Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

Vizagapatam Sewing Work Box

Sold

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REF: 82505

Height: 10.5 cm (4.1")

Width: 33.5 cm (13.2")

Depth: 25.5 cm (10")

Description

A good ivory veneer on sandalwood Vizagapatam Work Box.

Like many of the items made in Vizagapatam, it's likely that this Sewing or Work Box was bought as a present for a loved one back home in Britain. The exterior is subtly decorated with a delicate floral border, coloured black to contrast against the colour of the box. The initials SL are engraved to the centre of the top in similar delicate, floral letters.

The interior is fitted with a removable, silk pin cushion pad to the centre which echoes the padded silk interior to the lid. The box has a number of compartments with lids, some of which are removable as well as two lidded pots to the back and a number of thread barrels to the front. There is also a table clamp with a spool to the top for thread. The front of the box has a plain drawer which can be opened once its locking pin is removed. The handles to the sides and the pin are probably Indian silver, unmarked.

A very nice Anglo Indian Work Box. Circa 1820.

Vizagapatam became a renowned centre for work such as this box. It was ideally placed with a good port and fine timbers available locally. Ivory and sandalwood from Southern India was also easily available. An English factory was established in 1668 and eventually the region was ceded to the East India Company. The work from the area enjoyed a good reputation and eventually grew to encompass a strong souvenir trade for the Europeans passing through. It is probable that this box was intended for that market and certainly the elephant engraved to the shield on the top would have appealed. Amin Jaffer notes that James Johnson, an officer on HMS Caroline observed at Vizagapatam in the early 1800s that the 'natives, besides their cloths are very expert in their ivory works, imitating with some success the Chinese in making curious little boxes and work baskets of ivory and bone, which are brought home by the Europeans to take home as presents'.

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