

Finch & C^o



A FINE IVORY VANITAS ROSARY BEAD IN THE FORM OF A SKULL

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GERMAN

17TH CENTURY

SIZE : 5 CM HIGH X 4 CM DEEP X 3 CM WIDE

2 INS HIGH X 1½ INS DEEP X 1¼ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THERE IS AN ANCIENT ROMAN SAYING 'MORS CERTA, HORTA INCERTA' : DEATH IS CERTAIN, THE HOUR UNCERTAIN. THE SKULL BEAD ON THE ROSARY WAS USED AS AN ADMONITORY SYMBOL AND AN OBJECT OF DEVOTIONAL MEDITATION. DURING PRAYER IT WAS A SYMBOL OF CHRISTIAN REMORSE AND PENITENCE, A REMINDER TO PRAY FOR SALVATION, AND A WARNING THAT MAN IS NOT DIVINE AND CANNOT ESCAPE HIS IRREVOCABLE FATE, THAT ALL EARTHLY LIFE IS TRANSIENT.

'MEMENTO MORI'.