

A LARGE VICTORIAN GOLD BROOCH SET WITH 12 HARDSTONES INTAGLIOS. VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Stone min. 7x10 mm; max 16x17 mm

Total weight : 25,90 gr

Intaglios: From 2nd century A.D. to 17th century

Brooch: 19th century

The cruciform brooch of openwork gold construction, the central medallion set with an oval agate intaglio depicting the bust of a bearded philosopher in profile to the right, within a roped gold collet, surrounded by a cross-shaped arrangement of eight further intaglios in carnelian, red jasper and dark green jasper, each within a twisted gold wire mount; suspended below by three gold links, an oval intaglio depicting a helmeted bust in profile to the left, terminating in three further articulated drops set with carnelian intaglios; the reverse fitted with a long gold pin.

The intaglios depicting, clockwise from the top:

— a Roman red jasper, Hades enthroned; — a Roman carnelian, standing figure beside a tripod; — a Roman dark green jasper, quadriga of Helios; — a Roman red jasper, eagle devouring its prey; — a dark stone (jasper?), gryllos; — a carnelian, two animals; — a post-Classical intaglio, faun holding a kylix; — a Roman carnelian, offerer; — Centre: a post-Classical agate, bust of a bearded philosopher;

— Pendant centre: a helmeted bust; — Lower drops (from left): a Roman carnelian, Spes; a Roman carnelian, Mars; a Roman carnelian, Athena.

Note

This brooch belongs to a distinguished tradition of Victorian "archaeological-revival" jewellery, in which carefully assembled cabinets of ancient and post-Classical engraved gems were remounted into elaborate gold settings designed to evoke the splendour of antiquity for the modern collector. The vogue, championed by the Castellani firm in Rome and their British emulators (notably Carlo Giuliano in London), reached its zenith in the 1860s and 1870s, when Grand Tour souvenirs and inherited dactyliotheques were frequently dismantled and reset into wearable jewels of this type.

The present brooch combines genuine Roman intaglios with later post-Classical re-engravings continuing the antique repertoire. The juxtaposition of mythological subjects, portrait gems and emblematic motifs reflects the eclectic taste of the Victorian collector and the iconographic richness of the post-Classical glyptic tradition.