Finch & Co



AN IMPRESSIVE AND COMPLETE ANTIQUE NARWHAL TUSK

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LATE 18TH/EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 223CM HIGH (7FEET 81/2 INCHES), 8CM DIA, WITH STAND 33CM HIGH

LITERATURE

CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES WERE NOTED FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING COLLECTIONS OF NATURAL OBJECTS. IT WAS SAID BY THE 17TH CENTURY PHILOSOPHER EMMANUELLE TESAURO THAT EVERYTHING WAS A METAPHOR 'AND IF NATURE SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THESE METAPHORS IT FOLLOWS THAT AN ENCYCLOPAEDIC COLLECTION, AS THE SUM OF ALL POSSIBLE METAPHORS, MUST LOGICALLY BECOME THE ALL ENCOMPASSING METAPHOR FOR THE WORLD'. REGARDED AS THE WONDROUS HORN OF THE MYTHICAL UNICORN, AND POSSESSED OF MAGICAL POWERS, NARWHAL TUSKS WERE 'DE RIGUER' FOR WUNDERKAMMER. IN THE ROYAL DANISH KUNSTKAMMER

THERE EXISTED 'A HEAD OF A UNICORN' CAUGHT OFF GREENLAND IN 1706 AND PRESENTED TO FREDERICK IV, BUT THIS WAS SOLD AT AUCTION IN 1824.

THE NARWHAL LIVES IN THE ICY WATERS OF THE ARCTIC AND IS A CLOSE RELATIVE OF THE BELUGA OR WHITE WHALE. ONLY THE MALES HAVE TUSKS AND IT IS STILL NOT KNOWN WHAT THIS OVERGROWN TOOTH IS FOR, EXCEPT THAT THEY DO FIGHT AND HAVE BEEN SEEN CROSSING THEIR TUSKS WITH OTHER MALES ABOVE THE ICE. THE MALE NARWHAL GROWS UP TO 4.6M LONG AND CAN WEIGH UP TO 1.6 TONNES. MIGRATING WITH THE SEASONS THEY FOLLOW THE ICE NORTH IN THE SUMMER AND SOUTH IN THE WINTER.

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE OLDER THE TUSK THE MORE DEEPLY THE SPIRAL TWISTS ARE CHANNELLED INTO THE IVORY. THIS EXAMPLE HAS EXCELLENT PATINATION AND A GOOD DEEP SPIRAL TWIST TO THE TUSK. IT WAS FOUND STANDING IN AN 18TH CENTURY WHITE MARBLE AND WROUGHT IRON QUAYSIDE TORCHLIGHT HOLDER.