

RUNJEET SINGH

Runjeet Singh is an antiques dealer and consultant working by appointment from Warwickshire in the UK. He exhibits all around the world at some of the premier antiques fairs and exhibitions. He specialises in Asiatic Arms & Armour and has been involved in the field since 1999. He is well established on the global market and many consider him a leading specialist in his field. Runjeet currently sits on the board of directors of Asian Art in London.

Runjeet enjoys the study and academia of the field and writes an annual publication which sits on the shelves of many prestigious institutions. He produces regular PDF catalogues to accompany his exhibitions and has also advised and contributed to several highly regarded publications.

Runjeet has a reputation as a dealer of discerning taste, and responsibly sources fine and rare objects with good provenance. This has led to close relationships with not only the most important collectors, but museums and academics as well. Runjeet meticulously selects objects for his own inventory personally, and takes the same care when sourcing objects for his clients.

Runjeet takes great pleasure in providing confidential advice, consultation, and valuations for collectors, institutions and museums.

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IT IS VERY REFRESHING TO MEET DEALERS WHO CAME IN ASIAN ART THROUGH A DIFFERENT PATH. YOURS WAS MARTIAL ARTS! COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE "SCIENCE OF WEAPONS"?

Shaster vidiya is an ancient Indian martial art which the Sikhs have practiced and utilised since the 15th century. *Shaster* translates as weapon, and *vidiya* as science, so you are correct in your title of the 'science of weapons' I began practicing in my late teens and this continued until my retirement from the art when I was in my mid 20's. It was then when I realised my calling was the collecting and study of the objects, rather than the use of them. I am still in touch with my Ustaaad (teacher) and like to give some guidance to my ten year old son, who is showing an interest in martial arts.

YOU HAVE CONSTANTLY STUDIED AND READ EVER SINCE ON THIS THEMATIC AND WON YOUR RECOGNITION AS AN EXPERT. YOU HAVE BEEN RECENTLY APPOINTED COUNCIL MEMBER OF THE ARMS & ARMOUR SOCIETY. WHAT ROLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY IN THIS OLD AND RESPECTED ORGANIZATION?

It is a real honour to have been appointed a council member of the arms & armour society. It is an old institution and carries some nice old traditions, as is very common with such old institutions in Britain, but it has a very forward-thinking council and we are trying to keep in touch with the modern world, as well as best serve our members, and progress the academic study of arms & armour.

BUT YOU ARE ALSO NOW THE ARMS & ARMOUR SPECIALIST OF THE BBC ANTIQUES ROAD SHOW?! HOW WAS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE AND WOULD YOU LIKE TO APPEAR AGAIN ON TV?

Again it was a real compliment that the BBC contacted me to appear on the Antiques Roadshow. My first recording was on a beautiful sunny day, and I provided expertise on three very important South Indian weapons. The recording provided the finale of the hour long show, and was the highest value of all the items recorded that day, so I was very proud to have represented Asian Art in that way. Since then I have been asked to attend more recordings for the show, so please watch this space!

YOU WERE ALREADY VERY KEEN WITH DIGITAL MEDIA BUT THE PANDEMIC FORCED YOU TO ADAPT EVEN MORE YOUR WAY OF WORKING RIGHT? HOW WORKED YOUR LIVES ON INSTAGRAM?

The digital world did explode as you imply, and I embraced that, taking part in live interviews on Instagram, connecting with my clients and colleagues via zoom, and taking part in online fairs, however, I do believe a certain amount of 'digital fatigue' started to creep in towards the end of last year, with consumer being overwhelmed with online activity, and so I am very much looking forward to getting back to normal this summer with in-person fairs

ANOTHER GOOD THING THAT CAME OUT OF THE PANDEMIC IS YOUR NEW HOBBY, POLO! ARE YOU HONORING YOUR ROOTS INDIA BEING THE BIRTHPLACE OF MODERN POLO?

I never actually intended to learn how to play Polo, I just wanted to learn how to ride a horse, but a funny chain of events and a misunderstanding led to me arriving at a Polo school and the instructor thrusting a polo mallet into my hands in the very first lesson! I have to say I was glad I did, Polo teaches you a very natural way of riding using your body, legs and hips to guide the horse, with only slight direction with one hand. The other hand is kept free for a polo mallet, or maybe a sword if the need ever arises!

TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR FIRST PARTICIPATION IN TEFAF?

My participation in the showcase at TEFAF 2020 was a milestone in my career, it was a chance to show the art world the beauty and appeal of arms & armour, I was thrilled with the response, and since I have been

Shikargah (hunting) katar
Rajasthan, India
Circa 1850 AD
Steel, gold



Sword Hilt
Deccan or Mughal Dominions,
India
17th-18th century
Jade, gold, rubies, emeralds



accepted as a full TEFAF exhibitor, so I will be exhibiting with a full stand in Maastricht (25-30 June). I have many future ambitions, there are many important objects still to be discovered, and some wonderful collections to be formed.

NOW THAT ART FAIRS ARE ALL GETTING BACK TO LIFE WHERE WILL YOU EXHIBIT IN THE FORTHCOMING MONTHS?

As I have already said I am taking part in TEFAF Maastricht 25-30 June, but before that I am very excited to be exhibiting at the Pagoda during the Asia Week in Paris, 8-12 June (Printemps Asiatiques). It is a very exciting new event taking place in the Pagoda building, Paris. A building that looks like it was dropped straight from 19th century China directly into Paris. I hope to be able to honour the beautiful surroundings by showing some beautiful objects from all over Asia.

Left:
Suit of Armour
Bijapur, India
17th century
Steel, camel hair, fabric

Right:
Ornate knife
Ottoman Empire
Steel, glass, wood, ivory, coral,
turquoise, rubies, brass, silver,
mother of pearl, ebony



Showcase, TEFAF 2020