

SA599647

John Russell, RA, 1745-1806
 Portrait of a Young Girl and Her
 Brother seated at a Table with
 an open Book and a Tiger
 Cowrie Shell

Price

GBP 3,500

| USD \$4,736 | EUR 4,095

Item Reference: SA599647

Date of manufacture: 18th Century

Dimensions

Height = 64 cm (25.2")

Width = 76 cm (29.9")

Depth = 3 cm (1.2")

Description

John Russell, RA, 1745-1806 Portrait of a Young Girl and Her Brother seated at a Table with an open Book and a Tiger Cowrie Shell oil on canvas 64 x 76 cm. (25 x 30 in.) Despite the fact that this species does not occur in the Mediterranean Sea, shells of the tiger cowrie and the related panther cowrie, *Cypraea pantherina*, have been unearthed at Pompeii, the ancient Roman city near Naples, Italy, where these shells may have been used as some form of ornament. It is also conceivable that the shells were part of a natural history collection. There was an interest in natural history at the time, as exemplified by Pliny the Elder who wrote extensively about seashells in his book *Natural History* and who died investigating the eruption of Vesuvius. The shells of this species of cowry are still popular among shell collectors, and are also used as a decorative object, even in modern times. The shell of *Cypraea tigris* is believed to help to facilitate childbirth: some women in Japan hold a shell of this species during childbirth. Large cowry shells such as that of this species were used in Europe in the recent past as a frame over which sock heels were stretched for darning, i....

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