Finch & Co

RARE AUSTRALIAN SCRIMSHAW PAN-BONE PLAQUE

CIRCA 1880

A RARE SCRIMSHAW PAN-BONE PICTORIAL PLAQUE

DEPICTING A WHALING SHIP IN THE SOUTH SEAS, TWO WHALING BOATS AMONGST THREE SURFACING WHALES, TWO FURTHER WHALES ON THE SURFACE IN FRONT OF THE PROW

TITLED 'TAKING WHALE, AUSTRALIA, 1880'

FINE COLOUR AND PATINA

WHALE PAN-BONE

AUSTRALIA

LATE 19TH CENTURY / 1880

SIZE: 7CM HIGH, 27.5CM WIDE, 4CM DEEP - 2¾ INS HIGH, 10¾ INS WIDE, 1½ INS DEEP

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LITERATURE

MUCH SAILOR'S SCRIMSHAW WAS DECORATIVE RATHER THAN PRACTICAL WITH MANY ARTICLES BEING MADE AS 'CONVERSATION PIECES'. LARGE SECTIONS OF PAN-BONE PROVIDED THE SURFACE FOR MORE ELABORATE AND EXTENSIVE ENGRAVINGS OFTEN DEPICTING SEVERAL SHIPS IN AN ARCTIC WHALE HUNT. SOMETIMES, AS WITH THIS EXAMPLE, THE PAN-BONE WAS USED IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM, OTHER PIECES WERE CUT IN A RECTANGULAR SHAPE. OCCURRING AS A SECTION AT THE BACK OF A SPERM WHALE'S JAW, PAN-BONE SERVED AS A PERFECT CANVAS FOR A WHALE MAN'S DEPICTION OF EVENTS WHEN OUT HUNTING THE ELUSIVE SEA MAMMAL. THE DESIGN WAS FIRST OUTLINED OR SCRATCHED UPON THE SURFACE, AND PATIENCE WAS THE KEY TO THE ACTUAL ENGRAVING. THE USE OF INKS TO COMPLETE THE PICTURE WAS CUSTOMARY, BUT AS 'INDIA INK' WAS OFTEN NOT AVAILABLE, LAMP BLACK, TAR, SOOT OR SHIP'S PAINT WERE UTILISED. PAINSTAKING EFFORTS PRODUCED OUTSTANDING PIECES AND SOME WHALERS REVEALED AN ARTISTIC INSIGHT WHICH HAS MADE THEIR SCRIMSHAW BOTH VALUABLE AND SOUGHT AFTER.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION