Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Etruscan cornelian scarab intaglio

£1,450

Emmett & White Ltd
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REF: 7774

Height: 2.5 cm (1")

Width: 2 cm (0.8")

Depth: 1 cm (0.4")

Description

Ancient Etruscan Carnelian Scarab in a 19th-Century Silver Animal-Headed Swivel Pendant, Circa 5th-4th Century BC

A remarkable ancient carnelian scarab, probably Etruscan or from a related Mediterranean workshop and dating to the 5th-4th century BC, later mounted as a distinctive 19th-century silver swivel pendant. Combining an exceptional Classical gem with an imaginative antique setting, this is a rare object of considerable visual and historical appeal.

The finely engraved carnelian scarab depicts a powerful griffin attacking a quadruped, enclosed within a hatched border. A creature of myth, the griffin was widely associated with guardianship, strength, and the divine in the ancient Mediterranean world. Its animated confrontation with the smaller animal is rendered with impressive economy and vitality, demonstrating the skill of the ancient gem engraver. Scarabs such as this were commonly pierced longitudinally and mounted to turn within a bezel, allowing the engraved face to be pressed into wax as a personal seal.

At a later date, probably in the 19th century, the scarab was incorporated into an elegant silver swivel mount, surmounted by a beautifully modelled animal head. The setting allows the ancient gem to remain the focus while adding a dramatic and characterful layer of later workmanship. This marriage of Classical antiquity and 19th-century taste reflects the enduring fascination with ancient engraved gems among Grand Tour collectors and connoisseurs.

A museum-quality and deeply evocative piece, equally compelling as ancient glyptic art, a wearable antiquity, and an example of 19th-century historicist jewellery. It would make an outstanding addition to a collection of Classical antiquities, engraved gems, Grand Tour jewellery, or unusual antique silver.

Carnelian scarab probably Etruscan or related Mediterranean, circa 5th-4th century BC; later silver animal-headed swivel pendant mount, probably 19th century. Please refer to the photographs for condition, scale, and details of the engraving and setting.

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