

An antique gold snake ring set with an old-cut diamond

18k gold; old-cut diamond approx. 0.45 ct

Ring size EU 52 – US 6 – UK L½; gross weight 5.42 g.

Victorian, second half of the 19th century

Condition: good, with light wear to the chasing consistent with age

A gold ring formed as a serpent whose body coils twice around the finger and ties itself in a knot.

The head, finely chased with scales, is set with an elongated old-cut diamond of approximately 0.45 carat. The tail loops back through the coils, closing the circle.

Historical context – Victorian Jewellery

The serpent became one of the great motifs of 19th-century jewellery after Prince Albert gave Queen Victoria an emerald-set snake ring on their engagement in 1839. Gold snake rings, often knotted and set with a stone in the head, were worn as tokens of love and fidelity throughout the Victorian era.

Iconography and symbolism

The snake that sheds its skin was for the ancients an image of renewal; coiled on itself it became eternity, the ouroboros that Horapollo reads as time without end (Hieroglyphica I). Sacred to Asclepius, it also stood for healing and watchful wisdom. Here the knot binds the serpent to itself: love made into a vow that cannot be untied.