

# *Finch & C<sup>o</sup>*



**SOUTH NETHERLANDISH MECHELEN CARVED ALABASTER DEVOTIONAL FIGURE OF SAINT SEBASTIAN**  
A SOUTH NETHERLANDISH MECHELEN CARVED ALABASTER DEVOTIONAL FIGURE OF SAINT SEBASTIAN

TRACES OF ORIGINAL POLYCHROME TO HIS FACE AND LONG FLOWING HAIR

ONE HAND AND ONE THUMB REPLACED LEFT ARM REATTACHED AT THE SHOULDER

EARLY 17TH CENTURY

SIZE: 22CM HIGH, 11CM WIDE, 6.5CM DEEP - 8¾ INS HIGH, 4¼ INS WIDE, 2½ INS DEEP

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#### LITERATURE

DESPITE THE MANY ARROWS THAT PIERCED AND LEFT HOLES IN HIS YOUNG BODY, THE FACE OF THE MARTYR SAINT SEBASTIAN SHOWS NO TRACE OF SUFFERING. THE TRANSLUCENT NATURE OF THE ALABASTER, THE KNOTTED LOIN CLOTH ABOUT HIS HIPS AND HIS CONTRAPPOSTO STANCE ALL BEAR HOMAGE TO THE MORE SOPHISTICATED GERMAN CARVED IVORY CABINET PIECES PRODUCED IN THE LATE 16TH CENTURY.

IN ENGLAND THE REFORMATION AND HENRY VIII'S BREAK WITH ROME IN 1531 KILLED OFF THE TRADE IN ALABASTER ALTARPIECES AND DEVOTIONAL FIGURES THAT HAD BEEN FLOURISHING FOR OVER 200 YEARS. THE REFORMATION LED TO A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND OUTLOOK. THE ENGLISH WORKSHOPS SHIPPED THEIR ENTIRE REMAINING STOCK OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CATHOLIC AREAS OF EUROPE AND IN DOING SO PROBABLY SAVED THEM FROM DESTRUCTION AN IMPORTANT PART OF ENGLAND'S MEDIEVAL ARTISTIC HERITAGE. CENTRES OF PRODUCTION WERE FORMED IN THE NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY WITH CRAFTSMEN CARVING ALABASTER WHERE THEY HAD ONCE BEEN SPECIALISTS IN CARVING WOOD. MECHELEN (MALINES) IN THE NETHERLANDS BECAME AN IMPORTANT AREA DURING THE MID 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES FOR MAKING RELIGIOUS ALTARPIECES AND DEVOTIONAL FIGURES OF ALABASTER THAT WERE USED BOTH IN DOMESTIC AND ECCLESIASTICAL INTERIORS.

#### PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE NETHERLANDS COLLECTION