

# Peter Finer

## ***Mythical Beasts and Worldly Creatures*** **Peter Finer at Frieze Masters, Stand C9**



An exceptional casket by Plácido Zuloaga, c. 1870, Spain (Madrid or Eibar), steel, gold and silver (33 cm / 13 in × 52 cm / 20.5 in × 26.5 cm / 10.4 in), signed 'PZ' for Plácido Zuloaga; rare brace of ceremonial trident heads, or *Mdung Rtse-Gsum*, C17th, Tibet, iron, bronze, gold, silver and polychrome (50 cm / 19.7 in × 33.5 cm / 13.2 in)

A rare brace of 17<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan trident heads and an exceptional 19<sup>th</sup> century casket wrought in silver and gold by a famed Spanish artist are among the centrepieces of a special exhibition - *Mythical Beasts and Worldly Creatures* - being staged by Peter Finer, the specialist dealer in fine antique arms, armour and related objects at [Frieze Masters \(13-17 October, stand C9\)](#); it is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated catalogue.

The casket, an outstanding piece in the exhibition, sumptuously decorated and substantial in size (over a foot tall at 33 cm × 52 cm × 26.5 cm), is by the famed 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish sculptor and metalworker Plácido Zuloaga. Its provenance includes renowned collector Alfred Morrison (1821-97) and the decorated soldier, Great War poet and author Siegfried Sassoon CBE MC DLITT (1886-1967). The inspiration for the casket is an important late Renaissance French ceremonial shield, and Zuloaga's inlaying of gold and silver into a sculpted iron surface makes it a truly remarkable object. The decoration includes zodiacal crabs, piping Satyrs and languid swans; partridge, serpents, snails and dragonflies dot the entirely gilded background. Though characteristic of French Renaissance decoration, the design stems from schemes for armour by the goldsmith and engraver Étienne Delaune (1519-1583.) Other such works by Zuloaga are in museums, and the object's rarity and intricacy make it one of the most expensive items in the exhibition, priced in the region of £800,000.

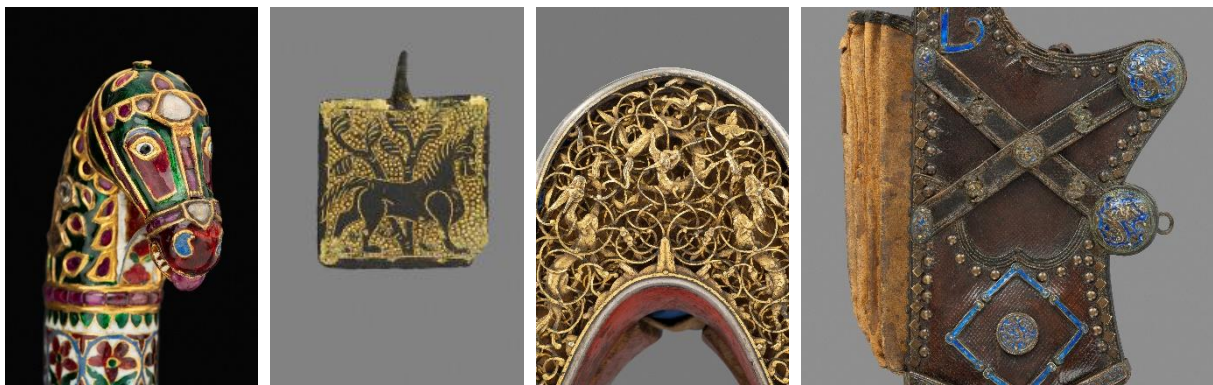
The 17<sup>th</sup> Tibetan trident heads, or *Mdung Rtse-Gsum*, preserved together as a pair, are extremely rare, and feature animalistic skulls with blue and red demonic eyes, symbolic of Hindu and Buddhist guardian deities. They are worked in steel with bronze, gold, silver and polychrome decoration. As objects they "feel strong, yet dynamic due to the hanging pendants", says Red Finer, and should appeal to the cross-collecting audience that attend Frieze Masters. They are priced at £75,000.

The exhibition has a fully illustrated accompanying catalogue and brings together a culturally diverse and exciting group of rare and outstanding purposeful works of art, unified by their imaginative decoration of mythical, legendary and 'real' animals. Together the pieces reveal the age-old preoccupation of artists over the millennia with animals in the natural world and of legend; they also overtly demonstrate the artistry and expense that was historically lavished on arms and armour and how remarkable the sculpture of these works remain today. The pieces, from Asia and Europe, date from the seventh century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As Finer points out: “The exhibition has a dozen items priced under £10,000 and is extremely accessible to younger collectors and those first becoming interested in this field.” For example, a Medieval copper pendant from the 1300s, decorated in gold with a horse, could be worn on a silk cord or gold chain as a unique piece of jewellery, or, on its mount, make a museum-worthy display. Priced at £3,800 it is a very approachable object for a collector.

He adds, however, that most of the items featured, across all price points, have comparable pieces in the world’s major museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC) and the Wallace Collection (London).

“Our ultimate goal,” adds Red Finer, “is to focus the eye on the astonishing artistry and careful detail found in each object’s unique portrayal and representation of animals and the imagination evident in a diversity of mediums, including precious metals, prized stones, and vibrant man-made lacquers and alloys.”



A rare dagger, or *Khanja*, early C19th, India (possibly Jaipur), steel, gold, enamel, diamonds, rubies, pink sapphires, spinels, wood & textile (34 cm / 13.4 in); medieval equestrian harness pendant, C14th, England or France, copper alloy, gold (4 cm / 1.57 in); an exceptionally fine saddle, or *Gser Sga*, C15th-C17th, Eastern Tibet or China, iron, silver, gold, wood & leather (30 cm / 11.8 in × 56 cm / 22 in); a quiver, or *Jian*, C18th, China, Qing Dynasty, wood, leather, iron, brass & enamel (34 cm / 13.4 in × 19.5 cm / 7.8 in)

Further items of note include an astonishingly ornate and rare early 16<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan saddle, comparable to one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC); an unusual and delicate gilt-brass German rococo small sword c. 1750-60 with an enamelled hilt depicting a pug (a similar example is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London); a bejewelled and enamelled early 19<sup>th</sup> century horse-head dagger made for an Indian court dignitary, and a Chinese Quiver (*Jian*) of the 1700s Qing dynasty. This quiver, made for use by archers on horseback, is decorated with mythical Qilin – chimeric unicorn-like creatures - in striking bright blue enamel.

The exhibition continues in the gallery from 21 October-12 November at 38/39 Duke Street, St. James’s, London.

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Peter Finer  
Frieze Masters, 13-17 October, Stand C9

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