Finch & Co



AN UNUSUAL SPANISH HOLY WATER STOUP

AN UNUSUAL SPANISH HOLY WATER STOUP FORMED FROM THE SEA SHELL OF A 'TRIDACNA GIGAS' WITH AN ORIGINAL BORDER OF BRASS

LATE 17TH - EARLY 18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 20CM HIGH, 61CM WIDE, 32CM DEEP - 8 INS HIGH, 24INS WIDE, 12½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

IN ALL ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRALS, ABBEYS AND CHURCHES THERE IS A STOUP BY THE ENTRANCE, A RECESSED BOWL OFTEN OF STONE OR MARBLE CONTAINING BLESSED HOLY WATER. ENTRANTS TO THE CHURCH DIP THEIR FINGERS IN THE WATER AND CROSS THEMSELVES WITH IT. THE STOUP IS A DESCENDANT OF JEWISH CUSTOMS OF RITUAL WASHING OF THE HANDS, FACE AND SOMETIMES, FEET. THESE CUSTOMS WERE CARRIED INTO THE EARLIEST CHURCHES WHICH PLACED A FOUNTAIN AT THE ENTRANCE FOR WASHING. OVER TIME IT CAME TO BE BELIEVED THAT THE SIZE DID NOT MATTER AS THE WASHING WAS PURELY SYMBOLIC, AND SO THE FOUNTAIN BECAME THE STOUP. THE STOUP IS THEREFORE USED TO EXPRESS THE PERSONS, WISH TO BE SPIRITUALLY CLEAN BEFORE ENTERING THE CHURCH.