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Spanish Royal Agate Cameo, Portrait Of Ferdinand Prince Of Asturias

6 000 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état



Description

Cameo Portrait of Infant Ferdinand, Prince of Asturias
Rome, circa 1800

Four-layered Saxon agate

H. 2.9 cm

Excellent condition

Provenance: Collection Max Crepy, Glyptics and Intaglios, Drouot, Room 2, December 4-5, 1989, lot 116 (fig. 8)

This remarkable cameo, carved in four-layered Saxon agate, depicts the bust of Infant Ferdinand (1784-1833), Prince of Asturias and future King of Spain as Ferdinand VII. He is shown in profile facing left, with the youthful features of a young man. His medium-length hair covers his ears and

Dealer

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is tied in a queue at the nape of his neck. He wears the insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece and the Grand Cross of the Order of Charles III. A vegetal branch is embroidered on the lapel of his collar, and a festooned motif adorns the shoulder of his jacket.

In Francisco de Goya's painting *The Family of Charles IV* and its preparatory sketch for the prince's figure, Ferdinand is portrayed at the age of sixteen. The year is 1800, and as the Prince of Asturias and heir to the throne, he occupies a prominent position in this collective portrait.

The creation of this cameo likely dates to the same period, as it faithfully reproduces the youthful physiognomy of the prince: a broad, oval-shaped face, high forehead, open gaze, full cheeks, rounded and prognathous chin, concave nose with a rounded tip, and a slight smile accentuating the corners of his lips. The comparison extends to his hair, which falls over his ears and is tied in a queue, as well as the presence of the Golden Fleece and Charles III insignia, and the embroidery on his collar.

This cameo is engraved in an agate whose colors range from white to brown, with layers of pink and violet, speckled with tiny red dots. This type of agate originates from deposits in Saxony, where it is found in the works of goldsmith and mineralogist Johann Christian Neuber. In early 19th-century Rome, cameo engravers particularly appreciated this material, as seen in portraits such as that of Pope Pius VII or the head of a Maenad signed by Nicola Morelli.

By the late 18th century, Rome remained a major center of glyptic art, attracting artists and aristocratic patrons from across Europe. Cameos, highly prized by sovereigns and the elite, served as a means to assert rank and authority. This piece follows in the tradition of official portraits, intended for collections or to be mounted in jewelry and prestigious objects.

Ferdinand VII, a key figure in Spanish history, was known for his reign marked by political instability and the War of Independence against

Napoleon. From an early age, he was the subject of numerous official portraits. This cameo stands as a testament to the role of glyptic art in the dissemination of princely imagery and the affirmation of dynastic power throughout Europe.