



A late Renaissance sardonyx cameo set in a later gold ring. Bust of an elderly Roman, after Republican portraiture.

Cameo 16 × 11 mm

Later gold ring (9k) – ring size US 6 (UK L½ / EU 52); gross weight 5.6 g.

Cameo: Western Europe, probably Italy, 16th–17th century.

Mounting: 18th century

Good condition; small chip to the lower left edge of the stone, covered by the bezel; minor wear; no visible hallmark.

A gold ring with oval rub-over bezel and tapering shank, set with a sardonyx cameo carved with the bust of an elderly man in profile to the left. The white layer, warmed with honey tones, stands in relief against a brown ground. The drilled pupil gives the gaze a sudden intensity.

Historical context – Renaissance glyptic

Renaissance collectors sought portraits of illustrious Romans, and Italian engravers supplied them all'antica. The veristic manner — bare head, lined face, lean neck — follows the portraits of the late Republic, known from marble busts and coins. The low-carat gold ring is a later addition.

Iconography and symbolism

In Republican Rome, a face marked by age was a claim to virtue. Polybius describes the wax masks of ancestors kept in the atrium and worn at funerals, so that the dead seemed to walk again among the

living (Histories VI, 53). A lesson in gravitas.