Edwardian sterling silver model of a partridge

Berthold Müller

£2,550



REF: 9553

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Height: 180 mm (7.09")

Width: 140 mm (5.51")

Weight: 357 g

Description

This charming sterling silver model of a partridge was made by one of the best, and most famous of bird and animal model makers of the era, Berthold Müller of Germany. The feather detail is nicely hand-chased and the model has a removable head and hinged wings.

The head of the partridge is detachable which is common for animal models of this age. During the late 19th century a thriving industry had built up in Germany and Holland, making silver models for the British market. From traditional game birds to knights in armour and nefs (model ships on wheels). These models were made in sterling silver (925) and each imported piece was usually sent to a UK assay office to be tested and stamped with import hallmarks. This one is for 1903 in London.

This came about owing to a minor trade war that broke out in Europe with England imposing a tax on imported luxury goods, including silver models. To legally avoid this punitive tax, enterprising workshops in Germany and Holland adapted their designs of animals, ships and birds, making them into vessels. Ships were made into two parts, hull and deck with masts and rigging; while birds and animals had removable heads. Suddenly they were no longer considered just luxury items, they were functional. This ploy persisted into the early 20th century, when the tax was removed.