Finch & Co



AN EARLY CHRISTIAN ROCK CRYSTAL INTAGLIO SET IN A GOLD SWIVEL RING

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GOLD, ROCK-CRYSTAL

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

3RD–4TH CENTURY AD (INTAGLIO)

MOUNT - 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 59 (EU) R (UK) 8 5/8 (US)

WEIGHT: 17.9 GRAMS

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PROVENANCE:

EX PRIVATE FRENCH COLLECTION

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LITERATURE

A PROMINENT EARLY CHRISTIAN INTAGLIO, INTRICATELY ENGRAVED ON A CABOCHON-CUT ROCK CRYSTAL, WHICH WAS LATER SET WITHIN A METICULOUSLY CRAFTED 19TH CENTURY YELLOW GOLD SWIVEL RING. THE INTAGLIO DEPICTS A DOLPHIN AND AN ANCHOR, TWO OF THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS REPRESENTING SALVATION AND UNWAVERING FAITH.

ACCOMPANIED BY A RETROGRADE INSCRIPTION IN ANCIENT GREEK, THE PHRASE 'ΕΠΙΤΥΝΧΑΝΟΥ' TRANSLATES TO 'MAY YOU SUCCEED' OR, MORE BROADLY, 'TRUST IN THE FUTURE'. THIS EXPRESSION EMBODIES FAITH IN A PROMISE WHOSE FULFILMENT LIES CONCEALED IN THE FUTURE. COMPARABLE IMAGERY CAN BE FOUND ON A JASPER INTAGLIO IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM (INV. 1856,0425.16), AND RELATED EXAMPLES ARE EXAMINED BY J. SPIER IN 'LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY CHRISTIAN GEMS' (NOS. 261, 302). THE DOLPHIN, SYMBOL OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, AND THE ANCHOR, EMBLEM OF HOPE, HARMONIOUSLY COMBINE TO ARTICULATE A PROFOUND STATEMENT OF BELIEF IN DIVINE DELIVERANCE. THE SELECTION OF ROCK CRYSTAL, ASSOCIATED WITH PURITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND THE SANCTITY OF WATER, FURTHER EMPHASISES THE THEOLOGICAL DEPTH OF THE COMPOSITION. RE-MOUNTED DURING THE 19TH CENTURY, IT IS LIKELY THAT THIS PIECE WAS INTENDED FOR A COLLECTOR ON THE GRAND TOUR.

PROVENANCE

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