Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

# 19th-Century Bilston Enamel "Match" Box

£240

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REF: 1231

Description

A charming 19th-century Bilston enamel box, its hinged cover decorated with a lively cockfighting scene beneath a banner inscribed "Match." Compact, colourful, and full of period character, this delightful object combines the refinement of painted enamel with a vivid glimpse of popular sporting life in the 19th century.

The cover depicts two cockerels facing one another in a fighting pit, their dramatic encounter observed beneath the boldly lettered banner. The scene is painted with considerable spirit, using the small enamel surface as a miniature stage for movement, colour, and narrative. The word "Match" adds a particularly engaging touch, identifying the event while giving the box the quality of a tiny commemorative or novelty object.

Bilston, in the West Midlands, was an important centre for the production of enamelled boxes from the 18th century onwards. These small hinged boxes were made for a variety of uses, including snuff, patches, pills, keepsakes, and small personal possessions. Their appeal lay in the combination of a practical form with decorative painted subjects ranging from portraits and landscapes to sporting scenes, sentimental motifs, and witty inscriptions.

This example is especially appealing for its unusual cockfighting subject, a theme that captures the taste for sporting imagery and popular entertainment in the period. Its small scale and detailed cover decoration make it a fascinating collector's object, equally suited to a collection of Bilston enamels, Georgian and Victorian boxes, sporting antiques, or miniature works of art.



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