Finch & Co



A RARE SINGHALO-PORTUGUESE IVORY CORPUS CHRISTI

A RARE AND LARGE SINGHALO-PORTUGUESE IVORY CORPUS CHRISTI ‘CHRISTO MORTO’

IVORY

SRI LANKA

LATE 16TH / EARLY 17TH CENTURY / CIRCA 1600

SIZE: 33CM HIGH, 29CM WIDE - 13 INS HIGH, 11⅜ INS WIDE / 37.5CM HIGH - 14¾ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

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LITERATURE

THE PORTUGUESE OCCUPIED CEYLON (SRI LANKA) FROM 1505 UNTIL 1658. SIMILAR TO WHAT HAPPENED IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT OR THE PHILIPPINES, THEY COMMISSIONED LOCAL IVORY CARVERS TO SCULPT CHRISTIAN STATUES AND BIBLICAL SCENES ACCORDING TO EUROPEAN MODELS. THESE ARTEFACTS WERE THEN SOLD TO MONASTERIES, CHURCHES OR WEALTHY LAYMEN ON THE CONTINENT. BECAUSE OF ITS SCARCITY IVORY WAS UTMOST EXPENSIVE AND WITHIN THAT SPECIFIC ARTISTIC TRADE, THE IVORY CARVINGS FROM CEYLON WERE CONSIDERED THE MOST REFINED AND WERE THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER. THIS CORPUS IS A DAZZLING EXAMPLE OF THIS CRAFTMANSHIP AND ARTISTIC CREATIVITY: THE ELEGANCE AND FRAGILE REFINEMENT ARE SUPERB. NOT ONLY DID THE ARTIST GIVE EXTREME ATTENTION TO ANATOMIC DETAILS (RIBS, TOES, TENDONS OF FINGERS AND KNEES…) BUT ALSO THE GRACIOUS FACIAL EXPRESSION MAKE THIS ARTEFACT A UNIQUE AND VALUABLE OBJECT.

THIS IVORY CORPUS PRESENTS CHRIST DEAD, ‘CHRISTO MORTO’, BUT NOT SUFFERING. HIS HEAD IS GENTLY DROPPED TO ONE SIDE AND HIS STRAIGHT MUSCULAR TORSO IS NOT TWISTED OR ANIMATED AS IN LATER IMAGES. THE QUIET CONTEMPLATIVE QUALITY OF THE CARVING HAS SIMILARITIES WITH ITALIAN LATE 16TH CENTURY DEVOTIONAL PAINTINGS WHERE SACRED IMAGERY IS PRESENTED STRAIGHTFORWARDLY IN KEEPING WITH THE DOCTRINES OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT AND THE IDEOLOGIES OF THE EUROPEAN COUNTER REFORMATION.

PROVENANCE

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