



A Renaissance gold ring set with a carnelian intaglio. Old man seated on a rock with staff and curved blade, Saturn or Vulcan. Late Renaissance or earlier.

Intaglio 8 × 10 mm

Gold mount – ring size EU 59 (US 9 / UK R½); gross weight 6.19 g.

Ring and intaglio: Late Renaissance or earlier

Very good condition; crisp engraving; minor loss of metal to the rim of the bezel at left; the stone is intact.

A Late Renaissance, or earlier, gold ring with plain hoop widening to an oval bezel, set with a contemporary carnelian intaglio depicting a bearded old man seated in profile to the right.

The figure is nude, seated on a rock or tree stump, the left leg drawn back and the right extended. He wears a close-fitting cap; the beard is long and pointed. The left arm reaches behind the body to a staff resting against the shoulder; the right arm is extended forward, the hand holding by its handle a short curved implement — a sickle, or a pair of tongs seen in profile. Ground line. Small, lively engraving with rounded volumes and a vigorous profile, in the manner of the antique.

Historical context – Renaissance glyptic

Engraved gems never ceased to be worn between Antiquity and the Renaissance: antique intaglios were reset in medieval rings, and from the 14th century Italian and northern engravers began cutting new stones in the antique manner, first for seals, then for the collectors' cabinets of the 15th and 16th centuries. The plain gold hoop, widening smoothly into the bezel, belongs to this world. Two gods share the figure's attributes. Saturn is the old man with the sickle and sceptre; Vulcan is the bearded smith in a workman's cap, seated at his anvil with hammer and tongs — an iconography much favoured in the

Renaissance, from Mantegna to Piero di Cosimo, where the forge of Vulcan stands for the arts and crafts of civilisation.

Iconography and symbolism (If Saturn)

The Roman Kronos, who castrated his father Ouranos with a sickle and devoured his own children before Jupiter overthrew him; exiled to Latium, he taught men agriculture and reigned over the Golden Age. For the Renaissance, following Ficino, Saturn was also the planet of contemplation and melancholy, the patron of scholars — a fitting seal for a learned hand. If Vulcan: the lame god of fire and the forge, husband of Venus, maker of the arms of Achilles and of Jupiter's thunderbolts; the Renaissance read his forge as the birthplace of the arts. In either case, the seated old god with staff and blade is an emblem of mastery — over time, or over matter.

Literature **Comparanda**

The ring type

– Raphael, Portraits of Agnolo Doni and Maddalena Doni, c. 1505–1506, Florence, Uffizi Galleries (Palatine Gallery, Palazzo Pitti). Agnolo wears two gold rings with oval bezels, one with a dark stone, one with a red stone; Maddalena wears four.

– Titian, Portrait of the Physician Gian Giacomo Bartolotti da Parma, c. 1515–1518, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. GG 94. Two gold rings with oval bezels on the left hand, one set with a red stone.

– Bronzino, Portrait of a Young Man, 1530s, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 29.100.16. Plain gold ring with a small dark oval bezel on the right hand.

Comparanda

Vulcan in the Renaissance

– Giorgio Vasari, The Forge of Vulcan, 1564, Florence, Uffizi Galleries. Vulcan bearded, nude, seated in profile at work.

– Piero di Cosimo - Vulcano e Eolo, 1490, National Gallery of Canada