



A Gold Ring Set With An Italian Agate Cameo -- Theatrical Tragic Mask, First Half 19th Century



2 750 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Gold

Description

10K gold (modern mount) Stone: Banded agate cameo (carved in high relief) Cameo dimensions: 30.6 mm (1.21 in.) Ring size: UK O½ / US 7.5 / FR 56 Period: Cameo -- Italian, first half 19th century A magnificent banded agate cameo carved in high relief depicting a theatrical tragic mask, the dramatic expression frozen in perpetual lamentation. This impressive piece, of Italian manufacture from the first half of the 19th century, exemplifies the neoclassical fascination with the theatre of antiquity. The mask displays the characteristic features of Greek and Roman tragic personae: the wide-open mouth (the os apertum) through which the actor's voice projected, the furrowed brow expressing anguish or grief, and the elaborate headdress known as the onkos -- a towering coiffure worn by actors

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portraying gods, kings, or heroes to increase their stature and presence on stage. The decorated diadem across the forehead suggests a figure of high rank, perhaps a monarch or deity from classical tragedy. The cameo is masterfully carved from banded agate, exploiting the natural layering of the stone to create depth and contrast. The warm honey and orange tones of the upper stratum form the mask itself, while the translucent grey-blue ground provides a subtle backdrop, enhancing the three-dimensional quality of the carving. The reverse of the mount reveals an elegant openwork gold gallery with circular perforations, allowing light to pass through the translucent agate and illuminate the carving from within -- a sophisticated detail that demonstrates the quality of the goldsmith's work. Theatrical masks were a beloved subject in neoclassical decorative arts, symbolising the immortal legacy of ancient drama and, by extension, the cultured sensibility of their owners. Such cameos were collected by Grand Tour travellers and connoisseurs throughout the 19th century. Condition: Very good. Cameo intact with crisp carving. Minor natural inclusions in the agate. Mount solid and wearable.