Finch & Co



A FINE 'RAPA NUI' STANDING MALE FIGURE

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WOOD

EASTER ISLAND

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 50.5CM HIGH - 19¼ INS HIGH / 55.5CM HIGH - 21¾ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

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LITERATURE

ISOLATED IN THE HEART OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN, THE ISLAND OF RAPA NUI CAME TO BE KNOWN IN EUROPE AS 'EASTER ISLAND' AFTER THE DUTCH EXPEDITION LED BY JAKOB ROGGEVEEN LANDED THERE ON EASTER SUNDAY IN 1722, WHILST LOOKING FOR 'TERRA AUSTRALIS' AND 'DAVIS LAND'. HE REPORTED SEEING TWO TO THREE THOUSAND INHABITANTS.

ON CAPTAIN JAMES COOK'S SECOND VOYAGE, 1774, HE REVEALED THE EXISTENCE OF THE HUMAN FIGURES MADE OF 'NARROW' PIECES OF WOOD ABOUT 'EIGHTEEN INCHES OR TWO FEET LONG' AND 'WROUGHT IN A MUCH NEATER AND MORE PROPORTIONATE MANNER THAN THE ENORMOUS 'STONE' STATUES'. THEY WERE MADE TO REPRESENT PERSONS OF BOTH SEXES. THE FIGURES SERVED IN 'DOMESTIC WORSHIP' CEREMONIES HONOURING ANCESTORS AND PROTECTOR OF DIVINITIES.

OLD LOSSES TO THE FEET, AGE CRACKS TO THE BACK, A CARVED 'W' BEHIND EACH EAR. THE RIBBED COIFFURE AND LARGE BROWS, LIPS AND DEEPLY PIERCED PUPILS GIVE THE FACE A HAUNTING 'MYSTICAL' FEEL. THE WHOLE FIGURE HAS A MELLOW SHINY PATINA TO THE AREAS 'HANDLED' OVER THE YEARS. A PARIS EXPORT LABEL TO UNDERSIDE OF WOOD BASE.

PROVENANCE

ACQUIRED IN THE 1960'S

EX PRIVATE UK COLLECTION