

Cameo Appearances



The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Inside back cover: Alessandro Masnago (Italian, active by ca. 1560, d. 1620). *Sleeping Shepherdess in a Moonlit Landscape* (detail). Milan, probably late 16th century. See fig. 51, page 27.

This page: Benedetto Pistrucci (Italian, 1783–1855, active in England 1815–55). *Head of Medusa*. London, ca. 1840–50. See fig. 95, page 44. Opposite: *Jupiter Astride an Eagle*. Possibly Roman, 1st century B.C. See fig. 12, page 12.

Photographs of intaglios and cameos were taken especially for this *Bulletin* by Peter Zeray and Paul Lachenauer, The Photograph Studio, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Most of the cameos have been enlarged for legibility's sake. Unless indicated otherwise, measurements do not include mounts.

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Director's Note

The Metropolitan Museum's Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts oversees roughly 250 small, wondrously wrought hard-stone cameos dating from the Renaissance to the Victorian era, a collection that outshines that of any other American museum. It was with a view toward bringing these cameos to greater attention that in 2005 James David Draper, Henry R. Kravis Curator in the department, arranged a survey of about 100 examples in the gallery devoted to periodic showings of the department's possessions, subsequently endowed as the Wrightsman Exhibition Gallery. Drawing also upon the resources of the departments of Greek and Roman Art, Medieval Art, and American Art, as well as the Robert Lehman Collection, the Museum at one stroke was able to demonstrate the origins of cameos in classical antiquity, their rare occurrences in the Middle Ages, their efflo-

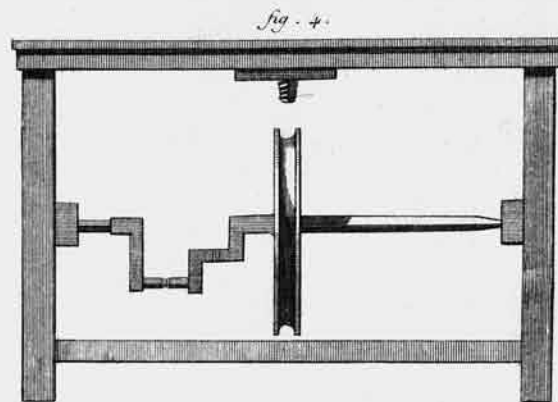
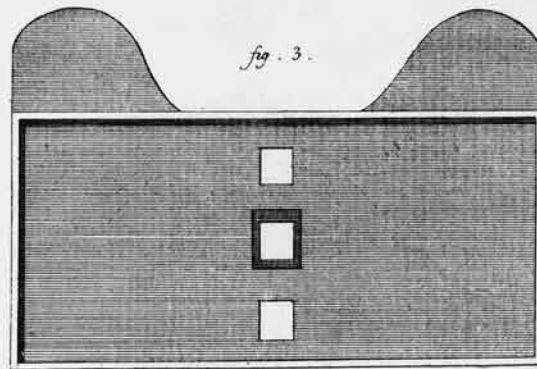
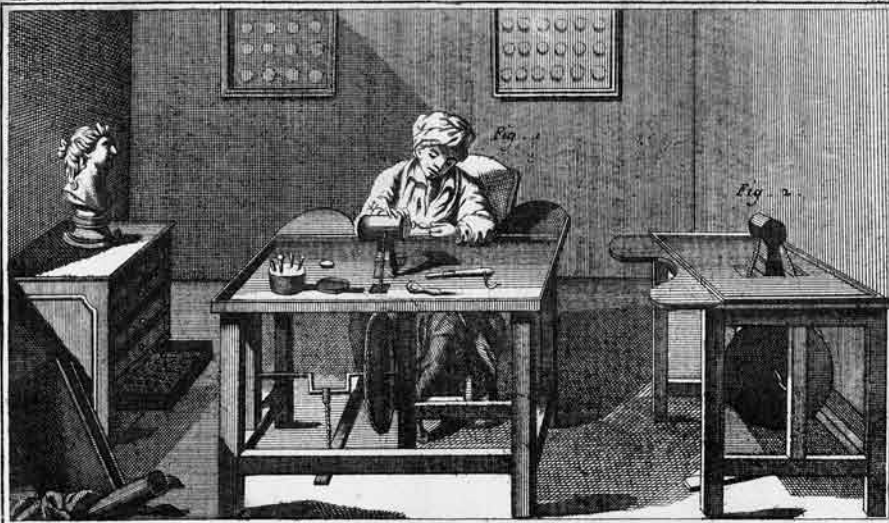


rescence from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, and their spread to the New World. We owe thanks to The David Berg Foundation for helping to make this exhibition possible.

The exhibition of cameos proved to be well liked by visitors, and it would have been a disservice to scholarship if it had left no record, particularly as the objects themselves are not only eloquently evocative of past civilizations but also extremely photogenic. The situation is now redressed by this *Bulletin*. Individuals too numerous to name have assisted Jim Draper in its realization, yet we would be remiss not to cite some of those most helpfully involved. Curators Carmen Bambach, Christopher S. Lightfoot, Charles T. Little, Joan R. Mertens, Elizabeth J. Milleker, Thayer Tolles, Clare Vincent, and Beth Carver Wees were unstinting with advice. In the Museum's Conservation and Scientific Research Departments the stones were analyzed and identified by James H. Frantz, assisted by Anna Serotta, and cleaning by Linda Borsch has made them spectacularly presentable. Peter Zeray undertook the campaign of photographing all the cameos, with compelling results. Denny Stone adroitly tracked the pieces' movements throughout the Museum.

But it is fitting above all to recall those through whose perspicacity and generosity the collections have evolved. Foremost was Milton Weil, a zealous connoisseur whose gifts and bequests form the bedrock of the Museum's holdings, accounting for at least two-thirds of our finest pieces. Our most dedicated enthusiasts nowadays are members of the family of the late Ignazio Peluso, who have provided funds for the purchase of distinguished exemplars from the age of Neoclassicism, the heyday of cameos. Our Neoclassical gems were already preeminent thanks to Milton Weil, but now through the kindness of the Pelusos they shine forth with even greater éclat.

Philippe de Montebello
Director



Cameo Appearances

The time-honored engraving of hardstones harks back several millennia to the seals that identified ancient Near Eastern dignitaries. The Greeks refined the art, engraving both precious and semiprecious stones with an exquisite precision that matched their rarity and that of their gold settings, which have largely vanished. These objects often bore the images of deities or other talismanic signifiers. Until roughly the fifth century B.C. the Greek world produced gems carved only in sunken relief, or intaglios, whose name derives from the Italian verb *intagliare*, to carve into or to engrave. In antiquity, as well as in later periods, countless thousands of little stones received images engraved in intaglio (see figs. 2–4, three intaglios in the Metropolitan, one ancient, one from the Renaissance, and one Neoclassical). The motifs on intaglios are not always immediately discernible because their forms recede from the eye, but when impressions are taken from them, typically in gypsum compounds, they become sharper and more legible (although the images on the three intaglios shown here are sufficiently strong not to require their transfer into another material in order to be read). Because the carvers knew that their compositions would be reversed when casts were taken, they cut inscriptions and signatures in mirror image so that they would read properly on the impressions. Intaglios are generally made from translucent, nonlayered gems, either precious or semiprecious. Most of the intaglios in the Museum's collections are semiprecious stones.

About the fifth century B.C. the Greeks introduced stones engraved in appreciably projected relief. These are the antecedents of cameos, a term again borrowed from the Italian. Whereas the relief in intaglios is incuse, that is, cut into the stone by the drill, in the cameo process the drill cuts away the stone to raise the composition in relief, with proper sculptural effect. As Erasmus Darwin, a naturalist of the Enlightenment, put it, “the bold cameo speaks, the soft intaglio thinks.” The Greeks distinguished between the two branches of glyptics, the overall term for

the engraving of hardstones; diaglyphs are intaglios and anaglyphs are cameos. The same artists could produce both intaglios and cameos, but most specialized in one or the other. The Romans, promulgating Greek glyptic traditions, continued nobly in both branches, and during the Renaissance Italy became the center of gem engraving, a position it has retained in modern times.

Ancient methods of hardstone engraving were based on principles still in play today. The pieces were worked by manipulating various drills (in antiquity made of relatively soft metal, eventually replaced by iron) against them. The drills rotated by means of a wheel or, sometimes, apparently among the ancients, a bow, though subsequent practice increasingly favored the wheel. The actual cutting was accomplished not with the point of the drill itself but by using the drill to rub powders (in later epochs, diamond powder) into the stone, and additional abrasives were often employed to polish the backgrounds. At all times the stones must have been gripped fixedly with just enough flexion to prevent their shattering under stress. When magnifying glasses were introduced into the art is unclear; today they would be virtually indispensable. An engraving in Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (fig. 1) conveys the means through which, by the eighteenth century, uncut stones became cameos. In the nineteenth century steam and electricity powered the drills, and new methods, including the intervention of photography, allowed ever greater verisimilitude and accuracy of line.

The glyptic arts have known various ups and downs. They reached a veritable apex during the mid-nineteenth century, as witness the signal achievements of the Roman masters so brilliantly represented in the Museum's collections: Giuseppe Girometti (see figs. 86, 90–93), Benedetto Pistrucci (figs. 95–97), and Luigi Saulini (figs. 102–5, 114). But that rebirth was followed by a crash. By the 1860s Neoclassicism, whose elegant simplifications could be so perfectly expressed in cameos, was losing its grip, and gem

1 • An early modern gem carver at work.

Engraving. From Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie; ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1751–65), vol. 4, pl. 1 (plates vol. 5, no. 154). With his foot driving the wheel that powers his drill, the carver brings the stone, affixed by mastic to a handle, to meet the drill's point. Among his supplies are diamond powder, olive oil, and a range of tiny bits and saws. The bust atop the cabinet suggests that the artist either is or identifies with a sculptor, while the open drawer suggests a sizable glyptic output.

carvers showed a diminution of creative impulse as well as technical prowess that was soon reflected in contemporary criticism. The Reverend C. W. King, a Victorian connoisseur and pundit, lamented “that sudden and total decay of the taste for gems which prevails in this day,” which he blamed on the counterfeiting and endless repetition of ancient designs. Honestly gifted carvers may have revived the art sporadically, as happened in France about 1900, but without ever recapturing the authority or the mystique of the gems that had lain at the heart of full-fledged Neoclassicism.

“To engrave is, in final strictness, to decorate a surface with furrows,” the eminent Victorian critic John Ruskin once said, and “cameos, in accuratest terms, are miniature sculptures, not engravings.” The three-dimensionality of cameos, which are usually quite tiny, is attained through intensely concentrated work at close range. Drills are employed to bring forth the design from the stone, boring through the piece’s upper layers down to the ground layer. Cameos were, and still are, especially prized when the artist manipulated the strata of the stone in relation to his or her design, exploring the stone’s depths to enhance its visual impact. This was often achieved by playing a paler layer against a darker ground, typically white on black, especially in onyx, to realize a strong contrast. The reverse could also obtain, with a dark layer rising from a pale ground. Gradually, depending on the complexity of the stone itself and with constant practice augmenting artistic intent, more bands of color were engaged in the design, sometimes even prompting the inclusion of hints of landscape like those in the more pictorial pieces of the Hellenistic age.

Throughout history cameo makers have used a wide range of stones. Softer stones such as chalcedony or, rarely, turquoise and harder ones such as jasper and lapis lazuli can all be carved in relief, but they inevitably evoke less fascination than cameos carved from polychromatic hardstones, which in the best hands seem almost to combine the effects of painting and sculpture and have always been coveted both as fanciful curiosities and as miraculous unions of art and nature. The selection of stones was rooted in commerce, and the dealers who supplied them were no doubt shrewd judges of their properties and their potential for creating striking banded effects.

Cameos have long been used to complement jewelry. Typically mounted in gold and often set in rings, these private adornments attained cul-

tic significance in classical antiquity. In imperial Rome they not only advertised the taste and wealth of the men and women who wore them but also, through the images they bore, professed their wearers’ virtue and devotion to the gods or to political forces such as the Caesars. Cameos passed down from hand to hand and those discovered by diggers have held up better than their golden mounts, which have frequently been melted down. A quick look ahead will tell the reader that even though the amuletic potency of the stones themselves may have waned, the settings crafted for Victorian matrons’ cameos have fared better than those of their Roman forebears.

The ancients hoarded gems as well as commissioning them. Romans deposited engraved stones in temples as lavish donations. In the first century B.C. the Roman general Sulla’s son-in-law Scaurus was the first to keep his in a cabinet, according to Pliny, who wrote further that Julius Caesar placed six cabinetsful in the Temple of Venus Genetrix (thus influencing the educated taste of later enthusiasts for the opulent cabinetry that has housed the best collections). Greco-Roman gemstones continued to be esteemed in the Middle Ages. Many were preserved in precious reliquaries, some of which still display magnificent engraved stones alongside mediocre ones and bits of glass. The Reverend King styled this rehabilitation “Heathen Gems Christianized.” It was left to the quattrocento’s indefatigable collectors of ancient cameos to begin distinguishing among them, prizing and isolating those most appealing in design and execution and those whose subjects had greatest iconological relevance and phylacteric authority. Pope Paul II’s prestigious holdings, the grandest of their day, were acquired by the Medici after that pontiff died in 1471. Lorenzo de’ Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent) did not think he was mutilating his gems when he had each of them incised with the abbreviated Latin form of his name, LAVR.MED., in large capitals that occupy much of their fields. Nor, probably, was he worrying about security. He is more likely to have tagged them thus because the act involved him indelibly and intimately in their history and glamour. His contemporaries record Lorenzo eagerly sharing his pieces with visitors, and he employed agents in Rome to seek out more. When he died in 1492, the inventory of his collections in the Palazzo Medici valued his greatest cameos at several times over his best Botticelli paintings. (Most



2

2 • Gnaios (Greek, active during Roman rule, late 1st century B.C.). **Bust of a Woman.** Intaglio. Carnelian, 19 x 16 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $\frac{5}{8}$ in.), later mounted in gold as a ring. Signed in reverse: Γναίου. Rogers Fund, 1910 (10.110.1). That the stone is convex on the engraved side gives this intaglio bust of a woman extra depth and presence. The scepter behind the woman's neck presumably signifies dominion. The field below the bust

is signed by a Greco-Roman carver, Gnaios. Though signed ancient gemstones are rare, five compositions bearing the signature of Gnaios survive. This one has a distinguished past, having belonged to Athanasius Kircher, the erudite seventeenth-century German Jesuit who formed the Museo Kircheriano in Rome. Its design circulated among connoisseurs in the form of gypsum impressions.



3

3 • Adoration of the Shepherds. Intaglio. Northern Italian, ca. 1500. Jasper, diam. 51 mm (2 in.), mounted in silver as a seal. On silver grip: French import mark in use from 1893. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.22). The jasper in this intaglio is not layered, but the engraver used its mottled patternings and variegated colorations, from violet to amber, to add atmospheric effects to his model, much like a cameo carver exploring a stone's best properties. The Renaissance composition is sufficiently large and lucid to be judged without the aid of an impression. The

intaglio's original function is not known, but a devout subsequent owner decided to make it into a seal.

4 • Nathaniel Marchant (English, 1739–1816). **Emma Hart, later Lady Hamilton.** Intaglio. Naples, 1786–87. Smoky transparent chalcedony, 27 x 21 mm ($1\frac{1}{16}$ x $\frac{7}{8}$ in.), mounted in a gilt-silver ring. Signed in reverse: MARCHANT. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.1). Neoclassical Europe appreciated Nathaniel Marchant's emulation of the best in Greco-Roman form and his glyptic perfectionism, with results not unlike our fig. 2. In 1786–87 he

visited Naples, where the beautiful Emma Hart was the current rage. Artists crowded the rooms of her protector, Sir William Hamilton: "The house is full of painters painting me," Emma wrote. "Marchant is cutting my head in stone, that is in cameo for a ring. . . . All the artists is coming from Rome to study from me." Either Marchant cut both a cameo and an intaglio or the unlettered Emma confused the two. The "Grecian" headdress is in keeping with her famous "attitudes," poses she struck based on masterpieces of antiquity.



4

5 • Apollo and Marsyas.

Italian, 15th century, after the antique. Bronze plaque, 37 x 32 mm (1½ x 1¼ in.). The Erich Lederer Collection, Gift of Mrs. Erich Lederer, 1986 (1986.319.8). This replicates a famous carnelian that belonged to Lorenzo

de' Medici and is now in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Lorenzo's abbreviated name, LVR. MED., appears along the left edge, but so faintly as to suggest that this is an undatable aftercast of an earlier plaque.



5

of Lorenzo's cameos are preserved together in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples.)

Not all fifteenth-century collectors were potentates. The great Florentine sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti owned cameos whose compositions inspired passages in the Gates of Paradise, the bronze doors of the Florence Baptistery. By the late quattrocento copies of the most admired cameos were reappearing everywhere, whether carved in enlarged versions on portals or painted in actual size in the borders of illuminated manuscripts. Before the printing press, images on hardstones circulated by means of casts, some probably of ignoble gesso, others of bronze that underscored the esteem in which the stones were held. Three-dimensional copies were invaluable indicators of the height of the relief in the stones. Bronze plaquettes cast from carved gems, often with a hole drilled into them so they could be pinned to a surface for study (see figs. 5 and 6), motivated the designs of many a Renaissance artist. And in their own right they comprised a new, affordable species for collectors.

From the sixteenth century far into the nineteenth, collectors continued to favor ancient



6

6 • Bacchus Discovering Ariadne on Naxos.

Italian, 15th century, after the antique. Bronze plaque, pierced, 57 x 78 mm (2¼ x 3⅛ in.). Rogers Fund, 1927 (27.14.6). The celebrated

"Gonzaga Cameo" replicated here belonged to the Mantuan dukes of that name. Its piquant motifs, such as the satyr being seized by one of his horns, provided fodder for painters all over Italy.

cameos, even alongside periodic bursts of achievement by Renaissance and Neoclassical master carvers. In 1551 Giovanni Grimani, the patriarch of Aquileia, spent a considerable sum to reclaim his family's collection of nearly two hundred antique cameos from the authorities who had seized it when his brother, Cardinal Marino Grimani, died suspiciously and in great debt. Giovanni allowed Battista Franco and the antiquarian Enea Vico to arrange for the cameos to be reproduced in a series of engravings. Only forty-five of the gems were ever illustrated, but through those engravings (see fig. 7) the Grimani collection (which has since been lost) became widely known.

The seventeenth century witnessed the consolidation of the great collections of the French and Austrian crowns (now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), as well as those formed by such personalities as the duchesse d'Orléans (eventually acquired, along with others, by Catherine the Great and now in the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg). Eighteenth-century collectors included numerous

British milords, many of whom were introduced to their treasures in Rome while on the Grand Tour. Scholars then also in Rome codified the study of gems with increasing science and sensitivity. In 1724 Baron Philipp von Stosch published all the gems with Greek signatures known to him (see figs. 8 and 9), and in 1760 Johann Joachim Winckelmann in turn published the remarkable collection Stosch himself had accumulated. Winckelmann would be forever known as the apostle who taught the superiority of all things Greek over things Roman, a prejudice that long remained dominant. Neither Stosch nor Winckelmann can have dreamed that their efforts would encourage fraud, but in fact the eighteenth century spawned widespread glyptic fakery that continued far into the nineteenth.

Cameos gained steadily in popularity over the eighteenth century, as evidenced by their occurrence as motifs on objects of all sorts, from textile patterns to ceramic borders. The Staffordshire firm of Josiah Wedgwood sold innumerable jasperware copies and imitations. Wedgwood poured supreme effort into the ceramic production of copies of the Portland Vase, the ancient Roman glass vessel with seven figures carved cameo-style around its body (British Museum, London), but his renditions of cameos in the usual sense also found plenty of buyers. One of his more successful items was of the “Marlborough

7 • Hercules Roping Cerberus. Engraving of an antique cameo published by Enea Vico (Italian, 1523–1567) in 1620. Plate: 88 x 124 mm (3½ x 4¾ in.). The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949 (49.97.432). The engraving replicates a classical cameo from the Grimani collection in Venice (now in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) that depicts Hercules grappling with the three-headed guardian of the mouth of hell and is signed by Dioscurides, the favorite gem carver of Emperor Augustus. An ancient fragmentary replica is in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 13).

8 • Bernard Picart (French, 1673–1733). **Cameo with Bust of Phocion.** Ca. 1724. Red chalk on paper, 219 x 149 mm (8⅞ x 5⅞ in.). Rogers Fund, 1967 (67.100.2). Bernard Picart drew the anxious features of the virtuous statesman Phocion, taken from a since-lost sardonyx, for Baron von Stosch's *Pierres antiques gravées* (see fig. 9). It bears the putative signature of Pyrgoteles, Alexander the Great's carver of choice.

9 • Bust of Phocion. Engraving, after a drawing by Bernard Picart (see fig. 8). From Philipp von Stosch, *Pierres antiques gravées, sur lesquelles les graveurs ont mis leurs noms . . .* (Amsterdam, 1724), pl. 56. The volume's subtitle reflects the appetite for signed gems that fakers were only too pleased to satisfy. At the image's lower right the engraver placed a small oval to indicate the cameo's actual size.



7



8



9

10 • Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (English, founded 1759). **The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche.** Etruria, Staffordshire, ca. 1780–1800. Jasperware, 70 x 89 mm (2¾ x 3½ in.). Bequest of George D. Pratt, 1935 (45.174.42).

The eighteenth century's most admired and widely replicated ancient cameo, called the "Marlborough Cameo" after the collection it then belonged to, enacts an initiation rite involving two curiously veiled children, traditionally identified as Cupid and Psyche. This is Wedgwood's blue-and-white takeoff on the original brown-hued sardonyx in Boston, which is signed in Greek "Tryphon."



10

Cameo" (fig. 10), a sardonyx cameo from the first century B.C. depicting the marriage of Cupid and Psyche that was owned by Peter Paul Rubens before it entered the collection of Thomas Howard, the earl of Arundel, sometime before 1727. In 1899 the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, bought the cameo from the auction of the fabled collection of gems that had been formed in the eighteenth century by George Spencer, fourth duke of Marlborough. The Marlborough sale at Christie's in London was a central event for American museums, who were just beginning to compete in the international art market. Some of the Metropolitan Museum's finest cameos, both classical and Renaissance, derive from the Marlborough hoard.

The Metropolitan Museum's greatest benefactor, J. Pierpont Morgan, gathered a few fine cameos into his farflung possessions, most notably the portrait of Bona Sforza, queen of Poland, that Gian Giacomo Caraglio carved in about 1530–40 (fig. 36), but Morgan also fell victim to an ostentatious hoax (see fig. 11). New York merchant Milton Weil, cofounder of the Gotham Silk Hosiery Company, was far less fabulously

rich than Morgan but had the good sense to specialize, founding the twentieth century's single most important collection of cameos, the choicest then available. Weil's treasures, transferred systematically over thirteen years, became the foundation of the Metropolitan Museum's holdings, and the majority of the pieces discussed here are from his collection. Weil's Greco-Roman cameos came to the Museum between 1927 and 1932. His widow presented those dating from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century in 1938 and 1939 and the whole spectacular Neo-classical balance in 1940. During his twenty-five years of buying Weil's standards were so high that one suspects he turned for advice to the curator of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Ernst Kris, who wrote a catalogue of the postclassical cameos in the Weil collection in 1932. At Weil's death in 1934 his obituary in the *Herald Tribune* announced: "Milton Weil, 59, Cameo Expert, Financier, Dies." The subheads "Had Stock Exchange Seat" and "Sold it within Two Years at Profit of \$125,000" were followed by a quote from Weil: "And that," he told his friends after retiring to pursue his hobby, "is a lot of cameos."



11 • A “Marlborough Gem”: Bust of a Woman in Profile, Her Back to the Spectator. Large cameo: Italian or English, probably 19th century; smaller cameos: three possibly Greco-Roman, others probably 19th century; mount: probably English, 19th century. Onyx, glued to a dark brown sardonyx(?) ground, 56 x 38 mm (2¼ x 1½ in.), mounted in gold for display, with enamel, smaller cameos, and a pearl. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.867). This ensemble of mixed elements has a confused history that illustrates how the age-old practice of incorporating cameos into objects of greater size and complexity continued well into the nineteenth century. The large cameo, based on a Roman type in which the

subject is shown from behind (for an ancient example, see fig. 18), was reputed to have been in the collection formed by the fourth duke of Marlborough in the mid-eighteenth century. It does not, however, appear in eighteenth-century Marlborough catalogues, and its facture and assembly are later, as is the coyly imitative over-the-shoulder view. The elaborate frame, with well-wrought war trophies, was altered by the owner who purchased it when it was added into the 1899 auction of the Marlborough collection. He replaced its plain stones with smaller cameos, also bought at that sale, of which only the theatrical mask at center left and one or two others might conceivably date from classical antiquity.

11

Greco-Roman Cameos

The Hellenistic Greeks were the first to excel at carving small hardstones with figures in relief. The practice seems rooted in the ancient Mesopotamian stones that were carved for use as identifying seals. Neither ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals nor Egyptian scarabs, however, exploit the layers of stone like the cameos carved by Hellenistic Greek and, later, with undiminished skill, Roman masters.

In retelling myths and establishing settings, carved gemstones on occasion rival frescoes and relief sculpture on larger objects such as sarcophagi, even when deploying multiple figures

on a very small scale. Because they mine much the same repertory of images as scenes in other media, it is sometimes possible to reconstruct the compositions of cameos based on fragments.

Ancient cameos are often hard to date with precision owing to the reuse of many compositions, particularly Hellenistic ones, well into the centuries of Roman dominion, when the preponderance of examples were produced. They manifest such consistency and conviction in the shaping of their stately rhythms that all later classical revivals would try, with varying success, to emulate their authoritative designs.



12



14

12 • Jupiter Astride an Eagle. Possibly Roman, 1st century B.C., after a Hellenistic prototype. Cristobalite, 34 x 30 mm (1⅜ x 1⅛ in.). Gift of Milton Weil, 1932 (32.142.2). Jupiter, most powerful of the gods, was invoked by rulers and subjects alike. The eagle's talons grasp his primordial symbol, the thunderbolt. Even in its fragmentary state this cameo has a canonical aura and exemplifies the precision and differentiation of texture and density—the ground is translucent—that engravers of later periods would strive to equal. The original cut of the edge is preserved at the right. By extending its arc one can project an oval composition about double in size.

13 • Hercules Roping Cerberus. Hellenistic or Roman, 2nd century B.C.–1st century A.D. Onyx, 16 x 26 mm (⅝ x 1 in.). Gift of Milton Weil, 1932 (32.142.1). The original gem by Dioscurides (see fig. 7) spawned numerous cameos and intaglios that allow us to visualize the rest of the design to which this fine fragment belonged.

14 • Bacchus and Ariadne in a Chariot Drawn by Panthers. Hellenistic or Roman, 4th–3rd century B.C. Sardonyx, 27 x 27 mm (1⅛ x 1⅛ in.). Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.1204). Groups of divinities in triumphal procession were a staple of ancient iconology. Departing from custom, here the wine god sits on the princess's



13



15

lap, his body and head turned in opposite directions. The panthers' shaggy fur stands out against the translucent ground.

15 • The Rape of Proserpina(?). Probably Roman, after a Hellenistic prototype of the 4th century B.C. Onyx, 78 x 79 mm (3⅜ x 3⅛ in.). Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.1203). Obdurate Pluto, god of the underworld, became enamored of Proserpina, and in his chariot conveyed her, vainly protesting, to hell to make her his queen. In this fragment, the arm of a second male and details of a chariot are visible. The forms may seem coarse and schematic relative to those achieved by the most fluent carvers, but that may be because the carver was rendering a much smaller composition in this exceptionally large scale. By continuing the arc of the god's back and cloak one can infer a round stone some 160 millimeters (6¼ in.) in diameter.

16–17 • Two cameos depicting *Aurora Driving Her Chariot*. Roman, 1st or 2nd century A.D. Sardonyx.
Fig. 16: 35 x 43 mm (1⅜ x 1⅞ in.). Gift of Milton Weil, 1929 (29.175.3). Fig. 17: 30 x 42 mm (1⅛ x 1⅝ in.). Rogers Fund, 1926 (26.60.59). Aurora was goddess of the dawn. One turned to her in hope that the day's

routines would bring reassurance and reward. Each day, eternally young, she mounted her chariot, ordinarily pulled by white horses, and raised the curtain for Apollo, god of the sun. Cameos show the consistency of her imagery over time, with occasional variations. In fig. 17, three strata are skillfully deployed, the top brown hue serving to articulate the foremost horse against the flank of the other. Fig. 16, less expertly fashioned from two layers, reverses the design and enunciates the goddess by encircling her torso in a veil that billows more broadly around her.



16



17

18 • Augustus Caesar. Roman, 1st century A.D. Onyx, 37 x 29 mm (1½ x 1⅛ in.). Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1942 (42.11.30). Famous since the seventeenth century, when it was in the Arundel collection (it was later in the Marlborough collection), this virtuoso demonstration of the Roman gem cutter's art shows the mature but energetic and well-muscled emperor Augustus from the back, his head in noble profile, the ribbons of his laurel wreath floating behind him. He turns his back so that his shoulder displays his baldric and the aegis incorporating heads of Medusa and a wind god. The cream-colored portrait rises masterfully from the violet-tinged brown translucent ground.



18

19 • Augustus Caesar above a Double Capricorn. Roman, late 1st century B.C.–early 1st century A.D. Sardonyx, 23 x 28 mm (⅞ x 1⅛ in.), later mounted in gold for suspension. Gift of Milton Weil, 1929 (29.175.4). The minute profile bust of the emperor crowned with laurel was carved in intaglio into the middle white stratum of the stone. The double Capricorn, Augustus's well-publicized astrological sign, is in relief, in regular cameo fashion.

20 • Caligula. Roman, A.D. 37–41. Onyx, 43 x 31 mm (1⅞ x 1¼ in.). Rogers Fund, 1911 (11.195.7). The contours of the bust in this fragment, a most agreeably composed likeness of the tyrant Caligula, have been preserved, but chips and the breaking away of the background are reminders of archaeological treasures' slim chances for survival.



19



20



21



22



23

21 • Bust of a Man, possibly Augustus Caesar.

Roman, early 1st century A.D. Glass paste, 44 x 31 mm (1¾ x 1¼ in.). Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1881 (81.10.143). The Romans reproduced the imagery current in cameos in two-layered pieces of molded glass (see also figs. 22 and 23). An emperor's features captured in "cameo glass" could proliferate freely throughout the realm in much the same way as they did on coins.

22 • Amorini Pulling the Chariot of Venus over the Sea.

Roman, early 1st century A.D. Glass paste, 153 x 124 mm (6 x 4⅞ in.). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.194.358). The Romans invented the technique of carving glass so that colors and forms interplay as they do on hardstones, and they were also the first to exploit it for insertions in buildings and furniture. Captivating details in this fragment of a frieze were emphasized through carving after the glass cooled.

23 • Frenzied Maenad. Roman, 1st century A.D. Glass paste, 35 x 27 mm (1⅜ x 1⅙ in.). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.194.10). The companions of Bacchus, contorted in drunken ecstasy, are ubiquitous in Hellenistic and Roman art. Modest little glass reliefs like this one survive in numbers that suggest they enjoyed considerable popularity.



24

24 • Bust of a Young Woman. Roman, 2nd–3rd century A.D. Chalcedony, h. 64 mm (2½ in.). Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.286.125). In a fashion of the Antonine period (A.D. 138–93), this young woman's hair is coiled on top of her head. Her ears are pierced to receive earrings, and a luxurious gold setting very likely further enhanced the bust. Small sculptures like this and fig. 25 were carved in the round in an approximation of cameo methods. Chalcedony, a soft, milky translucent or semitranslucent quartz, was often chosen for these miniatures because its relative ductility allowed such interesting achievements in plasticity.



25

25 • Victory. Probably Roman, 1st or 2nd century A.D. Chalcedony, h. 73 mm (2⅞ in.). Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.1161). Images of the Greek winged goddess Nike proliferated in Roman art as symbols of military triumph. This one has lost her wings; like her missing head, arms, and palm branch, they were probably made of precious metal. She remains ravishing, especially when bathed in light that silhouettes her body, carved in the densest area of the stone, amid her translucent draperies.

Medieval Cameos

As might be expected during an age of intense spirituality, most medieval cameos have religious subjects. Rare exceptions are the works created during the Hohenstaufen rule in southern Italy and Sicily in the thirteenth century (see fig. 30). The greatest repositories of medieval carvings, and indeed also of those passed down from Greco-Roman antiquity, were the treasuries of churches and monasteries, where, in company with pearls and plain-carved stones and glass, they adorned venerated liturgical and devotional objects.



26



27

26 • Female Figure (probably Aurora) Driving a Chariot. Cameo: Roman, ca. A.D. 100–300; brooch: Langobardic, ca. A.D. 600. Sardonyx, 19 x 21 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $\frac{7}{8}$ in.), mounted as a brooch in gold with glass cabochons. Purchase, 1895 (95.15.101). This cameo repeats a familiar classical type (see figs. 16, 17), but its energetic angular forms are a shorthand approximation of the earlier conception. Like some other nomadic tribes, the Lombards, or Langobards, the Germanic people who invaded northern Italy in the sixth century, prized Greco-Roman gems of earlier times, both preserving stones and displaying them by having them mounted in jewelry.

27 • The Archangel Michael. Byzantine or Italian, ca. 1100–1400. Onyx, 28 x 21 mm ($1\frac{1}{8}$ x $1\frac{3}{16}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.58). The end of the drill has punctuated the stone's white zone, opening a semblance of space at Michael's elbow and between his legs. The engraver also manipulated the white stratum so as to frame the image in an oval band. The perforation at the left must have been for attachment.



28

28 • The Virgin and Child Enthroned between Angels. Byzantine (Constantinople), late 11th–12th century. Chalcedony, 38 x 32 mm (1½ x 1¼ in.), mounted in northern Europe in the 12th–14th century as a pendant in gold with emeralds, sardonyx, garnets, sapphires, and pearls. Purchase, Acquisitions Fund, Christopher C. Grisanti and Suzanne P. Fawbush, Austin B. Chinn, and Katharine R. Brown Gift, Gifts of Marx Freres, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Mrs. Frank D. Millett, by exchange, and funds from various donors, 2007 (2007.9). The Virgin in this fine bluish chalcedony carving occupies a well-cushioned throne. Incised below the angels on either side of her is an abbreviation of Theotokos (Mother of God). In their embrace of Orthodox Christianity, recent converts among the Rus' tribes of northern Europe had bejeweled mounts fashioned to receive iconic Byzantine motifs.

29 • The Virgin Blachernitissa. Byzantine (Constantinople), second half of the 11th century. Agate, 53 x 40 mm (2½ x 1⅝ in.), mounted in France ca. 1800 in a gold frame bearing the mark of Adrien-Jean Vachette. Gift of John C. Weber in honor of Mary and Michael Jaharis, 2007 (2007.445). Suspended in Adrien-Jean Vachette's superb foliate frame, its edge grasped by the bills of tiny doves' heads, this agate depicts a Virgin of a Byzantine type named after an icon venerated at the Blachernai monastery in Constantinople. Arms raised in orant position, she displays a medallion of the Christ Child on her chest. The Greek letters incised at the top abbreviate the name of Jesus Christ. The stone's original sheen is spectacularly preserved.



29

30 • Hercules Wrestling the Nemean Lion. Southern Italian, ca. 1220–40. Sardonyx, 41 x 32 mm (1⅞ x 1¼ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.23). At his peripatetic court Frederick II Hohenstaufen, king of Sicily and, from 1220 until his death in 1250, Holy Roman Emperor, promoted the creation of cameos based on antique themes adapted from Greek and Roman coins and cameos. The gods and heroes of antiquity long outlived the fall of Rome, and their images served as amulets worn even by devout Christians. As late as 1502, Camillus Leonardi reminded readers of his *Lapidaria* that "Hercules, holding a club and slaying a lion or other monster, engraved on any stone, gives victory in battle." As cleanly delineated as the figures are, their chunky forms and the stiff framing wreath would not be found in the cameos of classical antiquity.

31 • The Fast of Saint Nicholas. Southern Italian, ca. 1200–1250. Onyx, 24 x 18 mm (1 x ¾ in.), later mounted in gold as a pendant. Rogers Fund, 2000 (2000.347). This irregular carving with tawny inflections, which might at a casual glance be taken for a Madonna and Child, actually shows the infant Saint Nicholas grasping his mother's arm as she proffers her breast and he refuses her milk, an episode that in the Middle Ages served as an exemplum of abstinence. Nicholas's relics reside at Bari, and his protection was invoked throughout southern Italy, including the Hohenstaufen fiefdoms.



30



31



32



33

32–33 • Christ Crucified between the Virgin and Saint John and The Virgin and Child. Fig. 32: Probably French, 14th century. Onyx, 28 x 21 mm ($1\frac{1}{8}$ x $1\frac{3}{16}$ in.), mounted, probably in France in the 17th century, as a pendant in gold with enamel and rock crystal. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.59). Fig. 33: Flemish or Burgundian, ca. 1440–50. Onyx, 34 x 18 mm ($1\frac{3}{8}$ x $\frac{3}{4}$ in.), later mounted as a pendant in gold with enamel and a pearl. Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1522). In the Middle Ages

familiar typologies evolved and were constantly refined in accordance with stylistic changes. The fourteenth-century *Crucified Christ between the Virgin and Saint John* follows a relatively static convention, whereas the slight asymmetry and swaying rhythms of the Madonna on the later stone are elegant Late Gothic interpolations. The latter shows considerable rubbing, no doubt from devotional handling.

Renaissance Cameos

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries gem carvers followed the lead of painters and sculptors in devoting themselves to the reintegration of classical subject matter and form. Several of them were in demand at the courts of rulers. As they viewed the natural world around them with ever greater curiosity, they selected a colorful variety of hardstones that allowed them to give new expression to old genres.

34 • The Virgin and Child. French or Franco-Flemish, ca. 1500. Probably onyx, 26 x 21 mm (1 x 13/16 in.), later mounted as a pendant in a gilt-silver frame with diamonds. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.1). The tenderly interacting figures of Mary, elaborately coiffed and holding a flower, and her reclining baby are arranged much in the manner of the well-knit compositions of the half-length Virgin with Child that are among the glories of Early Netherlandish painting.

35 • The Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist. Northern Italian, ca. 1520–30. Sardonyx, 29 x 25 mm (1 1/8 x 1 in.), mounted in gold as a ring. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.4). The group echoes the new harmonies that Raphael and his school brought to painting. Suggestive comparisons exist in Raphaelesque Madonnas engraved by Giulio Bonasone and Gian Giacomo Caraglio (who doubled as an engraver of hardstones; see fig. 36), but the graceful composition is apparently unique to this piece. The cityscape in the background is executed in intaglio. The irregular chestnut-hued translucent band around the edge of the stone is void, probably because it was meant to be embedded in a gold setting.



34

36 • Gian Giacomo Caraglio (Italian, 1500/1505–1565). Bona Sforza, Queen of Poland. Kraków, ca. 1530–40. Sardonyx with inlaid gold and silver details, 31 x 22 mm (1 1/4 x 7/8 in.), mounted in the 19th century as a pendant in gold with enamel, pearl, and ruby. Signed: *JACOBS VERON*; inscribed: *BONA SPHOR REGINA POLONIAE*. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.869). Exceptionally for the Renaissance, this is a signed cameo, bearing the signature of Gian Giacomo Caraglio, who was born in Verona and later worked in Venice and then Kraków and who was best known as a printmaker. Bona Sforza, daughter of the duke of Milan, married Sigismund I, king of Poland, in 1518. At Sigismund's death in 1548 she returned to Italy, where she died in 1557. The cameo is inlaid with gold that enhances details of Bona's chain and hairnet, and a silver Medusa's head (see detail; for Medusa, see also fig. 59) is inset on her breast, in the same spirit of jewelry within jewelry. The only other gem signed by Caraglio, an agate similarly bedecked with gold representing Barbara Radziwill, Bona's successor as queen of Poland, is in the Münzkabinett, Munich. The dainty frame, although dated 1554 on the reverse, is a nineteenth-century invention.



35



36



36, detail



37, obverse



37, reverse



38, obverse



38, reverse

37 • Leone Leoni (Italian, ca. 1509–1590). Jugate Portraits of Emperor Charles V and King Philip II of Spain (obverse) and Empress Isabella (reverse). Milan, 1550. Onyx, 34 x 26 mm (1 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 1 in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.9). This is a rare, possibly unique instance of a Renaissance cameo documented in the carver's own words. The eminent Hapsburg court sculptor Leone Leoni wrote in 1550 from Milan to Cardinal Granvella, agent of Charles V in Brussels, that “a fantastic stone” inspired him to carve a double portrait of Charles and his son, Philip II, “the way a sculptor used to do for Caesar and Augustus. On the reverse I represented the Empress so beloved of the Emperor.” Isabella of Portugal, wife of Charles and mother of Philip, had died in 1539. Leoni estimated

that his work had taken two months. He was perpetually busy with important projects and his attention cannot have been undivided, yet as the precious letter corroborates, he obviously took great care with the cameo's execution.

Jugate portraits, in which one profile overlaps another, were indeed popularized by the ancient Romans. The object behind the heads here is a winged thunderbolt, borrowed from the imagery of Jupiter. The two men's faces are livelier than Isabella's; her likeness was modeled on a posthumous portrait, possibly painted by Titian.

The chip at the top, while unfortunate, does not diminish this jewel's power.

38 • The Judgment of Solomon (obverse) and The Resurrection (reverse). Probably Netherlandish, mid-16th century. Agate, diam. 58 mm (2¼ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.2). This undulating curiosity is carved on the top, sides, and back. On the back, in appreciably low relief and a flowing, Italianate style, is the Resurrection of Christ, the basic features of which are found on a stone in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. The front bears a Judgment of Solomon in much the same quirky style as the cramped enactments of Jacob's Dream and Elijah in the Fiery Chariot along the sides. The Solomon scene also occurs on a cameo in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The carver of the Metropolitan cameo most likely used the gems in Paris and Vienna as sources, rather than the other way around. The chunky object is drilled through from top to bottom; it may have been suspended, but it is rather weighty to have been worn as a pendant.

39 • Cosimo de' Medici, Duke of Florence and Grand Duke of Tuscany. Florence, ca. 1567–69. Lapis lazuli, 55 x 46 mm (2⅛ x 1¾ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.13). Lapis lazuli is a notoriously

brittle medium for detailed carving, but the highly specialized Florentine grand-ducal workshops overcame many challenges as they fashioned and assembled hardstones. This portrait of Cosimo de' Medici is more generalized than those on the medals it is based on, no doubt owing to the extra caution that had to be taken with the drilling. The cameo appears in Medici inventories, described as framed in ebony, between 1588 and 1628.

40 • Elizabeth I of England. Probably Italian, ca. 1570–1600. Onyx, 16 x 13 mm (⅝ x ½ in.), mounted in gold as a ring. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.32). The Virgin Queen hired English, French, and Italian engravers to create a huge and resplendent glyptic iconography. This relatively meager specimen, well worn, reflects coins minted late in her reign.



39



40



41, obverse



41, reverse

41 • A Roman Emperor (obverse) and **A Laureate Man of African Descent** (reverse). Italian, mid-16th century. Sardonyx, 49 x 36 mm (1 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.12). The laureate emperor carved from the paler layers of this stone has so far eluded identification. By implication, the man carved from the dark mahogany tones of the reverse, more excitingly executed in extremely low relief, may also be an emperor or perhaps an emperor's foe. The third-century emperor known as Philip the Arab has been suggested, but for that matter the heads of unknown Africans embellish a sizable number of sixteenth-century cameos, seldom so stylishly as here.

42 • Hercules (obverse) and **Omphale** (reverse). Italian, mid-16th century. Agate, 37 x 30 mm (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.14). Gems carved on the back as well as the front became a specialty of sixteenth-century masters. Omphale, legendary queen of Lydia, was a mistress of Hercules. The zigzag of white that emerged in both sides of the grayish brown morsel of agate forcefully highlights both his lion skin and her veil.



42, obverse



42, reverse



43

43 • Alexander the Great(?). Italian, mid-16th century(?). Turquoise on dark blue enameled gold, visible cameo: 11 x 10 mm ($\frac{7}{16}$ x $\frac{3}{8}$ in.), mounted as a ring in gold with enamel. Rogers Fund, 1910 (10.110.2). This vibrant carving has previously been described as made of glass and as a product of the French Renaissance, but it is in turquoise, a rarity in cameos of any period. That it is reputed to have been in the Este collections may make an Italian origin likelier. It is not to be ruled out even that the stone is Hellenistic, from as early as the fourth century B.C., but the heroic type of Alexander the Great's profile was adopted by various Hellenistic successors. In any case, the person who caused it to be set surely thought of it as ancient and as representing Alexander. It is probably a fragment whose broken edges the goldsmith has deftly concealed by forming the bezel as a lion skin, a motif that Alexander borrowed from Hercules.



44

44 • Prudence. French, ca. 1550–60. Chalcedony (head and hands), mounted in gold as a pendant, with enamel, rubies, emeralds, and a pearl; overall, with pendant pearl, 82 x 48 mm ($3\frac{1}{4}$ x $1\frac{7}{8}$ in.). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.907). The mirror into which Prudence gazes (one of her wonted attributes, as is the serpent) is a table-cut diamond. The practice of incorporating hardstones in complex gold compositions originated in the courts of Italy, where a piece of this sort was known as a *commesso*.

45 • Head of Medusa(?). Possibly French, mid-16th century. Onyx or sardonyx, 22 x 20 mm ($\frac{7}{8}$ x $\frac{3}{4}$ in.), mounted in silver as a pendant. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.12). The distinctive Mannerist style of this cameo, with its shallow, flattened relief and elegantly meandering flourishes such as the snaky locks of hair, seems un-Italian, yet one hesitates to call it French because so little is known as yet about Renaissance carvers in France.



45



46

46 • Marcus Aurelius. Italian, late 16th–early 17th century. Sardonyx or possibly onyx, 63 x 51 mm ($2\frac{1}{2}$ x 2 in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.15). This admirable stone exhibits five layers. Sixteenth-century carvers often revealed the strata in concentric rings that have the effect of framing and reinforcing the images.



47–48

47–48 • Emperor Galba and An Unidentified Emperor of the Antonine Dynasty. Italian, probably mid-16th century. Agate; fig. 47: 72 x 63 mm ($2\frac{7}{8}$ x $2\frac{1}{2}$ in.), fig. 48: 73 x 62 mm ($2\frac{7}{8}$ x $2\frac{1}{16}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.7, .6). These two pieces offer an ideal demonstration of a stone split down the middle to reveal and exploit its decorative potential. The layers of rosy pinks, grays, and white are especially resonant in the half with Emperor Galba. The two halves, which have vertical grooves on their backs, formed the sides of a priming flask for gunpowder, very likely mounted in precious metal.

restraining, his gesticulating—denote conflict, as Venus entreats Adonis not to go after the wild boar that will be the cause of his death. But Adonis, hound at his side, is on the point of willful departure. The sophisticated atmospherism, relayed in myriad browns and grays, shows awareness of Alessandro Masnago's work (see fig. 51).

50 • Hunt of a Roebuck. Milan, probably late 16th century. Agate, 31 x 37 mm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ x $1\frac{1}{2}$ in.), mounted in gilt silver as a pendant. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.29). The carver who used the deepest red of this ambitiously multicolored cameo for the fallen stag and a hound was also influenced by Masnago, even to the point of indicating the source of light, in this case the sun at the center top.



49

49 • Venus and Adonis with Cupid in a Landscape. Milan, late 16th century. Onyx, 24 x 33 mm (1 x $1\frac{1}{4}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.19). The lovers' entwined legs (and the presence of Cupid) imply amorous attachment, while their arms—hers



50

51 • Alessandro Masnago (Italian, active by ca. 1560, d. 1620). **Sleeping Shepherdess in a Moonlit Landscape.** Milan, probably late 16th century. Agate, 78 x 65 mm (3 1/8 x 2 1/2 in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.33). Gems carved with highly pictorial evocations of nature by the great virtuoso Alessandro Masnago were eagerly sought by collectors, particularly

Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. The thoroughgoing artistry with which Masnago could discern the marvels inherent in a piece of stone still causes the beholder to gaze in wonder and delight at this shepherdess sleeping with her flock and her dog amid the moonbeams and treetops elicited from the hues and forms of a variegated agate, akin to moss agate.



51

Baroque Cameos



52

The age of the Baroque favored large, vigorously muscular forms and splashy effects, often for religious subjects, but it also looked for archaeological evidence and consolidated the learned taste for certain cameo types, notably busts of the Caesars, that would extend far into the nineteenth century.

52 • Coronation of the Virgin. Italian (probably Milan), late 16th–early 17th century. Onyx or sardonyx, 19 x 34 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $1\frac{3}{8}$ in.), mounted in gold. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.10). The irregular cloud of smoky brown that floats across the cream layer of this stone eventually helps the viewer to distinguish the Virgin's robe and her hands raised in intercessory prayer.

53 • Bust of Christ. Northern Italian, ca. 1600. Onyx or sardonyx, 39 x 33 mm ($1\frac{1}{2}$ x $1\frac{1}{4}$ in.), mounted in gold as a pendant. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.15). The carver's drill followed the dark to pale amber coloration, offsetting hair and beard against pale flesh.



53



54

54 • Bust of Christ Crowned with Thorns. Italian (probably Milan), mid-late 17th century. Heliotrope, 74 x 59 mm (2 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.11). The red iron-oxide specks that occur in heliotrope, or bloodstone, a dark green varietal form of jasper that was much favored in Milan, encouraged the artist to evoke droplets of blood.

55–56 • Jugate Heads of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina and Jugate Heads of Germanicus and Agrippina. Italian, probably 17th century. Onyx; fig. 55: 22 x 15 mm ($\frac{7}{8}$ x $\frac{5}{8}$ in.), fig. 56: 24 x 18 mm (1 x $\frac{3}{4}$ in.); both mounted in gold for display. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.19, .18). Subjects from Roman history preoccupied collectors in the Baroque era. The twinned countenances of these famous couples, mounted as pendants, were in the Arundel collection in the seventeenth century and the Marlborough collection in the eighteenth. As is often the case with portrait cameos, the stones were manipulated so that their warmer gradations further a suggestion of flesh.



55



56



57

57 • Bust of a Roman. Italian, probably 17th century. Cryptocrystalline quartz, probably chalcedony, 69 x 50 mm (2¾ x 2 in.), mounted in gold for display. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.30). The man's compactly curled hair and beard recall those of the Antonine emperors. Ernst Kris, author of the Weil catalogue, reasonably suggested Aelius Verus, whom Hadrian adopted as praetor and consul but who predeceased him by drinking poison. Aelius Verus was habitually shown with an anxiously knitted brow. This gem was in the Marlborough collection in the eighteenth century.

58 • Harpocrates. French, 17th century. Sardonyx, 25 x 21 mm (1 x ¾ in.), in gold and enamel mount. Rogers Fund, 1910 (10.131.3). Harpocrates, an avatar of the Egyptian god Horus, was represented by the Romans as a child with his forefinger at his mouth, a gesture later Europeans interpreted as urging silence, often with amorous implications. The piece was acquired as Roman, but the figure's soft triangulations bespeak a free imitation of the antique. Ranking among the most personable French seventeenth-century carvings, it too was in the Arundel and Marlborough collections.



58



59

59 • Head of Medusa. Probably Italian, late 17th–early 18th century. Onyx, 72 x 59 mm (2⅞ x 2⅜ in.), mounted ca. 1840–50 in gilt silver as a pendant. The Milton Weil Collection, 1938 (38.150.35). Medusa (see also figs. 36, 95) was the Gorgon slain by Perseus, who presented her head crawling with serpents to the all-wise Minerva to wear on her shield. Medusa's grisly yet mesmerizing countenance is encountered often on cameos, apparently as an advertisement of her apotropaic force. This expressive example has been attributed both to the sixteenth century and to the nineteenth, but its robust, propulsive style and peculiar coloring, utilizing the top stratum's brown to accent a snake and green flecks to create eerie effects against the pale cream body, may have been more thoroughly at home in the age of the Baroque.



60

60 • Hercules and Omphale. Probably Italian, late 17th–early 18th century. Sardonyx, 54 x 43 mm (2½ x 1½ in.), mounted in gold as a pendant. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.999). In this bold late Baroque design, whose curvilinear forms are enunciated with admirable clarity, the sexual roles of Hercules and Omphale (whom we have encountered in stately profile format in fig. 42) are reversed: Omphale excitedly assumes the hero's lion-skin mantle, her leg nudging his, while he sinks into sedentary torpor.

61 • Cupid before Jupiter amid Clouds. Netherlandish, late 17th century. Aragonite, 65 x 87 mm (2½ x 3½ in.). Signed in monogram on the back: *VH*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.17). Unlike most of the other stones discussed here, this opaque blue-green mineral, a uranium-bearing aragonite, is soft and was easily worked to encourage generously rounded shapes. The hearty style lent itself to the embellishment of rich domestic furnishings such as cabinets. A cameo with Neptune and Galatea, larger but otherwise identical to this one in signature and workmanship, was on the Amsterdam antiques market in 1974.



61



62

62 • Vespasian. Italian, probably mid-18th century. Onyx, 38 x 29 mm (1½ x 1¼ in.), mounted as a pendant in gold with amethyst, rubies, and emerald. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.13). The fleshy pink and lavender tones and opulent setting are rather at variance with the emperor's gross features, which were modeled on a Medici cameo reproduced in an engraving in Antonio Francesco Gori's *Museum florentinum* (Florence, 1731–34). Our gem had this mount when it was in the Marlborough collection.

63 • Cup and Cover Supported by an Enchained Turk. Frankfurt am Main, first quarter of the 18th century. Jade (nephrite), aragonite (Turk and two of the busts), rose quartz (finial), chalcedony, onyx, diamonds, rubies, garnets, gilt silver, and gold, h. 402 mm (15⅞ in.). Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1508). The finial of this Baroque vessel bears the arms of the Hapsburg emperors and the enamel inserts those of the Holy Roman Empire's nine electors. The chained Turk signifies the pivotal Siege of Vienna in 1683, when imperial allies repelled a Turkish blockade. The larger carvings are the most conspicuous among the Metropolitan Museum's few examples of postclassical pieces that have been worked as cameos in the round following ancient Roman practice (see figs. 24, 25), but here they are stationed a bit precariously. The smaller cameos, contemporary with the rest, show vignettes drawn from episodes in classical mythology that are in keeping with the gold applications' allusions to the hunt. The cup follows a long tradition in which gemstones in important treasuries were incorporated into larger objects made of precious metal both to display and to protect them.



63

Neoclassical Cameos

The heart of the Museum's collection consists of pieces, many of them signed, that bear witness to the heroic, concentrated revival of ancient art that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. All the courts of Europe participated in the antique revival to one extent or another, but the epicenter, as least for glyptic activity, was papal Rome. Beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth, dynasties of carvers were established by masters passing along the secrets of their art to their progeny.



64

64 • Pelchinger (German?). Neptune Driving over Waves. Possibly Italy (Rome?), 18th century. Sardonyx, 32 x 25 mm (1¼ x 1 in.). Signed in Greek: ΠΗΛΧΥΓΕΡ. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.9). Nothing is known about the Pelchinger, presumably a German, who signed his name in Greek on the front of this cameo, which reproduces a Renaissance intaglio in the British Museum, London. In his catalogue of the Weil collection Ernst Kris said that the inscription could denote an owner rather than an artist, but an owner would have had less cause than an artist to Hellenize his name.



65

65 • Two Tritons. Probably Italian, late 18th century. Onyx, 39 x 40 mm (1½ x 1½ in.), mounted in gold with a loop. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.4). This cameo reproduces the lower right section of an ancient onyx (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) that allegorizes Octavian's naval victory over the forces of Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Evoking antiquity in tantalizing fragmentary form, it was apparently conceived as a deliberate forgery.

66 • Sphinx. Italian, 18th century. Jasper with quartz, 56 x 65 mm (2¼ x 2½ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.35). Sphinxes *all'antica*, like Medusa heads, were enigmas often invoked in Neoclassical decorative arts. Someone took pains to preserve this piece after it broke, expertly repairing it with closely matched stone, then gluing it to a glass backing that has since been removed from the quartz ground layer.



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67–69 • Walking Leopard, Recumbent Lion, and Walking Lion. Italian. Fig. 67: 18th century. Sardonyx, 17 x 27 mm ($1\frac{1}{16}$ x $1\frac{1}{16}$ in.), mounted in gold as a pin (defaced). Fig. 68: 18th or 19th century. Sardonyx, 16 x 24 mm ($\frac{5}{8}$ x $1\frac{5}{16}$ in.), mounted in gold as a ring, marked *ET* (Paris importation mark for 1864–99). Fig. 69: 18th century. Sardonyx, 17 x 26 mm ($1\frac{1}{16}$ x 1 in.), mounted in gold as a ring. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.37–39). Cameos displaying animals, a mainstay of ancient Roman glyptics revived by Neoclassical engravers, filled the cabinets of European royalty. Particularly fetching is the way the carver of the leopard capitalized on brownish flecks in the stone to give the beast its spots. The grinning recumbent lion shows a fine contrast of matte and polished surfaces. The carver of the walking lion nearly exhausted the stone's red layer when forming the tail.

70 • Johann Lorenz Natter (German, 1705–1763). William Ponsonby, Viscount Duncannon, Future Second Earl of Bessborough. Probably London, 1750. Onyx, 25 x 22 mm (1 x $\frac{7}{8}$ in.), mounted in gold as a pendant. Signed: *L. NATTER F.* The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.52). His lapidary excellence led the

German medalist Johann Lorenz Natter to Switzerland, Venice, Florence, England, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and Russia, where he died. William Ponsonby (1704–1793), an influential parliamentary politician, was an original member of the band of aesthetes known as the Dilettanti Society. Natter presented him sparsely, with cropped hair, in the neo-Roman style of budding Neoclassicism. The ground stratum is carved so thin as to be transparent, allowing a delicate play of light. A companion cameo dated 1750 of Ponsonby's wife, Lady Caroline, née Cavendish, was auctioned at Christie's in London in 1923 but has left no subsequent trace.

71 • Christian Friedrich Hecker (born in Saxony, active in Rome 1784–95). Pope Pius VI. Rome, ca. 1790. Onyx, 24 x 18 mm ($1\frac{5}{16}$ x $\frac{3}{4}$ in.), mounted in gold as a ring. Signed: *C.F. HECKER FEC.* The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.27). Although he grew pudgy with age, Pius VI (r. 1775–99) was invariably praised as a fine figure of a man and was more frequently captured in hardstone than any pontiff before or since. His important collection of ancient glyptics was looted and dispersed during the French occupation of Rome.



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72 • Catherine II of Russia. Possibly German, ca. 1790. Onyx, 18 x 14 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $\frac{1}{16}$ in.), mounted in gold for display. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.26). In his catalogue of Weil's collection Ernst Kris suggested the Austrian archduchess and Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa as the subject of this portrait, but the imposing countenance and ample bosom are those of Catherine the Great (1729–1796) in advanced age. She favored many foreign carvers with orders and also created imperial workshops in the provinces. This tiny oval could have been carved by a German in her employ. Enlargement makes the natural inclusions in the stone more noticeable.



73

73 • James Tassie (Scottish, 1735–1799), after a cameo by Maria Feodorovna (1759–1828). Jugate Busts of Czarevitch Paul and Maria Feodorovna of Russia. London, 1791. Cast glass, 68 x 54 mm ($2\frac{3}{8}$ x $2\frac{1}{8}$ in.). Signed and dated (cast in): *Maria F. / 21 April 1791*. Funds from various donors, 1999 (1999.525). Catherine the Great's daughter-in-law Maria Feodorovna, born Princess Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg, was an accomplished cameo carver. James Tassie produced several glass replicas of the cameo she made of herself alongside her ill-favored spouse, the future Paul I. Most of the replicas, like the original hardstone in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, are dated April 21, Catherine the Great's name day; the original was presumably Maria Feodorovna's tribute when that occasion was celebrated in 1791. The Russian court had known contacts with Tassie, whose small glass portraits emulating cameos enjoyed wide circulation, and there can be little doubt that it was to him they turned for replications of Maria Feodorovna's cameo.

74 • Giovanni Pichler (Italian, 1734–1791). The Farnese Hercules. Rome, ca. 1770–90. Onyx, 25 x 17 mm (1 x 5/8 in.), mounted in gold as a locket. Signed in Greek: ΠΙΧΛΑΕΡ. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.46). The Pichler family was an Austrian dynasty of glyptic artists based in Rome. Giovanni's cameo quotes a famous ancient marble statue in the Museo Archeologico, Naples. Another after it, also signed by Pichler, is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Nathaniel Marchant (see fig. 4) began to use the same two-thirds viewpoint by at least 1780 in intaglios (now in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, and elsewhere) that circulated in the form of sulfur impressions. Whether he or Pichler was the first to do so remains to be discovered.



74



75

75 • Giovanni Pichler. Young Woman with a Torch and a Vase. Rome, ca. 1770–90. Sardonyx, 24 x 13 mm (1 5/16 x 1/2 in.), mounted in gold as a ring. Signed in Greek: ΠΙΧΛΑΕΡ. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.42). The vessel improbably slung by one handle over the maiden's arm is superbly delineated in the tawny top stratum. This, one of Pichler's choicest assimilations of Hellenistic style, would alone justify the high repute he enjoyed among his contemporaries.

76 • Giovanni Pichler. Jugate Heads of a Couple. Rome, ca. 1775–80. Sardonyx, 21 x 16 mm (1 3/16 x 5/8 in.), mounted in gold. Signed in Greek: ΠΙΧΛΑΕΡ. The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.45). The pair are represented in a chaste manner *all'antica*. His two brown strata, presumably by virtue of his masculinity, overlie her pure white. The white layer was also engaged to accent the back of his head as if it were lit from behind.



76



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78

77 • Confronted Busts of Antinoüs and Hadrian. Probably Rome, mid-18th century. Onyx or sardonyx, 20 x 29 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $1\frac{1}{8}$ in.), mounted as a pin in gold. Marked with a crowned Y (in script; possibly a French date letter for 1762–63). The Milton Weil Collection, 1939 (39.22.41). The double portrait of the emperor Hadrian and his favorite possibly catered to the tastes of a homosexual aware of antecedents in ancient history.

78 • Giovanni Antonio Santarelli (1758–1826). Dancing Amorini with Bacchic Symbols. Florence, late 18th–early 19th century. Onyx, 18 x 27 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $1\frac{1}{16}$ in.), mounted in gold as a ring. Signed: *SANTARELLI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.3). The mild gray ground is a foil for delicate movement and ornament. Giovanni Santarelli's original wax-on-slate model (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) is oval. He expanded the compositional field onto a wider hexagon, from the outset sensing its suitability for a ring.



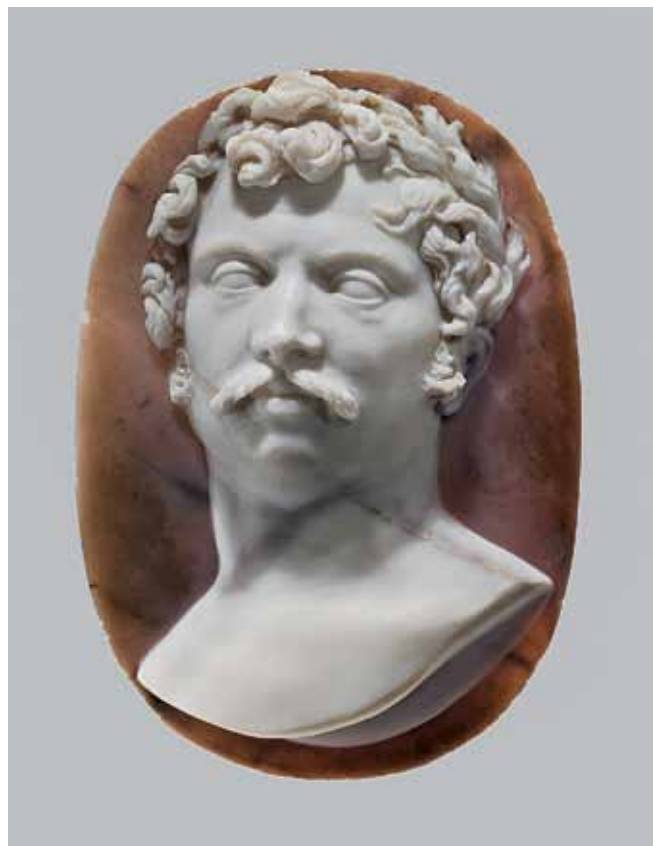
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79–80 • Alexander I of Russia and Napoleon I of France. Fig. 79: probably Italian, ca. 1810–20. Onyx, 42 x 33 mm (1 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.). Fig. 80: Clemente or Pietro Pestrini (Italian, active first half of the 19th century). Rome, ca. 1810. Sardonyx, 47 x 36 mm (1 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.), framed in gold. Signed: *PESTRINI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.25, .46). Much like their ancient prototypes, the rival emperors are wreathed in laurel. The pinkish blush in Alexander's onyx hints at corporeality, while the drab ochre sardonyx of Napoleon, by contrast, suggests a rather joyless military man.

81 • Prince Józef Antoni Poniatowski, Marshal of France. Italian, ca. 1810. Onyx, 59 x 42 mm (2 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.22). The lateral break, darkened by the shellac used to adhere it to a glass backing, does not diminish the force or freshness of this slightly asymmetrical portrait of the valorous Polish prince Józef Antoni Poniatowski (1763–1813), a commander in Napoleon's army who was named marshal of France just before he died protecting the army's retreat after the Battle of Leipzig.



81



82

82 • Filippo Rega (Italian, 1761–after 1833). **Jupiter.** Naples, early 19th century. Onyx, 53 x 44 (2½ x 1¾ in.). Signed: *REGA*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.2). Filippo Rega, son of an antiques dealer in Naples who sent him to Rome to study with the Pichlers (see figs. 74–76), returned to Naples and settled there. This monumental, rounded head emerges from subtly graduated, cloudlike mauve hues.

83 • George Gordon, Lord Byron. Italian (probably Rome), ca. 1820. Sardonyx, 38 x 33 mm (1½ x 1¼ in.), mounted in gold for display. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.23). This portrait could date any time between the publication of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–18), which brought the poet global fame, and his death in 1824. Byron's physical attractions were acknowledged by many, but as one observer, Lady Blessington, said, "I am sure that if ten individuals undertook the task of describing Byron, no two, of the ten, would agree in their verdict respecting him." The long nose, thinning temple hair, and unruly forelock are beyond question Byron's, but his apparition in a toga does not seem to refer to any known painted or engraved likeness.

84 • Niccolò Amastini (Italian, 1780–1851). **Education of the Infant Bacchus.** Rome, first half of the 19th century. Onyx, 52 x 36 mm (2 x 1⅜ in.), framed in gold with four perforations for attachment. Signed: *N. AMASTINI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.30). Freely adapting antique compositions, Niccolò Amastini described with elegant linearity the contours of the baby god and his wild attendants under a vine-wrapped tree.



83



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85 • Luigi Rosi (Italian, active early–mid-19th century). **Psyche.** Rome, probably second quarter of the 19th century. Onyx, 34 x 23 mm (1⅜ x ⅞ in.). Signed on the front: *L. ROSI*; scratched on the back: *Luigi Rosi, Roma, via Rasella no. 143*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.51). The diaphanous nature of Psyche's butterfly wings is indicated by small circular cuts into the translucent claret-toned layer. Anticipating customers, Luigi Rosi (apparently unrecorded apart from this piece) supplied his address in the Via Rasella near the Trevi Fountain in Rome. Most Roman carvers favored locations northwest of there, in streets between the Spanish Steps and the Piazza del Popolo.



86

86–87 • Two heads of Cicero. Rome, early 19th century. Fig. 86: by Giuseppe Girometti (Italian, 1780–1851). Onyx, 19 x 15 mm (¾ x ⅝ in.), mounted in gold as a ring. Signed: *GIROMETTI*. Fig. 87: by a member of the Cerbara family. Onyx, 29 x 22 mm (1⅛ x ⅞ in.), mounted in a silver-gilt pendant. Signed: *CERBARA*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.42., .34). The Neoclassical age prized the sternly republican marble head of Cicero (106–43 B.C.) in the Musei Capitolini, Rome. An intaglio after it by Nathaniel Marchant (see fig. 4) circulated in the form of gypsum impressions. The Roman carvers of these two heads consulted the sculpture itself, obtaining different results. The more



87

numismatic approach of the cameo carved about 1810–20 by a member of the Cerbara family (fig. 87), in which the features are affixed with broad authority, typifies the work of that clan (Gian Battista Cerbara [d. 1811] sired Giuseppe [1770–1856] and Nicola [1796–1869], Nicola succeeding Giuseppe as master of the papal mint). Yet Cerbara also employed the buff areas to suggest flesh, while the starker white-on-black contrast in Giuseppe Girometti's *Cicero* (fig. 86) evokes marble. Girometti's work is also more detailed, delivering a keener sense of the great orator's cogitations through his careworn features.



88



89

88–89 • Nicola Morelli (Italian, 1771–1838). Two heads of **Bacchantes**. Rome, ca. 1820–38. Onyx. Fig. 88: 50 x 38 mm (2 x 1½ in.); fig. 89: 42 x 32 mm (1⅝ x 1¼ in.), mounted in gold as a pin. Both signed: *MORELLI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.44, .45). In these cameos of devotees of Bacchus, Nicola Morelli, a shrewd judge of the coloristic capacities of hardstones, did not merely copy himself: In the gem on the left, with a goatskin and more complex tresses, he exploited four strata, the topmost being the pink of the grapes. In that on the right, in three layers, he investigated the uppermost layer of brown to define the grapevine against the pallid flesh of the girl, who seems even less in control of her senses.

90 • Giuseppe Girometti (Italian, 1780–1851). **Nessus Abducting Deianira**. Rome, ca. 1815–25. Sardonyx, 41 x 48 mm (1⅝ x 1⅞ in.), mounted in gold for display. Signed in Greek: ΓΥΠΟΜΕΤΤΟΥ. Purchase, Assunta Sommella Peluso, Ada Peluso, and Romano I. Peluso Gift, in memory of Ignazio Peluso, 2004 (2004.164). The brazen centaur Nessus is caught seizing the wife of Hercules. Giuseppe Girometti, celebrated for his copies after the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova and the Dane Bertel Thorvaldsen, here pinpoints the essentials of a relief sculpted in 1814–15 by Thorvaldsen, a splendid marble example of which is in the Metropolitan Museum.

91 • Giuseppe Girometti. **Priam Supplicating Achilles for the Body of Hector**. Rome, ca. 1815–25. Onyx, 41 x 47 mm (1⅝ x 1⅞ in.), mounted in gold as a pin. Signed: *GIROMETTI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.40). In *The Iliad* Homer tells of King

Priam of Troy visiting the tent of the Greek hero Achilles to beg him for the body of his eldest son, the great warrior Hector, whom Achilles had killed and then dragged back to his camp. Achilles, attended here by one of his warriors, Automedon or Alcimus, took pity on the old king and ordered the corpse to be bathed and returned to him. Girometti turned again to Bertel Thorvaldsen (see fig. 90), this time creating a capital stripped-down version, with several variations, of the sculptor's marble relief of 1815 at Woburn Abbey. The purplish ground provides a magisterial backdrop for the white figures.

92 • Giuseppe Girometti. **Thalia**. Rome, probably second quarter of the 19th century. Onyx, 28 x 23 mm (1⅝ x ⅞ in.). Signed: *GIROMETTI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.38). This cameo reiterates the head of an ancient marble statue of Thalia, the muse of comedy, in the Vatican Museums' Sala delle Muse.

93 • Giuseppe Girometti. **Hercules**. Rome, probably second quarter of the 19th century. Sardonyx, 32 x 27 mm (1¼ x 1⅛ in.). Signed: *GIROMETTI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.37). An agate cameo also signed by Girometti with Hercules' head reversed is in the Vatican's Museo Gregoriano Profano. In this sardonyx version four strata were deployed: the plummy brown of the Nemean lion's mask is defined against the blush of Hercules' cheek, which in turn sets off the paler flesh of the hero's profile and the white of the beast's fang and paw.



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94 • George III. English, ca. 1820. Onyx, 23 x 18 mm ($\frac{7}{8} \times \frac{3}{4}$ in.), mounted in gold as a ring. Inscribed on the back: *GEORGE III ob' Jan^y. 29. 1820*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.7). Apparently made as a memorial, this cameo captures George III (r. 1760–1820) in old age, pink, roly-poly, and bug-eyed but occupying the field with tremendous authority, much as in the coins designed by Benedetto Pistrucci, which it emulates. Pistrucci's prowess in modeling and carving (abundantly evident in figs. 95–97) gained him a post at the Royal Mint in London in 1816, soon after he emigrated to England, and he became chief medalist there in 1828.

95 • Benedetto Pistrucci (Italian, 1783–1855, active in England 1815–55). **Head of Medusa.** London, ca. 1840–50. Red jasper, diam. 53 mm ($2\frac{1}{8}$ in.), mounted in gold with white enamel by Carlo Giuliano (Italian, ca. 1831–1895) in London ca. 1860 so as to serve equally as brooch or pendant. Signed: *PISTRUCCI*. Purchase, Assunta Sommella Peluso, Ada Peluso, and Romano I. Peluso Gift, in memory of Ignazio Peluso, 2003 (2003.431). One of the most elegant of all Medusas (see also fig. 59), this head borrows freely from the ancient marble mask known as the *Rondanini Medusa* in the Glyptothek, Munich. The cameo was commissioned from Benedetto Pistrucci for the impressive sum of 200 guineas by a London dentist and collector, Samuel Cartwright, who also ordered a marble bust of himself (National Portrait Gallery, London). The



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wings and snakes on the cameo's frame allude to the caduceus of Mercury, emblem of the medical profession. The existence of a silver copy of the Medusa head bearing the mark of the silversmith Carlo Giuliano (sold at Sotheby's in New York in 2006) proves that he was the author of the strikingly handsome mount.

96 • Benedetto Pistrucci. Nymph and Swan. London, ca. 1830–40. Agate, 27 x 19 mm ($1\frac{1}{16} \times \frac{3}{4}$ in.), mounted in Rome ca. 1830–40 as a pin in gold with filigree and wirework and black enamel. Cameo signed: *PISTRUCCI*; on the mount: interlaced *CS* for the firm of Fortunato Pio Castellani (1794–1865), Rome. Purchase, Assunta Sommella Peluso, Ada Peluso, and Romano I. Peluso Gift, in memory of Ignazio Peluso, 2007 (2007.30). Even the most celebrated carvers did not scruple to borrow freely from authoritative sources. Nathaniel Marchant (see fig. 4) had already treated this composition in an intaglio carved for Lavinia, Countess Spencer (private collection, United Kingdom), but Pistrucci added an original flourish of drapery. One might understandably interpret the subject as Leda and the swan had not Marchant identified it as the nymph in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* who accepts tablets bearing the names of deceased worthies from a fleet of swans (hence the disklike object proffered by the swan). Castellani's delicate "archaeological-style" setting perfectly frames the curvilinear design.



96



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97 • Benedetto Pistrucci. Venus Marina, Cupid at Her Side. London, ca. 1820–30. Onyx, 45 x 30 mm (1¾ x 1⅛ in.), mounted in gold, probably as a box lid and then as a pendant. Signed: *PISTRUCCI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.49). Amazingly, the relief's surface is concave. Benedetto Pistrucci used his drill in a virtuoso excavation of the strata, employing the palest brown to outline the goddess's shell and team of dolphins, shaping an exquisite bowknot from the foremost brown, and piercing the white layer perilously close to the black ground to define the sail-like drapery and dainty silken reins. The frame of about 1820–30 was later fleshed out with filigree.

98 • Maria Elisa Pistrucci (English, 1824–1881, active in London and Rome). Benedetto Pistrucci. Probably London, ca. 1850. Sardonyx, 39 x 33 mm (1½ x 1¼ in.). Signed: *M. E. PISTRUCCI*. Purchase, Assunta Sommella Peluso, Ada Peluso, and Romano I. Peluso Gift, in memory of Ignazio Peluso, 2003 (2003.464). Benedetto Pistrucci taught gem carving to his children. This is an exceedingly rare tribute from a carver to her father and mentor. The buoyant curls and mutton-chops above the timelessly classical drapery at the neck are easily interpretable as silvery white marks of distinction.



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99–100 • Two heads of Hercules. Probably Rome, mid-19th century. Fig. 99: Sardonyx, 65 x 51 mm ($2\frac{1}{2}$ x 2 in.). Fig. 100: by Maria Elisa Pistrucci. Sardonyx or onyx, 52 x 43 mm (2 x $1\frac{1}{16}$ in.). Signed: *M.E. PISTRUCCI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.19, .48). The head of Hercules framed in a helmet formed by the open jaws of the Nemean lion, the dead beast's paws tied around his neck, was a staple of Neoclassical glyptics inspired by ancient gems and coins (see also fig. 93). Within the format endless variations could appear. Both of these carvings have three strata. The anonymous carver, who chose a stone so fiery it has even been wrongly said to be artificially colored, manipulated the pale middle layer to limn the blunt profile, offset between the reds of the ground and top layers. Maria Elisa Pistrucci worked closely from a composition by her father (art market, Rome, 2007), who invented a younger, more lyrical type of Hercules. The dappled brown stone she selected produced, simultaneously, greater legibility and greater subtlety. The lion skin emerges clearly from the dark top layer, all the facial features were excavated from the middle white layer, and irregularities in the translucent bottom layer provide an appealing foil.

101 • Elena Pistrucci (English, 1822–1886, active in London and Rome). **Minerva.** Probably Rome, ca. 1870–80. Onyx or agate, 57 x 42 mm ($2\frac{1}{4}$ x $1\frac{5}{8}$ in.). Signed: *E. PISTRUCCI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.50). Benedetto Pistrucci's daughters lived in Rome after his death, and it was probably there that Elena carved this cameo, basing it directly on her father's wax-on-slate model (Museo di Roma), which he had patterned (including the ram's head on the helmet's visor) after an ancient statue, the *Giustiniani Minerva* (Vatican Museums). Elena made

the goddess's features abstractly rigid, yet the white stratum, which contrasts agreeably with the deep green ground, evokes the essence of marble.

102 • Luigi Saulini (Italian, 1819–1883). **Parure: tiara, brooch, and necklace.** Rome, mid-19th century. Onyx; cameos on tiara: *The Toilet of Nausicaa*, 47 x 78 mm ($1\frac{3}{16}$ x $3\frac{1}{8}$ in.); on brooch: *Apollo Belvedere*, 43 x 33 mm ($1\frac{1}{16}$ x $1\frac{1}{4}$ in.); on necklace (counterclockwise from back): *A Youth with Hoop and Paddle*, 20 x 15 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ x $\frac{5}{16}$ in.), *Discobolus*, 27 x 21 mm ($1\frac{1}{16}$ x $1\frac{3}{16}$ in.), *Cupid and Psyche*, 29 x 23 mm ($1\frac{1}{8}$ x $\frac{7}{8}$ in.), *Cupid Stringing His Bow*, 27 x 21 mm ($1\frac{1}{16}$ x $1\frac{3}{16}$ in.); all mounted in gold (with a tortoiseshell comb [not illustrated] for the tiara). *The Toilet of Nausicaa* and *Cupid and Psyche* signed: *L. SAULINI*; *Apollo Belvedere*, *Discobolus*, and *Cupid Stringing His Bow* signed: *L. SAULINI. F.* The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.55a–c). Luigi Saulini learned hardstone and shell carving from his adoptive father, Tommaso (1784–1864), and continued in the family trade from a successful shop in the Via del Babuino in Rome.

Cameo-laden parures that included tiaras became fashionable among Napoleon's sisters and the ladies of his court. The taste survived for at least a half century. A bit of paper that accompanied the set when Weil lent it to the Metropolitan Museum in 1929 stated that the mounts were designed by John Gibson (1790–1866), a British sculptor resident in Rome, and executed by Castellani, the Roman firm of goldsmiths (see fig. 96). Saulini's studio was near Gibson's, and many artists turned to Castellani for mounts in the best "archaeological" style. Certainly an able hand modeled the tiara's acorns and oak leaves and the firm is not to be ruled out, but the leaves are pointier than in other oak jewelry known to be by Castellani.

The large stone in the tiara, despite the tradition probably not designed by Gibson, represents the toilet of Nausicaa, a rare subject even in ancient art. To ensure that Nausicaa, wise and beautiful daughter of King Alcinous of Phaeacia, would rescue the shipwrecked and travel-stained Ulysses as he slept in a bed of leaves at the mouth of the river Calliroe, Minerva directed her in a dream to go with her handmaids to the river to wash her family's linens. Here, though, her companions lavish their attention on the princess, fixing her hair, bringing her jewelry, and reflecting her beauty in a mirror. All but one of the other cameos copy ancient marbles. The bust in the brooch is of

the Vatican's *Apollo Belvedere*, viewed much the way Nathaniel Marchant (see fig. 4) positioned it in an intaglio (private collection, Germany). The three large stones in the necklace cite the statues *Discobolus*, *Cupid and Psyche*, and *Cupid Stringing His Bow*, the first in the Museo Nazionale in Rome, the last two in the Musei Capitolini. The unsigned nude youth with a hoop and a paddle on the clasp is after a long lost ancient intaglio Johann Joachim Winckelmann singled out in his *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, published in 1755. Its design survives in copies by Giovanni Pichler (see figs. 74–76) and others.





103

103 • Luigi Saulini. Angels Bearing the Body of Saint Catherine to Mount Sinai. Rome, mid-19th century. Sardonyx, 54 x 74 mm (2 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.). Signed: *L. SAULINI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.56). This cameo reproduces a canvas (Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin), famous in its day, by the German Nazarene painter Heinrich Karl Anton Mücke (1806–1891). It is one of Luigi Saulini's largest and most splendid pieces. By reducing the painting's colors to white on vivid red-orange, he gave the airborne group extra emphasis. The stone would be heavy to wear mounted as jewelry and was probably made to be admired on its own in a case or frame or on a stand.

104 • Luigi Saulini. Bearded Man in a Cap. Rome, mid-19th century. Onyx, 45 x 34 mm (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.), mounted in gold as a pin. Signed: *SAULINI*. Gift of Assunta Sommella Peluso, Ada Peluso, and Romano I. Peluso, in memory of Ignazio Peluso, 2004 (2004.519). Luigi Saulini first drew his subjects' portraits, sometimes after sending them to a photographer around the corner. In this bust of an unknown gentleman (it has been mistakenly taken for a self-portrait), he extracted powerful contrast and a sense of volume from the two strata.



104

105 • Luigi Saulini. Florence Nightingale. Rome, ca. 1855–60. Sardonyx, 26 x 20 mm (1 x $\frac{3}{4}$ in.). Signed: *L. SAULINI*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.54). Nurse Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) dedicated herself to reforming military hospitals and attracted worldwide admiration, especially for her valiant and compassionate service in Turkey in 1854–57 during the Crimean War, in the course of which she contracted a form of brucellosis called "Crimean fever." Here she looks down with becoming modesty amid a show of crisp linen and lace.

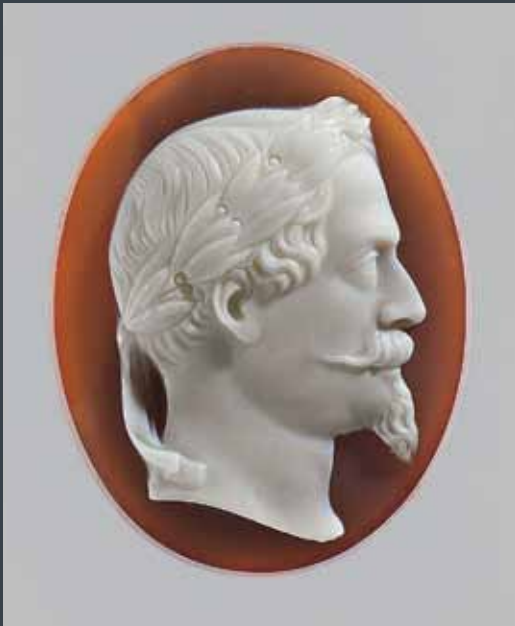


105

French Nineteenth-Century Cameos

The French school briefly rivaled Rome in the quality of its output, greatly motivated by official encouragement. From the Second Empire to the end of the century, cameos increasingly rich in painterly atmospheric effect competed with works of greater size for attention at the Salon in Paris.

106 • Paul-Victor Lebas (French, active 1852–76).
The Prince Imperial. Ca. 1865. Carnelian onyx, 39 x 30 mm (1½ x 1¼ in.). Signed: *P.L.* The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.16). The open countenance of Napoléon-Eugène-Louis (1856–1879), sole offspring of Napoleon III, helped freshen the image of the increasingly unpopular regime of the Second Empire. The cameo is close to but does not copy the marble statue by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux commissioned by the emperor in 1865 (Louvre, Paris).



107



106

107 • Napoleon III, Emperor of the French. French, ca. 1867. Carnelian onyx, 36 x 28 mm (1⅜ x 1⅛ in.). The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.14). The features, while not repeated verbatim, closely resemble those on imperial coins and medals. Tiny holes in the crown of laurel suggest the plant's berries.



108



109-10

108 • Adolphe David (French, 1828–1896). *The Fall of Phaeton*. Third quarter of the 19th century. Onyx, 56 x 76 mm (2¼ x 3 in.). Signed: *A. DAVID*. The Milton Weil Collection, 1940 (40.20.12). Phaeton, son of the sun god Apollo, rashly insisted on driving his father's chariot. Here we witness the outset of his inexorable descent through the heavens after losing control of the quadriga. For this tour de force, Adolphe David drew on ancient glyptic typologies (see figs. 16, 17). He cut through three strata to set off the foremost horse and clouds in ocher and made reins from the threadlike remains of the middle white layer. Equally finely characterized at the top left are three signs of the zodiac. All are set against deathly, polished jet black. The sizable gem was conceived as an exhibition performance; David often showed cameos at the Paris Salon.

109–10 • Georges Tonnellier (French, 1858–1937). *Busts of a Woman and a Man*. 1894. Sardonyx; woman: diam. 47 mm (1⅞ in.), signed: *G + TONNELLIER + 1894*; man: diam. 46 mm (1¾ in.), signed: *TONNELLIER G*. Purchase, Assunta Sommella Peluso, Ignazio Peluso, Ada Peluso and Romano I. Peluso Gift, 2007 (2007.367.1, .2). These twin cameos are said to be of Georges Tonnellier and his wife, but her endearingly homely profile and unmanageable hair do not match the image in a more glamorously sedate cameo inscribed as representing Mme Blanche Tonnellier (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore). The vaporous colorism, with bluish intonations, characterizes French fin-de-siècle cameos in general and Tonnellier's in particular.

Shell Cameos

Because the material is softer than stone and grows brittle over time, shell cameos from early periods have had a lower survival rate than those in stone. Easier to carve than hardstone and opaque, with basically just two strata to explore, shell has not enjoyed the same prestige as hardstone. Yet in the hands of virtuosi such as Luigi Saulini, the results could be very satisfying. Throughout the nineteenth century Naples was the European capital of shell carving. American carvers used seashell much more frequently than hardstone, presumably because shells were readily available along the United States coastline. Helmet conch and bull's-mouth shells were among the favorites.

111 • The Archangel Michael. French, 17th century. Shell, 28 x 22 mm (1 $\frac{1}{8}$ x $\frac{7}{8}$ in.), mounted as a pendant in gold with seashell motifs (chain modern). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.864). Both sides of this pendant contain shell cameos with well-worn, almost mirror images of the archangel Michael putting down Satan. The badge belonged to a member of the French Royal Order of Saint Michael, which was founded by Louis XI in 1469. Badges with shell were reputedly presented to ecclesiastic members, whose numbers had swelled to one hundred before they were reduced to six by decree of Louis XIV in 1655 as part of a reform of the chivalric order.



111



112 • George W. Jamison (American, d. 1868); metal-work possibly by William Rose (American, active 1839–50). **Andrew Jackson.** New York, ca. 1835. Shell, 46 x 37 mm (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.), mounted as a pin in yellow, rose, and green gold with blue enamel. Signed in relief: *GJ*. Purchase, Susan and Jon Rotenstreich Gift, 2000 (2000.562). “Old Hickory,” seventh president of the United States, is surrounded by the slogan *THE UNION / IT MUST AND / SHALL BE / PRESERVED*, a paraphrase of the famous toast he made at a political dinner held in Washington, D.C., on April 13, 1830, to commemorate Thomas Jefferson’s birthday. George W. Jamison exhibited his “Conchylia portraits” at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1835. The metal mount, with its wreath of rose hips and leaves, is a spirited accompaniment.

112



113

113 • Frederick Marshall. New Orleans, ca. 1855. Shell, 52 x 34 mm (2 x 1⅜ in.), mounted as a pin in gold with green enamel. Gift of Frederick Marshall, 1948 (48.60). The anonymous carver mixed candor with grace in personifying this snub-nosed citizen, whose portrait descended in the family.

114 • Luigi Saulini. Cupid with a Setter Dog. Rome, ca. 1860–70. Shell, 48 x 38 mm (1⅞ x 1½ in.), mounted in a gold bracelet. Signed: *L. Saulini F.* Bequest of Maria Morgan, 1892 (93.6.2). Luigi Saulini's dexterity with hardstones is seen in figs. 102–5. He more frequently produced cameos of shell, for which he charged a tenth the price. Much of his output was based on statuary by his contemporaries. The model here was an as yet unidentified marble group in the round (indicated by the plinth at the bottom).

The bracelet, together with another displaying a micromosaic circling of Italian peasant girls, was bequeathed by a colorful Irishwoman, Maria Morgan, whose knowledge of horses led King Victor Emmanuel of Italy to entrust her with his stables. According to her, the bracelets were the king's parting gift before she left for the United States, where she became a newspaper reporter on equine matters, eventually retiring to Staten Island.



114

115 • Parure: necklace, two bracelets, earrings, and pin. Italian (probably Naples), mid-19th century. Shell; visible portions of cameos on necklace (largest): 38 x 46 mm (1½ x 1¾ in.), on each bracelet: 35 x 28 mm (1⅜ x 1⅛ in.), on each earring: 40 x 17 mm (1⅝ x ⅝ in.), on pin: 26 x 32 mm (1 x 1¼ in.); all mounted in gold. Gift of Mrs. John D. Jones, 1899 (99.33.1–.6). Made to catch the eye of a shopper bent on ballroom glory, the cameos in this set of jewelry bear typical Grand Tour images, including (on the necklace's clasp) Guido Reni's *Aurora* fresco of 1614 (Palazzo Pallavicini-Rospigliosi, Rome), mythological scenes, peasants of the Roman *campagna*, and (on both the pin and the necklace) Bertel Thorvaldsen's ever-popular marble relief *Night* of 1815 (Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen). Billing doves grace the earrings, and on one of the bracelets, above a dolphin, is a comely marine divinity, probably Arethusa after an ancient coin of Syracuse. The rather flimsy fittings of stamped gold filigree suggest that this was costume jewelry, not meant to be worn often.



115, earrings



115, necklace and pin



115, bracelet



116



117

116–17 • Augustus Saint-Gaudens (American, 1848–1907). Hannah Rohr Tuffs and John Tuffs. Fig. 116: Rome, 1872. Shell, 48 x 39 mm (1 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.). Fig. 117: New York, ca. 1861. Shell, 44 x 38 mm (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.). Purchase, Sheila W. and Richard J. Schwartz Gift and Morris K. Jesup Fund, 1990 (1990.78.2a,b, . 1a,b). Augustus Saint-Gaudens, who would go on to become America's greatest sculptor, supported himself in his youth cutting cameos under the tutelage of two French émigrés working in New York: Louis Avet, apparently an abusive crosspatch, and the more pacific Le Brethon (whose given name is unknown). Saint-Gaudens was

only about thirteen when he carved the portrait of Tuffs, a New York lawyer who had died some two years before, in 1859. He doubtless worked from a daguerreotype, which had the typical effect of freezing and exaggerating features like Tuffs's wandering left eye and wispy hair. Saint-Gaudens hauled his lathe across Europe during his first study trip there. It was on a street in Rome in 1872 that the widow Tuffs recognized him and commissioned the companion cameo of herself. The more meditative composure of her profile suggests that Saint-Gaudens based it on a drawing. The pair still have their cases of velvet-lined leather.



118

118 • R. & S. Garrard & Co. (English, founded 1735). **Jewelry casket.** London, 1875–76; cameos probably carved in Naples. Macassar ebony casket, fitted with gilt-silver rosettes and eighteen shell cameos mounted in gold wire, on a stepped gilt-silver base bearing Garrard's mark and English hallmarks for 1875 and 1876; casket 32.1 x 30.5 x 21 cm (12 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 12 x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.). Gift of Mercedes Bass, 2007 (2007.214a, b). Victorian artisans went to extremes in embellishing luxury objects like this jewelry case. The eminent London firm Garrard & Co., Crown Jewellers from 1843 until 2007 (the Court Circular giving out only that it was "time for a change"), undoubtedly ordered a huge supply of shell cameos from a Neapolitan workshop. The range of models selected—after the ancients as well as after Canova and Thorvaldsen (see also figs. 90, 91, 115)—is remarkable, as is the range of quality in the carving. Among the best are a head after a Hellenistic gem with Jupiter in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (top left), and a Roman *She-wolf Nursing Romulus and Remus* (see detail) that has a glint of originality.



118, detail

Bibliographical Note

There is an overall dearth of English-language studies on cameos. Gisela M. A. Richter's *Catalogue of Engraved Gems: Greek, Etruscan, and Roman* (1956, reprinted in Rome, 2006) is a classic study of the Metropolitan Museum's Greco-Roman holdings. The cameos that form the core of the Museum's collection were described by Ernst Kris in his *Catalogue of Postclassical Cameos in the Milton Weil Collection* (Vienna, 1932), which has long been out of print. But much of the best writing on later carvings is in German, Italian, and Russian. The reader is best advised to consult the catalogues of museums with leading collections of cameos and jewelry with cameos, among them the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the British Museum in London, the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.



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