Finch & Co



A WONDROUS PRIVATE CABINET OF NATURAL CURIOSITIES FROM SOUTH AFRICA, WITH EACH ITEM SEPARATELY LABELLED AGAINST A PAINTED BACKDROP

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CIRCA 1880'S

SIZE: 169CM HIGH X 134CM WIDE X 41CM DEEP

LITERATURE

IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES THE CONCEPT OF A CABINET OF CURIOSITIES BEGAN TO CHANGE AND THIS LEAD TO THE SEPARATION OF NATURALIA, ARTIFICIALIA AND MIRIBILIA INTO DIFFERENT SPACES AND EVENTUALLY INTO DIFFERENT MUSEUMS. IN THE 1706 ILLUSTRATION OF LEVEL VINCENT'S NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTION THERE ARE PORTRAYED JARS OF PRESERVATIVE FLUID CONTAINING VARIOUS SMALL ANIMALS, FROGS, SNAKES AND INSET IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DISPLAY A BABY'S HEAD WITH THE BIZARRE ADDITION OF A LACE CAP! THIS AMAZING PRIVATE CABINET OF NATURAL CURIOSITIES WAS MOST PROBABLY MADE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE PAINTED BACK PANEL DEPICTS A SCENE FROM THAT LANDSCAPE. IT IS RARE THAT SUCH A CABINET SURVIVES COMPLETE WITH ITS ORIGINAL INSTALLATION. IT CONTAINS 27 JARS OF PRESERVED NATURAL

SPECIMENS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA: CHAMELEONS, LIZARDS, SNAKES, GIANT CENTIPEDES AND OTHER INSECTS ETC., AS WELL AS A FEW ETHNOGRAPHIC ITEMS SUCH AS 'KAFFIR CLOGS'. EVERYTHING IS LABELLED AND ONE GLASS JAR HAS THE DATE OF 1886 WRITTEN ON IT.

FOR COLLECTORS, THE OBJECT IN THE CABINET OFFERED A METAPHOR FOR THE UNKNOWN. THIS CABINET OFFERS THAT TIMELESS FEELING OF STRANGENESS, A SLIGHTLY DISTURBING VIEW OF THE SURREAL, WHICH ANDRE BRETON WOULD HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED AND ENJOYED.