

Valletta painting sells for record price



A painting of Valletta Harbour by Girolamo Gianni has been auctioned in Lincoln, England, and sold to a Maltese collector living in the UK for a 'record price' of £14,250, the auctioneers said.

The 19th century oil painting of Valletta Harbour by the 'great painter of Maltese scenery' was estimated to fetch between £2,000 and £4,000.

Sarah Winstanley on behalf of auctioneers Thomas Mawer and Son, Lincoln, said the painting attracted a huge amount of interest with three bids left by Maltese buyers on the books before the sale, four telephone bidders from Malta, London, Scotland and Surrey and another buyer in the room competing for the lot.

Bidding started at £4,500 and rose rapidly until only one buyer was left on the phone and another in the room. Finally, the painting was sold to the buyer in the room, who was originally from Malta but now lives in England.

The vendor of the painting, who does not wish to be named, lives in Lincolnshire and inherited it from a relative. She was 'very pleased and surprised' with the price achieved and intends to donate some of the proceeds to two charities, the St Barnabus Hospice on Nettleham Road, Lincoln, and Marie Curie Cancer Care, Ms Winstanley said.

Girolamo Gianni (1837-1895) was born in Naples and initially visited Malta in 1866. Two years later he returned with his family to live and work in Valletta where he produced many paintings of the harbour and other views of the country.

In 1886, Gianni was commissioned by the Duke of Edinburgh, the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet in Malta, to paint the ships of the fleet. For the next two decades, he painted landscapes and marine paintings and the majority of these works were bought by army and navy officers.
