

English translation of article from Société section, *La Journal*, 9 March 1984

The main attraction will remain “off limits”

A unique gem in the world: a chest of dueling pistols of the 1st Empire built on a scale of 2 to 5!

“It is a rare and marvelous thing that the artist, in the torment of his soul, extracts from the universal chaos. And when it is created, it is not to be seen by all.”

I had the privilege to come across this thing of beauty of which Somerset Maugham spoke, and appreciate its true value through arms of prestige, unique in the world, created by a true connoisseur and artist, Mr. Michel Lefaiivre, a 43 year old mechanical engineer, native of Picardie, whose hobby is to reproduce by hand, on a scale of 2 to 5, and in their smallest details, the rarest and the most famous masterpieces of arms craftsmanship.

Like a toothpick sculptor

To thank for services rendered or to gain the favors of a head of state, a minister or an influential person, Napoleon the 1st had the custom of offering these privileged people a luxurious chest of arms—genuine, priceless gems.

Bearing this tradition in mind and as a challenge to last century’s artists and arms craftsmen, Michel Lefaiivre undertook the task of recreating such a chest—an accurate reproduction in which he went as far as to search for the right kind of figured walnut with the best grain. And not just a simple reproduction, but rather a miniature one, on a scale of 2 to 5! A much more challenging task such as those skillfully engineered toothpick sculptures. Each numbered and hallmarked piece is made strictly according to the original model.

Thus, when Michel Lefaiivre half-opened his case at Granger’s—a craftsman and manufacture of famous platinum guns—and pulled out almost stealthily a 150 mm x 100 mm chest, he was displaying for the very first time a gem unsurpassed in beauty, made of the most precious elements such as gold, silver, steel, ivory, walnut and velvet.

King Faycal (Faisal) of Arabia may dream in vain

This chest contains a pair of dueling pistols as used during the 1st Empire, unique in the world and worth of the most fanciful dreams King Faycal of Arabia may ever dream.

The making of these two pistols required 1000 hours of work. They are perfectly functional and their mechanisms are likewise accurately reproduced. All the fittings are of silver, the barrels are inlaid with gold. The butts are made of top grain walnut. The chest contains all the accessories formerly included with a pair of dueling pistols—namely the powder pouch, bullet mold, cleaning brush, screwdrivers with ivory handles. The celebrated arms manufacturer, Nicolas Noel Boutet, whose craftsmanship had no equal in the world.

The owner of this extremely rare treasure keeps it locked in a safe, and unfortunately refuses to put it on display. We can be sure, however, that if Nicolas Boutet were still alive, he would have hired Michel Lefaiivre as his master arms craftsman.