



An early 19th-century silvered brass snuff box, the lid set with a large glass paste of Jupiter Aegiochus after the Zulian intaglio.

Glass paste in imitation of rock crystal, moulded after an ancient cameo

Original silvered brass mount with scalloped bezel.

H. max. 56 mm; diam. 90 mm.

Probably Italian or English, early 19th century.

A circular snuff box in silvered brass, the plain drum with a push-fit lid. The lid is filled by a thick disc of colourless glass, moulded on its underside and read through the glass from above, so that the bust appears in relief within the transparent mass; it is held by its original scalloped bezel.

The subject figures the bust of Jupiter Aegiochus, facing, the head slightly turned in three-quarters: the god bearded, with thick tumbling hair, crowned with a wreath of oak leaves, the aegis with its scales over the right shoulder. The moulding is deep and sharp, the curls of hair and beard fully rendered — a cast of unusual size and quality, in glass imitating rock crystal.

Historical context – The Zulian intaglio and its casts

The model is the Zulian cameo, a sardonyx bust of Zeus Aegiochus of the 2nd century BC, found at Ephesus and given to the Republic of Venice by Girolamo Zulian in 1795; it is today in the National Archaeological Museum of Venice and was, from its arrival, one of the most admired ancient gems in Italy. Casts of it in plaster, sulphur and glass paste circulated across Europe in the decades around 1800, and a comparable glass example is kept in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (AA.VA.11). Our box belongs to this taste: an ancient masterpiece reproduced at large scale and turned into an object for the pocket.

Iconography and symbolism

Aegiochus — "bearer of the aegis" — is Homer's epithet for Zeus, and the aegis is the goat-skin shield he shakes to raise the storm. The Julian type gives the god not the calm of Olympian Zeus at Olympia but a face in movement, hair blown back, gaze lifted — the Hellenistic god of tempests rather than the seated lawgiver. For a collector of the Napoleonic years, opening a snuff box on this head meant carrying in one's hand the father of the gods as the Greeks of Pergamon and Ephesus had imagined him.