Company School Birds Painted On Mica

Sold

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Height: 13.5 cm (5.3")

Width: 17 cm (6.7")

Description

An Honourable East India Company School painting in gouache on mica of a pair of unknown exotic Indian birds.

Probably painted in Benares. Mounted and framed. Circa 1860.

Image Size is given. Framed Size 10 x 11 1/4 inches.

The market for paintings on mica was popularised by the British in India. Previously it had been used by Indian artists to trace family paintings for preservation or for decorating marriage lanterns. However, the Europeans were fascinated by it and soon became the principal buyers. In the age before photography such pictures would give an insight to families at home of life in India and serve as a memory for those returning west. The Honourable East India Company encouraged such artists and seeked to profit from their work which was broadly labelled Company School Painting. Mica was mined in Kordarmah to the north of Hazaribagh and was sent to artists in Benares, Patna and Murshidabad in the east. Trichinopoly artists would have used mica from Cuddapah in the south. The paintings from the south predominantly used orange-brown, yellow and arsenic green in their colour scheme whereas those from the east favoured red, pink and blue. By its nature, mica is fragile and it is common to see pictures with damaged edges. However, the clear, crystal like properties of the silicate give the paintings a wonderful quality.

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