

Finch & C^o



THREE GERMAN CARVED IVORY VANITAS

A COLLECTION OF THREE GERMAN CARVED IVORY VANITAS
USED AS DEVOTIONAL ROSARY BEADS

17TH CENTURY

SIZES: A: 4CM HIGH, 4CM WIDE, 4.5CM DEEP – 1½ INS HIGH, 1½ INS WIDE, 1¾ INS DEEP

B: 3.5CM HIGH, 3.5CM WIDE, 4.5CM DEEP – 1¼ INS HIGH, 1¼ INS WIDE, 1¾ INS DEEP

C: 2CM HIGH, 2CM WIDE, 2.5CM DEEP - ¾ INS HIGH, ¾ INS WIDE, 1 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

DURING THE MIDDLE AGES THE USE OF JEWELLERY WAS CONSIDERED A PAGAN CUSTOM AND WAS DISCOURAGED BY THE CHURCH. BEADS OF IVORY, CORAL, JET, GEMSTONES AND PRECIOUS METALS WERE USED PRIMARILY FOR ROSARIES AND BY THE LATE 14TH CENTURY THESE HAD BECOME BOTH POPULAR AND MORE ORNATE. BY THE 17TH CENTURY THEIR DECORATIVE FUNCTION RIVALLED THEIR RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.

'MEMENTO MORI' ROSARY BEADS CARVED IN THE FORM OF A HUMAN SKULL HAD THE DUAL PURPOSE OF REMINDING THE WEARER OF THE TRANSIENCE OF EARTHLY LIFE, AND OF ACTING AS A 'PATERNOSTER' ASSISTING THE CHRISTIAN WORSHIPPER IN ACCURATELY REPEATING FROM MEMORY THE CORRECT NUMBER OF PRAYERS REQUIRED OF HIS DEVOTION.