

Summers Place Auctions to sell monumental sculptural props

Summers Place Auctions will be holding its next sealed bid auction on the 28th September and among the highlights is a collection of monumental sculptures based on TV and film props created by Rod and Louis Vass, who set up Armordillo Ltd, a company specialising in designing and creating sculptural props for films, shows and events. During his long career Rod worked for the BBC (on such classics as *Doctor Who* and *Black Adder*) and for Warner Bros, Disney, Marvel and DC. Over the last decade he has been joined by his son Louis, who has added his sophisticated digital sculpting skills to Armordillo's portfolio.

Among the sculptural props are three monumental polyurethane resin heads, which were made for the TV series *Beowulf*. They are each almost two and a half metres high and are estimated at £3,000 - £5,000 each, one of the heads has been designed to fit around a tree.

Rod remembers: "The heads were originally made for the high budget TV series *Beowulf*. The series was filmed in Northumberland in some of the most beautiful locations with some very impressive building works, there was an enormous Anglo Saxon Mead Hall built in wild countryside by a lake. The huge heads were positioned all around the hills and landscape in Northumberland and their last usage was as part of a bridge in a remote location."

Other sculptural props include a monumental hand (est. £2,000 - £4,000), an almost 3 metre high Cobra, created for an Indian circus (est. £3,000 - £5,000), another monumental hand broken into several heavy sections and a sculpted head, with wall hanging features, which is 185cm high and estimated to fetch £2,500 - £4,000. It was made for a music video and shows a Black King's head. It was one of Rod's favourite projects: "I am keen on African history and we based this sculpture on the 14th-century Mali King Mansa Musa, who was the first king of Timbuktu. He is considered to be one of the richest people to have ever lived and was certainly the richest man of his day. There is a famous portrait of him on a map in the Catalan Atlas, which had been published in 1375, and we took that as inspiration when we created the head."

Designed for the film "*Tomb Raider*, the Cradle of Life" a horse's head (almost one metre high) is expected to fetch £500 - £800, while a 2.3 metre long and equally high resin stallion on an iron frame base carries an estimate of £2,000 - £4,000. That was a great film to work on," reminisces Rod, "we were involved in the building of a huge classical temple, leaning at 15 degrees from vertical, it's huge doric

columns had to collapse in an earthquake. We made four classical stallions inspired by the horses of San Marco in Venice and the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. This stallion is one of four horses which were attached in pairs to bronze chariots.”

Props from a more recent film are the trees from the World War One battle scenes of *Tolkien*, inspired by Paul Nash’s Western Front paintings: giving them a particularly bleak and dramatic look. The set of four is estimated to sell for £2,000 - £4,000.

Rod Vass started his company when he created 650 suits of armour for Ridley Scott's film *Gladiator* –25 years on, his and Louis’ focus is towards large scale permanent sculpture and installations.

They combine traditional artistic practice with newly developing technologies and experimental research and development. The use of relatively light, but extremely sturdy and waterproof resins opens a new market in large scale art.