Finch & Co



A VICTORIAN WATERCOLOUR OF THE EXTINCT GREAT AUK ENTITLED ' GREAT AUK . GAIRFOWL . NORTHERN PENGUIN 274 ' NO 23 .

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LATE 19 TH CENTURY

SIZE : 30 CM HIGH , 35 CM WIDE – 11¾ INS HIGH 13¾ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

NOT RELIABLY SEEN SINCE 1844 THE GREAT AUK , LIKE THE ILL-FATED DODO , HAS BECOME ONE OF THE GREAT ICONS OF EXTINCTION . IN THE 17 TH CENTURY THE DANE 'OLE WORM' OBTAINED A LIVING BIRD AND KEPT IT ALIVE FOR A WHILE IN HIS CABINET OF CURIOSITIES 'THE MUSEUM WORMIANUM' IN COPENHAGEN . THIS CABINET WAS CONFINED TO COLLECTIONS OF NATURALIA . A PORTRAIT OF HIS BIRD WAS DRAWN AND IS ONE OF THE EARLIEST KNOWN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GREAT AUK .

THIS 19 TH CENTURY WATERCOLOUR WAS MOST PROBABLY PAINTED AS A RESPONSE TO THE NEWSPAPER REPORT OF 1894 ; 600 GUINEA'S WAS A VAST SUM BY LATE 19 TH CENTURY STANDARDS FOR A STUFFED BIRD ! . THE NEAREST SIMILAR ILLUSTRATION TO THIS WATERCOLOUR IS A HAND COLOURED LITHOGRAPH BY H . MEYER INCLUDED IN HIS 'ILLUSTRATIONS OF BRITISH BIRDS 1835 - 41' . LIKE OTHERS MEYER CONTINUED TO BELIEVE IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE GREAT AUK LONG AFTER 1844 .