Finch & Co

AN UNUSUAL AND FINELY CARVED COCONUT 'BUGBEAR' POCKET SNUFF BOX

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SILVER PIQUÉ INLAID AND HINGED TORTOISESHELL BASE AND FEATHERED SILVER RIM, THE COCONUT TOP CARVED WITH MASONIC SYMBOLS AND BUGBEAR FACE, THE HINGED BASE INLAID WITH A SILVER PIQUÉ FIVE POINTED STAR
CIRCA 1780 – 1810
SIZE: 9 CM LONG, 6 CM WIDE, 2.5 CM DEEP – 3½ INS LONG, 2¼ INS WIDE, 1 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

IN THE 18TH CENTURY THE SNUFF BOX WAS THE GIFT FOR ALL OCCASIONS. IT WAS THE ACCEPTED DIPLOMATIC GIFT, A GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP OR A PLIGHT OF LOVE. IT COULD ALSO BE A PEACE OFFERING AS RECORDED BY LAURENCE STERNE IN HIS 'SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY'. HAVING ONCE REFUSED AN APPEAL FOR ALMS FROM A FRANCISCAN MONK, ON THEIR SECOND MEETING HE TRY'S TO MAKE AMENDS; 'HAVING A SNUFF BOX IN HIS HAND, PRESENTED IT OPEN TO ME - YOU SHALL TASTE MINE - SAID I, PULLING OUT MY BOX, WHICH WAS A SMALL TORTOISE ONE, AND PUTTING IT INTO HIS HAND 'TIS MOST EXCELLENT, SAID THE MONK; THEN DO ME A FAVOUR, I REPLIED, TO ACCEPT OF THE BOX AND ALL, AND WHEN YOU TAKE A PINCH OUT OF IT, SOMETIMES RECOLLECT IT WAS THE PEACE OFFERING OF A MAN WHO ONCE USED YOU UNKINDLY, BUT NOT FROM HIS HEART'.