Finch & Co

EXCEPTIONAL AND FINELY CARVED GERMAN IVORY VANITAS

IVORY ACT 2018: A CERTIFICATE FOR A PRE-1918 ITEM OF OUTSTANDINGLY HIGH ARTISTIC, CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL VALUE. CERTIFICATE NUMBER: M01S3D9U DATE: 01/06/2023

AN EXCEPTIONAL GERMAN CARVED IVORY VANITAS

A SALAMANDER AND SNAKE CRAWLING THROUGH THE PARTLY DECOMPOSED SKULL WITH SCRAPS OF SKIN DANGLING FROM THE FACE THE EXPOSED MUSCLES PARTLY DECOMPOSED

EARLY 17TH CENTURY

SIZE: 4.5CM HIGH, 7CM DEEP, 4.5CM WIDE - 1¾ INS HIGH, 2¾ INS DEEP, 1¾ INS WIDE

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LITERATURE

A DRAMATIC REPRESENTATION OF DECOMPOSITION, THIS SUPERB 'MEMENTO MORI' WAS MADE AS AN OBJECT FOR PRIVATE MEDITATION. NORTH OF THE ALPS THEY WERE POPULAR OBJECTS FROM THE RENAISSANCE ONWARDS AS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE TRANSIENCE OF EARTHLY LIFE AND AN ADMONITION TO DO PENANCE. ACTIONS TAKEN IN LIFE COULD AFFECT ONE'S FATE AFTER DEATH, AND PENANCE OR GOOD WORKS UNDERTAKEN WHILST ALIVE WERE SAID TO BE MORE THAN TWICE AS EFFECTIVE AS RELIANCE ON FAMILY PRAYERS AFTER DEATH. THE AIM WAS TO MINIMISE THE TIME THE SOUL SPENT IN PURGATORY, AND SO THE SEVEN WORKS OF MERCY: TO FEED THE HUNGRY, TO GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY, TO CLOTHE THE NAKED, TO SHELTER THE HOMELESS, TO VISIT THE SICK, TO VISIT THE PRISONER AND TO BURY THE DEAD, WERE ALL TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY AS IT WAS IMPORTANT TO MAXIMISE ONE'S SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING.

EMPHASISING THE VANITAS ASPECT WITH THE CARVED SCRAPS OF SKIN, INVASIVE SNAKE AND LIZARD, THE SCULPTURE SHOWS AN ALL PERVADING INTEREST IN ANATOMY, WHICH WAS A NEW SCIENCE AROUND 1620.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE EUROPEAN COLLECTION

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION OF THE LATE ROBERT NOORTMAN (1946 - 2007)

SOLD SOTHEBYS AMSTERDAM 2007

EX FINCH & CO 2008

EX PRIVATE LONDON COLLECTION 2008-2020

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