Finch & Co



JAPANESE CARVED IVORY OKIMONO OF A HUMAN SKULL

A JAPANESE CARVED IVORY OKIMONO OF A HUMAN SKULL SURMOUNTED BY TWO TOADS THEIR EYES OF INLAID HORN
'MEMENTO MORI'
MEIJI PERIOD 1868-1912
SIZE: 5CM HIGH, 3CM WIDE, 4CM DEEP - 2 INS HIGH, 1¼ INS WIDE, 1½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

IN JAPAN THE SYMBOL OF THE HUMAN SKULL WAS AN ALLEGORY FOR THE VANITY OF LIFE. THE TOAD WAS A SYMBOL OF TRANSIENCE, AND WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO STRADDLE VARIOUS WORLDS. AS AN AMPHIBIAN IT CAN EXPLOIT THE SYMBOLIC SWITCHES BETWEEN ATTRACTION AND REPULSION, BETWEEN WATER AND EARTH, AND PERMANENCE AND IMPERMANENCE. IT ALSO REPRESENTED THE SUCCESSION OF THE SEASONS AND WAS KNOWN IN LEGEND FOR ITS ATTRACTION TO GOLD, ANOTHER 'VANITY'.