Finch & Co



SCOTTISH SAILORS SCRIMSHAW SPERM-WHALE TOOTH

A SCOTTISH SAILORS SCRIMSHAW SPERM-WHALE TOOTH ENGRAVED WITH THE PORTRAIT OF A THREE MASTED 94 GUN SHIP OF THE LINE FLYING THE UNION JACK
THE REVERSE WITH A PORTRAIT OF A SCOTTISH TAM-O-SHANTER IN HIGHLAND DRESS
EARLY 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 15CM LONG – 6 INS LONG

LITERATURE

DURING THE COURSE OF A SUCCESSFUL WHALING VOYAGE UP TO FORTY WHALES MIGHT BE KILLED YIELDING A TOTAL OF OVER A THOUSAND TEETH, WHICH IN THE 19TH CENTURY WERE OF NO GREAT COMMERCIAL VALUE. THE EXCELLENT CREAMY WHITE SURFACE LENT ITSELF TO ENGRAVED DESIGNS AND THE SAILORS WERE ENCOURAGED TO SCRIMSHAW THE SPERM-WHALE TEETH TO KEEP THEM AMUSED AND OCCUPIED DURING THE LONG IDLE PERIODS SPENT ON BOARD SHIP WAITING TO SIGHT ANOTHER WHALE.
WHALING WAS A STRANGE MIXTURE OF THE ROMANTIC AND THE SQUALID, THE HEROISM OF THE HUNT CONTRASTED WITH THE BLOOD AND STENCH OF WHOLESALE BUTCHERY. SCRIMSHAW MADE FROM THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF THE WHALE SOMEHOW ENCAPSULATES THESE PARADOXES.