Finch & Co



AN ANTIQUE NARWHAL TUSK

AN ANTIQUE NARWHAL TUSK
(MONODON MONOCEROS)
EARLY 19TH CENTURY
SIZE : 124.5 CM LONG – 4 CM DIA. – 49 INS LONG, 1½ INS DIA.
C.I.T.I.E.S DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE
CF SEE FINCH AND CO CATALOGUE NO. 3, ITEM NO. 40, FOR ANOTHER EXAMPLE

LITERATURE

'IN NATURE'S INFINITE BOOK OF SECRECY A LITTLE I CAN READ' SHAKESPEARE
THE NARWHAL'S TUSK GROWS WITH AGE THROUGH THE UPPER LIP SPIRALLING CLOCKWISE TO REACH UP TO 4 METRES. IT HAS UNTIL NOW BEEN THOUGHT TO BE A SWORD LIKE WEAPON TO 'FENCE' RIVAL MALES AT BREEDING TIME, BUT RECENT RESEARCH AT HARVARD HAS SHOWN THAT THE TUSK IS A SENSORY ORGAN OF EXCEPTIONAL SIZE AND ACUTE SENSITIVITY THAT THROUGH 10 MILLION NERVE ENDINGS CAN DETECT SUBTLE CHANGES OF TEMPERATURE, PRESSURE AND PARTICLE GRADIENTS AND POSSIBLY MORE, GIVING THE NARWHAL UNIQUE INSIGHTS INTO ITS OCEAN ENVIRONMENT.
ON THE SURFACE OF THE TUSK THERE ARE MILLIONS OF OPENINGS OR TUBULES THAT LEAD DOWN THROUGH A MAZE

LIKE COATING TO INNER NERVES AND TOOTH PULP WHICH IS CONNECTED TO THE NARWHAL'S BRAIN. IT IS NOW THOUGHT THAT WHEN THE MALES HOLD THEIR TUSKS HIGH IN THE AIR THEY ARE SERVING AS SOPHISTICATED WEATHER STATIONS HELPING THEM TO DETECT THE FATAL FREEZING OF OPEN ICE CHANNELS AND THE ARRIVAL OF COLD FRONTS.

IT IS NO LONGER THOUGHT THAT 'TUSKING' OR THE RUBBING OF TUSKS WITH OTHER MALES IS A RITUALISED FORM OF BATTLE BUT MORE LIKE THE BRUSHING OF ONE'S TEETH. IT IS A WAY FOR MALES TO REMOVE THE ENCRUSTATION ON THEIR TUSKS SO THAT THE TUBULES STAY OPEN ALLOWING THEM TO FUNCTION MORE EFFECTIVELY AS SENSORS.

THOUGHT IN ANTIQUITY TO BE THE HORN OF THE MYTHICAL UNICORN AND TO POSSESS MAGICAL POWERS, NARWHAL TUSKS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HIGHLY PRIZED AND AVIDLY COLLECTED AS SUPREME EXAMPLES OF NATURAL CURIOSITY. NOW THERE IS EVEN MORE OF A REASON TO WONDER AT THE MAGICAL NARWHAL TUSK.