Finch & Co

A FINE CURIOUS LIFE-SIZE NEAPOLITAN PRESEPIO WAX HEAD OF A BLACKAMOOR

A FINE CURIOUS LIFE-SIZE NEAPOLITAN PRESEPIO WAX HEAD OF A BLACKAMOOR WITH GLASS EYES

WAX, GLASS AND HUMAN HAIR – FAUX MARBLED WOOD BASE

LATE 18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 27 CM HIGH – 10½ INS HIGH – 37 CM HIGH – 14½ HIGH (INCLUDING BASE)

SEE FINCH AND CO CATALOGUE NO. 6, ITEM NO. 42, FOR ANOTHER NAPLES PRESEPIO BLACKAMOOR

LITERATURE

THE HEAD OF A NEAPOLITAN CRÍ¨CHE FIGURE, THIS WAX WAS CREATED TO REPRESENT THE BLACK KING BALTHASAR. ONE OF THE THREE WISE KINGS FROM THE THREE KNOWN CONTINENTS COME TO WORSHIP AT THE ADORATION. BALTHASAR WAS SYMBOLIC OF AFRICA.

CHRISTMAS CRÍ¨CHE SCENES WERE HIGHLY POPULAR IN 18TH CENTURY NAPLES WHERE THE LARGEST SCHOOL OF ITALIAN PRESEPIO MODELLERS WAS CENTRED. EACH YEAR NATIVITY TABLEAUX WERE SET OUT IN THE CHURCHES AND THEATRICALLY STAGED AND ARRANGED WITH ELABORATE AND COSTLY SETTINGS.

THE ROYAL BOURBON COURT OF KING CHARLES III OF NAPLES EMPLOYED FAMOUS ARTISTS TO CREATE THE MOST EXQUISITE FIGURES FOR USE IN THE PALACE NATIVITY SCENES. THEY WERE DRESSED IN MAGNIFICENT COSTUMES AND PLACED IN ASTONISHING JEWELLED AND PAINTED SETTINGS.