

. AGNEWS .

EST. 1817

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Christoph Amberger (Place unknown c. 1505 -
1561/2 Augsburg)

Portrait of Barbara Schwarz

Inscribed with the sitter's year of birth in an
astrological diagram, upper right: 1507/
AD.21:AVG:TO; and inscribed and dated
beneath: TO/ XXI AVG: M:DXLII/
.BARBARA./ DIE MATHEVSIN
SCHWERTZIN/ .AE.KRAD.XXXV.IAR

Oil on panel

28 ³/₈ x 24 ¹/₈ in. (72 x 61.2 cm.)

Painted in 1542



Provenance

Commissioned by the sitter's husband Mathias Schwartz (1497– c. 1574) to commemorate her birthday
on the 21st August 1542.

Possibly Ferdinand August Hartmann (probably the painter Christian Ferdinand Hartmann (1774–1842),
Dresden, together with the companion portrait of the sitter's husband.

By descent to Johann Gottlob von Quandt (1787–1859), Dresden.

Von Ritzenberg collection, Schloss Nischwitz, near Wurzen, Saxony, until 1870.

Richard Freiherr von Friesen (1808–1884), Dresden, together with pendant;

His posthumous sale, Cologne, Lempertz and Heberle, 26 March 1885, lot 3, for DM 6,500;

Where acquired by Dr. Martin Schubart (1840–1899), Dresden and later Munich, together with pendant;

His posthumous sale, Munich, Helbing, 23 October 1899, lot 3, together with pendant for DM 51,000;

Where acquired by Colnaghi, London.

Leopold Hirsch (1857–1932), 10 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, by 1906, together with pendant;

His posthumous sale London, Christie's, 11 May 1934, lot 89, for 1,500 guineas, to Heinemann.

With Arnold Seligmann, New York and London, 1936.

With Kurt Meissner, Zurich, 1953.

Acquired in 1976 by a private collector.

Sotheby's, London, 5 July 2017, lot 7.

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Exhibited

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Literature

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This highly important example of German Renaissance portraiture was painted in Augsburg, then one of the main commercial centres of Europe with important connections to Venice and Italy. Christoph Amberger was the leading portrait painter of the Augsburg patriciate in the 16th century, and his work was heavily influenced by portraiture in Venetian art of the period. The sitter, Barbara Schwarz, was the wife of wealthy Augsburg accountant Matthäus Schwarz, a high-ranking servant of both the wealthy banking family of the Fuggers and the Emperor Charles V, and moved in the highest circles of Augsburg society. Amberger himself had worked for Charles V and was the favoured portrait painter to this elite circle; his own experiences of Italy and of Venice in particular produced in portraits such as this an elegant fusion of German and Italian courtly portrait types which proved highly popular. Here elaborate inscriptions and a very rare astrological horoscope are discreetly married with a multitude of observation relating to the sitter's wealth and interests, not least her expensive and highly fashionable costume, providing an unusually clear window into her privileged lifestyle.

As the inscription on the panel shows, the sitter was born on 21 August 1507, the daughter of Anton Mangold, a Swabian accountant who had risen to high office in the employment of the great Augsburg banker Anton Fugger (1493–1560). Her elder and decidedly plainer sister Magdalena, had previously married the wealthy Augsburg merchant Veit Wittich (1493–1544) in 1523, and both she and her husband had also been painted by Amberger.¹ Her introduction to the wealthy elite circle of Augsburg was cemented by her marriage on 1 May 1538 to the Fuggers' chief accountant Matthäus Schwarz (1497–1574). Picked out in gold on the pilaster behind her is the most unusual feature of a horoscope (fig. 1), in the centre of which the sitter's date of birth (21 August 1507) is inscribed and surrounded by a diagram showing the position of the stars at the time. According to the inscription beneath it, this portrait was painted on 21 August 1542, on the sitter's thirty-fifth birthday. At the same time the portrait formed a pendant to Amberger's likeness of the sitter's husband, painted five months earlier, and today in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid (fig. 2).² The two portraits remained together for nearly five hundred years, being separated in 1934 at the sale of the collection of Leopold von Hirsch in London.

Barbara's husband Matthäus Schwarz was a fascinating and well-documented personality. A native of Augsburg, he acquired financial training from Antonio Mirafiori in Venice, and was responsible for the

¹ Braunschweig Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum. Kranz 2004, nos 41–42.

² Lübbecke and Will 1991, pp. 38–43, no. 2.

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introduction of double entry bookkeeping north of the Alps. He rose to become head of the accounting office of Fugger, perhaps the greatest and wealthiest merchant house of the time. For his services to the Holy Roman Empire he was finally ennobled by Charles V in 1541, the year before this portrait was painted. A humanist and mathematician, he died in 1574 in Augsburg, a city to which he was deeply attached culturally. His father, Ulrich, had also been a patron of artists before him, most notably Holbein the Elder, and Schwarz continued in this tradition, commissioning a number of works, including for example, his own portrait by the court painter Hans Maler (1469–1537), which depicted him as a luteplayer, as well as portrait medallions by Friedrich Hagenauer and Hans Kels.³ As a mathematician, Schwarz would no doubt have had a close interest in astrology, and his own portrait by Amberger contains an astrological horoscope similar to the one in the present painting, but of even more complicated nature.⁴ Despite the fashion for astrology throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, the inclusion of such horoscopes in portraiture is extremely rare, and suggests that this was a strong personal interest of Matthäus and his wife.

Amberger has dealt sensitively with the interests and position of his sitter, with whom he was no doubt acquainted for many years. Although at first glance this portrait might seem to depict Barbara Schwarz in relatively modest attire, clad in the sombre colours befitting the wife of a wealthy Augsburg accountant, this is in fact not the case, and indeed the painting contains a myriad of details that bring to life the sitter's interests in fashion. One of the most fascinating aspects of the painting is its inclusion in the *Trachtenbuch* or *Costume Book* of 1561 kept by her son Veit Conrad Schwarz, now in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (fig. 3). This journal was in fact a reprise of his father Matthäus's own remarkable *Trachtenbuch*, started in 1520, and also now in Braunschweig, which contained no less than 137 miniatures, all detailing Schwarz's new clothes with accompanying texts and explanations. At the beginning of Veit Conrad's costume book are two illustrations of his parents by Jeremias Schemel, recording the name of the Christoph Amberger as the original painter, but extending his original designs to full-length. Far from being demure or thrifty, black was in fact much the *most* expensive colour for such a dress, and Amberger plainly delights in showing off his skill in the rendering of the silk, embroidery and lacework, and with it the wealth of his client. Schemmel's miniature

³ Paris, Musé du Louvre. Cf. H. von Mackowitz, *Der Maler Hans von Schwarz*, Innsbruck 1960, no. 45, reproduced fig. 32.

⁴ The horoscopes in both paintings are now thought to have been based upon the *Ephemeriden* of Regiomontanus, one of the earliest treatises on the positions of the heavenly bodies, first published in Nuremberg in 1474.

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also tells us that the object attached to the silver girdle around Barbara's waist was an elaborate and very ornate tassel, its quality a reflection of the skill and reputation of Augsburg's silversmiths at this date.

The wealth of such detail and documentation regarding both Barbara and her husband make these portraits central to our understanding of the work of Amberger, who rarely signed or dated his works. Like Matthäus Schwarz, Amberger had also travelled to Italy, probably around 1526–27, where he had been profoundly influenced by the work of Titian in Venice whom he met in 1548. So successfully did he fuse Italian Renaissance and mannerist formulae onto the prevailing German court fashions following Dürer, that three years later in 1530 he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the Emperor Charles V, now in Berlin (fig. 4), which established his reputation as leading court painter and, according to Joachim Sandrart, was much praised by the sitter.⁵ Having arrived in Augsburg, Amberger married the daughter of his master Leonhart Beck and was admitted to the Guild of Painters in 1530. The unchallenged heir to the portrait tradition established in Augsburg by Hans Holbein the Elder, successive commissions from Hans Jakob and Christoph Fugger in 1541⁶ cemented his position as the portrait painter of choice to the city's patrician elite, and no doubt led directly to the commission for the present portrait the following year.

⁵ Kranz 2004, p. 254 ff., no. 9. According to the inscriptions on the painting itself, it was painted or completed only in 1532.

⁶ Kranz 2004, nos 30 and 31. The former was sold New York, Sotheby's, 28 January 2010, lot 158, and the latter is in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

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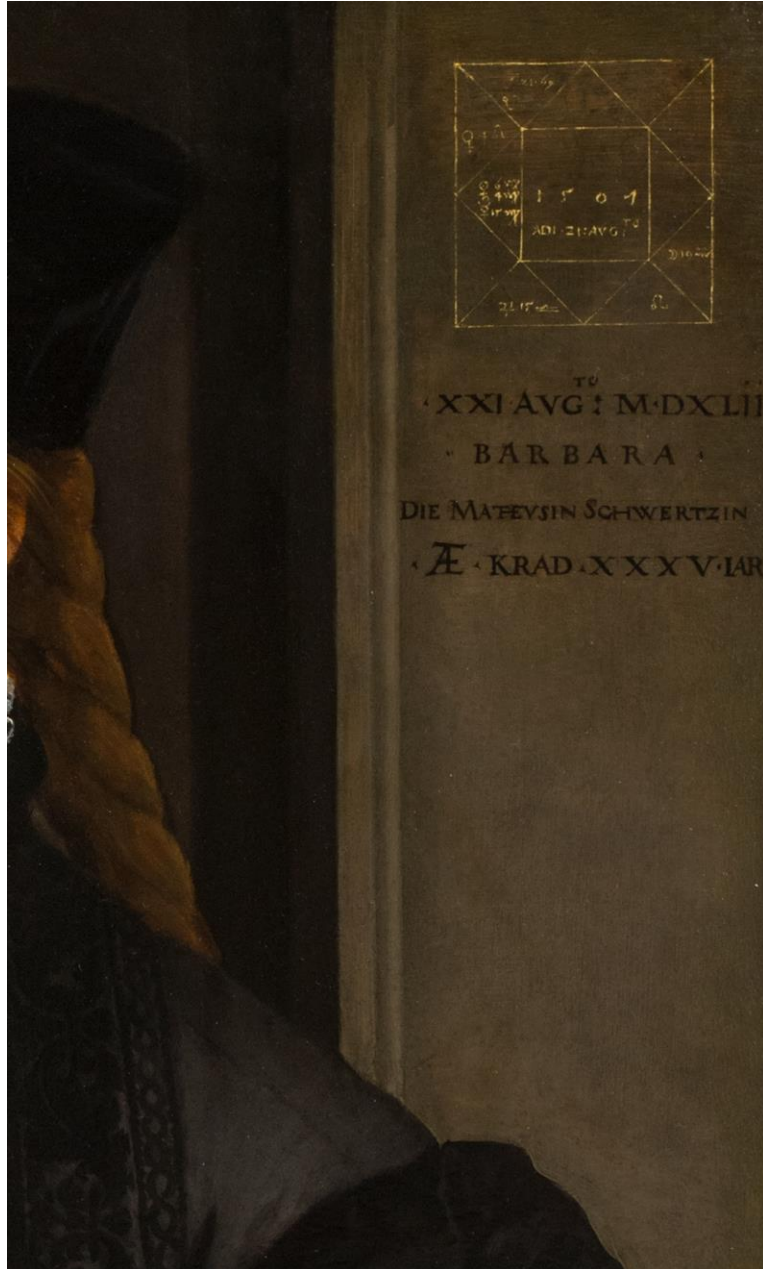


Fig. 1: Detail of the horoscope of the present painting.

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Fig. 2: Christoph Amberger, *Portrait of Matthäus Schwarz*, oil on panel, 73.5 x 61 cm, 1542, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

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Fig. 3: Jeremia Schemmel, *Portraits of Matthäus and Barbara Schwarz*, Herzog Anton-Ullrich Museum, Brunswick.



Fig. 4: Christoph Amberger, *Portrait of Emperor Charles V*,
oil on panel, 67.2 × 50.7 cm, 1530,
Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.