

Terminus Est & Real Swords of Justice

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 31 Dec 2013

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6499>

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Matthew Keeley — 31 Dec 2013, 03:05

A few years ago, there was some discussion of real-life executioner's swords or swords of justice, with a link to an image of an executioner's sword from the Higgins Armory Museum collection.

I live near the museum and fully intended to look at the sword in question and report back, but until today I never got around to it. Sad to say, the Museum is ceasing operations tomorrow, and although its collection will stay together and will eventually make its way to the Worcester Art Museum, it's going to be some time before everything's on display again.

Spurred by the impending closure and by guilt at neglecting such a great local cultural institution, I visited the Higgins today. I was especially curious to see the sword that had been discussed here a few years back; as the Higgins allows photos, I took a few pictures in the hope of passing them along to Urth. The pictures turned out poorly, but, happily enough, the Higgins website provides images and documentation<<http://higgins.lostpapyr.us/artifacts/1996.01.3.a>>

Like Terminus Est, this sword is very wide and lacks a pronounced "tip." Like Terminus Est, it is a beautifully-made weapon. Unlike Terminus Est, it was never designed to actually shed blood. It turns out that this sword was in fact designed as a symbol of state power, not an actual executioner's tool. The lower parts of the blade itself are gilded and ornamented, with an image of a winged Justice. Beneath that there's a little oval cartouche containing an inscription: "When the poor sinner is deprived of life,/then he will be placed under my hand./ When I raise the sword/may God give the poor sinner eternal life." What would Severian make of that?

-Matt