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THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF CADETS AT THE WIENER NEUSTADT MILITARY ACADEMY, AS PORTRAYED IN THE PAINTINGS OF BERNHARD ALBRECHT (1785–1793)

Eleven exquisite gouache and pastel paintings have been held in the Museum of the Theresian Military Academy (Theresianische Militärakademie-TMA) at Wiener Neustadt, (founded in 1752 by Empress Maria Theresa and still operating today) and two more at the Museum of Military History (Heeresgeschichtliches Museum-HGM) in Vienna.¹ They present a remarkable series of scenes from the outdoor everyday life of the cadets, who resided there more than 200 years ago. The thirteen paintings can be ordered chronologically: 1) «Combat exercises in the Steinfeld basin» (1785) at TMA; 2) «Drill in parade uniforms with the flag» (1787) at TMA; 3) «Various sport exercises» (1787) at TMA; 4) «Dancing lessons, flag waving, fencing and vaulting» (1788) at TMA; 5) «Cavalry lessons» (1788) at TMA; 6) «Survey work and musketry» (1789) at TMA; 7) «The Pall mall game» (1790) at TMA; 8) «Pistol shooting and vaulting» (1793) at TMA; 9) «Firing cannon» (between 1785 and 1793) at TMA; 10) «Boating and swimming» (between 1785 and 1793) at TMA; 11) «Ice skating and flag waving» (between 1785 and 1793) at TMA; 12) «Night time target practice with mortars» (between 1785 and 1793) at HGM; 13) «Balancing exercises of cadets on the high beams» (between 1785 and 1793) at HGM.

The paintings are signed with the painter's name: «Bernhard Albrecht», who was an Austrian landscape painter, and served at the Academy as the drawing teacher from 1795 until 1822. They are dated between 1787 and 1793 and provide excellent contemporary evidence of the way in which both training and drilling activities were organised at the Academy during the direction of the Bohemian Count and Austrian Army officer, Franz Joseph Kinsky (1739–1805). Moreover, they give an insight into the social lives of young boys and teenagers destined for military service in the age ranges of six to eight through to eighteen to twenty years of age. Peter Burke explicitly recognises the value of such painters as «social historians», who «record the forms of social behaviour» in everyday life and in leisure time. Therefore, the goal of the lecture was to present thirteen paintings as trustworthy sources for the neglected history of everyday life in the 18th century Habsburg army, and more broadly, history of early modern sport and physical exercise.

Albrecht's collection present the cadets' outdoor activities, where they engage in physical exercises, shooting and military drill. During the long period of Kinsky's direction (from 1779 to 1805), the Theresian Military Academy was publicly praised by contemporaries as a successful enlightened project, which trained the Austrian military elite. In the Academy's memory, this period is remembered as a golden age, and Kinsky's bust is the only one among the Imperial statues in the Academy's park. In his pedagogical works, he insisted on the physical component of education and recommended the toughening of children's physical stamina (clothes and gymnastics), the sharpening of the external senses (sight, smell and touch), and healthy as well as balanced nutrition and foods.

¹ The lecture was based on the newly published article „The everyday life of cadets at the Wiener Neustadt Military Academy, as portrayed in the paintings of Bernhard Albrecht (1785–1793)“, *History of Education & Children's Literature* 15, 1(2020): 245–271.

The park, where most of the paintings scenes took place, bore the German name, *Tiergarten* (Eng. «zoological garden» or «zoo»), because in the past it had been used as a hunting ground and for breeding wild animals. The Academy's castle (*Burg*) belonged to the Habsburgs, but in 1752 Empress Maria Theresa handed it over to General Leopold Joseph von Daun (1705–1766) to establish a new cadet school. Kinsky took on both the castle and the garden as his own property, as though he were its aristocratic owner. He invested considerable time and even his own financial resources for their renovation and redesign. All Kinsky's interventions had a utilitarian rather than aesthetic purpose – the garden had to serve as a field of instruction for the cadets. Most of the garden's space was used for learning and teaching, including experimentation. This juxtaposition of pleasure and utility was a hallmark of Enlightenment landscape spaces. Therefore, the Academy's park could justifiably be labelled as «the Enlightenment garden».

One of the keywords in Kinsky's vocabulary about public education was «game» (*Spiel*), which referred both to indoor and outdoor games. While the indoor games such as billiard are known only from written sources, the outdoor games are illustrated in Bernhard Albrecht's paintings. The painting «Various sport exercises» is maybe the most vivid representation of sport games or physical exercises invented and played during Kinsky's time. The physical exercises included climbing up ropes, jumping over the wall with or without a pole, walking on stilts or climbing up a ladder, playing *trocca di terra* (*trucco da terra*) or «dawn billiard», playing the ball games and the ancient Italian game *la pallone col bracciale*. Shooting from pistols and throwing darts was also exercised. Other paintings represent the very popular Pall mall game, which was a bowling game of the French origin, the noble exercises such as dancing, flag waving, fencing and vaulting. Three paintings illustrate horse riding at the Academy, one portrays boating and swimming because the cadets were bound to learn how to swim, another is showing the ice skating and flag waving of the cadets on the ice formed by the waters of the summer bath. Finally, walking over two wooden high beams at different heights was a method of inculcating courage. Mapping, manoeuvering and artillery classes are the military themes on the last three paintings.

The scientific mind of Count Kinsky turned the Academy into a laboratory with experiments for forming the bodies and souls of the future officers. Albrecht's paintings are great visual sources for Kinsky's innovations, which ranged from the arrangement of the Academy's garden to the introduction of numerous games, which helped the cadets' physical and mental development. However, most of them were abolished after Kinsky's death in 1805, so that the paintings preserve the atmosphere of the long non-existing world.