

# The Telegraph

By Colin Gleadell  
2 May 2023 • 6:00am

In 1810, the artist John Flaxman made his first designs for an elaborate silver-gilt shield, for the 1823 Coronation of George IV. Almost 3 ft in diameter and inspired by the military triumphs of Achilles, the shield was presented at a sumptuous Coronation banquet, where it was placed close to the King's honour table. It has been in the Royal Collection ever since, prominently displayed at state dinners and other banquets.



The 19th-century Royal Shield of Achilles, made for the then-Duke of Cumberland | CREDIT: Koopman Fine Art

It was not, however, the only one. Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, then-royal goldsmiths, produced four other shields contemporaneously from the exact same design, and sold them. One was acquired by the then-Duke of York and is now in the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, California; one went to the then-Duke of Northumberland and has, since 1984, been owned by Mohammed Mahdi Al-Tajir, the former UAE ambassador to Britain. The third belongs to the National Trust.

The final example was sold to George IV's brother, Ernest Augustus, the then-Duke of Cumberland and later King of Hanover (who used it for his coronation). Now, this shield is about to re-appear on the art market at The Treasure House Fair in London next month, for sale at a seven-figure price through the specialist silver dealers Koopman Rare Art.