

ROYAL TREATMENT

Jonathan Downs reviews the latest lots from Holts, from French flintlocks to a Maharajah's rifle

HOLTS KENSINGTON, LONDON - 19 MARCH 2019

HOLTS HAD A GOOD SALE AT THE END OF MARCH, WITH MUCH OF THEIR BESTSELLER'S LIST GIVEN OVER TO FINE HISTORIC ANTIQUES. The first of these was a stunning pair of flintlock pistols – I wouldn't normally highlight such pieces in this more sport-orientated spot, but these were exceptional, particularly owing to their provenance: they were the former property of no less than King Louis XVI. Made in 1770, some twenty years before his fall, they were designed in the Renaissance style, with blued round-tapering 5¼" barrels with carved and chisel-engraved sighting-ribs incorporating gilded fore-sights and the royal fleur-de-lys. One could be forgiven for thinking them small but these are 60-bore, which makes them .426 cal. (c.10mm) – the snap and kick from a shot would have been considerable; not quite Dirty Harry's .44 magnum but near enough for 1770. This pair of royal pistols, from the most famed and tragic of the French monarchs, sold at their estimate of £8,000.

In the sporting range there were some excellent specimens, one of them by the Fratelli Rizzini: a fine Fracassi & Contessa-engraved 20-bore 'Mod R1-E' single/double-trigger hand-detachable sidelock ejector. Estimated at

£20,000-£25,000, it sold for £20,000 in a light leather guncase with some accessories.

Another piece worth noting was from another noble house, Holland & Holland – in this case a very rare pair of .500/.465 (3¼") Nitro Express 'Royal' sidelock non-ejector double rifles, the absolute denier for tiger hunters in the days of the British Raj. They were completed in September 1907 for Colonel H.H. Maharaja Shri Sir Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, GCIE, (1862-1911) ruler of Cooch Behar in India. A keen hunter, he wrote *'Thirty Seven Years of Big Game Shooting in Cooch Behar, the Duars and Assam, A Rough Diary'* (1908), an account of his hunting adventures between 1871 and 1907. He dedicates an appendix to his guns and rifles and towards the end, references his pair of .500 Cordite rifles by Holland & Holland, which 'have never been out of order or given any trouble', writing earlier: "With regard to makers of rifles, I consider Messrs Holland & Holland second to none."

Both rifles underwent a full strip, clean and service, the barrels reblued and the woodwork refinished by JP Daeschler (Gunmakers). Estimated between £24,000 and £28,000, they sold for £30,000. For further information on this auction and Holt's Sealed Bid auctions, please visit holtsuactioneers.com. **GIN**



Fracassi & Contessa-engraved 20-bore 'Mod R1-E' single/double-trigger hand-detachable sidelock ejector by Rizzini, est. £20,000-25,000, sold £20,000, with light leather guncase and accessories

Extremely rare pair of engraved flintlock pistols made for King Louis XVI, 1770, est. £8,000-12,000, sold £8,000



Beautiful pair of rare .500/ 465 (3¼") Nitro Express 'Royal' sidelock non-ejector double rifles, 1907, made for Colonel H.H. Maharaja Shri Sir Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, GCIE, (1862-1911) ruler of Cooch Behar, est. £24,000-28,000, sold £30,000

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