

An Etruscan Revival gold brooch with filigree and granulation, set with pearls and sapphires.

18ct (750‰) yellow gold, twisted-wire filigree and granulation; one pearl at the centre, twelve half-pearls, four cushion-cut sapphires.

Diam. 3.3 cm

Gross weight 8.80 g. Pin and C-catch at the back.

Italy or England, c. 1865–1880

A quatrefoil brooch in three tiers — four lobes, a square set on the diagonal, a central disc — each bordered with a rope of twisted wire and covered with filigree rosettes and granulation. A pearl sits at the centre, four cushion-cut sapphires mark the diagonals, and each lobe carries three half-pearls, with gold beads at the points. Pin and hook at the back.

Historical context – The Etruscan Revival

The opening of the Etruscan tombs around Rome in the 1830s and 1840s, and the arrival of their gold in the museums, set a fashion that ran across Europe for half a century: jewellers in Rome, Naples, London and Paris relearned filigree and granulation and built brooches, earrings and bracelets in the antique manner. This brooch, with its rope borders, wire rosettes and beaded collets, belongs to the mature phase of that taste, in the 1860s and 1870s; the catalogue that sold it called it "neo-Renaissance", which it is not.

Iconography and symbolism

The quatrefoil on a circle is a figure of order: four directions held around a centre, the oldest scheme of the world in the ancient and medieval imagination. The Etruscan goldsmiths whose work this imitates buried their finest granulated jewels with the dead, and the 19th century wore their forms as a way of

touching that lost world.