



A 19th Century Gold Chiseled Signet Ring set with a Roman Sardonyx Intaglio — Sphinx with Caduceus

Metal: Gold with French hallmarks

Stone: Sardonyx intaglio (banded, white and brown)

Intaglio dimensions: 10 × 14 mm

Ring size: UK M / US 6.25 / FR 52 — Gross weight: 5.90 g

Intaglio: Roman, 2nd–3rd century A.D.

Mounting: 19th century, French work

A handsome gold signet ring of 19th-century French manufacture, its shoulders finely chiseled with foliate motifs, set with a Roman sardonyx intaglio depicting a Sphinx accompanied by a caduceus.

The Sphinx — that enigmatic creature combining the body of a lion with a human head — is shown in profile, seated upon a plinth, with the winged staff of Mercury rising beside her. This rare iconographic combination unites two potent symbols of the ancient world: the Sphinx, guardian of sacred mysteries and emblem of wisdom, and the caduceus, attribute of Mercury (Hermes), god of commerce, communication, and the passage between realms.

In Roman glyptic art, such composite images often carried apotropaic (protective) significance, combining the watchful vigilance of the Sphinx with Mercury's powers of mediation and safe conduct. The presence of an ear of wheat or poppy behind the figure may allude to fertility, prosperity, or the mysteries of the underworld.

The intaglio is carved in banded sardonyx, a stone prized since antiquity for its natural layering of brown, orange, and white. The Roman engraver has exploited these layers to striking effect, the warm central tones framing the scene against a milky white border.

The 19th-century gold mount is of excellent quality, bearing French hallmarks. The shoulders are adorned with delicate chiseled foliate decoration, reflecting the neoclassical taste for combining ancient gems with finely wrought period goldwork. A distinguished piece uniting Roman glyptic art with French orfèverie.

Condition: Very good. Intaglio intact with fine engraving. Gold mount solid with crisp chiseled decoration. Light wear consistent with age.