

Gluckshaus Late 16th Century German Board and Dice Game

Constructed for Entertainment Purposes

By
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Fig. 225 —Dice-maker.

From Monogrammist PVL
16th Century

Alphonso X, King of Leon and Castille believed that board games were for those “who like to enjoy themselves in private to avoid the annoyance and unpleasantness of public places...and in general [for] all those who are looking for a pleasant pastime which will bring them comfort and dispell their boredom” (from the Introduction of Alphonso X’s Book of Games @1282AD).

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RESEARCH OF THE ITEM IN ITS PERIOD:

HISTORY

“Gluckshaus is Old High German for "House of Fortune" and is a gambling game with dice played during Renaissance throughout Europe.” (Dagonell the Juggler)

ITEM IN PERIOD



Gluckshaus board

Dated 1583

Bauerischen National Museum, Munich

Requirements of Play:

- ❖ A board
- ❖ A set of six-sided dice.
- ❖ Coin (Money)

The Board

Research:

Partlett states that it is mostly played on an “ad hoc chalk-drawn board,” (Partlett, 31-32).

Tomas Nowak states that the best playing surface is “a solid, painted **wooden board**, but boards made of leather and linen are recorded.”

“These **wooden boards** were expensive and elaborately carved and painted works of art. (Dagonell the Juggler)

My conclusion:

Gaming surfaces were made out of what was convenient and enjoyable for those who intended to play. One may have **a board of wood** at home, but a soldier may draw one of chalk on the ground to play.

Layout of the Board:

<p>“ It has eleven compartments 2 to 12. A similar board of 1583 has ten compartments in the spaces formed from a double cross, and these have background decorations reminiscent of playing cards” (Partlett, 31-32).</p> <p>“The fields are in the form of a house with 11 (or 10) rooms or windows arranged...” (Nowak)</p> <p>“Each square of the board contained a scene, and the rest of the board surrounding the squares was heavily illuminated.” (Dagonell the Juggler)</p>	<p>My conclusion: 10 spaces form a double cross</p>
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The Dice

<p>All sources indicate a set of six sided dice.</p>	<p>My conclusion: Set of six sided dice.</p>
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Coin (Money)

<p>This game was a fast paced gambling activity. The money of the day would have been used for gambling.</p>	<p>Any coins or markers for gambling.</p>
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Rules of play:

<p>According to Parlett, each player “in turn throws the dice. If the [space] is empty, the caster places a stake on it; if not, he wins the stake already there, leaving it empty again. [I rolling 7, all stakes are left to accumulate. Throwing double 1 entitles a player to sweep all the stakes except compartment 7, while a double 6 sweeps the board entirely. [On a ten space board], as there is no 4, a player throwing it simply does nothing” (Partlett 31-32).</p> <p>“Players roll, add total of dice, and thus on a field of the board finds a coin and takes it, or if none you have to leave one behind. Everyone who rolls 7 must put a coin deposit, as a wedding everyone has a gift. Rolling 2 has pig and must all fields plunder, except for the wedding. The king roll gets all coins in all fields including the wedding because the king can know nothing denied. The game ends when only one player is left with the coins. A variant with 10 boxes to play, it the 4 roll means nothing.” (Nowak)</p>	<p>My conclusion of the rules: Take turns rolling the dice. If 3,5,6,8,9,10, 11 are rolled, take a coin from the space of this number; if empty, leave a coin. If 4 is rolled, nothing happens but a loss of turn. If 7 is rolled, leave a coin at the wedding. If 2 is rolled, be a pig and take all the coins on the board except the wedding. If 12 is rolled, you are the king. Nothing is denied to the king. Take all the coins on the board.</p>
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CONSTRUCTION OF THE GAME

Board

What was it made out of? Where did those materials come from?

“...maple, alder, and ash were common, with yew, and boxwood and even Scots Pine on occasion...” (Morris as quoted in Rettie, p.3).

According to Martha Schreffner’s research, “artwork on wooden panels was widespread across Europe and wood used included poplar, oak, pine, silver fir, linden, beech and chestnut.”

“First take a little boxwood panel...a little panel of old fig is good...” (Cennini, chapter 5 and 6)

“The best is a solid, painted wooden board...” (Nowak)

How was it made in period?

“wooden boards...elaborately carved and/or painted works... Each square of the board contained a scene,...heavily illuminated.” (Dagonell the Juggler)

The period example from the Bavarian National Museum in Munich was pyrographically inscribed.

How was the pattern transferred to the board?

A technique of transferring a design on paper to wood, canvas, plaster and cloth was called "pouncing". The artist would create a sketch on paper, called a "cartoon", which would then be laid upon the surface to be worked. Holes were punched through the paper with a needle and then patted with charcoal dust, leaving a series of dots on the surface showing the outline. These techniques would have been available to the period pyrographer.

What tools were used to pyrographically inscribe in period?

According to Martha Schreffner’s research, “It is not known exactly what implement(s) were used to perform pyrography pre-1600. One hypothesis is the use of heated needles... Relief burning tools are described in the Dictionary of Woodworking Tools, c. 1700-1970 as "metal rods known as 'points' with flat, claw- or horn-shaped ends, fitted to cork-covered handles to protect the hands. The points were heated in flame and then applied to the wood surface.”

“Formerly the fire-etcher employed copper tools, not unlike

What materials did I use?

A basswood board with a beveled edged pre-cut was purchased for the project.

What method did I use?

The design was pyrographically inscribed.

Where did the pattern come from?

The design imitates the drawing from the 1583 board. The “cartoon”, which is a reproduction of the 1583 board from the Bayerischen National Museum was rendered from Laura Palmer’s coloring book, The Big Book of Board Games.

The design was transferred to the board with the previously described period method of pouncing.

What tools did you use?

A modern implement was used to reproduce the look and feel of a period piece without the dangers of period methods.

This supposition was based on Schreffner’s opinion after extensive experimentation... “The electric

<p>soldering-irons, set into wooden or other non- conducting handles” (Fosdick, 496).</p> <p>Description of soldering tools by Theophilus in 1125: “Now you should have a soldering iron which is long and thin, with a slender point, filed and tinned. Put this into the fire.”</p> <p>What technique was used to pygraphically inscribe in period?</p> <p>“Tools cooled rapidly, and had to be constantly shifted, while the oxidation of the copper necessitated constant cleaning. What with feeding his fire and blowing it up with hand bellows, it is a wonder that the wood-burner produced anything artistic” (Fosdick, 496).</p> <p>“...several metal rods [were put] in the fire in order to continue their artwork This is where the expression, “having more than one iron in the fire” became popular.”(Boyer)</p>	<p>stylus is subject to heat dissipation when the tip is drawn across the wood so, like the period pyrographer, development of the appropriate techniques of pressure, temperature, and drawing speed are required to achieve a range of effects. The electric stylus can reproduce the look and feel of a period piece if the artist studies examples from period and chooses metal tips to achieve the same effects.</p>
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Dice

<p>“Modern dice have the six opposite the one, the three opposite the four and the five opposite the two. Some medieval dice also had this pattern but many were apparently random in the pattern of the faces.” (Gothic Green Oak).</p> <p>“...square shapes of six equal sides, all equal in size and shape because otherwise they will not roll....” (Alphonso X</p>	<p>Dice for this rendering are randomly faced.</p>
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Coins

<p>The coin would have been the money of the day in period.</p>	<p>For the purposes of play by children, wooden chips in a style of coins from the period have been created to accompany this board.</p>
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CONCLUSIONS:

What inspired you to make this item?

At a previous event, the children were playing period games. My daughter was unfamiliar with the games and the rules. Some of the rules were rather complex. I wanted to make a game that was fun, fast-paced, with simple rules for her and myself to enjoy.

What did you learn from making this item?

I learned quite a bit about pyrography. It was an art form used to decorate everyday items, and therefore, not many examples of it exist. There are artists who are attempting to define what the period methods of pyrography were through experimentation and discovery. Any research in this area will add to the body of knowledge, and therefore, is worthy of study.

If you were to repeat this project what would you do differently?

Change the design of the board or perhaps make a board on leather, so that it may be rolled for ease of transporting.
I may also venture at some point into experimentation in making period tools for this process.

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“...This book provides as complete a record as possible of the other board games that have existed in different parts of the world, showing how they were played, what is known of their history and development and their ultimate origin. In the fifty years since it was written it has become the classic compilation of evidence from ancient sources and from archaeological finds and anthropological records. The main game types are introduced and discussed at length with numerous examples being added in a more notational form. While recent archaeological finds modify some of the older evidence presented here, the main themes remain unaltered and this book remains the primary reference work for modern historians.” From *Powells of Chicago*.