

# The Graphic Sources for the Moor with the Emerald Cluster

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AMONG THE TREASURES from the Grünes Gewölbe brought to this country with the loan exhibition "The Splendor of Dresden," the *Mohr mit der Smaragdstufe—Moor with the Emerald Cluster*—was one of the more eye-catching pieces, even in that dazzling array (Figures 1, 2).<sup>1</sup>

The Moor is represented as a muscular youth in swaggering stride; he is carved from pearwood, and lacquered a deep brown. His broadly smiling face with its wide, blunt nose and full lips is clearly meant to be that of a Negro; but his curly hair is—when seen from the front—almost entirely hidden by a jeweled gold "feather" crown of a type generally associated with romantic images of American Indians. The Moor's dark brown skin is covered on arms, legs, and body with intricate tattoos, meticulously produced by thousands of tiny dots of blue-black lacquer paint. In splendid contrast to this dark background stands forth the lavish assortment of gem-studded jewelry: necklace, pectoral, armlets, knee bands, cuffs, and greaves, and a belt heavily loaded with pendants to form a fringed skirt.<sup>2</sup>

The Moor carries a tray of tortoiseshell,<sup>3</sup> containing a matrix of emeralds. This was presented to Elector Augustus (1553–86), the founder of the Dresden Kunstkammer (1560), by his friend Emperor Rudolf II in 1581, when Augustus paid him a visit in Prague, soon after Rudolf's recovery from a serious illness. The emeralds were kept "in a black box lined with crimson velvet," and were catalogued under the section "Precious Stones, Unicorn and Rhinoceros Horns." They were said to have come from the Indies of the West—probably Muzo in Colombia—and had presumably been sent to Europe by some Spanish conquistador.<sup>4</sup> Elector Augustus treasured them so highly

that he decreed that "in memory eternally" they should remain with his house inalienably.<sup>5</sup>

The *Moor with the Emerald Cluster* must have been created shortly before 1725, when it first appears in an inventory.<sup>6</sup> Its companion piece, carrying a composite cluster of crystals (Figures 3, 4), was delivered

1. *The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting*, exh. cat. (Washington/New York/San Francisco, 1978–79) no. 291, "Blackamoor with matrix of emeralds," col. pl. p. 44.

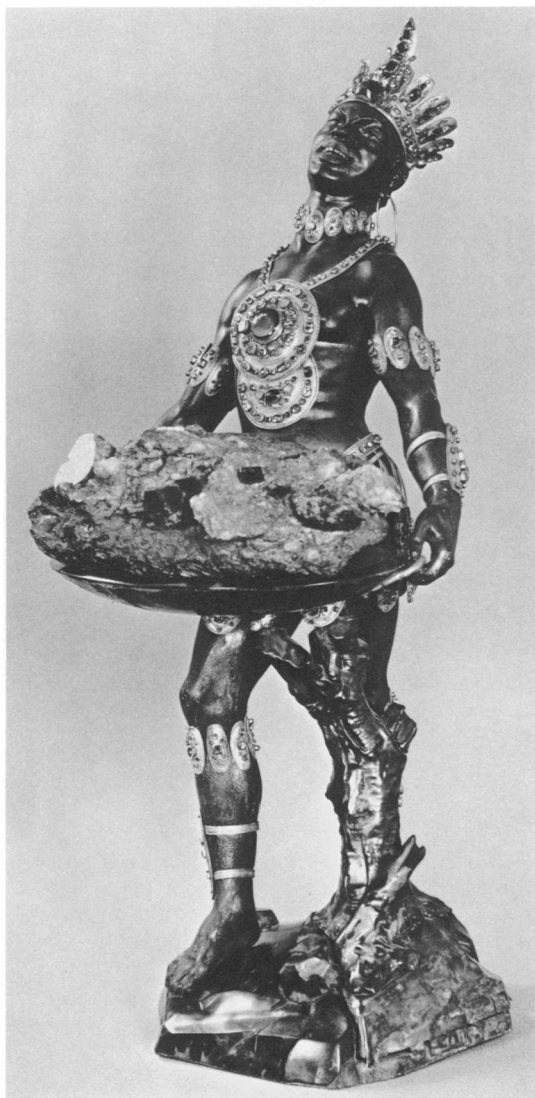
2. The jewelry—according to the catalogue—is silver gilt, densely set with a multicolored array of rubies, emeralds, topazes, and Ceylon sapphires; a large almandine and a ruby are the centerpieces of the pectoral discs.

3. The tray is decorated on its underside with three chinoiserie vignettes—pagodas and Chinese-style buildings in landscape settings—executed in a mosaic of silver nails.

4. According to information from Joachim Menzhausen, director of the Grünes Gewölbe, there are two clusters in existence. One remained in Prague, and is now in the Museum of Natural History in Vienna. They are supposed to have come to Europe in the 1570s.

5. Inventory Kunstkammer, 1587; fol. 8: "1 Schmarallen stoffe von 16. steinen gross und klein, wie dieselben an ihrem natürlichen gebirge gewachsen, so in den Occidentalischen Indien gebrochen werden, in einer schwartzen Schachtel mit roten Carmosin gefüttert, Hat Keyser Rudolphus dies nahmens der ander, herzogk Augustus Churfürsten, zu Sachsen als S. Churf. G. allerhöchstgedachte Ihre Kay. Mt. nach deroselben langwirigen Leibesschwachheit, aus treuen gemüthe unterthenigst im Monat Octobri Ao 81. besucht, zu anzeigung vnd wahren freundschaft gnedigst vnd dankbarlich verehret, welchen S. Churf. G. fürder bey diesen Churfürstlichen Hauße vnd Stamme zu ewigenn gedechtnüs zu bleiben verordnet vnd gewiedemet haben" (Erna von Watzdorf, *Johann Melchior Dinglinger: Der Goldschmied des deutschen Barock* [Berlin, 1962] n. 323). One of the decisive factors in the choice of a green gemstone as gift, and a reason for the elector's appreciation of it, must have been that the national color of Saxony was green, derived from the charge of the *Rautenkranz* (wreath of rue) in its coat of arms.

6. Watzdorf, *Dinglinger*, n. 328; Inv. Pretiosen, 1725, fol. 88.



1, 2. *Moor with the Emerald Cluster*, front and back views.  
H. 63.8 cm. Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. VIII  
303 (photos: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden)

by the court jeweler, Johann Heinrich Köhler, in 1724.<sup>7</sup> It was presumably on the occasion of the dissolution of the old *Kunstammer* in 1720 and the new installation of the *Grünes Gewölbe*, particularly the *Pretiosensaal*, in 1724, by order of Augustus the Strong (1694–1733), that this great connoisseur with his surpassing sense for the dramatic must have decided that a worthy setting was needed for the prized emeralds—a noble savage offering to the Old World the astounding riches of the New.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of its creation, however, relatively little attention was paid to the figure of the Moor. Throughout the eighteenth and the greater part of the nineteenth centuries the emerald matrix as a mineralogical rarity clearly took precedence, as indicated by the description “Die Smaragd Stufe mit dem Mohren” in the inventory of 1733.<sup>9</sup>

7. Joachim Menzhausen, *Das Grüne Gewölbe* (Leipzig, 1968) cat. no. 129; Watzdorf, *Dinglinger*, p. 212. According to Sigfried Asche, *Balthasar Permoser* (Berlin, 1978) fig. 315, the figure of this second moor might have been carved by Paul Heermann. In any case it is not by either Permoser or Köhler.

8. Watzdorf, *Dinglinger*, p. 216, n. 324.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 210. The glamor of the emerald cluster had its drawbacks too. The 1725 inventory states that there are only



3, 4. *Moor with the Crystal Cluster*, front and back views. Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. V 156 (photos: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden)

The question of the authorship of this work, therefore, was not raised until 1879, when it suddenly appears as “un nègre, ouvrage de Dinglinger.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, it seems that Johann Melchior Dinglinger, the celebrated court goldsmith of Augustus the Strong and the master of the most breathtaking *objets d’art* in the Grünes Gewölbe, was thought to have been the carver of the figure too. It was not until 1915 that Jean Louis Sponsel in his guide to the collections suggested Balthasar Permoser, the sculptor, who was a close friend

and collaborator of Dinglinger’s, as the author of the figure. Erna von Watzdorf in her monograph on Dinglinger (1962) attributes the Moor himself to Permoser, the tray and pedestal to Ephraim Benjamin Krüger, a worker in ivory and tortoiseshell, and the jeweled mountings to Dinglinger’s workshop.<sup>11</sup> Joachim Menzhausen, the present director of the Grünes

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“four big and nine smaller” emeralds left from the original sixteen. The cluster had been sent to Warsaw with other pieces from the Kunstkammer, and on its return it was noticed that “one or another had been broken off.” Today there are four big and five small emeralds left (*ibid.*, n. 324).

10. *Ibid.*, n. 327.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 210–212; n. 324.



5, 6. *Moor with Pearl Cluster*, front and back views. Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. VI 99 (photos: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden)

7, 8. *Moor with Pearl Cluster*, front and back views. Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. VI 195 (photos: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden)



9. "How ceremonies are performed by Satouriona, when he wants to war against his enemies," from Théodore de Bry, *Historia Americae* (Frankfurt am Main, 1591). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas J. Watson Library



Gewölbe, accepts the attribution to Permoser, but suggests Wilhelm Krüger, the father of Ephraim Benjamin, as the carver of the tray and pedestal. In his monograph *Das Grüne Gewölbe* (1962) the jewelry of the Moor is attributed to Dinglinger's workshop. In the exhibition catalogue *The Splendor of Dresden* Gerald Heres and Werner Kiontke, who jointly wrote the entries for nos. 241–306, attribute the mountings of the Moor (no. 291) to Dinglinger. Erna von Watzdorf claims that the workmanship of the jewelry is a little too coarse for Dinglinger's own hand, particularly in comparison with the trappings of two small ebony statuettes by Permoser—blackamoors carrying oyster shells with grown-in pearl clusters—which she takes to be the Moor's prototypes and models (Figures 5–8). In the *Inventar Pretiosen*, 1725, folio 88, however, it is stated that the small blackamoor statuettes were mounted "auf die façon" of the larger pair, with the emeralds and crystals respectively.<sup>12</sup>

In *The Splendor of Dresden* it is mentioned—following a suggestion I had made to Joachim Menzhaußen—that the Moor's tattoos and feather crown were

taken from contemporary illustrations of travel accounts, and that the figure is supposed to represent an American Indian. Indeed, almost every detail of the adornments of all four statuettes has a common source, a series of engravings of the New World by Théodore de Bry (1528–98).

Among de Bry's illustrations to René de Laudonnière's report about the abortive French settlement in Florida in 1564,<sup>13</sup> we find the exact model for the Moor's tattoos in those of the "powerful king called Satouriona" (Figure 9). The statuettes' characteristic

12. Ibid., p. 212; n. 325. One of the small statuettes (inv. no. VI 195) was included in the Dresden exhibition (*Splendor of Dresden*, no. 288, "Blackamoor with pearl-filled tray," H. 20 cm.).

13. Théodore de Bry, *Historia Americae* [1590–1634] II (Frankfurt am Main: Siegmund Feyerabend, 1591). Recent editions: *Discovering the New World, Based on the Works of Théodore de Bry*, ed. Michael Alexander (New York, 1976) p. 30; Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land* (New York, 1975) p. 72; W. P. Cumming, R. A. Skelton, and D. B. Quinn, *The Discovery of North America* (New York, 1971) p. 161.



10. "How order of battle is kept by King Olata, when he goes to war," from Théodore de Bry, *Historia Americae* (Frankfurt am Main, 1591). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas J. Watson Library

pectorals of two overlapping discs, their armlets and knee bands composed of oval discs, their belts with skirtlike fringes of oval pendants hanging from straps, we see on braves in the opposing army, that of Olata Outina, "considered the king of kings" (Figure 10). The armlets and knee bands worn by the braves have also been used as models for necklaces, and for anklets and bracelets.

The rectangular wristguard worn by the archer marching in the van of Olata Outina's host, however, has been misunderstood by the goldsmith. In de Bry's engraving it is shown quite correctly on the inside of the left wrist as a protection against the snap of the bowstring. In the trappings of the Moor with the emeralds, though, this bracer has been taken for a peculiar "Indian" adornment; it appears on both forearms—turned outward to boot—as a bracelet, and even on the lower legs as a kind of greaves.

In a similar way the skirted breechclout of the war-

rior on the left, wearing the skin of a mountain lion, seems to have served as a model for the belts with pendants worn by the statuettes. They all have a large triangular flap in front (that of the Moor with the emeralds is hidden under the tray), and a small flap in back. This is an adaptation of the breechclout with its turnover in front; the rear flaps were added by the goldsmith, probably for symmetry, because the breechclouts in the de Bry prints are simply knotted in back. Another variant is that the pendants hanging from the belts of three of the statuettes (Figures 1, 2, and 5–8) are interspersed with looped bands. In the *Moor with the Crystal Cluster* (Figures 3, 4), however, the pendants are connected by a pair of parallel straps, exactly like those of de Bry's warrior.

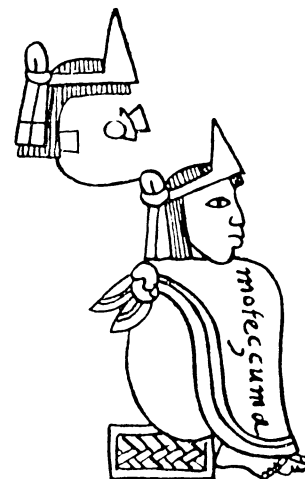
The double-disc pectorals of the two great Moors—modeled after the breast ornament of de Bry's archer—are suspended by two jeweled straps over their shoulders. These straps cross each other in back, with discs at the crossing points, and are attached to the belts. The two small Moors have cross-straps running up from their belts in front and in the rear, with double discs in front and single discs in back. In the engravings no such harnesses appear;



11. *America*, from the tapestry series of the Four Continents, design by Ludwig van Schoor, active ca. 1700. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of James Hazen Hyde, C-526 (photo: National Gallery of Art)

12. Detail of Figure 11 (photo: National Gallery of Art)

13. Montezuma with his name-glyph. Codex Mendoza (after Prescott-Kutscher)



there the pectoral discs are simply hung from a band around the wearer's neck.

In the arrangement of the pectorals and particularly in the strapwork of the belt of the Moor with the crystals, the two great Moors are much closer to de Bry's illustration than the smaller pair with the pearl clusters. This can mean only that the great Moors were taken directly from the graphic sources, and that the small statuettes were made later *auf ihre façon*, as indicated in the Inventar Pretiosen, 1725.

However, there is no direct prototype among de Bry's engravings for the headdresses worn by the great Moors. At first glance their feather crowns look like the standard plumed ornaments associated with American Indians from the earliest woodcut illustrations on, but on closer observation it becomes clear that there is a curious tongue-shaped extension rising from the middle of the browband. This pointed projection is quite different from the other round-tipped "feathers." It is practically identical to the jeweled tongue that juts up from the feathered headdress of the allegorical figure of America in the tapestry series of the Four Continents (Figures 11, 12), designed by Ludwig van Schoor and woven by the Brussels workshop of Albert Auwerx at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup>

The model for this peculiar headdress must have

been the diadem of the emperors of Mexico at the time of the conquest. Usually called *copilli*, the diadem's other name *xiuhuitzolli*—"the jewel-encrusted pointed peak"—offers a fair description of its shape and nature.<sup>15</sup> The *xiuhuitzolli* was part of the name-glyph of Montezuma,<sup>16</sup> and it is to be found in countless sixteenth-century illustrations identifying this monarch (Figure 13).

De Bry's engravings were based on original watercolor drawings by Jacques Le Moyne, who had accompanied Laudonnière on his ill-starred adventure,<sup>17</sup> a point that is duly mentioned in the Feyerabend edition of de Bry's work (1591). This guarantee of authenticity must have been a decisive element in the choice of a Florida chieftain's trappings—augmented by the similarly authentic headdress of Montezuma and America herself—for the image of the Moor carrying emeralds from the Indies of the West.<sup>18</sup>

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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14. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., has two versions of this *America* tapestry, C-512 and C-526. The latter was published in James Hazen Hyde, "L'Iconographie des quatre parties du monde dans les tapisseries," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 5, 10 (1924) pp. 253–272.

15. Eduard Seler, "Altmexikanischer Schmuck und soziale und militärische Rangabzeichen," *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur amerikanischen Sprach- und Altertumskunde* (Graz, 1960) II, pp. 509–619, esp. p. 544, fig. 54a and n. 1: "Tezozomoc Crónica mexicana cap. 59: '... salió el rey ... en la cabeza í frente llevaba el *xiuh-huitzolli*, que era la media mitra que servia de corona real, esmaltada de piedras de esmeraldas, diamantes, ámbar í sencillo muy menudo, muy subtilmente hecho y labrado que

relumbraba.' Id. cap. 82: '... y la corona que llamaban *xiuh-huitzolli*, que era una media mitra que se ponía desde la frente. ...'"

16. Gerdts Kutscher, ed. and trans., William H. Prescott, *Die Eroberung von Mexiko* (Berlin, 1956) p. 182, fig. 75; Kurt Ross, ed., *Codex Mendoza* (Fribourg, 1978) pt. I, pp. 18–33, esp. p. 33, fig. B.

17. The only surviving original drawing is now in the New York Public Library.

18. A German version of this article—"Über die graphischen Vorlagen des 'Mohren mit der Smaragdstufe' im Grünen Gewölbe zu Dresden"—has been published in *Dresdener Kunstblätter* 25 (1981) pp. 10–19, figs. 1–6.