

A Neoclassical Agate Cameo gold Brooch — Venus and Cupid

Gold and gilted silver

Agate cameo: 20 × 25 mm

Gross weight: 6.71 g

19th-century European work

A finely carved agate cameo depicting Venus seated in profile to the left, her body partially nude, the lower limbs delicately draped in a thin fabric. The goddess of Love holds the wrist of the infant Cupid with her right hand, in a gesture that is at once maternal and commanding — restraining or guiding the mischievous child. The field is enriched with floral motifs and a butterfly, a symbol traditionally associated with Psyche and the soul, adding a layer of mythological depth to the composition.

The carving exploits the natural layering of the agate to striking effect, the white relief of the figures standing out against the darker ground with a softness and precision characteristic of the best 19th-century cameo work.

The modelling of Venus's body is fluid and accomplished, while the details of the drapery, the flowers, and the butterfly's wings demonstrate the engraver's command of the medium at a remarkably small scale.

The cameo is mounted in a gilt-metal and gold brooch frame with a fine rope-twist border, typical of 19th-century European jewellery. The mount is neat and well-proportioned, complementing the oval gem without overwhelming it.

The subject of Venus restraining Cupid is a celebrated classical theme, rooted in Hellenistic sculpture and revived extensively during the neoclassical period. It speaks to the eternal tension between love and reason, desire and restraint — a subject that resonated deeply with the educated sensibility of 19th-century collectors.

The presence of the butterfly, emblem of Psyche, subtly extends the narrative, evoking the myth of Cupid and Psyche and the transformative power of love.

Condition: Very good. The cameo is intact, with crisp and well-preserved carving. The brooch mount shows light wear consistent with age. Pin and clasp functional.