Historical European Martial Arts
From the page to the gym

International conference in relation with the exhibition “European Martial Arts: From Vulcan’s Forge to the Arts of Mars” (01.05-15.09.2019) and the Invitational Gala Tournament (22-23.06.2019).

Friday June 21, 2019
Minsk History Museum, 09:30-17:30

more information on www.hema-minsk.org
**Sport of kings? Foot combat armour in the European Renaissance.**

Armour- a ghostly, empty shell that reveals the shape of the man of the Middle Ages. The foot combat armours of King Henry VIII of England will be undressed and examined.

Bio: Karen Watts, is a Curator Emeritus at the Royal Armouries (Leeds), a visiting Research Fellow at Leeds University, an archivist of the Worshipful Company of Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers (London), a Professeur de Patrimoine et Archéologie Militaires at Ecole du Louvre (Paris) and a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

**International Centre of Martial Arts under the auspices of UNESCO.**

Presentation of the institution

Bio: Mr. Sungsik CHO is a Senior Programme Specialist at the International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the auspices of UNESCO. He has worked for a number of sport mega events over the years specialised in international and NOC relations. He has a keen interest in the positive impact of martial arts on youth.

**Fencing and fun under the wings of Saint Michael.** By Dr. Bert Gevaert (Hallebardiers, Brugge, BE)

The Low Countries have a long tradition of fencing guilds, usually called guilds of Saint Michael. Some of them already existed in the 15th century and are still active today. In these guilds not only martial arts were taught, to be practiced as self defence or in tournaments, but the guild members were also gathered for solemn activities or parties. In past times the role of fencing guilds was not to be underestimated, but what about today?

Bio: Bert Gevaert (1978) was research fellow at the Catholic University Leuven, but now he is an independent researcher, focussing on disability studies, history of mentalities, martial arts, Roman literature, napoleonic history and the history of his hometown Bruges. In 2013 he completed his PhD on deformities and disabilities in the epigrams of the Roman author Martialis (40-104 AD). He combines his work as teacher of Latin in a secondary school with giving lectures on historical subjects, writing articles and books. In 2016 he saw the publication of first book, ‘Te Wapen’ (Davidsfonds/WPG/AUP) dealing with Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA). In 2017 he published ‘Het grote verhaal van kleine mensen’ (Davidsfonds/WPG), on the lives of little people. Besides this, Bert is instructor historical fencing at the Hallebardiers (Bruges) and city guide.

**War Fencing in the Nineteenth Century: the Use of Martial Arts to Kill.**

The relation between Martial Arts and the action of killing is at its strongest on the battlefield, but what martial art are we referring to, and with what weapon? We can find the answers by looking closely at the history of military bladed weapons; a sabre or a lance for the cavalry, and a rifle with a bayonet for the infantry. Were these weapons truly efficient? What was on the mind of the people who used them, be it a simple soldier or an officer, on the moment of battle? How to give a deadly thrust with a bayonet? How to use a saber to attack or defend on the back of a horse? How did war fencing differ so greatly from other types of fencing? Why did it become so central in nineteenth century Europe? Who were those, simple enthusiasts or sword-masters, who played a role in its ascension? And how did governments take hold of this topic?

We will tackle these questions in this lecture, focusing on the case of France. We will talk about bayonet fencing, saber and lance fencing on horseback, and also about the subtle topic of the type of fencing used by officers: an unusual mix of sports fencing, duel fencing, and war fencing. This lecture is the result of my research on the history of fencing but also on military history and French cultural studies.
Bio: Julien Garry started HEMA for about ten years now and has become an instructor of war fencing with bayonet, sabre and lance, on foot as well as on horseback. Practicing HEMA gave him the will to investigate in this obscure branch of fencing history that is fencing on the battlefield. First as an amateur, he started researching on this topic, which then led to a Master Degree in Modern History and the publication of his master’s thesis. He is currently a doctoral student at the University of Burgundy, working on his PHD thesis on the History of War Fencing.

Lost and found. Fencing treatises no longer available and recovered.

Today we are able to reconstruct some visions of ancient fighting arts because we have source material, mainly books and illustrations, but unfortunately some of them are lost for ever, else historical sources no longer available or previous unknown works. Also from time to time new unknown materials appears, fuelling the hope for further discoveries.

We are going to describe some lost and much wanted books, and also trace the fate of some recovered ones. Our main scope is Destreza books but also some relevant works from German tradition or other school will be included. We would like to remark some works present at this exhibition that were recently recovered and bring back to full light after some time in twilight.

Bio: Manuel Valle Ortiz has been researching the Destreza treatises for the last 20 years. Author of reference works as the Nueva bibliografía de la antigua esgrima y destreza de las armas, an update in iberian fencing. Director of AGEA Editora, publishing firm of several Destreza treatises an critical editions. Author of more than ten books. He has delivered conferences on several countries (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Scotland, USA) and events (WMAW, HEMAC Dijon, Torre de Hercules, AEEA Toledo)

From display case to training hall: the study of historical weaponry and the production of modern tools for Historical Martial Artists.

The rediscovery and practice of Historical Martial Arts are based on sources - manuscripts and books most easily come to mind. Without an unbroken lineage of teaching these Arts, these written and illustrated sources are our clearest path to understanding their context, intentions, techniques, and actions. Yet there are also material sources – here the surviving collections of weaponry contemporary with the written sources - which cannot be neglected if we intend to accurately reconstruct these Arts. To correctly interpret and reproduce the principles, motions and techniques we glean from the page, they must be performed with weapons close in form and function to those used by the historical master and his students. We will discuss why the written sources are insufficient without a close study of the material sources, how these material sources are studied and how appropriate training tools based on these material sources are made available to contemporary historical martial artists.

Bio: Anthony Rischard is a historical ironwork restoration blacksmith and entrepreneur with a lifelong passion for historical weapons and their use. He studied and ran businesses in France, the Middle East and the USA, where he discovered historical fencing in 1993. He is CEO and the Head of Research and Product Development for Black Armoury, an international company specialized in designing, producing and distributing equipment and weapons for the Historical Martial Arts, which he cofounded in 2015.

‘The Beginning Teachings’ - Reconstructing the training sequence of Pietro Monte’s Poleaxe.

Pietro Monte, scholar, master at arms and general (1457 - 1509) gives a unique insight into the training methods of Renaissance Italian warriors. In his book, the Collectanea (1509), he describes his I evata, ‘the first blows which we begin to teach or to learn’, his fundamental teachings for fighting. This paper discusses the process and challenges involved in interpreting the I evata of the poleaxe, the basis for learning all of the long weapons. Working from the author’s translation of the Collectanea , produced in collaboration with Dr. Ingrid Sperber, the levata was approached in the context of Montes’ wider martial system. A process of walking through the techniques was carried out, weapons in hand, in order to develop and test the interpretations. The result of this work is a proposed reconstruction of a series of
five distinct combat techniques or ‘blows’ of the levata, which may also provide further insights into the principles of Monte’s tactics and teaching philosophy.

Bio: Mike Prendergast is a HEMA instructor, competitor and independent researcher living in Dublin, Ireland. His primary area of interest is 15th and 16th century Italian martial arts. In 2018 he published an English translation of Pietro Monte’s Collectanea (1509), an anthology on fighting arts, psychology and strategy from the high Renaissance. Mike trains Monte’s system as founder and lead instructor of the Historical Combat Academy and also instructs in longsword and rapier with SCA Dun in Mara.


China is one of the countries with the oldest sword tradition in the world, with a history going back to the beginning of the Western Zhou Dynasty about three thousand years ago. Based on the groundbreaking research by Prof. Ma Mingda, the pre-eminent scholar in Chinese martial studies, this paper presents an overview of China’s classical sword-fighting heritage, and its transformation through contemporary sporting development and digitization. More than a historic survey, this paper takes a dynamic view of how a classical martial art is transmitted and passed on as a living practice, and highlights some of the changes that have come about in response to challenges in contemporary practice and revival. It also looks at new documentary methodologies and technologies that are being brought into play in the authors’ effort to preserve and create a permanent archive for this heritage.

Bio: Dr. Ma Lianzhen is third generation master of Tongbei martial studies, secretary-general of Guangdong Bruce Lee Research Association, founder and editor of Journal of Chinese Martial Studies, and chief instructor of the Guangdong provincial Muay Thai team. Dr. Ma is also a qualified first grade national sanshou referee, and recently served as chief referee at 2008 International Wing Chun Sticky Hands Competition (China). He has published dozens of academic papers and teaches at the Sports Science College of SCNU (South China Normal University).

Hing Chao is a pioneer in the research and cultural revival of indigenous cultures. Since founding the Orochen Foundation in 2004 he has been active in documenting, promoting, and preserving endangered cultural traditions in northeast China, focusing on numerically small, marginalized ethnic minorities, and is the writer and editor for the Uncooked magazine. Over the last few years, Chao has given talks and lectures at international conferences and leading academic institutes in Hong Kong, China, and overseas. Under his initiative, the National Museum of Ethnology in China launched an international campaign to protect Orochen heritage in 2006. He is also the founder and executive editor of Journal of Chinese Martial Studies.
0900  Registration

0930  Introduction. By Daniel Jaquet (University of Bern, CH)

0945  Sport of kings? Foot combat armour in the European Renaissance. By Dr. Karen Watts (Royal Armouries, UK)

1045  International Centre of Martial Arts under the auspices of UNESCO. By Sungsik Cho (ICM, KR)

1115  Guided tour of the exhibition

1400  PANEL 1: FROM THE PAGE...

Fencing and fun under the wings of Saint Michael. By Dr. Bert Gevaert (Hallebardiers, Brugge, BE)

Lost and found. Fencing treatises no longer available and recovered. By Manuel Valle Ortiz (AGEA, Santiago de Compostela, SP)

War Fencing in the Nineteenth Century: the Use of Martial Arts to Kill. By Julien Garry (University of Burgundy, FR)

1515  Coffee break

1545  PANEL 2: ... TO THE GYM

‘The Beginning Teachings’ - Reconstructing the training sequence of Pietro Monte’s Poleaxe. By Mike Prendergast (Historical Combat Academy, Dublin, IE)

From display case to training hall: the study of historical weaponry and the production of modern tools for Historical Martial Artists. By Anthony Rischard (Black Armoury, Clermont Ferrand, FR)

1630  China’s Classical Sword-fighting Tradition: Legacy, Inheritance and Transformation. By Professor Ma Lianzhen (South China Normal University, CN) and Hing Chao (International Guoshu Association, HK)

1730  End of the conference

Organisation: Daniel Jaquet  Partners: Directorate of the 2nd European Games, Hroarr, Martial Art Museum (Botticino).
Language: English