Finch & Co



JAPANESE EXPORT LACQUER PORTRAIT MEDALLION

A RARE JAPANESE EXPORT LACQUER PORTRAIT MEDALLION ON COPPER DECORATED IN GOLD HIRAHAKI-E AND KINJI ON A ROIRONURI GROUND

LATE 18TH CENTURY

SIZE: APPROX: 12CM HIGH, 9.5CM WIDE – 4¾INS HIGH, 3¾ INS WIDE

14CM HIGH – 5½ INS HIGH (WITH RING)

PROVENANCE: EX AMERICAN PRIVATE COLLECTION

SEE: FINCH AND CO CATALOGUE NO. 17, ITEM NO. 37, FOR TWO OTHER EXAMPLES

LITERATURE

THESE PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS WERE MADE BY JAPANESE CRAFTSMEN IN SASAYA, JAPAN UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIES COMPANY EXPRESSLY FOR EXPORT TO THE EUROPEAN MARKET. ALL EXECUTED MORE OR LESS IN THE SAME STYLE AND TECHNIQUE THEY FORM PART OF SEVERAL SERIES OF PORTRAITS DEPICTING FAMOUS HISTORICAL PERSONALITIES. THE JAPANESE LACQUERER FINELY AND CAREFULLY COPIED PRINTS FROM 'L'EUROPE ILLUSTRÉ' COMPILED BY DREUX DU RADIER IN SIX VOLUMES BETWEEN 1755 AND 1765 AND PUBLISHED IN PARIS. IT CONTAINED 593 DEPICTIONS OF FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES TO THE MID 18TH CENTURY ENGRAVED BY DIFFERENT ARTISTS WHO WOULD OFTEN USE EARLIER PRINTS, DRAWINGS OR PAINTINGS AS THEIR MODELS.

THE RIJKSMUSEUM IN AMSTERDAM HAS A COLLECTION OF 19 MEDALLIONS; SOME WITH PORTRAITS OF HISTORICAL FIGURES OTHERS ILLUSTRATING ROMAN EMPERORS, WHICH IS REGARDED AS OF DOCUMENTARY IMPORTANCE BECAUSE OF THEIR NUMBER AND THAT THEY WERE ALL ACQUIRED IN 1829 AS PART OF THE ROYAL CABINET OF CURIOSITIES OF KING WILLIAM I IN THE HAGUE.

THE JAPANESE EXPORT LACQUER PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS ENTERING ENGLAND IN THE 1770'S MAY WELL HAVE INFLUENCED JOSIAH WEDGWOOD TO COMMERCIALLY EXPLOIT THEIR POPULARITY AND PRODUCE HIS OWN CERAMIC

MEDALLIONS OF FAMOUS FIGURES IN BLUE JASPER AND BLACK BASALT WARE, ESPECIALLY AS HE MADE A SPECIAL SERIES FOR THE NETHERLANDS DEPICTING FAMOUS DUTCH PERSONALITIES.