, from the tournament field to use on foot and on
horseback; the Rogendorf family and its strong patronage of the arts by contributor Andreas Zajic; and finally, the harness itself and how it came to be in the Vienna Kunshistorisches Museum.

What is oddly missing are technical notes on the harness, such as weight, material, thickness, crafting processes employed, and details on the recent restoration, all of which would likely have been welcome to a sizable portion of the book’s likely market. Disappointing also are a lack of construction details and photographs of the unique and skillful elements that make this harness so superb as an example of the height of the armorer’s art. Given that the book’s genesis was the painstaking restoration of the armor from 2005 to 2016, it seems an opportunity was lost to offer passionate students of armor a glimpse into the skill of the conservators.

The text might be divided into three parts. One is about the harness’s owner, Willhelm von Rogendorf, who likely commissioned it in 1521 and saw much service in Spain. Two draws parallels between fashion and armor, though the mirroring of military fashion in medieval civilian circles may extend back into the possible evolution of pourpoints into the tight-fitting cotehardies of the fourteenth century in England, as detailed by Stella Mary Newton in *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince* (1980) and, perhaps not coincidently, arising at the exact time the plate leg harness also begins to come into widespread use (a tight-fitting pourpoint is needed to suspend and support cuisses and poleyns of iron or steel). Third, it discusses the armor itself, and Krause usefully brings together elements of the harness and reunites it with dispersed elements for the book, a trend begun first in Walter J. Karcheski Jr. and Thom Richardson’s *Medieval Armour from Rhodes* (2000).

Overall, the book is a well-priced (just USD 40) introduction of the landsknecht and offers some stunning photographs of the harness. The decision to distribute the book through Yale University Press is also inspired; were it only available from the museum in Vienna, far fewer would be able to enjoy the work.

Note

[1]. Stefan Krause is the primary author of the book, and curator of the exhibit and Imperial Armoury, with Austrian historian Andreas Zajic as a contributor to the text.