

Finch & C^o



A RARE SURINAM, DUTCH GUIANA, CARVED WOOD CEREMONIAL TRAY

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LATE 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 38CM DIAMETER

LITERATURE

DESCRIBED AS 'BUSH NEGRO ART', THE ART OF AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS, SURINAM DESIGNS HAVE THEIR ORIGINS IN 17TH AND 18TH CENTURY WEST AFRICAN ART FORMS. WHEN THE COLONY WAS HANDED OVER TO THE DUTCH BY THE ENGLISH IN 1667 MANY OF THE WEST AFRICAN PLANTATION SLAVES ESCAPED INTO THE FOREST. THESE PEOPLE WERE LATER JOINED BY THE DESCENDANTS OF THE SLAVES WHO GAINED EMANCIPATION IN 1863. THEY INTERMARRIED WITH THE INDIGENOUS INDIANS TO SOME EXTENT, THEY REMAIN THE FOREMOST GROUP OF NEW WORLD NEGROES WHO HAVE PRESERVED IN ITS PUREST FORM THEIR RACIAL IDENTITY WITH THEIR AFRICAN ANCESTORS.

THERE ARE THREE PRINCIPLE TRIBES: THE SARAMACCANER, THE AUCANER AND THE BONI, ALL OF WHOM LIVE ALONG THE BANKS OF THE PRINCIPLE RIVERS THAT RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF THE INTERIOR OF SURINAM. THIS TRAY COMES FROM THE BONI TRIBE AND ITS DESIGN IS SIGNIFICANT IN THE CONTEXT OF FERTILITY.

BUSH NEGRO ART HAS EVOLVED INTO AN ART FORM WHICH IS UNIQUE IN STYLE AND POSSESSES A VITALITY OF ITS OWN. WITH CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS, AFRICANS AND PROBABLY EUROPEANS IT IS A 'PRIMITIVE ART' THAT STILL REMAINS VIRTUALLY UNTOUCHED BY THE MODERN RAPID DIFFUSION OF WESTERN ARTISTIC TRADITIONS.