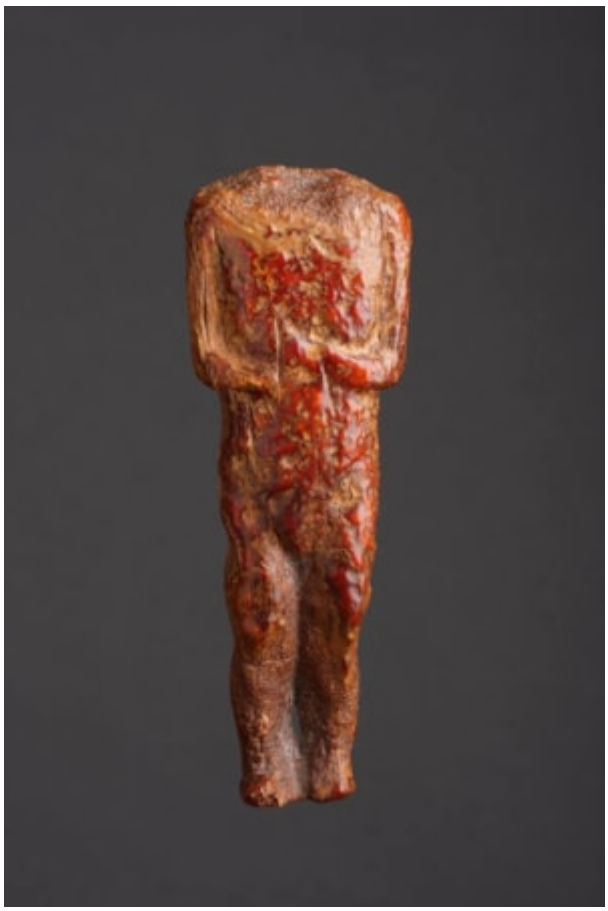
Finch & Co



A VERY FINE AND RARE ANCIENT OKVIK BERING SEA ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY FIGURE

A VERY FINE AND RARE ANCIENT OKVIK BERING SEA ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY FIGURE
RICH ORANGE/BROWN PATINA
CIRCA 100 – 300 A.D
SIZE: 18CM HIGH, 6.5CM WIDE, 3.5CM DEEP – 7 INS HIGH, 2½ INS WIDE, 1½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE ESKIMO AND THEIR PREDECESSORS ON THE BERING STRAIT WERE MOST PROBABLY THE FIRST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TO CARVE WALRUS IVORY AND THE GLORY OF OKVIK ESKIMO SCULPTURAL ART RESTS IN ITS FINE WALRUS IVORY FIGURINES. THESE MINIMALIST SCULPTURES WERE PROBABLY CARVED AS PART OF A MAGICAL HUNTING OR FERTILITY RITUAL THAT WAS PRESIDED OVER BY SHAMANS.

IN THE ARCTIC, DRIFTWOOD WAS A RARE COMMODITY WITH WALRUS IVORY MUCH MORE READILY AVAILABLE TO USE TO CARVE OBJECTS AND HUNTING IMPLEMENTS. OF ALL THE ANIMALS THAT EXIST IN THE ARCTIC NONE HAS BEEN MORE IMPORTANT TO HUMAN SURVIVAL THAN THE WALRUS. EVERY PART OF ITS BODY WAS USED TO MANUFACTURE A WIDE VARIETY OF ESSENTIALS FOR EVERYDAY ESKIMO EXISTENCE. IT PROVIDED FOOD, THE BLUBBER WAS USED FOR OIL FOR COOKING, HEATING AND LIGHTING. THE SKIN WAS USED FOR CLOTHING, MAKING KAYAKS AND THE ROOFS OF HOUSES. THE SINEW AND GUTS PROVIDED CORDS AND LINES AND THE BONE AND IVORY WAS FASHIONED INTO TOOLS AND ART OBJECTS.

OVERTIME ONCE THE OBJECT HAS BEEN BURIED IN THE PERMAFROST, WALRUS IVORY, UNLIKE WOOD, REMAINS PRESERVED AND PROVIDES A GREAT SOURCE OF EVIDENCE FOR PAST ESKIMO CULTURES.