Finch & Co

ROSE GOLD PEARL AND TURQUOISE SET PORTRAIT MINIATURE 'EYE' BROOCH

A ROSE GOLD PEARL AND TURQUOISE SET PORTRAIT MINIATURE 'EYE' BROOCH

THE REVERSE WITH A PANEL OF BRAIDED HAIR

CONTAINED IN LEATHER BOX INSCRIBED 'GOLDSMITHS & SILVERSMITHS COMPANY LTD 112 REGENT ST LONDON BY APPOINTMENT TO THE KING'

LATE 18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 2CM HIGH, 2.8CM WIDE, 0.5CM DEEP - ¾ INS HIGH, 1 INS WIDE, ¼ INS DEEP

CASE: 4.5CM WIDE, 4.5CM DEEP - 1¾ INS WIDE, 1¾ INS DEEP

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LITERATURE

DURING THE LATE 18TH CENTURY SMALL MINIATURES SOMETIMES KNOWN AS 'LOVER'S EYES' AND REPRESENTING A SINGLE EYE WERE IN FASHION SET INTO LOCKETS, BROOCHES, RINGS AND SMALL BOXES. SOME WERE PAINTED AS MEMORIAL JEWELLERY, BUT MOSTLY THEIR PURPOSE WAS THE ADORATION OF A BELOVED SUBJECT AND A WAY OF EVOKING THEIR FACE IN THEIR ABSENCE. THE ACT OF LOOKING, THE GAZE WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF GLANCES, CONVEYED DIFFERENT EMOTIONS AND MESSAGES, AND SO AN EXPRESSION OF DEVOTION WAS THEREFORE EASILY CONVEYED IN A GAZING EYE.

TRADITIONALLY IT IS SAID THAT EYE PORTRAITS BECAME POPULAR BECAUSE GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, HAD HIS MISTRESS MRS FITZHERBERT'S EYE PAINTED BY RICHARD COSWAY IN NOVEMBER 1785. PLEADING WITH HER TO MARRY HIM HE WROTE, 'I SEND YOU A PARCEL AND I SEND YOU AT THE SAME TIME AN EYE'. ROYAL LAW FORBADE A CATHOLIC WIDOW FROM MARRYING A PRINCE BUT SOON AFTER HIS PASSIONATE LETTER WAS RECEIVED HE MARRIED HIS LOVER IN A COVERT CEREMONY.

EYE PORTRAITS WERE IN VOGUE FOR NO MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AND BY 1830 PHOTOGRAPHY HAD EMERGED ERASING THE INTEREST IN MINIATURE PORTRAITURE, BUT THESE LOVER'S EYES STILL RETAIN THEIR ABILITY TO HYPNOTISE, TO CONNECT WITH AND ARTICULATE AN ESSENCE OF A PERSON YOU HAVE NEVER MET.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE LONDON COLLECTION