Renaissance Gold And Enamel Pendant With A Cameo Of Christ And The Virgin.



18 200 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Gold

Description

A Renaissance gold and enamel pendant featuring a cameo of Christ and the Virgin.

Italian, Late 16th / early 17th Century.

Measures 4.6 x 3.2 x 0.7 cm.

Weighs 25 grams.

The heliotrope cameo is intricately carved in relief on both sides, depicting profiles of the Virgin and Christ. The gold mount is finely chased with repeating egg-and-dart motifs, fluting, and dot decoration, all enhanced with black and white enamels.

During the late 16th and early 17th centuries in

Dealer

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Italy, bloodstone a dark green chalcedony with red inclusions was prized for crafting cameos, especially depicting Christ and the Virgin Mary. The red spots symbolised Christ's blood from the crown of thorns or the Virgin's tears of mourning, whilst also performing an apotropaic function: according to the 17th-century physician Anselmus Boetius de Boodt it had healing properties. Renaissance stone cutters skillfully positioned these inclusions to heighten the realism and emotional impact. Vasari notes that Matteo dal Nassaro used bloodstone for a Descent from the Cross commissioned by Isabella d'Este, leveraging its natural markings for dramatic effect. These cameos were highly valued and featured in prestigious collections and kunstkammers.

Both cameos appear to be derived from bronze medals attributed to Antonio Abondio the Younger (1538-1591). Most of these jewels are likely to have been created within Abondio's orbit in Milan and at the courts of the Holy Roman Emperors in Prague in the late 16th and early 17th century, including by members of the Miseroni family. Similar examples of this glyptic art can be found in prominent collections, such as four double-sided pieces in the Medici Gem Gallery at Florence's Museo degli Argenti (inventory numbers 105, 1817, 1818, and 1819). A double sided example set in a ring from the Duc d'Orléans collection at the Hermitage (inv. ?-649), and another attributed to Ottavio Miseroni is housed in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Object Number: 1982.60.393 also 39.22.6). Other examples can be found in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Numéro d'inventaire: Camée.408 and Camée.416), the British Museum (Museum number AF.2673 and 1867,0507.732).

Unlike these comparable works (BnF Camée.408 being an exception), the artisan of this rare and exceptional medallion has pushed the boundaries

of realism, engraving Christ's face with tears of blood, further intensifying the emotional impact. The exquisite enamelled gold mounting enhances the beauty of this medallion, demonstrating extraordinary craftsmanship.

Works consulted:

J. Kagan and O. Neverov, Le destin d'une collection, 500 Pierres gravées du cabinet duc d'Orléans, St. Petersburg, 2001, p. 219

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A. Boetius de Boodt, Gemmarvm et lapidvm historia.., 1609, pp.130-130

M. E. Babelon, Catalogue des camees antiques et modernes de la Bibliotheque nationale, Paris, 1897

E. Kris, Die Kameen im Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1927

P. Attwood, Italian medals, c.1530-1600 in British public collections, London, 2003

E. Kris, Renaissance-Kleinkunst in Italien, Leipzig, 1935, no. 621

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Heliotrope is also known as bloodstone, it is a dark green variety of chalcedony with red spots of iron oxide, historically valued for its supposed

healing properties.