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Pair of Flintlock Pistols

Gunsmith [Samuel Brunn](#) British

Marked for [Michael Barnett](#) British

hallmarked for 1800–1801

📍 Not on view

These pistols rank among the most lavishly embellished Neoclassical English firearms known. They are the masterpieces of Samuel Brunn, a leading London sword cutler and gunmaker who held appointments to the Prince of Wales (later Prince Regent and King George IV, 1760–1830) and other members of the royal family, as well as to the government's Board of Ordnance. The barrels and locks are of blued steel engraved and gold-inlaid with trophies of arms and foliage. The decoration of the stocks, combining engraved sheet-silver inlay and heavy cast and chased silver mounts, was inspired by contemporary French Empire firearms. The mounts, the designs of which appear to be unique to British firearms, are the work of a silversmith using the mark M.B., recently identified as the London sword-hilt maker and silversmith Michael Barnett.

Several of the ornamental motifs are based on ancient Roman sources: a nereid feeding a sea leopard on the sideplate derives from an engraving, published in Rome in 1762, of a wall painting found in the ruins of Herculaneum; and the oval medallion on the trigger guard, representing Hercules with a defeated Amazon, is based on an antique gem known from contemporary engravings and casts after the original. The Medusa head on the butt also derives from classical art, but here the idealized model has been transformed into a grimacing yet almost humorous caricature of the legendary gorgon.



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These pistols epitomize the opulence and sophistication of English decorative arts produced during the reign of the Francophile Prince Regent, for whom they were reputedly made.

^ View less

Artwork Details

Overview	Title: Pair of Flintlock Pistols
Signatures, Inscriptions, and Markings	Gunsmith: Samuel Brunn (English, London, recorded 1795–1820) Silversmith: Marked for Michael Barnett (British, Workington, Cumberland 1758–1823 London)
Provenance	Date: hallmarked for 1800–1801
Exhibition History	Geography: London
References	Culture: British, London Medium: Steel, wood (walnut, rosewood), silver, gold Dimensions: L. of each pistol 16 in. (40.6 cm); L. of each barrel 10 1/8 in. (25.7 cm); Cal. of each pistol .603 in. (15.3 mm) Classification: Firearms Credit Line: Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund and Gift of George D. Pratt, by exchange, 1992 Accession Number: 1992.330.1, .2

Learn more about this artwork



Arms and Armor at The Met

Collecting, preserving, researching, publishing, and exhibiting distinguished examples representing the art of the armorer, swordsmith, and gunmaker.

Timeline of Art History



CHRONOLOGY

Great Britain and Ireland, 1800–1900 A.D.

Museum Publications



Arms and Armor: Notable Acquisitions, 1991–2002



"Recent Acquisitions: A Selection, 1992–1993"

Related Artworks

All Related Artworks By Michael Barnett By Samuel Brunn Arms and Armor Arms Firearms Flintlocks Gold Handguns Iron alloy Iron and iron alloy Locks Metal Pistols Rosewood
Silver Small arms Snaphances Steel Walnut Wood From England From Europe From London From United Kingdom From A.D. 1800–1900



Double-Barreled Percussion Shotgun

Louis Perrin (French, Paris, active 1823–65)

dated 1854



Double-Barrel Breech-Loading Pinfire Shotgun

J. C. A. Brun (French, Paris, active 1849–72)

dated 1866



Double-Barreled Flintlock Shotgun

Nicolas Noël Boutet (French, Versailles and Paris, 1761–1833)

dated 1801



Double-Barreled Shotgun

François F

dated 1809

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