Finch & Co



COLLECTION OF EIGHTEEN GERMAN 'MEMENTO MORI' CARVED IVORY HUMAN SKULLS

A REMARKABLE COLLECTION OF EIGHTEEN GERMAN 'MEMENTO MORI' CARVED IVORY HUMAN SKULLS COMPOSED OF 1 LARGE AND 17 SMALLER PRAYER BEADS EACH ONE PIERCED LONGITUDINALLY

SMOOTH SILKY PATINATION

17TH CENTURY

SIZES: APPROX: 1CM HIGH - ½ INS HIGH / APPROX: 2CM HIGH – ¾ INS HIGH

SEE: FINCH & CO CATALOGUE NO. 8, ITEM NO. 21, CATALOGUE NO. 9, ITEM NO. 38 AND CATALOGUE NO. 19, ITEM NO. 2, FOR FURTHER EXAMPLES

LITERATURE

THESE SMALL ANATOMICALLY CORRECT MODELS OF HUMAN SKULLS WERE VERY POPULAR IN EUROPE DURING THE BAROQUE PERIOD. THERE WAS A GROWING SCIENTIFIC INTEREST IN HUMAN ANATOMY AND VANITAS SUCH AS THESE FUNCTIONED AS AMULETS PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM THE MANY EPIDEMICS THAT RAGED ACROSS EUROPE. THESE SKULL BEADS WERE MOST PROBABLY USED AS DEVOTIONAL ROSARY BEADS WITH THE LARGER ONE ACTING AS THE PATERNOSTER OR TERMINAL BEAD. WHEN THE WORSHIPPER CAME UPON THIS BEAD IT MARKED THE END OF A CYCLE OF PRAYER AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT, PROMPTING HIM TO 'REMEMBER ME' AND THUS PONDER ON THE TRANSIENCE OF LIFE.