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For sale — Marie Antoinette's dog bed and other princely delights

This year's Treasure House Fair features a trove of regal-themed objets d'art.
Nancy Durrant selects the finest pieces available to buy



A dark blue velvet dog house, circa 1775, reputedly created for Marie Antoinette's beloved dog Pompon, £35,000

© MALLETT ANTIQUES, LONDON/ NEW YORK



Nancy Durrant

Royal collections are quite particular in their unparticularity. Formed over generations and subject to not only the whims and interests of individual rulers, but also the sometimes idiosyncratic selection of diplomatic gifts from distant lands, they tend to be remarkable in their diversity, but also in their astonishing quality.

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There is something of this wonderful variety about the Treasure House Fair. Coming into its fourth edition this year, it's a curious collector's paradise — instead of specialising in, say, decorative or Asian art, antiquities or natural wonders, it brings together all these and many more, from across eras and across the globe. The fair takes as its curatorial inspiration the breadth of Prince Albert's Great Exhibition of 1851 — meaning it can feature any beautiful thing, as long as it's at the pinnacle of its class, whether that's silverware or cloisonné, furniture or watchmaking.

As a result, and appropriately for a fair that has at its heart the vision of a prince, it's also the place to find a remarkable variety of exquisite royal (and royal-adjacent) objects. Here are some of our favourites.

Marie Antoinette's dog bed, c 1775

Being in the dog house has never been so luxurious. Reputedly created for Marie Antoinette's beloved dog Pompon (thought to have been a fluffy poodle/spaniel mix), this gilded beech and velvet neoclassical kennel closely resembles the *niche de chien* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, attributed to the celebrated chair-maker Claude I Sené and made for the French queen. Marie Antoinette — like our own royals — was famously devoted to her dogs; it's widely held that her cherished pet Coco (a papillon) followed her to the Temple prison during the French Revolution, though his eventual fate is, mercifully, unrecorded.

Mallett Antiques, £35,000

Silver sculpture of Eos, Prince Albert's dog, 1840



A silver sculpture of Prince Albert's greyhound Eos, commissioned by Queen Victoria for his 21st birthday, August 1840. Price on application

© WARTSKI, LONDON

Speaking of dogs, this silver sculpture by R&S Garrard, a gift from Queen Victoria to her husband Albert on his first birthday after their marriage, depicts the prince's beloved greyhound Eos, who accompanied him on his journey from Germany to marry the Queen earlier in 1840. Eos must have been a great comfort in a place full of strangers, many of whom regarded Albert with suspicion. When Victoria lost her husband in 1861, she wrote that her grief was "unbounded, dreadful, and I know not how to bear it". She channelled her sadness into acts of commemoration, one of which is the cenotaph in the Albert Memorial Chapel at Windsor Castle, where Eos lies at the feet of her master.

Wartski, POA



A 1699 table from Queen Mary II's bedchamber at Kensington Palace, price in excess of £100,000

© RONALD PHILLIPS, LONDON

Commissioned for the Kensington Palace bedchamber of William III and Queen Mary II, this elegant table was part of an important suite of giltwood furniture produced between 1689 (five years before Mary's death at the age of 32) and 1709, much of which is now lost or dispersed — only a handful of pieces remain in the Royal Collection. This example is rare in that it survives with much of its original gilding intact, a testament to the artistry of two notable Huguenot craftsmen — the carver Robert Derignée and the carver-gilder Jean Pelletier, whose arrival in England was hugely influential — in particular their pioneering use of gesso carving across

Ronald Phillips, in excess of £100,000

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A Mughal emerald seal, 1783-4



A Splendour of the Mughal Courts, dated 1783-4, bearing the name of Marian Hastings, wife of Warren Hastings, governor general of India 1773-85, £295,000

© GREENS OF CHELTENHAM, LONDON

It's not known who presented this emerald seal to Marian, wife of Warren Hastings, governor-general of India 1773-85, but its quality and size suggest that, if it was a diplomatic gift, it would have come from a prince, nawab or ruler of quasi-royal

associated with the Mughal court. The inscription reads: “The exalted nawab, the sultan of eloquence of the time, the one who has the magnificence of Bilqis, Zubaydah Khatun, Marian Hastin [sic], the most brave of women, the Baygum 1198.” It was a well-considered gift — once she returned to England in 1785, Marian was famous for her love of opulent jewels, of which she wore a great quantity.

Greens of Cheltenham, £295,000

A fantasy table and chairs, formerly owned by Countess Mona Bismarck, c 1790



A fantasy table and chairs, formerly owned by Countess Mona Bismarck, based on the designs of Michelangelo Pergolesi, c 1790, £62,000

© MALLETT ANTIQUES, LONDON/ NEW YORK

This startlingly theatrical and very rare Italian suite of fantasy table and chairs, from Countess Mona Bismarck’s Villa Il Fortino in Capri, is based on the designs of Michaelangelo Pergolesi. They blend chinoiserie flourishes with pseudo-Etruscan motifs and neoclassical symmetry — a romanticised, imaginative vision, much like their owner. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, into an unstable childhood, Mona Strader clawed her way to immense wealth via a string of husbands — one of whom was Count Albrecht von Bismarck-Schönhausen (grandson of Otto von Bismarck), who was the poorer of the two, but by then it didn’t much matter. Painted by Salvador Dalí, immortalised in song by Cole Porter, photographed by Cecil Beaton, and dressed by Chanel, Givenchy and Balenciaga, she was the first American to be named Best Dressed Woman in the World.

Mallett Antiques, £62,000



Leonard Limosin (c1505 to c 1577), a rare Limoges enamel convex portrait of a bearded man c 1550, £48,000

© FOSTER AND GANE, UK

Hidden in a private collection for nearly five centuries, this rare 16th-century Limoges enamel convex portrait, acquired directly from the Legh Family (seated at the magnificent Lyme Hall in Cheshire until 1946) has long been thought to depict the Italian cardinal sent to England to try the case between Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. It almost certainly doesn't, in fact, since it can't date as early as the 1520s, but its midnight blue ground is characteristic of Léonard Limosin's portraits from the 1540s-60s, as seen in the presumed portrait of Antoine de Bourbon at the Frick Collection in New York. Our man actually bears a striking resemblance to a portrait thought to be Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, brother of Jane Seymour, Henry's third wife.

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Foster & Gane, £48,000

Roman porphyry vase, 18th century



An early 18th-century Roman Imperial porphyry vase carved in Rome from Egyptian imperial porphyry, £85,000

© VAGABOND ANTIQUES/KENZIPHOTOGRAPHER.COM

When the Egyptian imperial porphyry from which this vase is carved was originally quarried, it was strictly reserved for royalty. Its deep purple colour mimicked the Tyrian dye exclusive to emperors, and its remarkable hardness symbolised endurance while rendering it extremely difficult to work, making it a perfect symbol

stone was more or less impossible to access by the early modern period, resulting in a thriving art of reworking existing examples. The ram's-head handles on this early 18th-century vase relate closely to one formerly in Louis XIV's collection and now in the Musée National de la Renaissance in the Château d'Écouen.

Vagabond Antiques, about £85,000

The 16th Duke of Alba's Order of the Golden Fleece, 1900



The 16th Duke of Alba's Order of the Golden Fleece, 1900

© SJ PHILLIPS, LONDON

The nephew of Empress Eugénie, Carlos María Fitz-James Stuart y Portocarrero y Palafox XVI, Duke of Alba de Tormes, was invested in April 1891 as a Knight of the Distinguished Order of the Golden Fleece, the highest Spanish chivalric honour. It

restricted membership to only 24 knights of the highest nobility. The duke certainly qualified — upon his parents' deaths, he inherited a total of 25 titles from them, including six dukedoms, nine marquessates, eight earldoms, one viscounty and a count-dukedom. This diamond, sapphire and ruby full order with stickpin and medal miniature was commissioned from the jewellery house Chaumet by the duke's wife, María del Rosario Falcó y Osorio, 12th Countess of Siruela.

SJ Phillips, POA

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Wall lamps for the sultan of Morocco, c 1705



A Gift from Queen Anne to the Sultan of Morocco, Moulay Ismail Ibn Sharif c 1705, £250,000

© RONALD PHILLIPS, LONDON

Made by the fashionable furniture supplier Philip Arbuthnot in around 1705, this pair of sconces is a remarkable survival, the only known wall lights featuring red *verre églomisé* decoration (where the back surface of glass is gilded with precious metal leaf and painted). They were ordered by Queen Anne for the vast sum of £12 7s as a gift to the sultan of Morocco, Moulay Ismail Ibn Sharif, in pursuit of a mutually sought trade alliance — his gifts to her included ostriches, tigers and leopards. Their fragility is one reason for their rarity, the other is that many diplomatic gifts were lost en route, either to piracy, loss at sea or misappropriation by local officials.

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