

# Antique Dickman Clown Cast Iron Shooting Target.



Featured on PBS's *Antique Roadshow*, the Dickman Clown Shooting Target holds a special place amongst the antique community. Holding equal weight as the pinnacle of shooting gallery technology, with its gas flame eyes, and its admirable folk art design, it is easy to see why this piece is a favorite amongst collectors and historians alike. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer an **Antique Dickman**

## Clown Cast Iron Shooting Target

(\$5/8,000) for sale in our February Gallery Auction, held on Friday, February 16th.

The shooting target takes the form of a clown, complete with a painted white face, cone hat, and ruffled collar. The eyes are hidden behind a masquerade mask, and the mouth is smiling and open. Both the eyes and mouth feature cutouts and one of the eyes would feature a burning gas flame. As a shot traveled through the lit eye, its flame would be extinguished, and the other eye would immediately light itself. Although only small amounts of the clown's white painted face remain, the hat used to be covered in bright red paint, while the shirt was painted in teal.

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Across the bottom of the target is inscribed the Dickman company name and its place of manufacture, Los Angeles, California. There are two additional holes at the base of the target, above the inscribed text, presumably to affix the target to the carnival operator's stand, which was operated with the use of long metal chains.

This type of shooting target would have been featured as part of a shooting game at a traveling carnival or circus production. These shooting games usually involved the use of an airsoft or a blank gun and rewarded participants with prizes such as goldfish or stuffed animals for successful scores. These games would often feature alongside traveling shows throughout the 19th century, however, the traveling carnival itself originated with the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, where rides, games of chance and skill, freak shows, and

burlesque performances were commissioned together alongside the fair's festivities. Following the fair, many of these contractors began touring together, rather than independently as had previously been the case. Soon these traveling carnivals became a regular fixture at fairgrounds across the country.

J.T. Dickman was born in Wisconsin in 1876 and moved to Los Angeles as a young man. After discovering a shooting gallery rig, he quickly became enamored and purchased three within the year. However he struggled to keep the galleries in operation, as they often required parts or significant repair work, and all of the manufacturers were headquartered east of the Mississippi. Sensing an opportunity, he opened his business and in 1911 manufactured the clown cast iron shooting target on offer

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at Michaan's Auctions. This target was his most famous design and would have formed the centerpiece of his shooting gallery. Unfortunately, he went out of business in 1934, and since then many other manufacturers have attempted to recreate his design, but never with the all-important Dickman signature.

**Antique Dickman Clown Cast Iron Shooting Target** (\$5/8,000) will be offered at Michaan's Auctions February Gallery Auction on Friday, February 16th, which features fine diamonds in excellent condition in addition to notable examples from the

Fine Art and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by the jewelry department, which will be offering an unmounted pear-cut 2.45 carats colorless diamond and an unmounted pear-cut 2.96 carats colorless diamond. Also included in the sale is a lithograph by Grant Wood, an Arnaldo Pomodoro hanging sculpture, and a jade insert table screen.

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