

Finch & C^o



NETHERLANDISH IVORY RELIEF PORTRAIT PLAQUE OF THE PHILOSOPHER DEMOCRITUS
A FINE NETHERLANDISH IVORY RELIEF PORTRAIT PLAQUE OF THE PHILOSOPHER DEMOCRITUS

CONTAINED IN A FRUITWOOD FRAME CARVED WITH FLOWERING TENDRILS

TITLED IN INK TO THE REVERSE 'DEMOCRITE'

WITH OLD COLLECTION LABEL

LAST QUARTER 17TH CENTURY

SIZE: 8.5CM HIGH, 6CM WIDE - 3¼ INS HIGH, 2¼ INS WIDE / 11CM HIGH, 8.5CM WIDE (FRAME)

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LITERATURE

AMSTERDAM WAS A PRINCIPAL EUROPEAN PORT AND MANY IVORIES WERE PRODUCED THERE FROM THE 16TH CENTURY ONWARDS AS A RESULT OF THE TRADE WITH AFRICA. DEVOTIONAL SUBJECTS WERE FAVOURED AT FIRST, BUT IN THE 17TH CENTURY NUMEROUS SMALL SCALE RELIEFS AND FIGURES BEGAN TO BE CARVED, THEIR INSPIRATION TAKEN FROM DRAWINGS AND ENGRAVINGS. DEMOCRITUS (460 - 370 BC) WAS KNOWN AS THE 'LAUGHING PHILOSOPHER' AND IN LEGEND HE IS SAID THAT IN ORDER TO RETAIN HIS CHEERFULNESS, HE BLINDED HIMSELF SO AS TO PUT AN END TO HIS DESIRE FOR WOMEN. TOGETHER WITH LEUCIPPUS HE FOUNDED 'CLASSICAL ATOMISM'. HE CONJURED UP A MAGNIFICENT VISION OF THE UNIVERSE WITH A TOTAL ABSENCE OF PURPOSE AND DESIGN. THIS WAS TOO MUCH FOR PLATO AND ARISTOTLE AND WAS ONLY WHOLEHEARTEDLY EMBRACED BY EPICURUS UNTIL IT WAS REDISCOVERED IN THE 17TH CENTURY AND FORMED THE BASIS OF MODERN SCIENCE.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE DUTCH COLLECTION