

Finch & C^o



A FINE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE CARVED IVORY PATERNOSTER ROSARY BEAD

A FINE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE CARVED IVORY PATERNOSTER ROSARY BEAD

IN THE FORM OF A 'MEMENTO MORI' SKULL

EARLY 17TH CENTURY

SIZE : 3 CM HIGH, 2.5 CM WIDE, 3 CM DEEP – 1¼ INS HIGH, 1 INS WIDE, 1¼ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

AN INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN ROSARY IS THE HISTORY OF ITS NAME DERIVED FROM ROSARIUM; 'ROSE GARDEN'. IN ANCIENT GREECE THE ROSE WAS LOVED FOR ITS FORM, FRAGRANCE AND COLOUR. IT SYMBOLISED BEAUTY, MYSTERY, LOVE AND PERFECTION. APHRODITE WORE ROSE PERFUME AND A CROWN OF ROSES WHILE THE MUSES WORE GARLANDS OF ROSES AND THYME. THE ROMAN'S ASSOCIATED ROSES WITH SUCCESS AND FESTIVITY; VICTORIOUS WARRIORS RETURNING FROM BATTLE WERE GREETED WITH ROSES. IN CHRISTIANITY THE RED ROSE SYMBOLISES CHRIST'S BLOOD AND THE PURITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

ORIGINATING IN THE CONCEPT OF THE PARADISE GARDENS OF PERSIA, WHICH ALLUDE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT GARDEN OF EDEN, THE CLOISTERED ROSE GARDEN BECAME AN ESSENTIAL PART OF MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE; A SECLUDED HIGH WALLED GARDEN FILLED WITH FRAGRANT ROSES. THE ROSE GARDEN WAS AN IDEAL PLACE FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER. COLLECTIONS OF MEDIEVAL PRAYERS AND HYMNS WERE BOUND INTO BOOKS AND CALLED ROSARIA; 'FLOWER GARDENS'. BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 15TH CENTURY ROSE GARDENS, ROSE GARLANDS AND ROSARIES WERE ALL ASSOCIATED WITH THE VIRGIN MARY AND THE CHRIST CHILD IN PAINTINGS AND ILLUMINATIONS.

PAINTINGS OF THIS PERIOD ARE OFTEN SET IN ROSE GARDENS, UNDER ROSE ARBOURS OR NEAR A ROSE BUSH. ANGELS AND THE CHRIST CHILD ARE WEARING OR HOLDING ROSARIES. IT IS UNCLEAR AT WHAT POINT THE WORD MEANING 'A GARDEN OF ROSES' WAS TRANSFORMED INTO 'A STRING OF BEADS USED TO COUNT PRAYERS', BUT NONE THE LESS THE SPIRITUAL IDENTITY OF ROSES WAS EXTENDED TO BEADS WHICH CAME TO SYMBOLISE A PERMANENT GARDEN OF PRAYER CALLED 'THE ROSARY'.