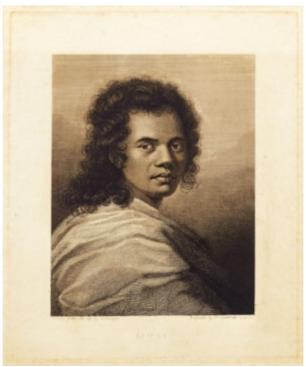
Finch & C°



'OMAI' AN ENGRAVING BY JAMES CALDWELL, AFTER WILLIAM HODGES, FOR CAPTAIN JAMES COOK.

'OMAI' AN ENGRAMING BY JAMES CALDWELL , AFTER WILLIAM HODGES , FOR CAPTAIN JAMES COOK . 1 ST PROOF , UNCUT MARGINS , FINE CONDITION . CIRCA 1777 SIZE : 33 CM HIGH , 28 CM WIDE – 13 INS HIGH , 11 INS WIDE

LITERATURE

'OMAI' OR MORE CORRECTLY MAE WAS A YOUNG TAHITIAN MAN FROM HUAHINE WHOM LIEUTENANT TOBIAS FURNEAUX HAD BROUGHT BACK TO ENGLAND ON THE 'ADVENTURE'. HE WAS PAINTED BY HODGES SOMETIME BETWEEN AUGUST 1775 AND JUNE 1776. THE PORTRAIT WAS COMMISSIONED BY JOHN HUNTER (1728 -1793) AN EMINENT SCOTTISH SURGEON AND ANATOMIST WHO HAD A GREAT INTEREST IN COMPARATIVE PHYSIOGNOMY AND A PASSION FOR EXOTIC CULTURES AND PEOPLES. HE WAS A KEEN COLLECTOR OF CURIOSITIES, CREATING A LARGE CABINET OF NUMEROUS RARE 'NATIONAL SKULLS' THAT COMPLEMENTED PICTURES OF NON-EUROPEANS.

SOLANDER'S DESCRIPTION OF OMAI UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND FITS BOTH HIS PORTRAIT BY HODGES AND THE PARTICULAR INTERESTS OF HUNTER : 'HE IS VERY BROWN, ALMOST A(S) BROWN AS A MULATTO. NOT AT ALL HANDSOME, BUT WELL MADE. HIS NOSE IS A LITTLE BROADISH AND I BELIEVE WE HAVE TO THANK HIS WIDE NOSTRILS FOR THE VISIT HE HAS PAID US - FOR HE SAYS, THAT THE PEOPLE OF HIS OWN COUNTRY LAUGHED AT HIM UPON THE ACCOUNT OF HIS FLATISH NOSE AND DARK HUE \hat{A} ^L.'.

OWAI WAS ADOPTED BY SIR JOSEPH BANKS AND THE EARL OF SANDWICH AND INTRODUCED TO FASHIONABLE LONDON SOCIETY, INCLUDING GEORGE III AND THE ROYAL FAMILY. HE CAUSED MUCH AMUSEMENT AND WAS GREATLY ADMIRED BY THE LADIES OF THE COURT WHO VIED WITH EACH OTHER TO SIT NEXT TO HIM AT TABLE. DINNER PARTIES WERE HELD IN HIS HONOUR AND HE RECEIVED NUMEROUS OFFERS FROM ARISTOCRATIC LADIES TO TEACH HIM TO READ AND WRITE

HE WAS PAINTED BY SEVERAL ARTISTS, MOST FAMOUSLY BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS WHOSE PORTRAIT OF OMAI HUNG UNTIL RECENTLY IN CASTLE HOWARD, UNTIL IT WAS SOLD, AND THEN BOUGHT FOR THE NATION IN 2003 AT A COST OF £ 9 MILLION. IT NOW HANGS IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.