Finch & Co



SAILORS SCRIMSHAW MODEL OF A WHALER'S CANNON FIRED HARPOON

AN UNUSUAL SAILORS SCRIMSHAW MODEL OF A WHALER'S CANNON FIRED HARPOON WITH BARBS AND AN EXPLOSIVE HEAD CARVED OF WHALEBONE

SPERM WHALE IVORY AND PAN BONE

LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 37CM LONG – 14½ INS LONG

LITERATURE

IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY THE NORWEGIANS INVENTED AN EXPLOSIVE KILLING HEAD FOR HARPOONS AND THESE BECAME UNIVERSALLY USED BY THE ARCTIC WHALERS. THEY WERE FIRED FROM HARPOON GUNS MOUNTED ON A SWIVEL IN THE BOW OF A WHALEBOAT AND WHEN THE HARPOON HEAD ENTERED THE WHALE FAR ENOUGH A MECHANISM WENT OFF THAT TRIGGERED AN EXPLOSION. THESE HARPOON HEADS MADE ICE WHALING IN ARCTIC WATERS MUCH MORE FEASIBLE BECAUSE WHEN AN ORDINARY HARPOON STRUCK THE WHALE IT WOULD OFTEN DISAPPEAR UNDER THE ICE, NEVER TO BE FOUND. THE EXPLOSIVE DEVICE KILLED THE WHALE BEFORE IT COULD SWIM UNDER THE ICE.