



A Magnificent Archaeological Revival Necklace by Giacinto Melillo | Twelve Roman Intaglios in Gold

Length: 40 cm (15 ³/₄ inches) | Total weight: 50.54 grams

Twelve Roman chalcedony intaglios: 6 × 9 mm to 9 × 12 mm

Intaglio period: Roman Imperial, 2nd-3rd century AD

Mounting: Naples, circa 1870

Maker: Attributed to Giacinto Melillo

Materials: High-carat gold, green chalcedony intaglios, natural pearls

Technique: Granulation, twisted wire, braided chain

An exceptional masterpiece of 19th-century Archaeological Revival jewelry, this sumptuous necklace exemplifies the highest artistry of Giacinto Melillo's Neapolitan workshop.

Twelve authentic Roman green chalcedony intaglios—each dating from the Imperial period (2nd-3rd century AD)—are meticulously set in oval gold bezels adorned with granulation, twisted wire decoration, and natural pearl drops. The settings are suspended from a broad braided gold chain, punctuated by clusters of four gold beads between each element.

The intaglios present a captivating repertoire of classical subjects: a goat and tree, a male bust, a young faun playing the double flute, a Gryllos, a warrior, a satyr, an Eros with panther, a draped figure in offering, Venus Victrix, Nike, Fortuna Tyche, and Venus with marine attributes. This remarkable assembly represents not merely decorative gemstones, but a carefully curated gallery of ancient Roman art.

Created circa 1870 in Naples, this necklace bears the unmistakable hallmark of Giacinto Melillo (1846-1915), whose career began under the mentorship of Alessandro Castellani. By 1870, Melillo had assumed ownership of the Naples workshop, producing pieces of such refined execution that they often surpassed the work of Casa Castellani in Rome. Count Michel Tyskiewicz, the celebrated collector, praised Melillo's extraordinary craftsmanship in 1896, distinguishing his work from the coarser jewelry of the era.

This necklace relates closely to the renowned Castellani necklace preserved in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome (inv. 85013), confirming its prestigious lineage within Archaeological Revival jewelry.

A wearable museum piece that unites ancient Roman artistry with the virtuoso goldsmithing of the Italian Renaissance Revival.

Literature

References

Geoffrey Munn, "Giacinto Melillo: a pupil of Castellani", *The Connoisseur*, vol. 196 (1977), pp. 20–22.
Geoffrey Munn, *Les bijoutiers Castellani et Giuliano. Retour à l'antique au XIXe siècle*, Fribourg, 1983.