

A M I R M O H T A S H E M I



Crested Penbox

Circa: 1594

Nuremberg, 1594

Brass

24cm long, 3.5cm high

Provenance: US private collection

Stock No.: A5404

An oval box with a hinged cover, engraved with a coat of arms, and dated, decorated with vases of flowers and strapwork. Within the coat of arms, are the initials HR and VW, flanked by the date 1594. The compartmented interior contains removable inkwell and sander.

It is possible that the form of this penbox was derived from Islamic penboxes. It is unlike the highly stylised European penboxes of this period (see comparative material no. 7). It is likely, that European craftsmen were inspired by Ottoman penboxes from this period. Most probably, Islamic examples were brought to Europe during the Ottoman conquests, where there was a transmission of ideas and iconography between these two civilisations. The style of engravings on this penbox bares a strong resemblance to those found on contemporary brass boxes in Nuremberg and Wroclaw. Particularly, the presence of the crest and the floral motifs.

Typically, larger, oblong Islamic pen boxes with angular or round ends, provided space to hold both inkwell and pens, with the inkwell portion typically on the right. Muslim metalworkers produced large numbers of these pen boxes, many of which were richly decorated with inlays of gold, silver, and copper.

Comparative materials:

1. [Museum of Islamic Art, Doha](#)
2. <https://www.deutsches-uhrenmuseum.de/en/museum/collection/single-pointer-travel-clock.html>
3. <http://www.bildindex.de/bilder/MI07835d05a.jpg>
4. <http://www.bildindex.de/bilder/MI07835d04a.jpg>
5. Jewel encrusted oval penbox: Topkapi à Versailles - Trésors de la cour ottoman, Réunion des musées nationaux, 1999, p. 287.
6. Christie's <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6308164>