

A gold ring set with a 18th century carnelian intaglio. Bust of Galba (reign 68-69 A.D.)

Intaglio 12x16 mm

US size 7.25 - UK size O½ - FR 55

Total weight 5,83 gr

Intaglio : 18th century

Mounting: 20th century

An exquisite carnelian intaglio of the 18th century depicting the laureate bust of Emperor Galba (reigned 68–69 AD) in left-facing profile, set in a later gold ring of elegant workmanship.

The intaglio is carved in translucent honey-orange carnelian of fine quality. The portrait is rendered with remarkable naturalism directly inspired by the imperial coinage of 68–69 AD: the characteristic features of the emperor — the aquiline nose, sunken cheeks, short beard, and heavy neck — are restituted with academic precision, revealing the hand of an accomplished 18th-century gem engraver well-versed in the classical prototypes. The surface exhibits a fine mirror polish. Slight wear marks consistent with age and use.

The later gold mount features an oval bezel and elegant double-hoop shoulders, a refined setting that allows the intaglio to be appreciated in full.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Servius Sulpicius Galba (3 BC – 15 January 69 AD) · The Year of the Four Emperors Galba's brief

reign belongs to one of the most dramatic sequences in Roman history. Governor of Hispania Tarraconensis, he overthrew Nero in June 68 AD with legionary support and entered Rome as sole master of the Roman world. He would rule for just 7 months. An 'old school' general — aged 71, exceptional for a *princeps* — Galba rapidly alienated the Praetorian Guard by refusing to pay the donativum promised by his agents, and the Roman populace by reinstating fiscal austerity after Neronian extravagance. His celebrated maxim encapsulates both programme and fatal error: Legi a me militem, non emi — 'I recruit my soldiers, I do not buy them.' Frugality admired by senators was perceived as meanness by troops. His choice to adopt Piso Licinianus as successor, rather than Salvius Otho who considered himself the natural heir, precipitated the catastrophe. On 15 January 69 AD, Otho incited the Praetorian cohorts to revolt; Galba was assassinated in the Forum, his body mutilated and left unburied. He had reigned 229 days.

His numismatic portrait, faithfully transposed here on this intaglio, is one of the most expressive of the Julio-Claudian series: the spare face, the determined gaze, the laurel wreath drawn tight over a thinning skull.