

Finch & C^o



AN ITALIAN BANDED AGATE INTAGLIO

AN ITALIAN BANDED AGATE INTAGLIO CARVED WITH ONE OF THE LABOURS OF HERCULES
IN ENAMELLED SILVER PENDANT MOUNT

EARLY 17TH CENTURY

SIZE: 4 CM HIGH, 3 CM WIDE – 1½ INS HIGH, 1¼ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

HERCULES WAS THE ROMAN ADAPTATION OF THE GREEK GOD HERACLES AND WAS A POPULAR SUBJECT FOR GEM ENGRAVERS. INTAGLIO GEMS BOTH LARGE AND SMALL WERE IN GREAT DEMAND WITH COLLECTORS THROUGHOUT THE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES, AND NORTH OF THE ALPS THE THIRST FOR ITALIAN RENAISSANCE CAMEOS AND GEMS CARVED IN THE ANTIQUE STYLE SEEMED LIMITLESS.

VASARI RECORDS IN HIS 'LIVES' OF 1568 THAT IN ITALY 'THE SHOPS OF THE GOLDSMITHS, OR RATHER THE WHOLE WORLD, MAY BE SEEN TO BE FULL OF IMPRESSIONS TAKEN IN GESSO, SULPHUR, OR OTHER COMPOSITIONS FROM THE INTAGLIO IN WHICH WERE MADE SCENES, FIGURES AND HEADS'.

VALERIO BELLI OF VINCENZA WAS THE LEADING GEM ENGRAVER IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE 16TH CENTURY AND MANY OF HIS FINELY ENGRAVED SCENES BY DEMAND WERE CLASSICAL, BUT THEY CHALLENGED THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE BOUNDARIES OF ANCIENT AND MODERN. USING ANCIENTLY DERIVED BUT 'MODERN' RENAISSANCE TECHNICAL SKILLS HE CARVED MANY ANTIQUE MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGES.