Finch & Co



LATE MEDIEVAL GILT BRONZE LION

A LATE MEDIEVAL GILT BRONZE LION LYING FULL LENGTH WITH FULLY STRETCHED FRONT PAWS LOOKING PROTECTIVELY UPWARD WITH DETAILED MANE AND FUR THE TAIL TO ONE SIDE A SMOOTH INDENTED SURFACE TO THE LION'S BACK CONSISTENT WITH IT FUNCTIONING AS A SUPPORT

PROBABLY ONE OF THREE OR FOUR SUPPORTS PERHAPS FROM A RELIQUARY CASKET OR SMALL TOMB CHEST MADE TO BE SEEN PRIMARILY FROM ABOVE

CIRCA 1450 - 1500

SIZE: 8.5CM HIGH, 14.5CM WIDE, 4CM DEEP - 3¼ INS HIGH, 5¾ INS WIDE, 1½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

LIONS SYMBOLISE STRENGTH AND MAJESTY AS DOES JESUS. ST JOHN'S VISION REFERS TO JESUS AS A LION STANDING VICTORIOUS OVER EVIL, AND SO STONE SCULPTURES OF POWERFUL LIONS ARE OFTEN USED AS DEFENSIVE BULWARKS IN ITALIAN CHURCHES WHERE STATUES SUPPORT THE PORCH COLUMNS. MEDIEVAL LEGEND HELD THAT LIONS SLEPT WITH THEIR EYES OPEN WHICH MADE THEM SYMBOLS OF ETERNAL VIGILANCE, JUST AS CHRIST IS FOR ALL HUMANKIND. IN MEDIEVAL BESTIARIES LION CUBS WERE THOUGHT TO BE BORN DEAD AND TO COME TO LIFE AFTER THREE DAYS WHEN THEIR FATHER BREATHED LIFE INTO THEM, JUST AS JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN AFTER THREE DAYS.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE BELGIAN COLLECTION THE LATE MR GUY ONGHENA

THENCE BY DESCENT

CF: THREE SIMILAR BUT LARGER LION SUPPORTS DECORATE THE BASE OF A BRASS LECTERN IN THE FORM OF AN EAGLE LIMBURG CIRCA 1500 IN THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CLOISTERS MUSUEM COLLECTION 1968 (68.8)