Gilt Bronze Papal Ring Set With An Illuminated Miniature. Italian, 15th Century.



9 950 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Bronze

Description

A gilt bronze Papal ring set with an illuminated miniature.

Italian, 15th century.

The ring would have been worn over a glove, hence its large size: Z+3 UK / 14 US (measured on the leading edge).

The massive ring measures 3.4 x 3.2 x 1.9cm.

The bezel is set with an illuminated miniature depicting the Adoration of the Magi beneath a piece of rock crystal. The shoulders of the ring are decorated with the crossed keys of Rome to one side and a Papal tiara, a cross and orphrey to the other. The main body of the ring is composed

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of bronze and the bezel in copper, the ring bears a fine patina with traces of its original gilding.

Very large gilt bronze or copper rings set with glass or crystal bezels are often known as Papal rings. Their name is somewhat misleading, as it is unlikely that they were actually worn by the popes, given the quantities that were produced and the inexpensive materials used, which would not appeal to the papal taste for precious stones in lavish settings. Rings of this type mostly date from the 15th and 16th centuries and are decorated with papal arms, mitres, crossed keys, and other ecclesiastical symbols. Their exact function is unknown but it has been suggested that they were worn as credentials by mounted couriers between Popes and other church figures and sovereigns. They served to prove the identity of the messenger but were not of a value which would tempt thieves.