



## Snake Vanity



### Description

Vanity with Snakes Hand-modeled ceramic sculpture with polychrome glaze. Contemporary work, late 20th or early 21st century. Dimensions: H 18 × W 19 × D 23 cm Ceramic sculpture depicting a human skull rendered in a naturalistic style, entwined by a multitude of snakes modeled in relief. The skull, with its ivory and pinkish hues, is partially covered by a tangle of reptiles whose very dark green, almost black, glaze reveals deep reflections in the light. The contrast between the skull's light tones and the depth of the dark glaze gives the work a particularly striking presence. The sinuous bodies coil around the skull, crossing and overlapping in a dense composition that animates the entire sculpture. One of the snakes, which is slightly movable, contributes to the composition's lively and

650 EUR

Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Ceramic

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organic character. Context and analysis: This sculpture is part of the long tradition of *memento mori*, a Latin expression meaning "remember that you will die," which has run through the history of Western art since antiquity and experienced a particularly significant development beginning in the Renaissance. The human skull, a universal symbol of mortality, appears here as an invitation to reflect on the fragility of existence and the transience of earthly possessions. Here, the artist combines this motif with a multitude of snakes modeled in relief, whose sinuous bodies coil around the bony structure until they partially cover its surface. This encounter between two fundamental symbols of the Western imagination greatly enriches the interpretation of the work. While the skull evokes human finitude, the snake is traditionally associated with more ambivalent notions: knowledge, transformation, renewal, and the perpetual cycle of life. Since antiquity, its ability to shed its skin has made it one of the oldest emblems of regeneration and rebirth. The intertwining of the reptiles around the skull thus creates a symbolic tension between disappearance and transformation. Death is no longer viewed merely as an end, but as a stage in a broader cycle where destruction and renewal coexist. This interpretation is reinforced by the composition's dynamics: the snakes seem to gradually take over the skeletal structure, as if nature were reclaiming what was once alive. The very dark green, almost black, enamel fully contributes to this atmosphere. Its deep reflections enliven the surface and highlight the richness of the modeling, while the ivory tones of the skull create a striking contrast with the reptilian bodies. Through its powerful iconography and the quality of its execution, this work is part of the contemporary revival of the themes of vanity observed since the late 20th century. It evokes the world of cabinets of curiosities, the great traditions of *memento mori*, and modern reinterpretations of the symbols of death and metamorphosis. Between aesthetic fascination

and philosophical meditation, it bears witness to the enduring nature of these universal questions that continue to inspire contemporary artists. Bibliography: Patrick Mauriès, *Cabinets de curiosités*, Paris, Gallimard, "Découvertes" series, 2002. Bertrand Tillier, *Vanities in Contemporary Art*, Paris, Éditions du Regard. Jean Clair, *De Immundo*, Paris, Galilée, 2004. DIANE CHATELET - IMPOSSIBLE GALLERY General Antique Dealer Expert in Furniture and Works of Art with the European Chamber of Art Experts (CECOA) FREE APPRAISALS - BUYING - SELLING