

Finch & C^o



A FINE FRENCH BURR WALNUT SNUFF BOX DECORATED WITH THREE HUMAN SKULLS

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WITH A TORTOISESHELL LINING AND TO THE REVERSE A LIST OF DR GALL'S 27 FUNDAMENTAL FACULTIES

CIRCA 1810

SIZE: 2CM HIGH, 8CM DIA - ¾ INS HIGH, 3¼ INS DIA

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LITERATURE

THE THEORY OF PHRENOLOGY WAS FIRST DEVELOPED IN VIENNA IN CIRCA 1800 BY THE PHYSICIAN AND ANATOMIST DR FRANZ JOSEPH GALL. VIEWED IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY AS PROGRESSIVE AND ENLIGHTENED, IT FASCINATED VIENNESE SOCIETY. DURING HIS LIFETIME GALL COLLECTED OVER 120 SKULLS IN ORDER TO TEST HIS HYPOTHESES. HE BELIEVED THE BUMPS AND UNEVEN GEOGRAPHY OF THE HUMAN SKULL WERE CAUSED BY PRESSURE EXERTED FROM THE BRAIN UNDERNEATH. GALL THEN DIVDED THE BRAIN INTO 27 SECTIONS THAT CORRESPONDED TO CERTAIN BEHAVIOURS THAT HE CALLED 'FUNDAMENTAL FACULTIES' AND MARKED THESE PLACES ON THE SKULL WHERE HE BELIEVED THEM TO OCCUR. THESE DISTINCT ZONES WERE LOCATED ON THE SKULL AND MARKED WITH CHARACTER TRAITS SUCH AS 'PROFUNDITY', 'BENEVOLENCE' AND EVEN 'THE FACULTY OF STRANGULATION AND MURDER'.

THE POPULARITY OF THIS THEORY BY WHICH PARTICULAR CHARACTER TRAITS COULD BE DISTINGUISHED ON THE

SURFACE OF THE SKULL BECAME A FAVOURITE PARTY GAME AT VIENNESE SOCIAL GATHERINGS. HIS CONCEPTS OF BRAIN LOCALISATION WERE REVOLUTIONARY AND EVENTUALLY CAUSED BOTH SCIENTISTS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO TAKE EXCEPTION AGAINST THESE THEORIES, INCLUDING EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH II OF AUSTRIA. HIS WORK BECAME SO CONTROVERSIAL IT WAS FORBIDDEN IN VIENNA. ALTHOUGH TODAY REGARDED AS PSEUDOSCIENCE, GALL'S STUDY OF PHRENOLOGY DID HELP ESTABLISH PSYCHOLOGY AS A SCIENCE AND SET THE GROUNDWORK FOR MODERN NEUROSCIENCE BY SPREADING THE IDEA OF FUNCTIONAL LOCALISATION WITHIN THE BRAIN.

PROVENANCE

EX FINCH AND CO 2008

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION

CF: FOR ANOTHER 'DR GALL' SNUFF BOX, SEE FINCH AND CO, NO. 30, CATALOGUE NUMBER 32, 2019 AND A SIMILAR BOX, KUNSTKAMMER GEORG LAUE, 'MEMENTO MORI' CATALOGUE NUMBER III, 2002 ITEM NO. 58