



Niello Hat Badge With The Marriage Of The Virgin. Italian, Circa 1500.

3 500 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Sterling silver



Description

A gilt metal and niello hat badge with the marriage of the Virgin.

Italian, circa 1500.

Measures 4.6 x 4.5cm.

The niello plaque depicts the marriage ceremony between Mary and Joseph, a symbol of Mary's commitment to the church and to her husband. The niello plaque has a gilt brass mount with a rope twist border, four loops protrude from opposite sides to allow the badge to be sewn onto a garment.

Niello is a black mixture, usually of sulphur, copper, silver and lead. It is used as an inlay on

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engraved or etched metal, especially silver. It is added as a powder or paste, then fired until it melts or at least softens and flows or is pushed into the engraved lines in the metal.

Men began wearing hat ornaments on their caps from the late fifteenth century, which could be either purely decorative or symbolic. Symbolic examples are traditionally known as enseignes, as they conveyed the wearer's personal intent or a visible message. These jewels trace their origins to the medieval pilgrim badge, usually mass-produced in base metal. It is believed that this fashion shift to a stylish male accessory began when French king Charles VIII entered Naples in February 1495, wearing a gold circular jewel on his cap, while his men had similar, though not gold, jewels on their caps or sleeves. Italians quickly adopted this trend, which then spread to most European courts. However, this fashion declined in the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century, giving way to the popularity of aigrettes.