Les Enluminures

Cycles of Life

Rings from the Benjamin Zucker Family Collection

Sandra Hindman

with Beatriz Chadour-Sampson, Reine Hadjadj, Jack Ogden and Diana Scarisbrick

Essay Benjamin Zucker

This book presents forty-one rings from Antiquity to the nineteenth century from the Zucker Family Collection, a collection the precious stone dealer and author Benjamin Zucker assembled over more than four decades. This book is the third volume in a series of books on jewelry. The first, *Toward an Art History of Medieval Rings* (2007, repr. 2014), situates rings in the major movements of medieval art and relates them to other art works. The second, *Byzantium and the West* (2012), focuses on cultural exchange in the pre-medieval era, on the phenomenon of continuity and change. This one offers another perspective. Benjamin Zucker's fine collection provides a springboard for studying the rings according to the Cycles of Life: Birth, Marriage, Everyday Life, Death, and Eternity. A recurrent theme in manuscript illumination, examples of which are included here, the Cycles of Life affords a fresh glimpse into how rings reflect the lives of their owners, then and now.

For the present book, an international team of scholars – Beatriz Chadour-Sampson, Reine Hadjadj, Jack Ogden, and Diana Scarisbrick – each a specialist in his or her field, has studied afresh the rings, adding new research that establishes the historical and artistic importance of each ring. Supporting materials include complete bibliographies, as well as auction and exhibition histories, for every ring. ○

CYCLES OF LIFE

Rings from the Benjamin Zucker Family Collection

CYCLES OF LIFE

Rings from the Benjamin Zucker Family Collection

Sandra Hindman

with Beatriz Chadour-Sampson, Reine Hadjadj,
Jack Ogden and Diana Scarisbrick

Essay Benjamin Zucker

Paul Holberton publishing, London for

LES ENLUMINURES

Paris • Chicago • New York

Produced and published for
Sandra Hindman, *Les Enluminures*
by Paul Holberton publishing
89 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL
www.paul-holberton.net

Exhibition:

30th OCTOBER TO 6th DECEMBER 2014

Les Enluminures ltd.
23 East 73rd Street
7th Floor, Penthouse
New York, NY 10021
Tel: (212) 717 7273
newyork@lesenluminures.com

www.lesenluminures.com
www.medieval-rings.com

Design: Virginie Enl'art
Photography: Richard Goodbody
Photography (post production): John Morgan
Project Manager: Gaia Grizzi
Copy Editor: Charles Dibble
Production: Guido Zanella
Printed in Italy: Verona, Editoriale Grafiche ZGE

Photo (facing title page): Benjamin Zucker
in front of a c. 1740 painting of the Venetian diamond exchange, July 2014 (Richard Goodbody).

ISBN 978-0-9915172-3-7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

The opportunity to catalogue the rings in the Zucker Family Collection, assembled over the last forty years, offers a special treat. Selected by Benjamin Zucker for the exceptional quality of their stones, rarity, and level of artistry, the collection features many fine examples of the major types of rings from Antiquity to the nineteenth century. Many of the rings boast sterling provenances dating back generations to Europe and America's most prominent collecting families, including the de Clercqs, and the Rothschilds as well as from the celebrated jewelry collectors Dame Joan Evans, Ernest Guilhou, and Ralph Harari, and the Americans Melvin Gutman and Thomas Flannery. With a few exceptions, the rings have been on loan to the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore since 1985; those not at the Walters were on loan to other museums. From the point of view of provenance alone, it would be extremely difficult to put together a similar group of rings today.

This book is the third volume in a series of books on jewelry. The first, *Toward an* *Art History of Medieval Rings* (2007, repr. 2014), situates the rings from a collection I put together in the major movements of medieval art and relates them to other art works. The second, *Byzantium and the West* (2012), focuses on cultural exchange in the pre-medieval era, on the phenomenon of continuity and change. This one offers another perspective. Benjamin Zucker's fine collection provides a springboard for studying the rings according to the Cycles of Life: Birth, Marriage, Everyday Life, Death, and Eternity. A recurrent theme in manuscript illumination, examples of which are included here, the Cycles of Life affords a fresh glimpse into how rings reflect the lives of their owners, then and now.

All the rings have been previously published in Diana Scarisbrick's *Rings: Jewelry* *of Power, Love and Loyalty* (London, 2007) recently reprinted in a paperback edition (2013). Many of the rings have also been published elsewhere and exhibited world-wide, in New York, London, Boston, Jerusalem, and Baltimore. For the present book, an international team of scholars – Beatriz Chadour-Sampson, Reine Hadjadj, Jack

Ogden, and Diana Scarisbrick – each a specialist in his or her field, has studied the rings afresh, adding new research that establishes the historical and artistic importance of each ring. Supporting materials include complete bibliographies, as well as auction and exhibition histories, for every ring. Ultimately, these multifaceted discoveries form a remarkable testament to the discerning eye of Benjamin Zucker, who has contributed a charming essay on what the rings have meant to him during his life and whose bibliography (works by and about him) we have also included. We hope this book lives up to Benjamin's observation: "if you follow the rings, they are really like compasses leading you to lots of intellectual discoveries."

Any publication with multiple authors is a challenge. I am very grateful to each of the authors for the high quality of their contributions and their ready cooperation throughout this project. The skillful copy editor Charles Dibble helped make the multiple voices in this book appear seamless. The entire team at Les Enluminures, but especially Gaia Grizzi, the project manager, and Keegan Goepfert, Rainbow Porthé, and Matthew Westerby, contributed in many diverse ways to the realization of the final project. Benjamin Zucker's enthusiasm for the project from start to finish meant that he stood ready to answer bibliographical and provenance questions and give advice from the very beginning. It's been a pleasure to work with him and a wonderful honor to be able to pay tribute to his level of dedication by advancing further scholarship on his extraordinary collection. ○

Sandra Hindman

MY RINGS IN THE JOURNEY OF MY LIFE

by Benjamin Zucker

A jeweled Moghul aigrette, a marvelous sleek Art Deco Cartier tiara on a rainbow, a colored tutti frutti bracelet are always welcome, but for me rings are ever and always fascinating to collect, to own, to lecture on, or write about.

I believe I know when my passion for rings started. I was browsing in a used bookstore in Greenwich Village around 1968 after I graduated from Harvard Law School. I spotted a catalogue of jewelry from the collection of Melvin Gutman exhibited at the Baltimore Museum of Art.[1] In the introduction Melvin was described as the fourth generation of M's: Malvin, Moses, Manuel, and Melvin – all successful clothiers. Melvin Gutman went to Harvard Law School, played tennis with the Kaiser in the 1920s, and was an active investor on Wall Street. In 1929, Melvin sold all his shares of stock and decided to devote himself to amassing a collection of jewels. I too went to law school. I too was investing in the market.

Immediately at this point I made a life plan; throw in a novel or two and I would be Melvin: make a fortune and then spend the second half of my life tennis-fit and collecting at leisure. In the catalogue I gazed longingly at pictures of delicately enameled Renaissance pendants, their bejeweled gold surfaces shimmering with rubies, sapphires, and diamonds. I marveled at an elaborate "pomander." What was that? It opened like a flower. I had a plan.

Just two years later in 1970 I was walking past Sotheby's, which at that time was located on Madison Avenue. I saw a sign: "Gutman Exhibition and Sale". I entered and there in a glass case were five Jewish wedding rings – Venetian or from Nuremberg, all dated to the late sixteenth century (optimistically, as it turned out). Stutteringly, I asked to see a ring with a delicate house-like structure held up by two hands, then another, and then one with gold bosses with *Mazel tov* written on the inside. I was stunned and I couldn't breathe; teenage love to be sure. The rings were estimated at $250–500 a piece. No problem. I had $13,000 in the bank. I was working in the

family gem business. Both my grandfather and my father were diamond, sapphire, ruby, and emerald merchants. My grandfather started the business in Antwerp. My father fought in the French Army during World War II and was then able to escape to America with my mother, my two older sisters, and me. He then continued in the gem trade in New York. In 1970, I was working in the family business, drawing a salary, writing a novel, and "playing" the stock market with money that I had made selling advertising as an undergraduate at Yale.

The day of the auction I had a plan: I would bid all of my $13,000 on the finest house ring that came up. If I had money left over, I would bid on the second, and then on the third, etc. I must have appeared somewhat deranged, waving my paddle wildly only to be told, "young man, it's yours at $2,000" (fig. 1; cat. no 10). Minutes later, still breathless, I had bought all five rings for just under $6,000 (cat. nos. 21, 22, 24, and 25).[2] I still had half my savings left! But now what? Had I gone mad?

fig. 1

My father and I were business partners with Victor Klagsbald, a pearl dealer in Paris and the foremost expert in Judaica in Europe. I called Victor after the sale and he said, "Wonderful, you've done wonderfully." He had seen the catalogue and then to reassure me, he said, "I'll give you a 10 percent profit on these items."

fig. 2

Each night I would come home to my apartment in Greenwich Village and examine my treasures, which I had hidden under a pile of shirts in my dresser drawer. I was friendly with Jan Mitchell, perhaps one of the greatest collectors of Pre-Colombian art in the world. Today the Jan Mitchell Family Pre-Colombian Treasury is a room I always visit when I am in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After the Gutman Sale, Jan looked at my treasures and beamed, "these rings are wonderful – modest in size, and gold; only buy gold, for the greatest craftsmen always worked in gold." Jan remained a friend and mentor for decades.

Through an introduction by Richard Camber in London, I met Diana Scarisbrick, who was then starting her career as a jewelry historian. Through her, I met the Norton Family. I would enter their shop, S.J. Phillips, on Bond Street and see jewels and rings from all periods. I'm not the greatest bargainer of all time. In fact, once I have confidence in a dealer, I trust the dealer as to quality and fair price. Also, truth to tell, my eyes often exceeded my pocketbook, but I certainly would pay or swap back to settle my debts.

One day I learned of a sale of Rothschild jewels to be sold a week later at Colnaghi in London. The year was 1981. Martin Norton slapped me on the shoulder and said, "We'll take you to Colnaghi now. Let us do the buying and you can choose what you'd like to own." Jewels once displayed by a Rothschild in a Rothschild home! There prominently displayed was a gimmel ring (fig. 2, cat. no. 1), which opens up with a small sculptured figure of a baby and a skeleton with marvelous deep red pigeon blood-colored Burmese rubies. This to me was the most marvelous thing I had ever seen. Sandra Hindman's amazing discovery that this very ring was stolen from the Rothschild family in Paris during World War II and subsequently restituted to them has special resonance for me. My family had also fled the War, and I would go on to collect other items that reflect my Jewish heritage, such as my collection of Ketubahs. Here, too, my life and my rings are entwined.

From 1970 onwards, it was immensely educational to be able to purchase Islamic rings and gold Byzantine rings from the collection of the Swiss antiquities dealer George Zakos, which formed the basis of the De Menil Collection, in addition to marvelous ancient rings from Derek Content, who started at age 16 working at the bench cutting diamonds and making jewels in Holland.

fig. 3

I can still recall putting the Roman snake ring with its startlingly sinuous scratched gold skin-like shape on my finger (fig. 3; cat. no. 2). I was suddenly alive 1700 years ago. Alive, and well protected in a part of the Roman Empire.

When I first stared at a German enameled Renaissance skull ring with piercing diamond eyes (cat. no. 28), I was reminded of my friend Alastair Bradley Martin's first rule for collecting art: "Try to isolate your first impression of a work of art. Do not buy a story. Look, look, look at a piece." How could I resist the haunting, eerie quality of this Renaissance ring? The more that I bought, the more I had to lecture about when I returned to America.

I would speak at various state jewelers' guilds. The first third of my lecture would be about my collection of ruby or diamond rings throughout the millennia. The next third would be about judging the

proper shade of green, red, blue, or white in a jewel. For the last third of the lecture I would show pictures of gems that I had purchased in Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, or London during the past months. Truth be told, I would dutifully rush to Diana Scarisbrick's house in London to show her and her husband, Peter, each and every purchase that I made. If it didn't meet her approval, I would still ship it to New York and somehow sell it or swap it, but I would never return it. I was a cheerful and reliable buyer. Martin Norton once said to me, "You're so nice, you must be a spy."

In the early 1970s there weren't more than a handful of serious ring collectors. The more I bought, the more I dreamt of buying. Pride of place was to acquire a Roman uncut diamond ring. I was after all a diamond dealer. Visiting Jack Ogden, a fifth-generation English jeweler who was really more scholar than dealer, was always a special treat. With him, pricing was a problem. Jack's prices were always too low. I would generally refuse to buy from him unless he raised the price somewhat.

When I was able to purchase the most marvelous uncut diamond ring that I ever saw, dwarfing by size and beauty any that I had seen elsewhere (fig. 4; cat. no. 32), I paired it with other diamond rings. I loaned the twenty-diamond ring collection to De Beers.

fig. 4

For years the collection traveled through the world. De Beers said of my ring: "The story of the diamond ring begins here."[3] As my uncles and my grandfather had made their substantial fortunes through being sightholders at De Beers, I was so pleased to gather each of the catalogues of my rings printed in English, Finnish, German, and scores of other languages as the rings toured the world as "The Power of Love" collection.

In 1973 Geoffrey Munn of Wartski's arranged for me to do a series of articles in *Connoisseur Magazine* on diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds.[4] In the early 1980's Thames & Hudson published two editions of *Gems and Jewels: A Connoisseur's Guide*, which expanded on the magazine articles and included information on many more gems. The book was sprinkled with many pictures of rings, which made it helpful for the reader to visualize what I was writing about. I then wrote a novel called *Blue*, which included as a plot device the very Jewish marriage ring I had bought as the first lot in the Gutman sale (cat. no. 13). This made my lifelong dream of being a novelist come true while still being in my marvelous, albeit speculative world of fine gemstones.

On each page of my novels, *Blue, Green*, and *White*, the story is in the center of the page and surrounding the text there are commentators such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Vermeer, Crazy Horse, and others giving their opinions on the story. This format is much the same as a page of the Talmud that my grandfather pored over each night in Antwerp. Across the page from the writing, there is a photograph of a jewel, often a ring that is part of the plot of the story. This is the first instance in literature that I know of that rings played a key pictorial element in a novel's development.

The path that the rings took after they passed muster with Diana Scarisbrick in London and then arrived in New York changed in the late 1970s. The rings were

deposited in a bank vault in Greenwich Village, which meant that neither I nor anyone else could really appreciate and treasure them.

On a sunny spring day in 1985 my life and the rings' life changed. Stanford Rothschild, my great friend from Baltimore, suggested that the Walters Art Museum (then the Walters Art Gallery) view my rings. Again Baltimore – my good luck city. In bounded Gary Vikan and Eric Zafran to my family's small apartment on Patchin Place in Greenwich Village. Gary had joined the staff of the Walters that very year as director of Curatorial Affairs, and Eric was the Curator of Renaissance and Baroque Art. I had moved to this small apartment because John Reed, who wrote *Ten Days That Shook the World*, had lived there, and also E.E. Cummings had shared a backyard with my apartment. Surely with these neighbors my novels would come into being. It was in this apartment that I would show each ring to my daughter and then gift it to her in a trust. Gary Vikan picked up one Byzantine ring and said, "Is this ring from the Zakos sale in the 1960s?" I was stunned. I answered, "Yes, I believe Derek Content bought it from Zakos and sold it to me in 1970. Eric Zafran particularly liked the Renaissance gimmel ring (cat. no. 1). Gary said, "Well if you are willing to loan these to us at the Walters and keep them there for three years, we will display them." I grandly said, "I will loan them for twenty years if you wish." And indeed, with a handful of exceptions all the rings have been at the Walters for nearly thirty years since 1985. I have lectured at the Walters on numerous occasions about Henry Walters and his rings, and my own family's collection of rings.

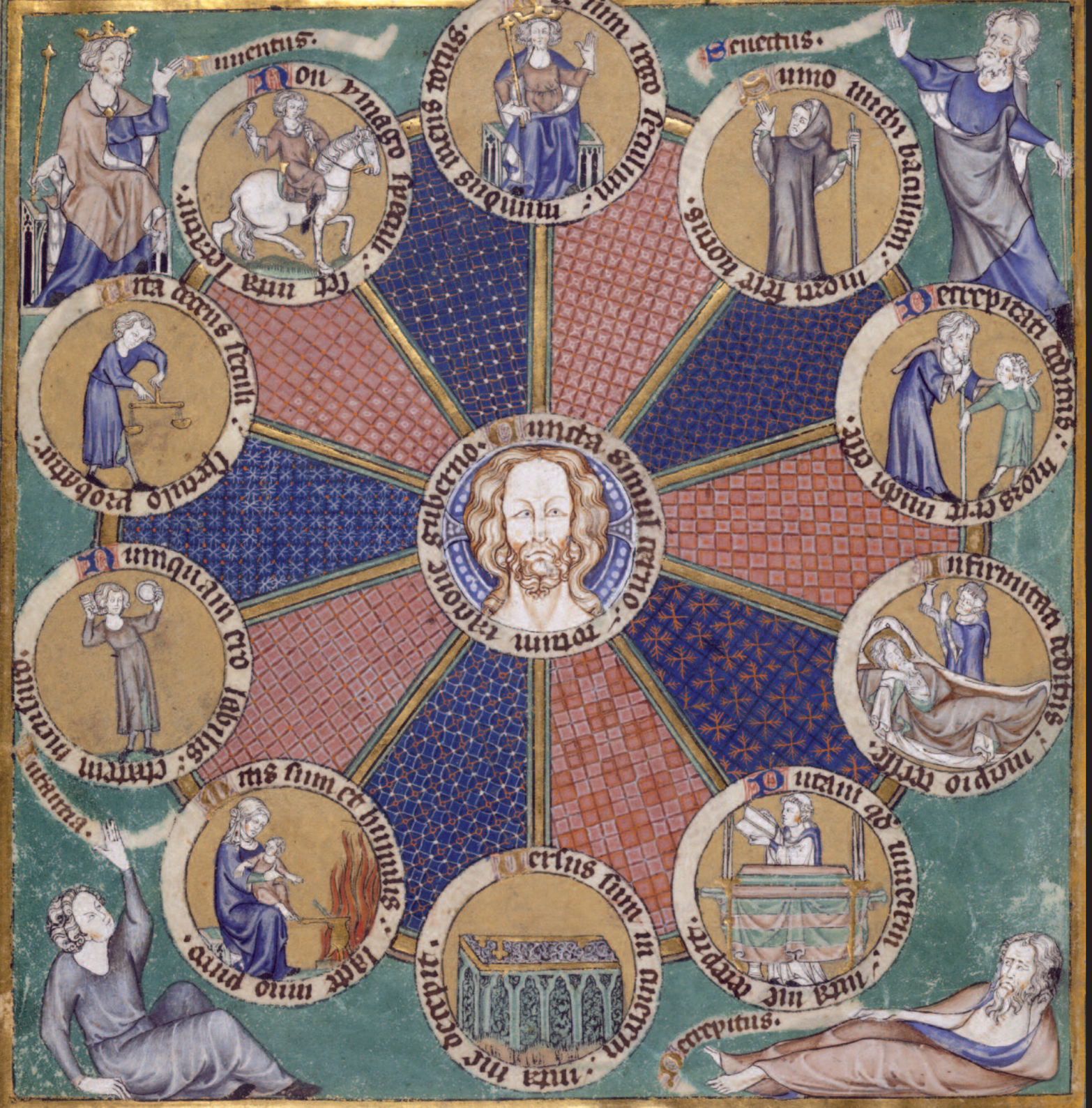
The rings continue to inspire me and others. In the late 1990s I read a biography of Elihu Yale by Hiram Bingham III recounting how Elihu Yale made his fortune in the late seventeenth century in the diamond trade before making a contribution in 1721 to an institution to bear his name. Diamonds, instead of being set uncut (see cat. no. 32) started to be cut in a table-cut fashion (see cat. no. 33) and then in a rose cut (see cat. no. 35) and finally in a European brilliant cut (see cat. no. 37). This is

the ancestor of the modern brilliant cut, which releases more brilliance and fire and greatly increased the desirability of diamonds from the time of Elihu Yale and onwards. I was struck by paintings of Elihu Yale wearing an uncut diamond ring on his finger.

Together with my wife, Barbara, I have set up a Spirit of Elihu Yale lectureship at Yale University as well as a room of jewels at the Peabody Museum at Yale. This year *Elihu Yale: Merchant, Collector, and Patron*, written by Diana Scarisbrick and me, has been published by Thames & Hudson. The uncut diamond ring has been a gentle muse to help me understand who the founder of Yale University was. I spent so many happy years at Yale, and I was now able to learn so much about Elihu Yale, the man.

When Sandra Hindman suggested to me that the Zucker Family 2007 Trust sell some of the rings in the family collection, we were all delighted. This volume, a careful study of the importance and art of some of the collection, will live on in ring lore. My family feels that some of the pieces which have passed through the Guilhou Collection, the Harari Collection, through Gutman, and others and sold to us by the Norton Family, Jack Ogden, Derek Content, and a very few other dealers will eventually find a way into private and public collections. It is our hope that the pleasure in looking at and learning from these rings will accompany the collection on the rings' onward journey into the lives of others. ○

1 Lesley 1968, 5.
2 Gutman cat. no. 23 remains on deposit at the Walters Art Museum, IL2001.10.7, illustrated in Albersmeier 2005, 43.
3 Levi 1988.
4 "Connoisseurship in Rubies." *The Connoisseur* 202 (1979): 236–41; "Connoisseurship in apphires." *The Connoisseur* 203 (1980): 204–8; "Connoisseurship in Emeralds." *The Connoisseur* 204 (1980): 52–55; "Connoisseurship in Coloured Diamonds." *The Connoisseur* 205 (1980): 252–59; "Connoisseurship in White Diamonds." *The Connoisseur* 206 (1981): 300–305; "Connoisseurship in Pearls." *The Connoisseur* 208 (1981): 194–97.



- CYCLES OF LIFE - CYCLE OF LIFES -

RINGS AND THE CYCLES OF LIFE

People of nearly every culture – excepting evidently Eskimos[1] – men and women, even children, from Antiquity to the present day wore or wear finger rings. It is something of a truism to say that rings are one of the most intimate types of jewelry and indeed among the most personal forms of art to have survived through the ages. The ring is one of the only few forms of jewelry we gaze at on our bodies without looking in a mirror. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the vocabulary for describing a ring also distinguishes parts of the human body: the "head" (or bezel or setting), the "shank" (or hoop or band), the "foot" (or bottom of the hoop or band), and the "shoulders" (that part of the ring between the hoop and the bezel). On one level, rings function as personal adornment responding to the "deep human wish for bodily beautification."[2] On a deeper level, scholars have long recognized the ring as "a symbol to which great interest is attached from the cradle to the grave."[3]

From the cradle to the grave (and even beyond) – that is how we have grouped the rings we present here from the Zucker Family Collection. In keeping with the idea of the ring as an art object directly related to the wearer and his or her life, we follow the ring through the life cycle, or the Ages of Man, a theme that enjoyed currency from Antiquity to the present day. Thus, our sections cover Birth, Marriage, Everyday Life, Death, and Eternity. Birth, Marriage, and Death are perhaps obvious categories. Everyday Life encompasses rings worn through adulthood, ones used by merchants, for signing, for identification, or merely worn for decoration. The final section, Eternity, incorporates a group of diamond rings, the diamond (from the Greek word *adamas*, meaning unconquerable, invincible) suggesting eternity, especially eternal love. Although these rings could just as easily fit in the section on marriage, the richness of the Zucker Family Collection in diamonds, Benjamin's own life as a diamond dealer, and the special allure of the diamond as a gemstone prompted the creation of this distinct category. Some rings could readily fit in several sections even if they are, sometimes arbitrarily, included in one. For each section, an illustration from a medieval manuscript (and in one instance a Renaissance drawing) serves as a springboard for the discussion and the rings that follow.

A striking illumination from the Psalter of Robert de Lisle opens our discussion. Written and illuminated by the Madonna Master around 1310, the Psalter actually contains two diagrams illustrating the Ten Ages of Man, each with explanatory verses.[4] The second of the two as shown here is organized as a wheel with ten spokes radiating out from a roundel of the face of Christ. Starting in the roundel in the lower left, a mother holds a baby in her lap before an open fire. The verse reads "Meek am I and humble, I live on pure milk." Next comes the Age of Reason, a boy holding a scale, followed by Adolescence, a youth admiring himself in a mirror (these are in reverse order in the manuscript). In young manhood, he hunts ("real life is joyful"), while at maturity as a king, he exclaims, "the whole world is mine." In the sixth age, he walks with a cane, and then a child guides him in the seventh, after which he is mortally ill and attended by a physician in the eighth. Finally, in the ninth and tenth age, his funeral service and his tomb are illustrated ("I have been turned into ashes, life has deceived me"). In the four quadrants of the square miniature appear personifications of Infancy, Youth, Old Age, and Decrepitude. Although the imagery is derived ultimately from the Wheel of Fortune (and the Ten Ages go all the way back to the Greek author Solon in the sixth century BC),[5] the position of Christ in the center and his admonition, "I perceive all at once, I govern the world with reason," stresses that good behavior governs the course of life. The presence of complementary diagrams in the sequence of the Tables of the Ten Commandments, the Articles of Faith, the Tree of Vices, and the Tree of Virtues, and so forth, further underscores the theological content of the series.[6] But, the inevitability of death is brought home by the inclusion of the Three Living and Three Dead.[7]

This pedagogical sequence of diagrammatic miniatures, which probably functioned as a prefatory cycle in the original Psalter along with scenes from the Life of Christ,

was surely intended to offer moral instruction. Even though the manuscript in its present state is mutilated and incomplete, we know from a contemporary inscription that it was made for Robert de Lisle (1288–1384), an important landholder who served the court under two English kings and who ended life ordained in a Franciscan convent.[8] The manuscript was a gift to his two daughters, Audere and upon her death to her sister, Alborou, and after both their deaths to the "ladies at Chicksands" (a convent near the family home), where Robert specified that it was to remain forever. Through a circuitous route, it ended up in the British Library, having passed from Chicksands through the hands of Lord Howard, then the Earl of Arundel, and finally the Duke of Norfolk. The Ten Ages illustrated in the Robert de Lisle Psalter animate the lives of the rings presented here and their contexts in the cycles of life, but the circumstances surrounding the ownership and fate of the book also remind us how rings, like manuscripts, were exchanged as gifts, as tokens of love, expressions of appreciation, and to convey moral lessons and, then, eventually were passed on through history by inheritance, exchange, or sale into the lives of others. **(SH)** ○

1 Kunz 1917 [repr. 1973], p. 31, with an inserted letter between pp. 30 and 31in the author's copy confirming this; however there is modern Intuit jewelry in the form of rings.
2 Evans 1953, 39.
3 Kunz 1917 [repr. 1973], ix.
4 London, British Library, MS Arundel 83 II; see their website, www.bl.uk/manuscripts; and Sandler 1983 [repr. 1999], pl. 4; on the Ten Ages, see also Sears 1986, with a discussion of these miniatures; see also Jones 1853 and Rushforth 1914.
5 See Sears 1986, 40.
6 Sandler 1983 [repr. 1999], pls. 6–9, discussed on pp. 46–52.
7 Sandler 1983 [repr. 1999], pl. 5, discussed on p. 44.
8 On the provenance, see Sandler 1983 [repr. 1999], 11–13, and the British Library website.

BIRTH-BIRTH-BIRTH-BIRTH-

BIRTH

Many aspects of childbirth changed little from Antiquity until nearly modern times. Conception itself was fraught with apprehension and anxiety and aided by superstition and magic. Women gave birth at home, attended by midwives, sometimes with the wet nurse, and other female friends, family, and attendants.[1] Men were absent. Sometimes there was an offering of gifts, a custom surely sanctioned in the Middle Ages by the Magi's gifts on the occasion of the birth of Christ. There are enough illustrations of birth scenes in medieval manuscripts to confirm these circumstances and for us to know also that, depending on the status of the mother-to-be, the setting might be more or less luxurious: the bed adorned with thick drapes for warmth, aided by logs burning on a hearth.

In this illustration – typical of many medieval birth scenes – from the deluxe presentation copy of John Lydgate's rhymed lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund, possibly made under the author's supervision between 1434 and 1439 and gifted to King Henry VI, the birth of the holy Edmund (a ninth-century East Anglian ruler) is depicted.[2] A moment after the birth is shown. Edmund's mother, Queen Siware, lies resting in bed with her attendants at her side, perhaps presenting food or gifts, while before a cozy fire a wet nurse holds the child, already bedecked with a halo. The Middle English text specifies that Siware conceived "thoruh goddis grace that werketh never in veyn" and that "Of god prouided: Edmund was his name." Thus, God's will facilitates birth (as it determines death) and even naming, as it had with the birth of Christ.

Rings, too, express God's will, such as a striking signet that doubles as an aid to prayer, with the words on its hoop cuing the reader to repeat "Hail Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us" (cat. no. 6). Another ring, perhaps also of magical purpose, reminds us of the presence of the Magi at Christ's Nativity at the same time that it looks forward to his death, symbolized by the veil of Veronica (cat. no. 5). And three rings from Antiquity survive as witnesses to the use of jewelry, specifically

rings, as charms to promote fertility (cat. nos. 2, 3, 4). Such a function was not uncommon later in the Middle Ages. A gem owned in 1380 by King Charles V contained a stone that was called "the holy stone, because it aided women to have children," and the Duke of Burgundy in 1455 owned a ring possessed of the same qualities.[3]

No ring better illustrates this inevitable cycle from birth to death than the beautiful Gimmel Ring of Jacob van Sachsen and Martha Wurmin, which introduces this book (cat. no. 1). Hidden within the cavities of the ring are tiny enameled images of a baby and a human skeleton, visible only when the ring is opened and presumably thus only to the wearer. Commemorating the marriage in 1631 of this prosperous German couple and replete with marriage symbolism – clasped hands and heart, an inscription, the diamond gem – this ring is also a "memento mori," a reminder of mortality. In spite of its small scale and great delicacy, the ring makes a powerful statement that marriage is but one stop in the journey of life between birth and death for one and all. Indeed, for the unfortunate Jacob this was all too true, for he died, surely unexpectedly, merely two years after his marriage at only 26 years of age.**(SH)** ○

1 See the section on childbirth in Itnyre 1996 [repr. 2012].
2 London, British Library, Harley MS 2278; see their site, www.bl.ul/manuscripts; and Edwards 2005.
3 Evans 1922, 117–18.

1.

Renaissance Gimmel Ring with Memento Mori

Germany, dated 1631

Height 29.61 mm; exterior diam. 23.7 mm; bezel 14.25 x 12.18 mm
Weight 13.75 grams
U.S. size 7.5; U.K. size O ½

The raised double-box bezel containing a diamond and a ruby, both table cut, of this enameled gold gimmel ring, opens to reveal two cavities beneath, filled respectively with a newborn baby and a skeleton. The outer facets of the twin interlocking hoops are inscribed in black Roman capitals in Latin NON SEPARABIT HOMO /QUOD DEUS CONIUNXIT ("Man must not divide those whom God has joined together"), and the inner facets with the names JACOB SIGMUND VON DER SACHSEN MARTHA WURMIN and the date 1631 above the skeleton. The hoops terminate in winged shoulders with red, blue, and green volutes from which issue hands gripping red hearts. The simulated reeded back of the bezel is centered on a circle. This ring is a seventeenth-century development of a type that originates in the sixteenth century.

This exceptional ring is called a "gimmel" from the Latin gemellus for "twin" referring to the double bezel and the double hoop, which open up to show the cavities with the names and date. The twinning of the two stones and the two hoops is a reference to two lovers, a man and a woman, side by side, and the Latin inscription is a paraphrase of the biblical text "What God has joined together let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6, Mark 10:9), affirming the indissolubility of the marriage vows. The hands offering hearts at the shoulders of the ring provide further love symbolism as does the choice of stones, the ruby and the indestructible diamond representing, respectively, a warm heart and fidelity (the ruby may likewise refer to birth or fertility, thus echoing

the symbolism of the baby and the skeleton in the cavities). The solemnity of the Renaissance marriage ceremony at which the couple promised to stay with each other until death is emphasized by the *memento mori* figures hidden inside the bezel. They recall the passage in the Bible (Job 1:21) that since we come into this world naked so also we will leave it with nothing. The moral is that, however rich we are, we cannot take our possessions to the grave with us and that therefore a good life is the best preparation for death. Since the ring was, owing to the rarity and value of the ruby and diamond and the excellence of the goldsmith's work, made for a wealthy individual, a reminder of the vanity of worldly possessions would have been appropriate. Moreover, the strong statement against divorce, as well as providing a warning of the inevitability of death, was known only to the person wearing the ring, since the hoops are concealed round the finger, the twin bezels joining together into one decorative whole, and the *memento mori* symbols are likewise hidden.

Born in 1607, Jacob Sigmund von der Sachsen was the son of an important town councilor in Erfurt, Jacob von der Sachsen (1587–1623). In 1631, at the age of 24, he married Martha Wurmin, and he died a young man just two years after his marriage in 1633. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics owned gimmel rings, and it is perhaps fitting that when the Protestant reformer Martin Luther married the ex-nun Katharina von Bora in 1525, it was with a gimmel ring inscribed with the biblical admonition similar to that on the present ring, but in German.[1]

Gimmel rings are rare. Examples without the memento mori figures are, nevertheless, found in the Tokyo collections of K. Hashimoto[2] and of Albion Art, and of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum.[3] Those like the present ring with the *memento mori* symbolism are in the Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim (newborn baby missing) and in a private collection that contains the marriage ring (1544) of the Tudor financier Sir Thomas Gresham, but without the hearts and hands.[4] **(DS)**

Set with a table-cut ruby and a diamond and with hearts above the strapwork and hands (hence "fede"), this gimmel ring – probably used to commemorate a marriage – shares many features with the Zucker example, and it is likewise inscribed: IN LEIB UND LEID GOT BEWAR UNS BEID ("In love and sorrow may God protect us both").

Gold gimmel fede ring
Germany, late 16th-17th century
(Tokyo, National Museum of Western Art, Hashimoto Collection, OA.2012-0174)

A table-cut ruby and a diamond are mounted in a heart-shaped bezel, held by hands, in this variant of a gimmel ring that separates into two parts and reveals two cavities, each with small repoussé enameled figures of skeletons, reminding husband and wife of their mortality. Rings with cavities containing figures – as in the Zucker example – are rare.

Gold gimmel ring
Germany (?), early 17th century
(Tokyo, National Museum of Western Art, Hashimoto Collection, OA.2012-0227)

Provenance: Baron Maurice Edmond Karl de Rothschild (May 19, 1881–September 4, 1957), Paris, then Chateau de Pregny, Switzerland (stolen during World War II, then restituted, record number R 2123, Cultural Plunder by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg: Database of Art Objects at the Jeu de Paume, now online http://errproject.org/jeudepaume/card_view.php?Card__cardid=13136); Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Colnaghi 1981, no. 32; Walters Art Museum, Baltimore 2005, 43 (Albersmeier 2005, 43).

Literature: Zucker 1984 [repr. 2003], pls. 21, 22; Levi 1988, 12; Scarisbrick, in Harlow 1997, 165 (Ring D); Albersmeier 2005, 43; Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 174, nos. 97–98; Weideger 2008, 106.

Notes:

1 Scarisbrick 1993, 106.
2 Scarisbrick 2004, no. 170, with hands and hearts, but not *memento mori* symbols.
3 Oman 1930, nos. 662, 664 with bezel formed of two clasped hands, each attached to a hoop, and no. 663, stone set double bezel; Dalton 1912, nos. 991, 992.
4 Scarisbrick 1995, 33.

2.

Roman Snake Ring

Roman Empire, c. 2nd century AD

Height 28.6 mm; average exterior diam. of hoop 24 mm
Weight 25.3 grams
U.S. size 6.5; U.K. size M ½

This, a superb and heavy example of a Roman gold snake ring, consists of a single gold rod with realistically modeled snake heads at each end, bent into a coil of two turns, with the heads turned back on themselves. There is a chased scale pattern at each end of the body. The ring started as a single cast rod of gold that was hammered to form the circular-section body and the two heads; the hoop rod ranges from 2.5 to 2.9 mm in diameter. The carefully delineated head details and linear cross-hatched "scales" were chased rather than engraved, and this work was done before the snake heads were bent back and the whole curved into the coiled hoop. This mode of construction, and the order of work, is typical for Roman snake rings of this general type.

Similar coiled, doubled-headed snake rings are known from across the Roman Empire, but most gold examples are far less massive that the present ring.[1] Very similar, heavy examples include one formerly in the Harman Oates and Whitehead collections; one in the Alice and Louis Koch collection and one in the Victoria and Albert Museum that was formerly in the Waterton Collection.[2] None of these has a dateable provenance. Related types of heavy gold snake rings and bracelets have been excavated at Pompeii, near modern Naples in Italy, and must date to no later than AD 79, when Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius.[3] The Pompeii examples include rings with two confronted heads and with a single turned-back head and a coiled, tapering tail. The Pompeian snake heads are similarly delineated to the heads on the present ring, but they have a more naturalistic chased imbricated scale

pattern, which might suggest that the present ring and its close parallels are a little later in date. The cross-hatched scale pattern is also seen on other classes of Roman gold rings that probably date to the second century, as do some related snake rings in silver from dateable contexts.[4]

Snake jewels had a host of amuletic connotations. In particular they were associated with the healing snakes of Asclepius, the god of medicine, who in Egypt was assimilated with the god Sarapis. Snakes also had many meanings, from being guardians to being symbols of resurrection. Although often associated in popular imagination, and art, with ancient Egypt, snake jewelry was not a traditional ancient Egyptian form and is seldom recorded there prior to Hellenistic Greek times. This plethora of pagan associations, plus the biblical tale of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, not unexpectedly led to the early Christians viewing the snake as a manifestation of the devil. The theologian Clement of Alexandria around AD 200 made a specific attack on jewelry in snake form: "Now women are not ashamed to wear the most manifest badges of the evil one. For as the serpent deceived Eve, so also has ornament of gold maddened other women to vicarious practices … fashioning eels and snakes for decoration" (*Paedagogos* 2:13).

When snake rings are shown on Roman-Egyptian funerary portraits and other depictions, such as the painted textile, or found in situ in burials, they are almost invariably worn on the third finger of the right hand. The reason for this choice is unknown. **(JO)**

This example of a similarly heavy snake ring includes realistically modeled snake heads bent into a coil with two turns and with chased scales. Symbol of a number of deities associated with healing, the snake protected its wearer, in part because they were associated with the Greek god of medicine Asclepius.

Gold serpent ring
Roman Empire, c. 100-200 AD
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.135-1962)

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 229, no. 310.

Notes

1 On classical snake rings, see Ogden 1990.
2 For the parallels, see Oates 1917 [repr. 1981], 2, pl. 1; Bury 1984, 19, fig. 19d (the Victoria and Albert Museum ring); Chadour 1994, 1:76, no. 254.
3 For the Pompeian examples, see Siviero 1959, pls. 168–70.
4 See Ogden 1990.

This remarkable fragment of a portrait of a woman painted in tempera on linen shows her hands. She wears rings on every finger of her left hand, which all parallel actual ring types from antiquity, and the snake ring worn alone on her right hand with its double turn is similar to surviving snake rings.

Fragment of a painted mummy shroud
Roman Empire, late 2nd-3rd century AD
(New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, X. 390)

3.

Greek Snake Ring with Garnet Heart

Hellenistic Greece, 2nd–1st century BC

Height 22.78 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 18.78 mm; bezel 13.95 x 10.08 mm
Weight 3.3 grams
U.S. size 5.75; U.K. size L

The hoop and bezel-backing take the form of the coiled body of a snake, the three coiled spirals of the hoop being separated by small gold grains. To the top is attached a heart-shaped gold setting bordered in beaded wire containing a heart-shaped bright red garnet.

Jewelry of the Hellenistic period, that is between the time of Alexander the Great in the later fourth century BC and the final Roman conquest of Egypt three centuries later, is characterized by an increasingly baroque style and construction typically involving numerous and often minute separate components. In the case of this ring, the components include sheet gold, plain and beaded wire, and gold grains. This type of construction is in marked contrast to much Roman gold jewelry (such as cat. nos. 2, 4, 18). With the present ring, the snake is formed of a single length of circular-section wire, some 0.8 mm in diameter. The head is simply depicted and faces along the axis of the finger; the tapered end of the tail forms three small coils.

Snake jewelry frequently figures in recent artists' concepts of ancient Egyptian female ornament, but snake jewelry was not limited to Egypt, nor was it an old Egyptian tradition. Jewelry with a variety of animal heads, including snakes, is found from the eighth century BC onwards in western Asia, and thence spread to Greece in about the fifth century BC.[1] This ring could be from almost any part of the Hellenistic Greek empire; neither its material nor its construction provides useful clues. Hellenistic snake rings include a

variety of forms with applied, gem-set bezels. Two related rings in the British Museum are shown here.[2] One is a variation on the present ring, with thirteen closely spaced coils and a pear-shaped garnet in a lyre-shaped setting. This was found in Beirut, Lebanon. The other represents another well-known Hellenistic form, where four snakes form the hoop and surround a setting usually containing either a garnet (as here) or an emerald. This latter type is characteristic of Egypt, and indeed the one shown here is from Alexandria.

Bright red garnets were the most popular gems in Hellenistic jewelry, with India being a major source. Garnet is a relatively hard gemstone and, like most ancient examples, the one in the present ring has the glassy or "vitreous" polish typical of garnet while retaining some of the coarser abrasive marks and finer scratches produced in the preliminary stages of gem polishing. The heart-shape form of the garnet is well known but is still not satisfactorily explained. The heart shape itself, often portrayed naturalistically in green enamel, is used in Hellenistic jewelry to depict the leaf of a grape vine where the leaves on fertile flowering stems take just this shape, termed "cordate" from the Latin *cor*, meaning heart. The grape vine had prominent fertility and Dionysian significance in Classical times. However, the red garnet also had fertility significance in Greek jewelry, connected with blood and the female cycle. What the heart shape of the garnet, with its lobed sides and central ridge, represents is unclear. We can note that grape vines suffer from viruses that can lead to occasional bright red leaves, a striking sight that might well have intrigued ancient observers, but whose relevance here is pure supposition. **(JO)**

In this ornately intricate ring, a single long piece of gold wire is coiled thirteen times to form the hoop, with one end terminating in a simple snake's head. Soldered into a pear-shaped setting resembling a lyre and placed just below the snake's head is a cabochon garnet with gold wire twisted around it to suggest the forms of rearing snakes. The ring was found in Beirut, Lebanon.

Gold serpent ring
Eastern Mediterranean, 1st century BC/AD
(London, British Museum, 1917,0501.770)

The baroque tendencies of later Hellenistic jewelry are clearly evident in this ring, formed by two wires that twist around a hoop and around a bezel and terminate in two pairs of snake heads. Embedded in an elaborate setting with granulation appears a central garnet, the most popular gem in Hellenistic jewelry (sourced in India). The scales of the snakes are lightly notched.

Gold serpent ring
Probably Egypt, 1st century AD
(London, British Museum, 1917,0501.770)

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985-2013.

Literature: Zucker 1984 [repr. 2003], pl. 242; Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 230–31, no. 314 (described as Roman, 3rd–4th century AD)

Notes

1 On Greek jewelry techniques in general, see Williams and Ogden 1994.

2 For the British Museum rings, see Marshall 1907 [repr. 1968], 126, nos. 770 and 771.

4.

Roman Inscribed Ring

Roman, late 2nd–early 3rd century

Height 21.3 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 24.74 mm; bezel 8.44 x 8.9 mm
Weight 13.3 grams
U.S. size 3.5; U.K. size G

The ring has a raised, octagonal bezel engraved with a stylized scorpion. This is flanked by beveled and steeply sloping shoulders bearing an inscription divided into two parts: ΦNEBE and NOYΘ.

The ring is constructed from a single piece of gold, hammered from a cast blank. There is no evidence for a solder seam at the back. The scorpion was cut using a combination of chisel cutting and engraving with a rather rounded engraving tool. The inscription was chisel cut.

The Greek letters spell ΦNEBENOYΘ – ***Phnebenouth*, a known magical spell**. Around 1840 workmen at York railway station, in Yorkshire, England, discovered a small piece of gold foil. On it were impressed two lines of characters. The upper line was unclear, but the lower read ΦNEBENOYΘ, essentially the same as on this ring.[1] The language is not Greek but Coptic, a later manifestation of the ancient Egyptian language written in a script based on Greek. The letters here can be read as "Lord of the Gods." Although Seymour de Ricci, when he catalogued the Guilhou Collection from which this ring comes, claimed that the ring probably hailed from Egypt, the Yorkshire gold foil charm demonstrates that objects with Coptic inscriptions were by no means confined to Egypt. Another silver foil "charm" in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, has a far longer text but also includes this same magical word.[2] We can only guess at the supposed nature of the protective power of this combination of the word and the scorpion, but it is noteworthy that it warranted an impressive gold ring.

The ring with its exaggerated, angular shoulders is a well-known type of late Roman ring encountered in gold, silver, and copper alloy. Two examples are similar. One is a more elaborate version, set with a sapphire, and also with a Greek inscription on the shoulders. This was found at Stonham Aspal, in Suffolk, two centuries ago and is now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The inscription can be translated as "long life to Olympis." The other ring is a far simpler version, now in the Koch Collection.[3] The stylized scorpion on the bezel of the present ring is similar to that shown on some Roman engraved gems and further to the east on some Sasanian Persian seals.[4] An example of the latter, a goethite or hermatite seal, is in the British Museum. **(JO)**

Provenance: E. Guilhou Collection [see S. De Ricci, *Catalogue of the Collection of Ancient Rings formed by the late E. Guilhou* (Paris 1912), 44, no. 314 and pl. 5]; *Catalogue of the Superb Collection of Rings ... formed by the Late Monsieur E, Guilhou of Paris,* Sotheby and Co, London, November 9–12, 1937, 84, no. 403 and pl. 14; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 23, fig. 26 (misidentified as an eagle and thus, despite its small finger size, suggested to have been worn by a Roman soldier).

Notes

1 For the inscription, see Kotansky 1994, 1–2.
2 Kotansky 1983, 172.
3 Chadour 1994, 1: no. 343; compare also a ring in Marshall 1907 [repr. 1968], no. 630, formerly in the Castellani collection and thus probably from Italy, which has three Greek letters of uncertain meaning on the bezel.
4 Bivar 1969, KA7, pl. 24.

The stylized scorpion on the bezel of the present ring is similar to that shown on some Roman engraved gems and further to the east on some Sasanian Persian seals, such as this hemispherical, goethite or hermatite stamp seal.

Stamp seal with a scorpion
Western Asia, 4th-6th century
(London, British Museum, 22441)

With its exaggerated, angular shoulders, this is a well-known type of late Roman ring encountered in gold, as here, as well as in silver and copper alloys. Portraits of Geta and Caracalla on related rings help fix a date for the typology of the band in the late second or early third century.

Gold finger ring
Roman Empire, late 2nd-3rd century AD
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 3,37)

5.

Iconographic Ring with Two Magi and Veronica's Veil

England?, 15th century

Height 22.61 mm; exterior diam. 22.13 mm; interior diam. 19.82 mm;
bezel 8.15 x 8.53 mm
Weight 4.05 grams
U.S. size 9.5, U.K. size S ½

This ring is composed of a D-sectioned hoop inscribed in the interior with "+ Melchoir * Balthasar *" and exterior *" ad iuva * maria" (help [me] Mother of God) interspersed with foliate designs and a star at the base of the hoop. A round disc featuring an engraving of Christ's face (the Veronica, or Vera Icon) is soldered to the hoop.

The names of the Three Kings, or Magi, two of which are inscribed on the interior of this ring in black letters, were incanted by votaries against everything from rabid dog bites to the "falling sickness."[1] The reliquary shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne was an important pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages and is most often associated with rings like the present example.[2] However, metal badges and chapels dedicated to the Three Kings in England attest to the popularity of their cult in the British Isles, including Scotland.[3] A number of rings with similar inscriptions (though most with all three kings' names) are extant from the same period and are often classified as magical rings because of their invocation against disease and evil.[4]

Many unique and wonderful details, however, set this ring apart from others. Unusual is the combination of the kings' names with the vernicle. The Veronica, or Sudarium, the impression of Christ's face on a veil offered by St. Veronica on the road to Calvary, is exceptionally well rendered: Christ's eyes are closed, his beard forked, and his visage appears before a discreet cross embedded in an organic quatrefoil design made of hatch marks.[5] The Veronica is celebrated

at the sixth station of the cross and was likely placed on this ring as a mnemonic form of devotion, like a single rosary in keeping with the invocation *ad iuva maria* (help [me], Mother of God). Widely known as an indulgenced image, it offered 3,000 years of pardon to the viewer, according to a popular French pilgrim's guide.[6] The image on cloth, parchment, metal, and even in printed form later in the fifteenth century was readily available for purchase at sites, and many devout placed them in Books of Hours of the period alongside the prayer "Salve sancta facies." This phenomenon supports my earlier hypothesis that iconographic rings, to which type the present ring loosely belongs, offered substitutes to Books of Hours, supplying the image on the wearer's finger instead of in a book for mnemonic recall of the prayer.[7]

The abundant engraving on this ring is not only symbolic; it recalls engravings of the period. The stars refer to the Star of Bethlehem that guided the Magi, for instance, and the foliate designs are prickly recollections of the crown of thorns, just as the form of the ring itself evokes the crown. Thoughtfulness in the ring's design is found in the placement of the cross on the top interior of the hoop under the veil; this is not just a symbol of the cross but a re-creation of the Crucifixion supporting the image of Christ on the other side of the bezel. At the same time that it invokes the Crucifixion, the prayer to Mary is a reminder of the birth of Christ or the Nativity. Thus, the ring is rich in Christian symbolism from the birth of Christ to his Passion and ultimately to his death. **(SH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–-2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 138.

This Vernicle ring takes the shape of a signet ring in latten (copper alloy), with its eight-pointed bezel showing an image of Veronica's veil, and a cut pearled border.

Signet-shaped ring with Vernicle
Italy, 14th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F755)

Notes

1 Duffy 1992, 216, and Kunz 1973, 349–50.
2 The literature on the cult of the Three Kings is vast; see Harris 1959, 23-30, and Zehnder 1982, and in relationship to rings, Hindman et al. 2007, no. 25.
3 Eila Williamson, "The Cult of the Three Kings of Cologne in Scotland," in Boardman, Davies, and Williamson 2009, 160-79.
4 Ashmolean WA1897.CDEF.F755; British Museum Coventry Ring AF. 897; Victoria and Albert M. 248-1962 and M.01-1960; Dalton 887 (Oman PL 75H, p. 119) in silver gilt.
5 Badde 2012; for an excellent study on Vernicle rings found in Findland, see Immonen 2004, 103–18; and a Three Kings' ring found in Sangravvold: http://nordic-aputsiaq.blogspot.com/2014/01/the-danish-three-king-ring.html.
6 *Merveilles de Rome*, cited by Reinberg 2011, 119; see also the excellent study by Megan H. Foster-Campbell, "Pilgrims' Badges in Late Medieval Devotional Manuscripts," in Blick and Gelfand 2011, 227–74.
7 Hindman et al. 2007, nos. 26, 27, 156–67.

A resoundin success in medieval art, the image of the Vera Icon was inserted in manuscripts, engraved on rings, and circulated as pilgrim's memorabilia. The inscription below this engraving reads: "This image was made after the model and likeness of the well-known first image of the Pietà, which is preserved in the Church of the Holy Cross in the city of Rome, which the holy pope Gregory the Great ordered to be painted according to a vision he had and that had been shown to him from above."

Israhel Van Meckenem the Younger, ***Vera Icon***
Engraving, c. 1490
(Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen)

6.

Medieval Armorial Signet Ring, with Lombardic Inscription

Germany, late 14th century

Height 26.1 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 22.61 mm; bezel 14.1 x 13.1 mm
Weight 8.65 grams
U.S. size 6.5; U.K. size M ½

The hoop of triangular section is inscribed in Lombardic letters on a black enamel ground + AVE MARIA SINE (rose) LABE ORIGIN CONCEP ORA PRO NOBIS ("Hail Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us") interspersed with five black four-petaled flowers on diamond-shaped bosses merging with the shoulders, each decorated with a black rhomboid, supporting the raised octagonal bezel enclosing a foiled crystal intaglio tilting shield (of which the charge cannot be deciphered) and the initials GH. The eight ridges at the back of the bezel terminate in globules bordering the intaglio.

As befits the armigerous owner, this substantial gold ring is well made with distinctively individual details such as the bosses on the hoop and the ridged back of the bezel. Indispensable for business transactions, a signet was used for impressing wax seals to attach to documents and letters, thus providing proof of authenticity, like a signature. Moreover, by the fourteenth century, heraldry had been widely adopted to identify an individual as a person of rank if he had the right to the possession of a coat of arms, crest, or badge. This development is underscored by the quality of this signet with its bezel set with an engraved crystal intaglio over foil, a new class of armorial seal introduced in the early fourteenth century by Jean Sans Peur, duke of Burgundy, assassinated in 1419.[1] This example is rare, for although foiled crystal intaglio signets continued in use into the seventeenth century, the majority of surviving examples date from no earlier than the mid-sixteenth century.[2]

Like many medieval rings, the present example had a dual purpose, for the inscription on the hoop invoked the protection of the Virgin Mary. These words refer to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which taught that although Mary was conceived like other children, grace poured into the soul of the Virgin Mary from the first moment of her being in the womb of her mother, St. Anne. Formulated by John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception won such widespread support that it was already established as a feast by the Roman Catholic Church by the mid-fourteenth century, a time of intense religious feeling. This devotion coincided with the new custom of inscribing Christian formulae on rings and articles of personal adornment instead of writing them on parchment carried in purses, as before.[3] Combining the function of a seal with a prayer and heraldry, the ring expresses the ideals of the age of faith and knightly chivalry. **(DS)**

Provenance: Dr. Johannes Jantzen (1887–1972), Bremen; Thomas Flannery, Jr. (1926–1980), Winnetka, Illinois, Sotheby's sale, London, December 2, 1983, no. 306; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg 1961, 313.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 39.

Notes:

1 Oman 1930, 11.

2 Dalton 1912, nos. 316–27.

3 Evans 1922, 122.

This type of signet, its foiled crystal intaglio covering painted arms or identification on an octagonal bezel, protected the ring from the hot wax used for sealing. Perhaps never used for sealing, the present example, dated 1634, depicts clasped hands holding three flowers between the initials "AW" and "GH" instead of heraldry.

Gold signet ring
Germany, c. 1634
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.229-1975)

Rings inscribed on the bands and shoulders occur as early as the thirteenth century, and Gothic examples often include inscribed prayers. The present example is inscribed AMOR VINCIT OMNIA and AVE MARIA GRACIA PLENA, the salutation used by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. The presence of the prayer next to the finger on the hand likely had a prophylactic intention.

Engraved ring, gold and sapphire
Europe, c. 1200-1300
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.181-1975)

7.

Renaissance Ruby Ring with Enamel

Western Europe, c. 1580

Height 23.05 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.61 mm; bezel 9.59 x 13.48 mm.
Weight 5.10 grams
U.S. size 6; U.K. size L ½

The hoop of this gold ring, chased with symmetrical ornament, formerly enameled, terminates in shoulders with a pair of bosses within strap borders supporting the flat cruciform bezel set with table cut foiled rubies in two square collets and three oblong collets; above, on each side opaque white enamel double scrolls enclose two translucent red pear-shaped drops centered on white H scrolls.

For Shakespeare, the ruby was "unparagoned," and Benvenuto Cellini valued it above all other gems on account of its glorious color.[1] Cellini goes on to describe how to set it in a bezel, "enhancing it with foils of which some should be of so deep a glow that they seem quite dark and others differing in intensity till they have scarce any red in them at all." In his opinion, the goldsmith should experiment with all these shades of colors until his "own good taste determines which foil will give most value to the stone." He also advises that the stone must not be set too deep so as to deprive it of its full value nor too high so as to isolate it from the surrounding detail.[2]

The jeweler who created this setting seems to have followed Cellini's instructions to the letter, for the five foiled stones, which glow with light and fire, are set at different angles on the cruciform bezel so that each can be fully appreciated. Since rubies are usually found in small sizes, the challenge was to group these five stones together to make one mass of uniform color, and he has chosen to set them into a cruciform motif. Alternative patterns – round

clusters, lozenges, stars – for similar groups are listed among the twenty-two ruby rings in the inventory of the jewelry of Queen Elizabeth I.[3] As was the rule for the classic Renaissance ring, all three parts – the hoop, the shoulders, and the bezel – are well differentiated yet combine to merge into one harmonious whole. To set the rubies off to their best advantage the symmetrical ornament round the sides of the bezel is enameled white, as was the most usual combination, according to documentary records, such as the 1576 inventory of the stock of the London jeweler John Mabbe: of the twelve ruby rings listed, nine were enameled white and only three in other colors.[4] In addition to its rarity and color, the ruby was also valued for its healing and protective properties, and according to Jean de la Taille "strengthened the memory and brought joy."[5] Although of course we can do no more than imagine the identity of the original owner of the present ring, rings like this may well have been gifts at child birth, the ruby in particular signaling success and prosperity (cf. also its symbolism in the Gimmel Ring, cat. no. 1). **(DS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 335.

Notes

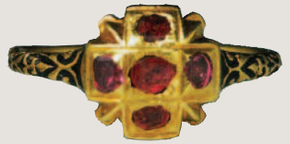
1 *Cymbeline* II.2.17.

2 Cellini 1898, 24. He urged the craftsman to "set his jewel with all the taste, care, and delicacy of which an able man is master."

3 British Library, Royal MS. Appx 68.

4 Rymer 1704–26, 15:757 etc.

5 Evans 1922, 144, quoting Jean de la Taille, *Blason de la Marguerite et autres Pierres Précieuses* (Paris, 1574).



Rings of this form occur in drawings dated 1638 in the *Llibres de Passanties* in Barcelona with designs for goldsmith work. For this reason, they are sometimes thought to be of Spanish origin, although a Dutch origin is also sometimes suggested. Throughout the seventeenth century, with the scarcity of large stones, smaller gems, especially rubies, were often foiled and set in floral or cruciform shapes, carefully matched, as here, to show off the color and quality of the stones.

Ruby cruciform ring with enamel
Spain or Netherlands, second third of 17th century
(Germany, Hanns-Ulrich Haedeke Collection, NR38)

Another variant on the ruby "cluster" ring is this one with five table cut rubies, chased below as a floral cross and enameled black, the hoop engraved at the shoulders. The inventory of the jewelry of Queen Elizabeth I listed twenty-two examples of ruby rings.

Ruby cruciform ring with enamel
Early 17th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F557)

MARRIAGE-MARRIAGE-MARRIAGE-

MARRIAGE

Rings appear to have first been related to marriage during the Roman (or perhaps Greek) era,[1] but customs varied in different countries, religions, and periods insofar as the "marriage ring" was concerned. The present selection of diverse rings from the Zucker Family Collection offers an opportunity to revisit the theme of the marriage or wedding ring. Included are rings from Antiquity up to the Neoclassical era.

Depicting a marriage ceremony in fourteenth-century Bologna, the introductory miniature from a commentary by Johannes Andreae on Gregory IX's *Decretales* (from Book 4, "De Sponsalibus," On Marriage) shows a custom evidently restricted to Italy in the later Middle Ages.[2] In a festive ceremony enlivened by music, the groom is about to place a heavy gold ring on his bride's finger. Just behind the couple, the man in the green and white hat is probably the notary, and bride and groom are both attended by friends and relatives on left and right. In an initial "P" below, a kiss seals the marriage (not shown here). Niccolò di Giacomo, the most celebrated artist of his day in Bologna, painted this colorful miniature now separated from the parent manuscript, much mutilated, which is in the Pierpont Morgan Library (New York, MS M.747), as well as other stray single leaves from the same codex (e.g., Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 331).[3] We even know the name of the scribe, Bartolomeo dei Bartoli. Gregory's *Decretales*, written in the twelfth century, was concerned with what constituted the marriage sacrament, how was it sanctioned; this is the topic his commentators and glossators also dealt with, and all agree that mutual consent was essential. Neither Gregory nor his commentators specify how the marriage ceremony took place or what physical act sealed consent, however. Scholars have shown that this illustration – typical of Italian representations of marriage – probably imitates the actual event, taking place at home in Italy, not in a church, together with the signing of legal documents.[4] In Italy, it was the gift of a ring and its placement on the bride's finger that signified the moment of consent. No source reveals what these rings looked like. The example in the miniature shown here has a very large gold hoop and could display a stone in its setting (perhaps not unlike cat. no. 24 of approximately the same data and geographic origin). How different the Italian ceremonies were from their French counterparts, which took place in or before a church, officiated by a priest, and signaled consent by the clasping of hands between the spouses (Latin, *dextrarum iunctio*, meaning literally "joining together of right hands").

One ring from late Antiquity illustrates the *dextrarum iunctio* engraved on the bezel of the ring; a man's larger right hand clasps a woman's smaller one, and she wears a bracelet on her wrist (cat. no. 9). Such rings were long thought to be marriage rings, and many are accompanied by the Greek word "omonia" for harmony (in marriage), but it has now been shown that the gesture also had a wider meaning and signaled a pact between two parties.[5] Even if some of these rings symbolized the pact of marriage, they were not necessarily exchanged during a ceremony, although from the first through the fourth century there are literary references that seem to confirm the gifting of rings between husband and wife. As in the case of the medieval examples, we cannot know what Roman marriage rings actually looked like, nor do we know what role, if any, they played in the wedding itself. Perhaps the elaborate key ring in this section was also a marriage ring, or at the very least a wedding gift (cat. no. 8). It certainly belonged to a woman; her name was Pulchra (meaning beauty), and the ring reads "belonging to Pulchra" or, as it has been read, "Beauty's ring." Since Roman women were given the keys to the domestic stores when they entered their husband's house after marriage (even if the present ring cannot function as a key *per se* but merely makes reference to the form), such a ring might be an appropriate wedding gift.

Jewish wedding rings are a special case, and their exact function is as shrouded in mystery as antique and medieval examples (cat. nos. 10-14). The Jewish custom of purchasing the bride for a nominal coin "worth a penny" dates from the seventh or eighth century.[6] It is thought that Jewish wedding rings, first known from fourteenth-

century archeological finds, hark back to this custom. Often composed with a house-like structure as the bezel and inscribed on the inside of the house or the band, "Mazel tov," for good luck, these rings thus represented the home the bride and groom would make together at the same time as they made reference to the Temple of Jerusalem.[7] Surely they were ritual objects, special ceremonial pieces, not worn by the bride but instead returned to the community and passed down through generations. Unresolved issues of their actual use are coupled with questions as to their date and place of manufacture. While scholars now think that the majority date later than previously assumed and that Eastern Europe (Transylvania) constituted a veritable marketplace for their production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the whole subject, including a census of the examples known worldwide, would repay further study.[8] The Zucker Family Collection is particularly rich in examples of Jewish wedding rings, and the different varieties represent well the forms of surviving types.

Final examples bring the marriage ring into modern times. An unusual Neoclassical ring made by Castellani took its inspiration perhaps from a Roman hat-pin, and displays the heart composed of a cabochon ruby – symbol of passionate love – on the hand of Venus, the embodiment of beauty, love, fertility and prosperity (cat. no. 17). Perhaps this was not a marriage ring, but it was certainly made with a gift of love in mind. Another beautiful nineteenth-century ring, this one with rose-cut diamonds, spells the initials of the married couple GM and heralds the triumph of this most precious of gemstones as a symbol of marriage, of eternal love (cat. no. 16). The ring looks forward to the twentieth century, when in 1948 an advertising tagline for De Beer's proclaimed "Diamonds are forever," which in 1999 was called "the slogan of the century." From then on, marriage and diamonds went hand-in-hand. **(SH)** ○

1 On the history of marriage rings, see Ogden 2014; see also Vikan 1987.
2 Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, B-22,225; see Nordenfalk et al. 1975, 50–52.
3 L'Engle and Gibbs 2001, 226–29, no. 20 (and cover).
4 On the difference between Italian and French marriage customs, see Nieuwenhuisen 2010, http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/202234 (accessed 30 July 2014).
5 See Hersch 2010, esp. 190–211; see also Treggiari, 1991.
6 See Pappenheim 1977 and Lipis 2011.
7 Lipis 2011, 54–60.
8 See especially Chadour 1994, 323–33. See also Seidmann 1981, 1983–84, and 1989

8.

Roman Key Ring with Inscription

Early Byzantine, 4th century AD

Height 18.1 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 24.45 mm; bezel 22.36 x 14.57 mm
Weight 13.55 grams
US size 4.25; UK size H ½

The tapered, beveled hoop with swollen shoulders, made from one piece of hammered gold, rises to a rectangular flat recessed bezel to which is attached a rectangular plate of gold with the two-line inscription ΠΟΥΛ and ΧΡΗC engraved and inlaid with niello, a black silver sulphide. To the bezel is attached a circular, openwork disk with cruciform design bordered by a ring of circles produced with a small ring punch and an outer rim of beaded wire. The two ends of this beaded wire terminate in small gold spheres. The ring shows a moderate amount of wear in antiquity.

The inscription, written in the Greek letters ΠΟΥΛΧΡΗC – Πουλχρης (Poulchrīs) – is from the Latin *pulchre* meaning beautiful and is the Roman woman's name "Pulchra" with what is presumably the Greek dative suffix, thus meaning "belonging to Pulchra." The woman concerned was evidently a resident in the Greek-speaking Eastern Roman Empire, not necessarily a Roman citizen or even of Roman decent. Women named Pulchra are attested from across the Roman Empire; indeed, there were several members of the Claudian family so named, including a great-niece of the emperor Augustus.

The ring is in the form of a stylized Roman key ring and was probably Pulchra's wedding ring. The keys to the domestic stores were given to a Roman woman when she first entered her husband's house after marriage and had to be surrendered on divorce. Key rings, including many functional ones in copper alloy were a long Roman tradition, first occurring in the Roman

Republican period. As time progressed, the ring became more symbolic and ornate than functional, particularly when in gold or silver.[1] We see such rings represented in wear on some Palmyrene funerary sculpture and on the remarkable Romano-Egyptian painted textile fragment that is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: (see p.40 above). Here the ring is worn on the little finger of the left hand and appears to be in silver. A Romano-Egyptian papyrus mentions a *daktyloklidin* – a ring in the form of a key, presumably meaning the type of ring described here.[2] A particular fine gold example actually from Egypt is in the British Museum. This has the pierced-work Latin inscription ACCIPE DULCIS MULTIS ANNIS on the bezel and around the hoop. This can be translated as "Take it, sweet one, for many years," a perfect sentiment for a wedding ring.[3] Another gold example with a curved profile to the extension was formerly in the Castellani, Guilhou, and Brummer collections and now is in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (acc. no. 57.1824). This is said to be from France and has an openwork Latin inscription around the hoop – "live sweetly" – and is set with an intaglio inscribed EYTYXI: "Good Luck" in Greek. The circular projection seen with the present ring is rare in gold examples, but bronze examples are well known.[4]

The pierced-work crosses on the British Museum example identify it as early Christian and from after about AD 325, when the cross first began to be used as a symbol in jewelry. If, as seems likely, the central motif on the present ring is an ornate Christian cross, a similar dating is indicated. **(JO)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick, 2007 [repr. 2013], 61, no. 77.

A particularly fine gold example of a key ring from Egypt, this one has an openwork band with the Latin inscription ACCIPE DULCIS MULTIS ANNIS ("Take it, sweet one, for many years"), a perfect sentiment for a wedding ring.

Inscribed openwork key ring
Roman Empire, 3rd century AD
(London, British Museum, 1988,1021.1)

This little-known example of a key ring is composed of a projecting openwork panel filled with vines above a pierced work DIT in an openwork panel. The hoop has two heart-shaped openwork panels ornamented with a flower.

Inscribed openwork key ring
Roman Empire, 3rd century AD
(Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Ariel Herrmann in honor of Gratia Berger, 2002.735)

Notes

1 Key rings are listed by Yeroulanou 1999, 260–61, nos. 338–42. See also the related examples with openwork bands but without the key element: Yeroulanou 1999, 255–57, nos. 302–7 and 310–13. For examples from England, see Johns 1996, 60–62.
2 Crawford 1949, no. 8.
3 Dalton 1912, 2, no. 3.
4 For the Walters Art Museum ring, see Garside 1979, no. 355, and Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 60–61, fig. 76; for a bronze key ring with circular projection, see Bury 1984, 20, fig. 20d.

9.

Roman Marriage Ring with Clasped Hands

Roman, 3rd century AD

Height 17.14 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.90 mm; applied bezel plaque 12.6 x 9.0 mm
Weight 14.2 grams
U.S. size 1.25; U.K. size B ½

This substantial ring is composed of a broad hoop of polygonal form with a flattened bezel to which is soldered a rectangular gold plate stamped with two clasped hands. The hoop was made from sturdy gold and has an overlap solder joint at the back; the join is now largely invisible due to subsequent shaping and finishing.

Like certain other classes of much Roman jewelry, this ring is a clear demonstration that simplicity of design could accompany extravagant use of materials. The uncluttered design of the Roman Period has a very different feel from the baroque complexities of much of the jewelry of the Hellenistic Period that preceded it. This ring style with broad, polygonal hoop, often very heavy, is encountered with various bezel designs in addition to clasped hands. Some bear only inscriptions; others are chased or engraved with figures of deities, such as one with a figure of the Romano-Egyptian deity Sarapis now in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection.[1]

The primary focus of the present ring is the clasped hands motif, an indication that this was a betrothal or wedding ring. A betrothal ring combined the function of our engagement and wedding rings. There is no evidence that a ring had any significance in marriage in the early Near East, and a Greek or Roman origin is probable. A ring given as a love pledge is first mentioned in Roman literature in the second century BC, although this was from a woman to a man.[2] Not all rings given as love gifts were a prelude to marriage, but many were. In the first century AD, the Roman writer Pliny says that a ring

was sent by the man as a gift to a woman at the time of betrothal, and a letter written on papyrus that survives from fourth-century AD Egypt seems to mention the sending of just such a ring. Most typically the ring was worn on the third finger of the left hand – as is still true in many parts of the world. Classical writers explain that this was because the ancient Egyptians had discovered that a nerve linked this finger directly to the heart.

By the third century AD there is more mention of betrothal rings, and from this time we can identify them with more certainty in museum and private collections. They typically show clasped hands, sometimes also with the Greek inscription *omonoia* meaning "harmony." In some of the finer examples, such as the present ring, there is a distinct difference in scale between the two hands, the smaller indicating the woman's hand, which is often shown with jewelry such as a ring or, as here, a bracelet. The gold ring in the British Museum has the same basic motif of clasped hands, but this is simpler, lacking jewelry or variance in hand size.[3]

The substantial weight of the present ring clearly demonstrates the wealth of the original couple. Other far flimsier examples in thin sheet gold or silver exist and remind us that in the fourth century, by which time wedding rings had become a Christian practice, Augustine of Hippo told priests that they should not hesitate to wed a couple even if they were too poor to give rings to each other. Note that he said "to each other."[4]

Like some other Roman betrothal rings, the present example shows minimal signs of wear in antiquity and raises the question as to whether the idea of the permanent wearing of a wedding ring was secondary to its symbolic function as showing union and perhaps endowing of wealth. Indeed the weight and proportions of this ring relative to finger size may suggest that permanent wear was never intended. (JO)

A ring with a similar sturdy polygonal band is engraved directly on the surface of the bezel, instead of on a superimposed gold plate. The form conforms to a common typology in the later Roman era.

Gold finger ring
Roman Empire, late 2nd-3rd century AD
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 11,10)

There is surprising variation in the actual representation of the clasped hands on the types of finger ring. In some of the finer examples, there is a distinct difference in scale between the two hands, which might wear other jewelry. This ring has the basic motif of clasped hands, but it is relatively simple, lacking jewelry or variance in hand size.

Gold marriage ring
Roman Empire, 2nd-3rd century AD
(London, British Museum, 1917,0501.276)

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2014.

Literature: Scarisbrick, 2007 [repr. 2013], 63, fig. 80.

Notes

1 For the parallels shown, see Marshall 1907 [repr. 1968], no. 276; and Chadour 1994, 1: no. 322.
2 For a history of betrothal rings, see Ogden 2014; see also Vikan 1990, 157 n. 97 for a list of types of marriage rings; and Kalavrezou 2003, 217, 222–28, nos. 121–30.
3 For the parallels shown, see Marshall 1907 [repr. 1968], no. 276.
4 Augustine, Epistle 119 to Januarius.

10.

Jewish Wedding Ring with Miniature Building

Central or Western Europe, 19th century

Height 33.8 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 21.5 mm; bezel 10.5 x 13.9 mm
Weight 10.7 grams
U.S. size 8; U.K. size P ½

The flat hoop of this gold ring surrounds the finger; its lower half has grooved lines on the outer side that imitate the shaft of a column or pilaster in relief with engraved details. The slightly enlarged shoulders terminate in a geometric-style column top. On either side of the hoop forming the shoulder is a hand in opaque white *ronde bosse* enamel. Both hands clasp the bezel, which is shaped like a small castle with rectangular ground plan but curved on the underside to conform to the finger when worn. The windows are square arched. Four coarsely formed lion heads appear on all four side walls, rather like gargoyles. The roof is gabled with tiles, and the corners of the building are accentuated by small crenellated turrets. The detailed motifs are mainly engraved.

The motif of two hands unified as a *dextrarum iunctio*, a gesture symbolizing the acceptance of the marriage contract, dates back to Roman times; it became fashionable again in Western Europe during the Renaissance and continued to be popular into the nineteenth century. The symbolism of clasped hands or a heart on a betrothal or wedding ring is a Western European tradition, but the clasping of an architectural structure is an iconographic feature characteristic of Jewish marriage rings.[1] These often have a house, chapel, or even as here, a castle-like building. The earliest surviving examples of Jewish marriage rings that come from well-documented archeological finds are those from the Colmar and Erfurt Treasures, dating to the first half of the fourteenth century, although the practice dates back well into the seventh and eighth centuries.[2] The rings found in Colmar and Erfurt all have bezels with a small building in

differing designs. There are various interpretations of the architectural motif's significance, ranging from Solomon's Temple, the Dome of the Rock, the synagogue, or more likely in this context, the Torah's vision of the house symbolizing the wedded couple's future life and home. Gertrud Seidmann quotes a saying from the Talmud: "His house is his wife," which gives the latter a further meaning.[3]

The aedicule or architectural form on a ring in fact occurs on Byzantine rings of the sixth to seventh centuries.[4] Jewish marriage rings have often been associated with Venice or northern Italy, where there were large Jewish communities, mainly of Sephardic Jews from various parts of Europe, and the influence of Greek craftsmen in the Mediterranean is well known. In recent years it has become evident that Jewish marriage rings have their origin in several regions of Europe; traditions from the countries in which the families lived were influential.[5] Thus determining the origin of a Jewish marriage ring is often complicated. The style and iconography of this ring point to a Western European tradition, including its use in Central Europe.

In recent years goldsmiths specialized in Judaica have taken on the challenge of re-creating rings with such architectural structures in a contemporary idiom; an example made in 1977 by Moshe Zabari (b. 1935 in Israel) is in the Jewish Museum, New York, as are rings by Mila Tanya Griebel (b. 1963), regarded as one of the foremost contemporary silversmiths. **(BCS)**

Provenance: Melvin Gutman (1886–1967); Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 15, 1970, Part V, lot 110, as "German Renaissance … late 16th century"; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1962–1968; Yeshiva University Museum, New York, 1977 (Pappenheim 1977, no. 150).

Few Jewish wedding rings are dated, and medieval examples are generally considered rare. This ring from the Colmar Treasure constitutes one of the earliest surviving examples. It must date before 1348 and was probably buried with a hoard of money and jewels by a member of the Jewish community in Colmar, Alsace around the time of the Black Death 1348-1350. Its typology – with a small pyramidal building formed by eight panels and the inscription Mazel tov – typifies that of Jewish wedding rings of the next six centuries.

Jewish wedding ring
Italy, c. 1300
(Paris, Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, deposit from Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge, CL20658)

Found in 1826, this ring from the Weissenfels Treasure is the second of the earliest Jewish wedding rings of the same typology as that from the Colmar Treasure. Buried after 1310 and probably before 1348-1349, it displays a similar architectural construction and gothic style arches, slanting panels, and bears the same inscription "Mazel tov."

Jewish wedding ring
c. 1300-1350
(Halle, Saale, Art Museum of Moritzburg, MOKHWEM00162)

Literature: Chadour 1994, 2: no. 1070; Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 154.

Notes

1 The inspiration for this Jewish wedding ring type can be traced back to seventeenth-century examples, such as one in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 2: no. 1070, with further parallels noted: in the Jeidels Collection (now the Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim); Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna; and the present example). The stylistic combination of the Classical column, medieval castle, and lion gargoyles points to a revivalist ring with a nineteenth-century date.

2 Descatoire 2009, 60–63.

3 Seidmann 1981, 50.

4 Compare Spier 2012, nos. 28 and 29.

5 Compare Röhrs 2011, 184.

The endurance of this appealing imagery of the open house is demonstrated in the endeavors of contemporary jewelers to recreate and "modernize" the form. Widely regarded as one of the world's foremost contemporary Judaica silversmiths, Mila Griebel has exhibited in Britain and the United States, with a number of museums acquiring her work for their permanent collections. This group of silver marriage rings represents a modern concept of the traditional Jewish type.

Mila Tanya Griebel, Jewish marriage rings
England, 2006
(New York, The Jewish Museum, Contemporary Judaica Acquisitions Committee Fund and Hyman and Miriam Silver Fund for Contemporary Judaica, 2008-150; 2008-151; 2008-152)

11.

Jewish Wedding Ring

Central or Eastern Europe, 18th century

Height 31.25 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 24.3 mm
Weight 7.10 grams
U.S. size 10.25; U.K. size U

The ring is composed of a circular wide band of gold sheet metal with a fine corded wire forming the edging. The inside of the hoop is polished and reveals an inscription in Hebrew letters with the words "Mazel tov" in abbreviated form. The outer side of the hoop is matt and lightly chiseled. The surrounding edges, formed of multiple corded wires, frame the middle frieze with openwork filigree bosses separated with pairs of globules.

Where the ends of the hoop join to form the circular shape of the ring, the decorative globules are cut through and incomplete. This suggests that the ring might have been made smaller to fit a new wearer's finger (perhaps someone who inherited the ring). Such rings might also have been produced from longer strips, which were prepared and then cut and soldered according to the customer's required ring size.

The Hebrew inscription "Mazel tov," usually abbreviated and inscribed on many Jewish betrothal or marriage rings, means "lucky star." It is a wish of good fortune for the future life of the newlywed couple. The use of Hebrew would suggest that the ring was worn at an Ashkenazim (rather than Sephardic) wedding ceremony.[1] In those communities the bride traditionally made a ribbon for the Torah scrolls which included her name, that of her husband, and the date of their wedding ceremony and then gave it to the synagogue.

Looking at the shape of this ring with the filigree bosses standing out around the full circle of the ring, we can imagine how uncomfortable these rings would have been to wear. In fact, Jewish marriage rings were not worn on a daily basis (as they are today) to signify the status of marriage; rather, they were intended for ceremonial use only and then returned to the synagogue. In accordance with Jewish ritual of the time, the ring had to be made of precious metal, yet unadorned, and the use of gemstones was not permitted.

This ring type with a single band of filigree decoration was quite common, and as seen in cat. nos. 10, 12, 13, and 14 of this catalog, this basic design was varied by the number of rows and the more or less elaborate filigree ornament.[2] The rope-style edging and filigree style is reminiscent of Eastern European filigree jewelry, but it might have been worn in Central Europe. Where these rings were produced and where they were actually in use could differ greatly, due both to the migration of Jews within Europe for political reasons and to the trade among different goldsmith centers. Their dates of production also vary widely, but it is now thought that they are later than previously supposed.[3] **(BCS)**

Provenance: Melvin Gutman (1886–1967), Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 15, 1970, Part V, lot 114, as "Venetian … late 16th century"; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1962–1968; Yeshiva University Museum, New York, 1977 (Pappenheim 1977, no. 149).

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 161.

This ring type with a single band of filigree decoration was quite common, and like others of the same design it is inscribed on the applied rectangular plaque "Mazel tov" (not visible).

Jewish wedding ring
Italy, 17th century
(Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, The Stieglitz Collection, B.86.0263; 102/109)

The rope-style edging and filigree style is reminiscent of Eastern European filigree jewelry, but it might have been worn in Central Europe. This example with its ten more elaborate filigree bosses, closely spaced and set between pairs of globules, is close to the Zucker ring. It bears engraved initials inside and the requisite "Mazel tov" in beautiful Hebrew characters.

Jewish wedding ring
16th century
(London, British Museum, AF.1422)

Notes

1 Gutmann 1987, 15 ff.

2 Almost identical rings with one row of filigree bosses can be found in numerous museum and private collections, for example, in the British Museum, London (Dalton 1912, no. 1345); and with a slight variation in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (Schahar 1981, no. 1093); the Alice and Louis Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 2: no. 1088); and formerly Guilhou Collection (de Ricci 1912, no. 1199), to name but a few.

3 The proposed dating and attributions vary considerably; they were traditionally thought to come from Venice, northern Italy, or southern Germany and to date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Chadour (1994, 2: nos. 1069–1097) was the first to question the attribution of Jewish marriage rings and to compare the goldsmithing techniques with Eastern European and Transylvanian goldsmiths' work, in some cases determining the dating by the filigree technique.

12.

Jewish Wedding Ring

Central or Eastern Europe, 18th–19th century

Height 30.43 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 24.24 mm
Weight 12.9 grams
U.S. size 7.75; U.K. size P

The ring is made of a wide circular band of gold sheet-metal with a fine corded wire – resembling a chain – forming the edging. The inside of the hoop is polished and reveals an inscription in Hebrew with the words "Mazel tov" in abbreviated form. The outer side of the hoop is matt and blackened, perhaps due to a high silver content. Three narrow bands formed of ornate chain-like wires frame the two friezes of alternating openwork filigree bosses and rosettes filled with opaque turquoise blue enamel. In between these ornaments are pairs of globules.

The join in the hoop ends is quite noticeable; this may indicate that these rings were made of longer strips and then cut to fit the size ordered by the customer. Some damage is visible, and a serrated insert may indicate a resizing of the ring subsequent to its manufacture.

Together with the collector Jules M. Samson from Toronto,[1] Gertrud Seidmann was the first scholar to attempt to catalogue Jewish marriage rings, and by the 1980s, they had identified more than three hundred examples in various public and private collections.[2] From Seidmann's research, it has become obvious that some designs were repeated, and these again can be found in numerous variations. This becomes already evident when comparing cat. nos. 10–14 in this publication, which range from a single row of filigree decoration to triple rows. The present ring contrasts with the others in that it not only has a double row of filigree bosses, but these alternate with rosettes in opaque turquoise blue enamel. The ring complies with the rules of Jewish

wedding rituals, inasmuch as it does not include any gemstones, which were not permitted. Here the goldsmith added colors by introducing enameled flowers. This design of a Jewish marriage ring was obviously influenced by Western European tastes. The rosettes are reminiscent of forget-me-nots used as an amatory or friendship motif in sentimental jewelry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When the groom gives the ring to the bride during the marriage ceremony, he recites the *kiddushin* formula: "Behold thou art consecrated unto me by this ring, according to the laws of Moses and of Israel." At Ashkenazi weddings, for which this ring was probably made, the groom places the ring on the index finger of the bride's right hand. Tradition maintained that the artery of this finger formed the closest link to the heart.

Examples of this ring type with alternating rosettes, formerly from the Rothschild collection exist in Paris in a single or double row with the same design (Klagsbald 1981, nos. 48 and 49), formerly Guilhou Collection (de Ricci 1912, no. 1204, the present example?); in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 2: no. 1087 with single row); Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Seidmann 1983/84, fig. 5 with single row; Taylor and Scarisbrick 1978, no. 476; Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 52–53, fig. 3a). The colors of the enamels can vary, including translucent green. **(BCS)**

Provenance: E. Guilhou (?), Paris, *Catalogue of the Superb Collection of Rings ... formed by the late Monsieur E. Guilhou of Paris* (London, 1937), no. 667; Melvin Gutman (1886–1967), Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 15, 1970, Part V, lot 113, as "late 16th century"; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1962–1968.

Literature: Albersmeier 2005, 43; Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 159

This striking photograph of a group of rings in Paris provides excellent indication of the varieties of the forms of Jewish wedding rings – with and without filigree bosses, enamel, architectural constructions and roofs, and comprised of differing numbers of rows of gold bands and varying degrees of intricate ornamentation. Dating these rings remains problematic and still open to discussion.

Jewish wedding rings
Italy, 16th-17th century
(Paris, Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, deposit from Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge, CL12280; CL12281; CL20692; CL12308; CL12282; CL12278; CL12277)

Notes:

1 Samson's unpublished work "The Jewish Betrothal Ring (or Mazal tov Rings)" (1982) is apparently available for consultation in the Center of Jewish Art, Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Lipis 2011.

2 Seidmann 1981; Seidmann 1983/84; Seidmann 1989.

Marriage Contract,
Tétouan, Morocco, 1837
(New York, The Jewish Museum, Gift of Barbara and Benjamin Zucker Family in honor of Daniel M. Friedenberg, 2008-204)

Marriage Contract,
Bombay, India, 1859
(New York, The Jewish Museum, Gift of Barbara and Benjamin Zucker Family in honor of Daniel M. Friedenberg, 2009-26)

In a Jewish wedding, the ring ceremony is followed by the reading of the so-called *ketubah*, in which the groom's rights and responsibilities are recorded and signed as a protection of the wife. The marriage contract on the left celebrates the joining of Luna, daughter of Avraham Coriat, and Avraham, son of Yaakov Bibas, both members of distinguished families. The ring and the *ketubah* are the oldest components of the Jewish wedding, and like the Jewish wedding ring, the *ketubah* endured into near-modern times. The decoration of the *ketubah* on the right also reflects local traditions, in this case the style of Indian miniature painting of the middle of the nineteenth century.

13.

Jewish Wedding Ring

Central or Eastern Europe, 18th century

Height 31.7 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 23.02 mm
Weight 16.8 grams
U.S. size 9; U.K. size R ½

The ring consists of a very wide circular band of gold sheet metal with a fine corded wire forming the edging. The inside of the hoop is polished and reveals an inscription in Hebrew letters with the words "Mazel tov" in abbreviated form. The outer side of the hoop has a matt surface covered by three ornate friezes with dense filigree decoration. Multiple twisted wires, resembling a chain, frame the surrounding edges of the hoop and the three friezes with openwork filigree bosses and pairs of globules in between.

The joins where the ends of the hoop meet are clearly visible, which suggests that longer strips were prepared and then cut and soldered to fit the size ordered by the customer; the filigree ornaments would have been applied subsequently.

Rings with the same openwork filigree ornamentation exist as a single frieze (e.g., cat. no. 11 with further references). Another variation is that of the double frieze: formerly Jeidels Collection (today Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim); formerly Guilhou collection (de Ricci 1912, nos. 1200 and 1207; Rothschild Collection, today in the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris (Klagsbald 1981, no. 42 and 43); Alice and Louis Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 2: nos. 1089 and 1090); Victoria and Albert Museum (Oman 1930, no. 712; Keen 1991, nos. 58 and 66).

This ring type with three friezes is rare. The quality of the present example is exceptionally good, and it would appear that the ring was originally owned by a wealthy synagogue, which could afford a ring of heavier gold weight.[1]

The history of Jewish wedding rings is rather complex and further research is much needed, both in the study of wedding ceremonies in different periods and countries, and among various Jewish ethnic groups, and most of all a thorough analysis of the goldsmiths' techniques found on existing pieces, which could lead to more precise dating and attributions.

Traditionally, the father of the bride was given a gold coin or other article of value by the groom as a symbolic purchase of the bride and pledge of marriage. Similar customs continue today in non-Jewish tribal communities of the world, and the practice can be traced as far back as the seventh and eighth centuries in Babylonia; it spread to Egypt after the diaspora.[2] The substitution of a ring for the coin is of uncertain date; the earliest known mention of the use of a ring during the Jewish wedding ceremony dates to 1400, in the account of the so-called *Niggunei Maharil* (para. 5) attributed to Rabbi Jakob hal Lewi Mölln (1360?–1427). He was based in Mainz at the time, but he was head of the Jewish communities of Germany, Austria and Bohemia. Manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries illustrate the ring ceremony and joining of the hands *dextrarum iunctio*.[3]

Over time, the wedding ceremony changed; instead of taking place at home, it took place in the synagogue, where it is customary for the couple to stand under a portable canopy, the so-called *huppah*. A further development was to combine the betrothal (*kiddushin*) and the marriage (*nissuin*) in a two-part service; prior to this, the two ceremonies could be as much as a year apart. The ring ceremony is followed by the reading of the marriage contract, the so-called *ketubah*, in which the groom's rights and responsibilities are recorded and signed as a protection for the wife. Finally, the nuptial blessings seal the marriage. The ring and the *ketubah* are the oldest components of the Jewish wedding.

This is an example of a similar ring with the same typology: formed of three rows bordered by filigree wires, each row encompassing filigree bosses separated by pearled granules and with the inscription "Mazel tov" engraved on the interior of the band. Rings with three registers appear to be rarer than the one and two row types. They must certainly have been uncomfortable to wear.

Jewish wedding ring
Italy, 17th century
(Paris, Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, deposit from Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge, CL 12308)

The chain-like edging and filigree decoration is East European in origin and may have been worn in Central Europe. **(BCS)**

Provenance: Melvin Gutman (1886–1967), Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 15, 1970 Part V, lot 112, as "Venetian … about 1600"; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Yeshiva University Museum, New York, 1977 (Pappenheim 1977, no. 148).

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 160.

Notes

1 One parallel formerly in the Rothschild Collection is today in the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris: Klagsbald 1981, no. 47.

2 Pappenheim 1977, 45–46; Goitein 1978, 67 ff. Ziskind 1991, 184 ff.

3 Gutmann 1987, 15–16, pls. XXVIII–XXIX.

This unusual manuscript with poems and prayers for life cycle events, includes an engagement contract, a marriage contract, as well as a full-page miniature of a betrothal scene, and may have been a wedding gift. The moment of betrothal (*kiddushin*) is shown in the miniature portraying a stylishly dressed couple (Judah ben Elhanan of Ascoli Piceno and Stella, daughter of Solomon of Mantua are named in the contract, married in Parma in 1420). Contrary to Jewish custom, the groom places the ring on the left hand, instead of the right hand, of the bride. Possibly the two half-length figures in the margins on either side are intended as witnesses.

Miscellany for Life Cycles
Illuminated manuscript on parchment
Italy, probably Ferrara, written by Leon Judah ben Joshua de Rossi of Cesena, c. 1460-1470
(Zurich, Braginsky Collection, MS.B259)

14.

Jewish Wedding Ring with Container and Pendant

Central or Eastern Europe, 18th century; container and pendant 19th century (before 1824)

Height overall 80.03 mm; height of ring 47.61 mm; height of pendant 30.89 mm; exterior diam. of ring 47.61 x 42.13 x 33.59 mm; exterior diam. of pendant 30.89 x 13.91 x 12.65 mm

This jewel consists of a ring that has been adapted to form a container, either to use as a memento of a loved one, or possibly as an amulet with suspended pendant.

The ring is made of a circular wide band of gold sheet metal with turned-over edges to hold the ornamental filigree frieze framed by a corded strip of gold metal – with indentations on either side. The frieze itself consists of filigree hemispheres alternating with palmette-shapes in translucent green enamel and rosettes in opaque white and turquoise blue enamel. The hoop is surmounted by a gabled roof with tiles and a repeat of the enamel colors. The roof is hinged and opens, but inside there is no inscription. The opening of the hoop for the finger has been altered. One side is closed with facetted glass and the other side with an openwork filigree rosette surrounded by an enamel wreath-style ornamental frame. Suspended from the ring on two chains of multiple corded wires is an urn-like pendant in open filigree work with translucent green-enameled fleur-de-lis-motifs and an opaque blue, white, and green lid, repeating the form and pattern of the roof on the ring.

The filigree on the ring and its adaptations are distinctly different in the quality and thickness of the wires and enamels, even the colors. The ring appears to have been made earlier, and the transformation into a container or amulet case dates from a later period. On the later additions the filigree wires are much finer and were probably machine-rolled, a method not found before the

nineteenth century.[1] On the pendant there is a re-hallmark "A" in a diagonal-shaped rectangle; this hallmark was used in as a confirmation of taxes paid.[2] This re-hallmarking does not give evidence regarding the provenance or date when the pendant was made and added – only that it would be before 1824.

A number of examples of this ring type are found in various museum collections, and the design and date vary accordingly: British Museum, London (from the Waddesdon Bequest and Rothschild Collection, Tait 1986, no. 51 gives a detailed account of parallels and mentions the possible origin of such workmanship in Eastern Europe); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. no. 17.190.996, formerly Baron Albert von Oppenheim and Pierpont Morgan); Alice and Louis Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 2: nos. 1076–1078 with full account of the possible Transylvanian origin of these rings); Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Taylor and Scarisbrick 1978, no. 476); and without roof in Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Oman 1930 [repr. 1993], no. 709; Keen 1991, nos. 65 and 71 with mention of a similar ring in the Jewish Museum, London).[3]

The twisted wire with double-sided indentation, the type of filigree decoration, and the combination of enamel colors are quite typical of Transylvanian goldsmith work, which was much sought after. Goldsmith work from this area was already well known in the early sixteenth century, and travelling goldsmiths from Transylvania worked in Central and Western Europe. Around 1850, a member of the Rothschild family and a little later Count zu Schwarzenberg traded with antiquarians in that area (with large communities of Jews).[4] Interestingly, the majority of Jewish wedding rings with filigree decoration seem to appear in private and public collections in the second half of the nineteenth century. More research into this phenomenon is required.

The Zucker Pendant began life as a Jewish wedding ring closely resembling the present type. More elaborate than many of the surviving examples, this ring combines very intricately worked filigree bosses separated by rich blue and white enamel, resembling strapwork, and small rosettes with dense cabled filigree borders. A black and white enameled pyramidal house rises from the hoop and completes the complex design.

Jewish wedding ring
Eastern Europe or Italy, 17th or 19th century
(New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.996)

Not unlike the medieval Colmar Treasure ring with its slanted panels, the present Jewish wedding ring (like the Zucker Pendant) features a small rectangular compartment covered by a hinged plate of thin gold over which there is a hinged gable roof with alternating blue and white enamel decoration (representing roof tiles) and two dormer-like windows, each open on the bottom and edged with black enamel. A press-clip stud allows for the gable roof to open and firmly close.

Jewish wedding ring
Eastern Europe, Italy (Venice) or Germany, 16th-19th century
(London, British Museum, WB.195)

The intended function of this jewel remains a mystery. The jewel without a chain to suspend from the neck (which may have originally been attached) reminds one of memorial brooches/pendants from which an urn-shaped pendant was suspended. As with these, the glass container might have contained a lock of hair from a loved one. The receptacle might also have held an amulet to protect the wearer from misfortune or illness, a custom very much alive still today. When the pendant from the Zucker collection was exhibited in the Israel Museum, it was compared with a portrait of Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936) painted by Leopold Pilichowski (1869 -1934). Here she is dressed as the seventeenth-century business woman Glückel of Hameln and shown wearing a similar pendant made from a wedding ring. Pappenheim was a descendant of Glückel and translated her memoirs from Yiddish into German.[5] **(BCS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; purchased Sotheby's, New York, early to mid- 1980s; on deposit in The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, since the late 1980s.

Exhibited: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (see Fishof 1985, 60-61, no. 36).

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], figs. 197–98.

Notes:

1 Deneke and Oppelt 1982, 32–35.

2 Rohrwasser 1987, 11, in use from 1806 to 1824.

3 Keen 1991 refers to R.D. Barnett, *Catalogue of Permanent and Loan Collections* [Jewish Museum] (London, 1974), 85, no. 462

4 Klusch 1988, 22–24.

5 Fischof 1985, 60.

15.

Black Letter Posy Ring SAUNS DE PARTIER

England, 15th century

Height 17.70 mm; exterior diam. 17.70 mm; interior diam. 16.20 mm
Weight 1.70 grams
U.S. size 5.25, U.K. size K

This ring is composed of a concave hoop that is inscribed on the exterior in black letter between floral sprays: "sauns de partier" meaning literally "without leaving" or "undying" or "eternal." Although the incision of the letters makes their legibility difficult, their forms are typical of Gothic script.

Rings inscribed on the exterior with Gothic script ("black letter rings"), like the present example, appear to originate in the thirteenth century when the flowering of knightly culture, specifically courtly love, prompted gifts or love tokens as expressions of the passion of a knight for his lady. Prevalent from the thirteenth through the fifteenth century, these rings are not only engraved with short amatory mottos on the exterior, and filled with niello, but also often ornamented with floral sprays. Both French and English examples exist, although it is thought that such rings were for the most part of English origin, French being the language of love in the later Middle Ages. Now we routinely group these rings with "posy" rings, from the word *poésie* (for poetry), thus taking their name from English literature. However, strictly speaking the "posy" ring is a later sixteenth-century phenomenon, replacing the custom of black letter rings of previous centuries. Unlike the sayings decorating black letter rings, the inscription of the posy ring was typically on the interior because as John Lyly wrote in 1578 in the dedication of his didactic romance *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wyt*, "the posies on your rings are always next to the finger, not to be seen of him that holdeth you by the hand." Provided we appreciate the crucial distinction between types, the term "black letter posy" can suffice

as a serviceable nomenclature. Joan Evans's excellent 1931 publication on posy rings remains the best overall source (and it is happily reprinted now and so readily available), but the entire subject warrants a new up-to-date study.

The present motto occurs with many variant spellings on a number of rings, several of them ornamented, one with a signet. Recorded find sites point to an English origin; other examples come from Warwickshire, Fenham Hall Essendine, and the Tower of London.[1] Perhaps the unusual variant spelling points to a non-French or English origin.[2] The concave profile of the hoop of this ring is not common; the majority of black letter posies have a D-section hoop, but the concave profile adds extra shine and sparkle to the ring as the engraved words reflect light against miniscule shadows created by the raised rims. The floral sprays invariably reference the garden of love, a place of eternal blooming and growth.

English museums hold the best collections of this type (for instance, British Museum 1960, 1103.1 and the Victoria and Albert M.219-1962), but a number more have been newly discovered in England and are awaiting verification.[3] **(SH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 67, recording the motto as "love is indivisible, for you only."

Notes

1 The present motto is recorded with several variations in Evans 1931 [repr. 2012], 13.

2 For a contemporary English buckle (Fishpool Hoard) using similar vocabulary and orthography, see British Museum 2010,8023.1.

3 See, for instance, the Portable Antiquities Scheme: 2004/T385b, 2004/T429, 2004/T430).

Compare the floral sprays and leaves incised on the exterior of the hoop which is inscribed EN BON AN ("Happy new year") in a black letter script similar to that on the Zucker ring. With the flowering of knightly culture, specifically courtly love, jewelry – including rings, brooches, belt buckles, and pendants – inscribed with amatory expressions or gestures of friendship were often gifts from a knight to his lady.

Posy ring incised with flowers and leaves
England, 15th century
(London, British Museum, 1960,1103.1)

Compare this medieval gold locket in the form of a miniature padlock inscribed with similar lettering *SAUNS* and on the reverse *REPENTIR.*

Medieval gold locket
England, Nottinghamshire, Newark (area), 15th century
(London, British Museum, 2010,8023.1)

16.

Wedding Ring with Diamonds and Enamel

Probably England, c. 1780–90

Height 21.15 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 20.05 mm; bezel 16.46 x 20.73 mm
Weight 7.30 grams
U.S. size 6.25; U.K. size M

The ring consists of a wide, flat band in red gold, which encompasses the finger and increases in width toward the bezel. The oval bezel is made of silver and formed to follow the curvature of the hoop. Twenty-one brilliant-cut diamonds set in silver contrast with the fine red gold setting of the central plaque. Inside and under glass are the initials "GM" in italics, studded with rose-cut diamonds in silver against a translucent blue enameled background with chiseled pattern.

Gem-set jewelry was highly fashionable in the eighteenth century, and diamonds were in great demand at the European courts.[1] The discovery of new diamond mines in or around 1725 in Brazil allowed for the lavish and almost unimaginable display of diamond jewelry. New diamond cuts were developed in the quest for more sparkle, and the desire to enhance their whiteness led to the stones being set in silver, avoiding any color reflections from the gold.

The design of a central gemstone surrounded by a cluster of diamonds became fashionable in the second half of seventeenth century; by the eighteenth century, the same design had become even more opulent and luxurious.[2] Such rings often had as a central gemstone a diamond, ruby, or even topaz, according to affordability, and specific gemstones would have been chosen to mark the occasion on which the ring was given. Glass pastes as substitutes were also in vogue, and tiny seed pearls a popular alternative to gemstones.

Such gem-set rings were not merely decorative; they were often given as a symbol of love or as betrothal and wedding rings.[3] This ring, individualized by diamond-studded initials, would have been a wedding gift from the groom and worn by the bride during their wedding ceremony to mark her change of name through marriage.[4] Other examples of the type with monograms vary in the use of colors ranging from dark blue, green, or even red translucent enamel to contrast against the letters. Not all of these rings were set with diamonds; the fashion for seed pearls was another alternative. The overall designs range from the refined elegant to richly floral, and such rings seems to have been popular in many countries in Western Europe. For the plain gold band hoop, see two examples from the Hull-Grundy collection in the British Museum, London.[5] For some comparisons of the ring type, see two rings in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection and a variation with seed pearls in the Historical Museum, Moscow. [6]

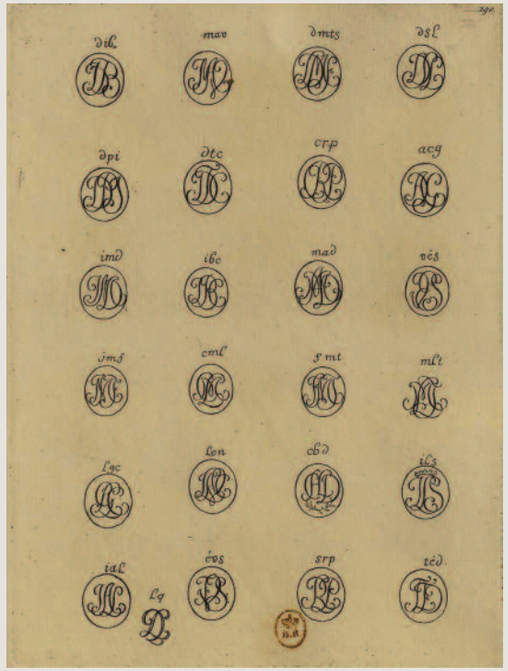
Jewelers would have sought inspiration from ornamental design books of the period, often published by jewelers. One of them was the merchant jeweler Jean-Henri Prosper Pouget (d. 1769), who in 1762 published a book titled *Traité des pierres précieuses et de la manière de les employer en parure*. More relevant for this ring as a reference book would have been his handbook on monograms, ciphers, and initials, which he designed, etched, engraved, and published in 1767: *Dictionnaire de chiffres et de lettres ornées*. **(BCS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr., 2013], no. 115, as probably of English origin.

Notes

1 On the history of diamonds, see Harlow 1997.
2 Dawes, Collings, and Dawes 2007, 134–36.
3 *Diamonds and the Power of Love* 2002, 30 ff; see also Levi 1988.
4 Scarisbrick 1993, 126, no. 277; Scarisbrick 2004, 123.
5 Tait 1984, nos. 95–96 (English, probably late 18th century); compare also Dalton 1912, no. 2159.
6 Chadour 1994, 1: nos. 1020–21; and Medvedeva et al. 1987, no. 116.



The merchant jeweler Jean-Henri Prosper Pouget (d. 1769) published a book titled: *Dictionnaire de chiffres et de lettres ornées*. This work, which he designed, etched, and engraved in 1767, was a handbook on monograms, ciphers, and initials such as the GW on the Zucker ring.

Pouget, Jean-Henri-Prosper, *Dictionnaire de chiffres et de lettres ornées, a l'usage de tous les artistes, contenant les vingt-quatre lettres de l'alphabet*
1767
f. 406
(Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, Kb-102-4)

The design of a central gemstone surrounded by a cluster of diamonds became fashionable in the second half of the seventeenth century; by the eighteenth century, the same design had become even more opulent and luxurious, and the central stone was often replaced by monograms or miniature ormamental plaques. The present example, close in date to the Zucker "GW" ring, displays a large central diamond surrounded by twelve smaller diamonds and framed on either size of the bezel by a pair of small diamonds.

Diamond ring
England or Netherlands, c. 1760
(New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Bayard Verplanck, 55.32)

Jewelers would have sought inspiration from ornamental design books of the period, often published by jewelers. In the book by the designer François Lefebvre published in Paris, each plate is divided into two sections, the top section containing designs for jewelry, and the lower section containing a view of a city, on this plate Paris. The designs of pendants, composed of a cluster of smaller stones around a central gem, in the upper portion of this plate are remarkably similar to the form this ring assumes.

François Lefebvre (designed by) and Baltazar Moncornet (engraved and published by), *Livre Nouveau de toutes sortes d'ouvrages d'Orfevries*
Paris, 1665
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 25416:7)

17.

Revivalist Ring with Hand Holding a Heart

Italy, Rome, signed Castellani, c. 1860–1870

Height 19.01 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 20.15 mm; bezel 5.24 x 3.77 mm
Weight 3.45 grams
U.S. size 1.5; U.K. size C

The ring is made of a gold wire with round cross section, decreasing in size through the process of hammering. On the thicker end, a sculptural hand, open in a gesture of offering, forms the bezel. The palm of the hand holds a heart with a collet-set ruby cabochon. The wire continues to form the hoop, then bypasses the hand and on the opposite side closes the circular form to surround the finger. The wire coils around the shoulder of the ring four times, like a bracelet around the wrist. On the underside of the bezel/hand the ring is signed with the simple monogram of Castellani in Rome showing two interlocked Cs in relief.[1]

This firm was founded by Fortunato Pio Castellani (1794–1865) in Rome. In the mid-1820s Castellani won the patronage of the archaeologist Michelangelo Caetani, later duke of Sermoneta; it was he who inspired Castellani and his sons Alessandro (1823–1883) and Augusto (1829–1914) to base their designs on jewelry from Antiquity.[2] The Castellani family not only made jewelry in the style of the ancients, but also owned an extensive collection of Italian antiquities and peasant jewelry.

In the nineteenth century, archaeological finds, especially in Rome, led to a greater interest in Antiquity and the revival of ancient styles. Ultimately the jewelry of the ancient Etruscans and Romans were the inspiration for "archaeological-style" jewelry, which was highly fashionable from about the 1860s to 1880s.

The model for this ring goes back to Roman hairpins, carved in bone or made of silver with a hand as the terminal, often holding a shell, an apple, or a pomegranate.[3] The shell alludes to the birth of the Roman goddess Venus from the foam of the sea; the apple to the legend of her offering a golden apple in the Judgment of Paris; and the pomegranate to fertility and prosperity.

Castellani must have been fascinated by the motif of the Venus hand: he made a hairpin of aluminum and gold with the hand holding an apple, today in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome.[4] This ring shows the firm's creative imagination by introducing the heart on Venus's hand as an amatory symbol and the ruby cabochon, a gemstone that is emblematic of passionate love. Rings with two hands holding a heart used as a betrothal or marriage ring to symbolize the union are more common. This ring appears to be unique. **(BCS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 143.

Notes

1 See Munn 1984, fig. 194.
2 See Soros and Walker 2004.
3 For examples of such hairpins, see d'Ambrosio 2001, no. 14 (from Pompeii, 1st century AD); Johns 1996, fig. 6.12; and Sas and Thoen 2002, no. 220.
4 Soros and Walker 2004, figs. 9–21.

Jewelry of the ancient Etruscans and Romans was the inspiration for "archaeological-style" jewelry made fashionable by the Castellani firm in Rome. Inspired by a Roman hairpin, the present jewel shows the hand of Venus holding an apple, not unlike how the hand of the Zucker ring proffers a heart.

Castellani, Hairpin with the hand of Venus
Rome, second half of the 19th century
(Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco Villa Giulia, 85416)

The reverse of a gold micromosaic pendant is signed by the readily recognizable interlaced C's of the Castellani monogram, which appear similarly superimposed on the back side of the hand in the present ring.

Castellani, Gold micromosaic pendant
Rome, c. 1875
(London, Wartski Ltd)

EVERYDAY LIFE - EVERYDAY LIFE -

EVERYDAY LIFE

An often reproduced, though little discussed, manuscript illumination of a goldsmith's shop introduces the section on Everyday Life, which includes rings worn by adult men and women as they went about their daily activities— rings for identification, for signing, and those worn purely for ornament. The miniature offers excellent visual commentary on the process of acquiring a ring: how were rings purchased, by whom, and where? Two shopkeepers, a young man and a young woman, stand behind the counter in a setting that replicates the working conditions of the trades as family-run businesses in the Middle Ages, often located on the ground floor of the family dwelling for easy access by mother, father, and children. On the shelves behind the counter an array of items are for sale: secular and liturgical metal vessels on the top two shelves, and jewelry, including necklaces, pendants, brooches, rings, already set with stones on the bottom shelves, as well as belt buckles. On the counter, each merchant lays out on a cloth a display of precious gems. An elegantly clad older nobleman on the right chooses a stone from those held in the hand of the young woman, while his young page or servant stands behind him. On the left a couple reaches for a ring (a wedding ring?) held in the hands of the salesman, and they, too, are accompanied by a male figure, barely visible to the left of the miniature (the father?). That a young woman waits on the older man and a man on the couple even seems to get the psychology of selling right.

This richness of detail goes beyond Flemish realism as inaugurated by the Bruges painter Jan van Eyck and his contemporaries and prompts a deeper, symbolic reading of the goldsmith's shop as a kind of microcosm of the Cycles of Life, as well as an allusion to the Conditions (or States) of Society. Just through the open door a miner breaks apart the stones with a pickaxe; could he represent a class with no access to the precious wares sold inside? Inside, merchants and noblemen, young and old, men and women all have their place in the miniature; in the foreground, even animals, such as the curious monkey gnawing on a bone while a dog looks on, remind us that the animal world is not so far from our own.

This miniature serves as the frontispiece to a fourteenth-century lapidary often attributed, though now thought erroneously, to Sir John Mandeville, the Englishman who wrote a travelogue that drew heavily on that of Marco Polo.[1] The lapidary is the second text in a deluxe compendium made for the famous Bruges bibliophile Louis de Gruthuuse (c. 1422–1492) around 1480 that begins with a French translation of the "Book of Simple Medicines" by Matthew Platerius (d. c. 1161). Nothing in either text directly warrants the depiction of a goldsmith shop. In the Pseudo-Mandeville work, the text following a brief prologue contains a description of the qualities of more than fifty stones, which apart from many obvious precious and semi-precious gems (ruby, diamond, sapphire, emerald, jasper, sardonyx, onyx, cornelian, and so forth), includes a number of purely imaginary stones. By the Master of the Flemish Boethius, a favored illuminator of Louis, the miniature needs to be placed in the context of Bruges as a center for goldsmith work and a source for jewelry favored by the Burgundian court. It was the jeweler Jean Peutin of Bruges who made all the necklaces for the knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece (Toison d'or) including the one worn by Louis of Bruges himself.[2] Working in Bruges, Petrus Christus painted *A Goldsmith in His Shop*, once identified as the patron saint of goldsmiths, St. Eloy, but now thought to be a portrait of a specific goldsmith perhaps Willem van Vleuten. This signed and dated panel (1449, Metropolitan Museum of Art)[3] of the goldsmith in his shop surrounded by the tools of his trade and approached by two clients, a married couple, may even have served as a distant model for the present miniature. Before Christus, his teacher Jan van Eyck also painted portraits of goldsmiths active in Bruges, each holding rings.[4] This tradition of painting goldsmiths in Bruges should be seen against the backdrop of the insufficiently studied inventories for jewelry at the Burgundian court; on one occasion fifty wagons full of jewelry and tapestries were carted off to a special ducal festivity.[5] We may well wonder whether Louis of Bruges, as a consumer of luxury goods in Bruges, was not only a significant patron of manuscripts but an enthusiast of jewelry and, if so, would have had a say in ordering this unusual miniature. Is it too fanciful to imagine that the nobleman on the right is meant to be Louis himself?

Real or imaginary, the buyers in the miniature are convincing stand-ins for ring-wearers of their day. What might they have been purchasing? The couple on the left may have gone to the store to order their wedding ring (like cat. no. 24), rings featured in the sections both on Marriage and Eternity in the present book. However, they could well have bought any number of rings worn for adornment in the Middle Ages, such as a tart mold ring (cat. no. 23), a black letter posy (cat. no. 15), or a facetted gemstone ring with engraved shoulders (cat. no. 25). The nobleman on the right may well have required a signet ring bearing his coat-of-arms (cat. no. 27). This vivid pictorial image of medieval tradesmen and women reminds us that merchant's rings (cat. no. 26) were commonly used throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages but especially in the commercial network of towns known as the Hanseatic League of which Bruges was one of the trading posts. Other rings in this section, such as the architectural rings like those found with cooking utensils, game pieces, and household accessories (cat. no. 21), and the wonderfully colorful Roman gemstone ring (cat. no. 18), underscore that, whatever multiple meanings and functions rings had, they also served as fashionable decorative accessories for men and women every day. **(SH)** ◯

[1] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 9136, fully reproduced on the Gallica website, www.gallica.bnf.fr. On the manuscript, see Wijsman 2010, 364; and especially Schandel and Hans-Collas 2009.

[2] Wilson 1998, 32.

[3] *A Goldsmith in His Shop*, Possibly Saint Eligius, 1449, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1975.1.110.

[4] *Portrait of a Jeweler* (or *Portrait of a Man in a Blue Chaperon*), c. 1430, Bukenthal National Museum, Sibiu; and *Portrait of the Bruges Goldsmith Jan de Leeuw*, dated 1436, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

[5] Wilson 1998, 32; see the same author's study of Margaret of York's jeweled necklace, Wilson in Areford and Rowe 2004.

18.

Late Antique Gemstone Ring

Roman Empire, 4th century

Height 22.6 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 26.13 mm
Weight 3.6 grams
U.S. size 3.25; U.K. size F ½

This slightly deformed band is composed of seven cells juxtaposed one to another. Four of the cells are set with cabochon garnets, two others with a cabochon emerald, and the last with green glass. The elements have been identified by the Laboratoire Français de Gemmologie in Paris.[1]

Originally from the eastern Roman Empire, this type of ring is relatively rare and always incorporates deluxe materials: gold, precious stones, and sometimes pearls.[2] Two technically distinct varieties exist. In one type, the cells are soldered onto a flat band with intervals between them, as in the present example; in the other type, the cells are soldered one to the other, the join formed where the cells meet. The number of cells varies from as few as five to as many as sixteen, and they are adapted in size to the irregular shapes of the cabochon stones. These rings are found either with stones uniformly of the same color – for example, red (Hindman et al. 2007, 26) or green (Spier 2012, 62) – or, more often, with gems of different colors, demonstrating the vogue for polychrome that was enjoyed from around the second century AD until the end of the Empire.

The particular arrangement of stones on the hoop of this ring permits five different combinations: three red stones, two red stones followed by a green, one red stone followed by two greens, one red stone between two greens, and one green between two reds. This mutable appearance resembles a contemporaneous articulated ring now in the Louvre (Bj 1333). One can imagine the

owner in ancient Rome turning the ring on his or her finger (the very small size suggests a female wearer) to access different views of the same ring – as though it were actually multiple rings.

Garnets of different varieties, sought after for their beautiful red colors, were originally found in India or in Sri Lanka. Their natural octahedral or cubic form facilitated their cabochon cut. Emeralds could come from India or from Sri Lanka, or also from an Egyptian mine located on the banks of the Red Sea exploited during the Roman period. For rings of the present type, a green opaque emerald with frequent inclusions was most often used, but green chalcedony or, as here, green colored glass might also be employed.

Other jeweled objects recall the form of these gemstone bands with similar changeable features. For example, a gold bracelet from the Desana Treasure, today in the Museo Civico in Turin (see Becatti 1955, 546, pl. CLII, fig. 546), presents the same association of red and green: a row of twenty-six large garnets, of which five are missing, set in cells and two additional rows of fifty-two emeralds.[3] The treasure dates between the fourth and fifth centuries. The Thetford Hoard, buried between 380 and 390, also includes two comparable jewels: a bracelet and a ring composed of nine small circular cells, of which two still contain a garnet cabochon.[4] **(RH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 313.

The Desana Treasure consisted of forty-seven works of Ostrogothic goldsmith work datable from the third to the sixth century from Desana, near Vercelli. In the absence of clear documention on the excavation, it is unknown whether these pieces, which appeared on the art market in 1938, constitute a real "treasure" of an aristrocratic Germanic family or whether they come from various funerary deposits. This bracelet witnesses the influence of Roman forms and taste on the Goths settled in northern Italy.

Bracelet from the Desana Treasure
Roman Empire (Danube Region), first half of the 5th century AD
(Torino, Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Madama, PM 8/ORI)

Discovered during excavations for the Royal Exchange, London, c. 1850, and once the property of Sir William Tite (1798-1873), this multi-colored ring set with emeralds, sapphires, and garnets compares with those from the Romano-British Thetford Hoard found near Thetford in Norfolk in 1978. It represents the first of two types of gemstone bands, in which the stones are soldered onto a flat band with intervals between them.

Band with various gemstones
Romano-British, 4th -5th century AD
(Les Enluminures)

Notes

1 30, rue Notre-Dame des Victoires, 75002 Paris (technical report available).
2 For other rings of the same type, see Chadour 1994, 1:113, nos. 389 and 391 and other cited examples; Hindman et al. 2007, 26–29, fourteen garnets; Spier 2012, 62–65, eleven emeralds; John and Potter 1983, 83, ring no. 8 (Thetford Hoard).
3 For the bracelets, see Becatti 1955, pl. CLII, no. 546; Yeroulanou 2010, 40–49.
4 John and Potter 1983, 97, no. 27 (Thetford Hoard).

19.

Merovingian Inscribed Ring

France, Gaul, 7th century

Height 22.24 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 22.9 mm; bezel 7.86 x 9.65 mm
Weight 6.65 grams
U.S. size 9.25; U.K. size S

This ring comprises four zones: the thick upper section or bezel bears an engraved monogram; the triangular shoulders are void of decoration; the juncture between the shoulders and the hoop is formed by opposing animal heads in the round; and the circular foot is engraved with an inscription, PAX (peace), in capital letters.

This type of ring is classified as Type 3f according to the typology of Merovingian rings proposed by Reine Hadjadj and is well represented in the seventh century; gilt bronze imitations attest to its popularity.[1] These types of rings are robust in order to ensure their sigillary function. The head's surface is sufficiently large for an engraved name, a portrait, or, as occurs here, a monogram.

In the Merovingian period it was common to inscribe monograms on rings. However, even in this period they were incomprehensible, and no real rules appear to apply to their creation nor their reading. This is confirmed by a letter written c. 520 from Saint Avit, archbishop of Vienne in France to Apollinarius, bishop of Valencia, in which the former described a ring he wanted to receive: "Let my monogram be engraved on the seal surrounded by my name so that it may be read."[2]

As opposed to the more typical side-by-side layout, this monogram's design consists of multiple alphabetic letters that are arranged one over another in an attempt to coincide as best as possible with a single letter. In this way the

letters are encrypted: neither their number nor their order is definite. Without an accompanying legend, we can only hypothesize an identity for the original wearer.

When the present ring was catalogued for dispersal in the 1937 Guilhou sale, the entry interpreted the monogram as VIVAS IN DEO. Deloche translated this formula: "Vis pieusement, saintement, en conformité des commandements de Dieu, de façon agréable à Dieu" (Live piously in a holy manner, in conformity with the commandments of God).[3] This acclamation, often associated with a name, is inscribed on different rings and is consistent with certain monograms. Thus, in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Oman finds "Vivas in Deo" in the monogram of two rings. Le Blant interprets two other rings in the same manner.[4] Supporting this hypothetical reading of the present ring, the absence of a small cross that usually appears with a baptismal name should be signaled.[5] Yet, the interpretation "Vivas in Deo" coheres to the inscription from Christian epigraphy, "Pax," at the foot of the ring. The religious inscription at the foot of the ring is worn closest to the body.

Fantastic heads of animals (called ducks in the Guilhou sale catalogue) in the round are present on many precious rings from the Merovingian period, notably those discovered at Saint-Denis. This animal ornamentation is also represented on plaques of belt buckles of the same period and on a number of fibulae.[6] **(RH)**

Provenance: E. Guilhou, Paris [see de Ricci, *Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient Rings formed by the Late E. Guilhou* (1912), 118, no. 964, pl. XV; *Catalogue of the Superb Collection of Rings … formed by the late Monsieur E. Guilhou, of Paris*, Sotheby's, London, November 9–12, 1937, 103, no. 489; pl. XVII]; acquired by Neame; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 26, no. 32.

From a hoard of coins found near Mons, this ring can be dated after 630. Its bezel is decorated with an engraved face, but its round foot – of the same form as the foot of the Zucker ring – bears a monogram and a cross. Rings with an ornamented head (bezel), as well as foot, occur already in early Roman times, examples of which may have influenced Merovingian goldsmiths.

Merovingian signet ring
Northern Gaul, after 630 AD
(Brussels, Musées Royaux d'art et d'Histoire)

This ring from the seventh century has been read as THEODORIC E(piscopus) or THEGANUS, but the difficulty of deciphering it reinforces the observation recorded in the letter of the archbishop of Vienne, which implies that there were no fixed rules and that, as such, these monograms were incomprehensible if not accompanied by a transcription of the wearer's full name.

Merovingian silver bishop's ring
7th century
(Nantes, Musée Dobrée, 882.1.466)

Notes

1 For type 3f Merovingian rings, see Hadjadj 2008, 56; for the index of rings of this same form, see p. 418; for rings with monogram decoration, see index, p. 420.
2 Kunz 1917, 266.
3 For rings bearing the acclamation VIVAS IN DEO, see Deloche 1900, 3–4, no. I; 126–28, no. CXVI; 195–96, no. CLXXXI; 306, no. CCLXVI; Cabrol and Leclerc 1924, 2218–21.
4 For the monograms interpreted as VIVAS IN DEO, see Le Blant 1896, 125, nos. 324 and 325; Oman 1930, 13 and plate VII, no. 200; Deloche 1900, 315, no. CCLXXI; Scarisbrick 2007, 27, no. 33.
5 Diana Scarisbrick has deciphered the monogram as the letters of a name LBOV, a reading that could co-exist with "Vivas in Deo," as in the cases of the rings studied by Oman and Le Blant and cited above. Another monogram in her book, fig. 33, might also be interpreted "Vivas in Deo."
6 Menghin 2007, 484, no. VII.17.39 for an example of a buckle, and 462 for examples of fibulae, see nos. VII.10.16 and VII.10.17.

20.

Merovingian Cloisonné Architectural Ring

France, c. 500

Height 31.03 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 22.3 mm; bezel 20.5 x 21.3 mm
Weight 10.7 grams
U.S. size 8.5; U.K. size Q 1/2

This complex architectural ring features a large conical bezel crowned with circular raised bezel with granulated base (this element is structurally supported underneath by a cylindrical shaft), and is set with a garnet cabochon. Eight elements radiate around this central axis to a main circular raised bezel disc framed by two rows of granulation. The entire structure is soldered onto a larger disk. The cells created by the radiating elements were once set with cloisonné garnets. The hoop is decorated in a similar manner: open cells form the hoop and are bordered by granulated edges. The loss of stones in this type of ring is typical, in part because its complicated technical structure is also delicate.

Jeweled objects with cloisonné garnets are encountered from the third century in Crimea and are relatively frequent in eastern and western Europe. They are represented from the fifth and sixth centuries in royal tombs (King Childeric, Queen Aregonde) and in exceptional contexts, such as Sutton Hoo, and as recently seen in Staffordshire in the West Midlands, where in 2009 the largest and most valuable Anglo-Saxon hoard was discovered.[1]

Unlike other cloisonné rings with large hoops that are ornamented with filigreed wirework, the band featured on this ring (Type 7a according to the typology of Merovingian rings proposed by Reine Hadjadj) is unique because of its gemstone decoration.[2] Convex objects covered with flat-cut gems are very rare because absolute technical mastery is required to realize a circular object set with flat garnet slices.[3]

Cloisonné is an ancient technique that juxtaposes different elements separated by *cloisons*, or cells. A gold and lapis lazuli ring, dated c. 2500 BC, discovered in the royal cemetery of Ur, attests to the technique's antiquity.[4] In the third century the ornamental procedure developed to emphasize the color and brilliance of the gems, and opaque stones or enamel gave way to garnets cut into fine slices set in gold. In addition, on especially fine objects, garnets were placed on foil, fine sheets of etched gold or silver, reflecting the light and illuminating the stones placed on top of them. The head of the ring, or bezel, adopts a conical form in order to optimize the reflection of light on the stones.

From the end of the fifth century to the first decades of the seventh century, jeweled objects decorated with cloisonné coverings constitute some of the most successful and remarkable productions in the West. Architectural rings like this one are contemporary with small round fibulae.[5] Cloisonné was also applied to other objects in the form of birds, decorating liturgical objects, clasps of aumonières, belt buckles and sword handles, shoulder guards and equestrian tack.[6] Eventually the extensive use of these stones led to supply shortages, and designs changed, reflecting their rarity: garnets were isolated and mounted in small box-like cells. Saint Eloy, goldsmith at the court of King Dagobert (628–639), was one of the last in Gaul to practice the technique of cloisonné.

Recent scientific analyses permit us to establish that the garnets are originally from India and Sri Lanka (for the jewels at Saint-Denis) and from Bohemia (for the analyzed stones from the Staffordshire Treasure).[7] They attest to the long-distance commercial exchanges that took place during the Migration era. **(RH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985-2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 234, no. 318.

Missing its central stone, the bezel of this Merovingian gold and cloisonné garnet ring is slightly conical, stimulating reflection of light. The ring can be dated between 500 and 550 AD and comes from a tomb at the site of Mézières-Manchester. The bezel of the Zucker ring, with its geometric cloisons once filled with garnets would have resembled that of this ring, although the cloisons are mounted more steeply and the curve is more marked in the Zucker example.

Finger ring
Northern Gaul, c. 500-550
(Charleville-Mézières, Musée de l'Ardenne, 981-1-101)

Jeweled objects decorated with cloisonné coverings constitute some of the most successful and aesthetically beautiful productions in the West. Considerable skill was required to mount the thin slices of garnets in curved conical compartments. The survival, therefore of these three brooches with central conical bosses, two of them intact, is remarkable, and they allow us to imagine how resplendent the Zucker ring once was.

Three brooches or fibulae (?)
District of Cluj, Romania (?), c. 450-475 AD
(Bucarest, Muzeul Naţional de Istorie a României 54389, 54388, 69964)

Notes

1 C. Alexander, "Magical Mystery Treasure," *National Geographic* 220 no. 5 (Nov. 2011): 44.

2 For the typology of cloisonné-type rings, see Hadjadj 2008, 70–73.

3 For a wealth of illustrations of objects with cloisonné decoration, see the catalogue for the exhibition *L'or des princes barbares* (Bianchini 2000). On the diffusion and diversity of cloisonné objects from this region, consult the catalogue for the exhibition *The Merovingian Period – Europe without Borders* (Menghin 2007).

4 For the rings from Ur, see Tait 2010, 30, fig. 26.

5 See, for example, Menghin 2007, 468-469, no VII.13.5, round pair of fibulae in cloisonné from Laon, département de l'Aisne; p. 531, no. VII.48.3 round pair of polylobed fibulae from Bonn-Schwarz-Rheindorf, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

6 For the spectacular cloisonné rings with surrounding elements, see Hindman et al. 2007, 56–59.

7 For the objects from Saint-Denis, see Vallet and Perrin 2004.

21.

Merovingian Architectural Ring

France, Gaul, late 6th–early 7th century

Height 25.97 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.18 mm; bezel 7.72 x 7.63 mm
Weight 2.9 grams
U.S. size 6.5; U.K. size M ½

A large open band presenting two parallel depressions terminates with a square plate soldered onto it. Above, the bezel is represented by three levels: a square base, comprising four arcades adorned with granules at the top and bottom of each of the corners; the second level constitutes a disc framed with granulation; and at the upper level a smooth dome is topped with a granulated disc and a large protruding gold bead at the highest point.

Reine Hadjadj has classified rings surmounted by small edifices under Type 8 in her typology of Merovingian rings.[1] Their form represents a complete rupture with rings of the Roman era preceding them. Generally, one attributes their origin to Byzantium; however, Isabella Baldini Lippolis' study of Byzantine goldsmith work from the fourth to the seventh century does not mention architectural rings.[2]

Chadour's 1994 study of the Koch Collection, on the other hand, records a number of rings of this type;[3] recent finds supplement her work. Since 1994, architectural rings have also come to light (for example, at Grez-Doiceau in Belgium) as have fragments that could come from rings or from hair pins with the same décor at top, now found in private collections and various museums.[4] The context of these finds dates the rings and pins to the sixth and seventh centuries. Rings of this type have all been found in graves of women. In tombs in Bulles and in Brèves, the architectural rings were accompanied by cooking pots. The presence of other jewelry, such as necklaces, earrings, hairpins, an

amber bead, as well as a goblet, a game piece, pottery, and even a Roman key, conjures up a tantalizing image of the daily life of women in Frankish Gaul.[5] Such archaeological finds also demonstrate that young women would have worn the rings on the right hand, contrary to the predominant usage of the period.

These rings are for the most part in gold. They often possess a large ribbon-like band richly decorated with twisted wire on which is soldered a circular or square plate. A small edifice of the same form is soldered above. Almost all the rings of this model present open arcades on which a dome or a pyramid with four sides rests, often decorated with gems or a stone at the summit. The stone is most often a garnet, rarely a blue or a green stone, although stones of other colors have also been found.

The arcades are realized *à jour* by a succession of one or two gold wires or, as here, by a gold thread rolled at its extremities and curved to form an arch. This easily constructed motif is found on several rings.[6]

Certain objects of this type present astonishing similarities with each other and they may have been produced by the same workshop or artisan, perhaps itinerant. This is the case with rings preserved in the Koch Collection,[7] the British Museum, a private collection,[8] a ring discovered in Burgundy, and another preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art resembling discovered fragments, one at Criel-sur-Mer (Territoire de Belfort, France) and the other at Waben (Pas-de-Calais, France);[9] the rings that have come to light in Belgium, one at Ciply and the other at Grez-Doiseau,[10] have very similar decorative forms.

Authors have compared this ring type to reliquaries and baptisteries. However, it should be noted that no ring of this type bears an inscription or

So similar are rings belonging to this group – sharing the *à jour* arcades composed of twisted wire and the small domed tops, among other features – that that they may have been produced by the same workshop or artisan, perhaps itinerant. Whether some of them are of Byzantine origin or merely Byzantine-inspired remains an open question.

Architectural ring
Byzantine Empire, 7th century AD
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 17,13)

Part of same coherent group, this ring from a sepulcher in Grez-Doiceau was worn by a woman, as were all the rings in the group; not surprisingly, they are significantly small in diameter. Archeological evidence shows they would have been worn on the right hand (contrary to common practice), but their meaning (if any) remains obscure.

Merovingian architectural ring
Northern Gaul, 6th century AD
(Jambes, Réserves de la Direction de l'Archéologie du Ministère de la Région Wallonne, 146.1)

a Christian motif. For her part, Diana Scarisbrick considers them purely decorative.[11] Doubtless these jewels had a particular significance that remains to be discovered.

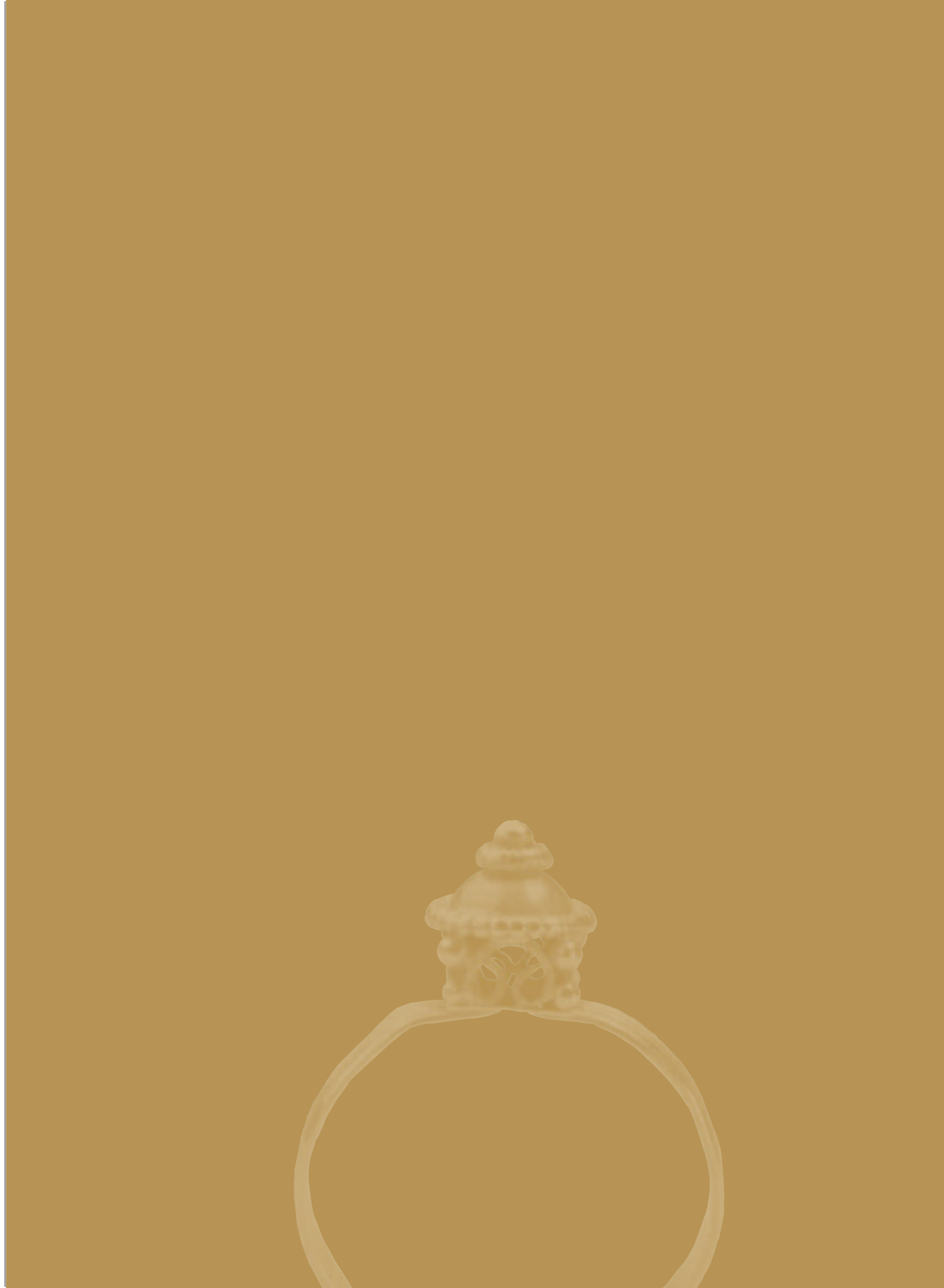
It should be noted that this type of figurative ring was used in the later Middle Ages in Jewish wedding ceremonies, in which instance they bear a Hebrew inscription. The form continues to fascinate contemporary designers. **(RH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 235, no. 319.

Notes

1 For Type 8 rings, see Hadjadj 2008; Hindman et al. 2007, no. 11; Speier 2012, nos. 28 and 29.
2 *Musée du Louvre* 1991, 26–27; Baldini Lippolis 1999, 187–215.
3 Chadour 1994, 1: nos. 495 and 496.
4 Hadjadj 2008, no. 539.
5 Hadjadj 2008, nos. 246 and 259.
6 Spier 2012, no. 28, two others in the Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 1: nos. 495 and 496), one possessing an openwork band constituted of these volutes and the other of similar arcades.
7 Chadour 1994, 1: no. 495.
8 Hadjadj 2008, nos. 569 and 483.
9 Hadjadj 2008, nos. 283, 297, 348, and 572.
10 Hadjadj 2008, nos. 378 and 393.
11 Scarisbrick 2007, 234.



22.

Merovingian Architectural Ring with a Beaded Hoop

France, Gaul, 6th–7th century

Height 23.99 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 20.0 mm; bezel 5.32 x 5.71 mm
Weight 2.7 grams
U.S. size 5.5; U.K. size K ½

This ring consists of a band with twisted wire borders and three rows of granulation on the center. A circular plate is soldered to the hoop. The head or bezel is composed of a small open edifice comprising six columns. A large summit surrounded by twisted wire topped with a granule sits above.

The bezel is remarkably small in relation to the band (its height is only three millimeters) in comparison with other rings of the same period originating from Byzantium. The Byzantine rings feature an exaggeratedly large head, almost equal to the diameter of the ring. The blue sapphire ring from Tomb 16 of Saint-Denis (MAN: inv. 87190), which has a bezel of 17 millimeters – nearly half the total height (36 millimeters) of the ring – is one example.[1]

The present ring belongs to the type known as architectural rings, and it is a small version of what Reine Hadjadj classifies as Type 8.[2] Architectural rings were constructed with various techniques and materials. Some used a more modest choice of materials (silver for the ring preserved in a private collection) or represented the arcades in sculpted goldwork or soldered wires. The present ring's construction is simplified because there are only two levels above the circular plate.

Another singularity of this ring resides in the twisted borders of the inner hoop – composed of three rows, parallel to the edges – and the gold nodules on its exterior band. The central row is displaced in relation to the two others,

with the result that the granules of the three rows are not aligned. The arrangement can be interpreted as a series of small crosses in relief, of which each branch consists of a single granule.

This hypothesis is supported by several comparisons: a ring decorated with a monogram of Christ, or chrismon, and nine gold protuberances on each side of its joint,[3] a ring decorated with Christian motifs, including a dove, olive branch, lamb and cross, composed of nine disks punctuated by granules,[4] and a fourth-century bronze ring decorated with a chrismon and a band composed of nine swellings in succession.[5] Isabella Baldini Lippolis' work on the typology of Byzantine rings establishes a type of rings with beaded joints (Type 1e) and the date of the fifth to seventh centuries.[6] She cites different rings with beaded joints of which one, preserved in the Museum Kanellopoulos at Athens, is decorated with a cruciform monogram. The hypothesis that this shrine-like ring might reference Christianity is not without significance, and it could be seen as support, however slight, for the idea that these architectural rings refer to baptisteries or reliquaries.[7]

The small size of the hoop and its particular traces of wear on one side of its contour suggest that it was worn on the little finger. **(RH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 235, no. 320.

Notes

1 For the ring from Saint-Denis Tomb 16, see Hadjadj 2008, 283, no. 351.
2 Hadjadj 2008, 74–77.
3 Scarisbrick 2007, 130, no. 179.
4 Scarisbrick 2007, 133, no. 183.
5 Chadour and Joppien 1985, 82, no. 112.
6 For Type 1e Byzantine rings, see Baldini Lippolis 1999, 203.
7 Hindman et al. 2007, 74, no. 10.

With its rounded dome composed of an openwork arcade, this silver ring belongs to the same type as the gold rings, thus confirming the use of less precious metals for rings that conform to the same typology.

Merovingian silver architectural ring
Gaul (?), 6th-7th century
(Private Collection)

The gold nodules on the band of this Ottonian cloisonné ring, presumably later than the Merovingian example, are nevertheless applied with a similar technique and are likewise not aligned. The suggestion that they represent a series of small crosses in relief is an intriguing one for both rings.

Ottonian ring
Germany, Rhineland (?), early 11th century
(Paris, Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge, CL23854)

23.

Gothic Tart Mold Ring with a Green Sapphire

England?, 14th century

Height 27.38 mm; exterior diam. 21.85 mm; interior diam. 18.85 mm; bezel 9.78 x 7.33 mm
Weight 3 grams
U.S. size 8, U.K. size P ½

This ring is composed of a D-sectioned hoop that terminates at the shoulders with angled trapezoid brackets soldered to either side of a bezel that is formed by two inverted pyramids (pie shaped) resting one on the other as though mirrored. The bezel itself is set with a fine Ceylon cabochon green sapphire.

Along with the stirrup ring, the tart mold ring, so called because the underside of its bezel resembles a pie mold, was one of the most popular ring styles of the Gothic period. This style of ring was not designed after a baking dish, however, but rather has its origins in architectonic designs, probably large-scale stonework of later Romanesque architecture.[1] Extant examples date from the twelfth through the fifteenth century and are found throughout Europe, although France and England are the most likely origins for these rings. There is still no adequate study of the typology and evolution of the form, nor the types of gems with which they were set, but the present example with its more complicated doubled bezel would seem to date to the fourteenth century. An analysis of the stone led Benjamin Zucker to identify it as a Ceylon green sapphire, the microscopic zircon inclusion transmitting the subtle green hue to the stone.[2] The stone thus dates from the very period of Marco Polo's voyages to the East, and the ring bears evidence that Ceylonese stones were exported to England in the fourteenth century. Writing of the gemstones he saw in Seilan [Ceylon] during his 1292 voyage, Marco Polo exclaimed: "You must know that rubies are found in this Island and in no other country in the world but this. They find there also sapphires and topazes and amethysts, and many other stones of price."[3]

Rings like this one are often classified as "decorative rings," but there is much evidence in late medieval literature to suggest that they were not simply vanities. Their modest forms are designed to emphasize the qualities of the stones, however small to our modern eyes, which were thought to hold powers – a belief consistent with the desire to maintain the stone's original divine "uncut" or cabochon form. Sapphires such as this one were valued for their exotic origins and their color, which represented the heavens. In Hebrew the word *sippur* is a synonym for "story," and these stones were thought to bring wisdom and wealth to the wearer as well as protection against illness and poisons. Their apotropaic qualities were among the reasons several rings were worn at once: to provide maximum protection to the wearer.

Most major ring collections are rich in examples of the tart mold ring, attesting to its popularity. Because the bezels vary in shape to accommodate the natural shape of the stone and many different types of gems were used, no two rings are exactly alike, although a number of examples share qualities with the present ring.[4] **(SH)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 237, no. 323; Zucker 1984 [repr. 2003], 44, pl. 46

Notes

1 Hindman et al. 2007, 108–11, no. 17, pp.
2 Zucker 1984 [repr. 2003], 44, .pl. 46.
3 *Travels of Marco Polo* (Yule-Cordier ed.), iii, 14 (available online).
4 Victoria and Albert Museum M285.1962 and 639-1871 (a 14th-century ring set with a cabochon sapphire, former Waterton Collection; published in Oman 1930, no. 257); British Museum (former Franks Collection, set with a carbuncle; published in Dalton 2012, no. 1751); Furness Abbey ring (white sapphire with possible container for a relic).

This tart mold ring set with a cabochon sapphire exemplifies the architectonic qualities of the form and reveals how jewelers used the stones uncut as they found them in nature, shaping the gold to the irregular form of the gem.

Gold ring with a cabochon sapphire
Western Europe, 14th -15th century
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M285.1962)

Although there is no census of tart mold rings or systematic study of find sites, many were discovered in England, such as the present example, the ring of the abbot of Furness Abbey in Cumbria, found during repairs to the ruins. The hollow pocket behind the gemstone may have contained a relic, part of the body of a saint or venerated person.

Gothic bishop's ring of gilt silver with a white gemstone (sapphire or rock crystal)
England, 12th century
(Cumbria, Furness Abbey)

24.

Medieval Inscribed Sapphire Ring

Italy, late 14th century; sapphire with Islamic inscription, 10th century?

Height 30.8 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 27.89 mm; bezel 16.15 x 17.4 mm
Weight 23.5 grams
U.S. size 7.25; U.K. size O

The heavy gold hoop, with projecting, shield-shaped shoulder motifs, supports a large oval bezel set with an inscribed sapphire within an engraved surround depicting dragons. There are fleurs-de-lis engraved on each side of the bezel. The interior and back exterior of the hoop bear a Latin inscription, and the sapphire is a tenth-century Arabic one.

The style of the ring is later medieval European, and an Italian origin is indicated by the inscription, the style of the engraving on the top and sides of the bezel, and the almond-shaped projections. The inscription in Lombardic letters reads, on the inside of the hoop, P[ER] AMOR TUE FATO: E P[ER] AMOR IO TE and on the outside back PORTO. Taken together this means "For love you were made and for love I wear you." A line seen in places along the inside center of the hoop may be a marking-out line for the inscription.

The sapphire, probably a superficially polished, water-worn stone, bears a wheel-cut inscription in Kufic, the earliest form of written Arabic, which was employed between the seventh and eleventh centuries. The inscription gives a personal name, 'Abd as-Salam ibn Ahmad, and an Egyptian origin in the tenth century has been suggested.[1] The color of the sapphire is consistent with a Sri Lankan origin as is the polished grooving to minimize disfigurement caused by surface-reaching flaws. Sri Lanka was the main if not only source of sapphires to the Byzantine and medieval world. Many of the sapphires in later medieval jewelry were reused from earlier Byzantine jewelry and church treasures,

but the present sapphire lacks the drilling typical of most of these earlier gems and was thus probably traded from Sri Lanka by Islamic merchants. At some time in the history of the ring, probably in wear, the sapphire was pushed down in the setting slightly, resulting in minor splitting within the engraved fleurs-de-lis.

The bezel is open at the back. This may have been intended to permit the supposed beneficial properties of the gem to reach the finger, although the stone is not deep enough to allow it to actually touch the skin. In medieval times a variety of properties were attributed to the sapphire. For example it stimulated purity in thought and actions and could help the wearer to bring about peaceful agreements. It also supposedly kept men chaste, hence its frequent use in rings worn by medieval bishops.[2] This latter "virtue" raises the question as to the original wearer. The ring is of a large size and probably belonged to a man; indeed it could be worn on an average man's thumb. A love gift from a woman to a man is probably the best explanation.

This shape of this late medieval ring is represented right across Europe, and several are known set with large sapphires. One now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is English and has an inscription in Latin naming Rutilans, the cantor of the episcopal city of York. Rutilans, meaning "red," was probably the equivalent of the name Rufus, while, as the magnificence of the ring indicates, a cantor was not just a singer but at that period was one of the main cathedral dignitaries. To the north, a sapphire ring of somewhat similar form was part of a huge hoard of jewelry, coins, and silver scrap found at Slagelse in Denmark.[3] The coins in this treasure range in date up to the 1370s. From the other side of Europe comes a ring with a table-cut sapphire. This is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and is part of a group of Veneto-Byzantine jewelry found in 1840 in the castle of Chalcis on the Greek island of Euboea, called Negroponte by the Venetians.[4] Euboea was one of the most

This sapphire ring that once belonged to the cantor (inscribed "Hail Mary, Rufus") of the episcopal city of York bears witness to a form of bezel and use of gemstone not infrequent in later Gothic Europe. Instead of engraved fleurs-de-lis, the New York ring is decorated with Italianate engraved rosettes and may, like the Zucker ring, have an Italian origin or at least influence.

Gold and sapphire ring
England, 14th century
(New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA Cloisters Collection, 1994.40)

Part of the collection **of "Veneto-Byzantine" jewelry found** in 1840 in the Castle of Chalcis on the Greek island of Euboea and split between the British Museum and the Ashmolean Museum, this elegant gold ring is set with a table-cut sapphire that would have protected the wearer against fraud and promoted chastity.

Gold and sapphire ring
Veneto-Byzantine, 14th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F386)

important Venetian colonies in the Aegean before it was captured by the Turks in 1470. **(JO)**

Provenance: Ralph Harari (1893–1969), London [a noted soldier, economist, and collector; see Boardman 1976; Boardman and Scarisbrick 1977, 71–72, no. 166 and pl. 166]; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 68–69, nos. 92, 93.

Notes

1 Boardman and Scarisbrick 1977, 72; and again in Scarisbrick 2007, 69. Compare the gems with Kufic inscriptions on Islamic rings in Dalton 1912: e.g., nos. 2272, 2278.

2 For the "magical" properties of gems, see Evans 1922 and Kunz 1913.

3 For the treasure from Slagelse, see Jensen et al. 1992, 2:173–79.

4 For the Chalcis hoard, see Dalton 1911, 391–404; and Bet McLeod, "Some Aspects of the Finger-Rings in the Chalcis Treasure at the British Museum," in Entwistle and Adams 2010, 233–36; for selections from the Ashmolean Museum, see Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 33–35.

25.

Renaissance Sapphire Ring Engraved with Acanthus and Palmettes

France?, c. 1540

Height 24.31 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 24.63 mm; bezel 12.13 mm
Weight 7.6 grams
U.S. size 6; U.K. size L ½

The square section hoop expands towards the shoulders engraved with palmettes supporting the oval bezel set with an oval-cut sapphire above a bead moulding and deeply engraved acanthus leaves, continuous toward the back of the bezel.

The classical ornament of palmettes and acanthus leaves indicates that this ring belongs to the Renaissance period, in which new motifs – acanthus leaves, terms, putti, satyrs, masks, cornucopias – known as "antiques" derived from the grottesche in ruins of Nero's Golden House and from Roman sculpture as reinterpreted in fifteenth-century Italy, were adopted by jewelers. Less esteemed than in the Middle Ages, the sapphire was nonetheless the choice for episcopal rings of both the Roman Catholic bishop of Milan St. Charles Borromeo (appointed 1564) and the Protestant Matthew Parker, archbishop of Canterbury (appointed 1559). It was prized not only on account of the celestial color but also for the various biblical allusions: "And they saw the God of Israel and under his feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire as clear as the sky" (Exodus 24:10); and another, "And above the firmament that was over their head was the likeness of a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone" (Ezekiel 1:26); and finally, "O thou afflicted tossed with tempest and not comforted behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors and lay thy foundations with sapphire" (Isaiah 54:11).

These texts were referred to by the contemporary scholar Piero Valeriano Bolzani: "The Christian religion, following the sacred teaching of the early Fathers, identified the sapphire as the stone in Ezekiel's vision, and believed that as it therefore signified the throne of Almighty God, it should be associated with heavenly powers and angels."[1] In the next century, Anselm Boetius de Boot, physician to the Emperor Rudolf II, in *Gemmarum et Lapidum Historiae* (1636) repeated the commentary on Isaiah of the biblical scholar St. Jerome: "that the sapphire being worn of any man procureth him favor with princes and with all men, pacifieth his enamies, frees him from enchantments and that it looseth men from prison and avengeth the wrath of God. Keepeth men chaste and therefore is worn of priests."[2] However, according to sixteenth-century documents and inventories, sapphire rings were still worn by the laity although not in such numbers as in the Middle Ages. The Countess of Oxford in her will of 1537 bequeathed her "sapphire faceted with divers squares,"[3] and two of Queen Elizabeth's rings were listed as "square" or "cut."[4] Mary Queen of Scots gave "a ringe of golde with a fayre tabled saphir" to the Marquis of Hamilton[5] and in 1592 Madame de Saint-Aulaire owned "une bague ou il y a ung grand safir et deux autres ou il y a deux petits safirs."[6] **(DS)**

Provenance: Dame Joan Evans (1893–1977); Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Zucker 1984 [repr. 2003], 44, pl. 47; Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 241, no. 329.

Notes

1 Piero Valeriano Bolzani, *Hieroglyphica* (1556), book 41, ch. 37.
2 Quoted by Nicols 1652, 85.
3 Lewer 1933, 112.
4 British Library, Royal MSS, Appx. 68, fol. 22.
5 Collection of Duke of Hamilton, Lennoxlove, Scotland.
6 De Montégut 1881.

The extravagant style of ancient Roman decoration full of arabesques and moresques – patterns with curving foliage elements – is exemplified in this engraving by Marco Dente, an Italian printmaker active by 1515 and died in Rome in 1527. Silversmiths, tapestry designers, and of course jewelers borrowed heavily from such widely circulated prints, incorporating the acanthus motif into their art works.

Marco Dente,
Ornamental Panel
Italy, c.1525-27
(New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA Cloisters Collection, 30.58.5(137))

Although set with a rock crystal over painted heraldry, instead of a sapphire, and used as a signet, this substantial ring is composed of an oval bezel with ornamented acanthus shoulders, a testimony to the popularity of antique motifs or grottesche that came into favor during the Renaissance.

Signet ring
Germany, 16th century
(Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2183)

26.

Renaissance Merchant's Ring WG

Germany (?), 16th century

Height 26.6 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 21.4 mm; bezel 10.6 x 11.7 mm
Weight 9.3 grams
U.S. size 7.5; U.K. size O ½

The convex hoop terminates in raised bosses within cartouches at the volutes at the shoulders, which, projecting outwards and within, support the round bezel; raised on volutes surmounted by a band of beaded molding between two bars, the bezel is engraved with a merchant's mark and the initials WG within a cable border. The back of the bezel is decorated with a hatched octagon centered on a lozenge between the triple cylinders inside the shoulders.

Although very clearly differentiated, the hoop, the shoulders, and the bezel merge together into one artistic whole, according to the principles of the classic Renaissance ring design. Owned and used by a merchant who stamped the bales containing his goods as well as sealing business documents and correspondence with this distinctive device and initials, the ring reflects the expansion of economic activity in sixteenth-century Europe and with it the growing importance of the merchant class. The increase in the population of Europe was followed by the demand for more and varied provisions distributed from home and abroad by road, river, and sea. Because of the risks of robbery, piracy, and shipwreck, the merchants divided their consignments between several shipments rather than risk all in one; to avoid loss and confusion when claiming, easily identifiable marks were essential. Marks therefore had to be simple, and most are like mast heads or vanes designed round an upright stem on an inverted V, double X or W base, sometimes surmounted by a reversed number 4.[1] Further research on rings for merchants, including a systematic census of their initials and symbols, is warranted; such research could usefully

include their relationship to masons' marks, the latter presently the topic of research by Dr. Jenny Alexander of Warwick University.

Although those with initials as well as the mark engraved on the metal surface of the bezel, as in this example, have survived in large numbers, most are made of silver or bronze. Since sixteenth-century gold merchants' signets are so rare, it is difficult to find others similar. Exceptions could be made for those in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, and in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which, although they are of the same round classic Renaissance form, are dual purpose, as the bezels engraved with the mark swivel round to reveal a death's head with a *memento mori* inscription.[2] The merchants were proud of their marks, which they had represented on their houses, on shop signs, and on works of art, and, when they died, on their tombstones. Few sixteenth-century rings are more evocative of the "Age of Expansion" than this, made for the finger of a successful and enterprising merchant. **(DS)**

Provenance: Melvin Gutman (1886–1967), Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 15, 1970 Part V, lot no. 123; Thomas Flannery, Jr. (1926–1980), Winnetka, Illinois, Sotheby's sale, London, December 2, 1983, lot no. 317; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Baltimore Museum of Art 1962–1968.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 38–39, no. 45.

Notes

1 See Girling 1964, the present mark unrecorded there; see also Elmhirst and Dow 1959.

2 Oman 1930, no. 739; Scarisbrick 1993, 67.

The cipher on the bezel is a merchant's mark, used by a trader to mark his goods and sign his bills and obligations, and adopted as a signet for those not entitled to bear arms. This ring, with its inscription NOSSE TE IPSUM ("Know yourself [and thou shalt know God]" combines a spiritual function with a practical commercial one. From the Harman Oates Collection, the ring was found at Guildford, but not all merchant's rings were English as traders throughout the Hanseatic League owned and used them.

Merchant's ring
England, 15th century
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.18-1929)

This ring is typical of merchants' rings with its "4," cross, and circle symbols. Often these trademarks included other personal symbols, initials, or prayer verses, as does the present example inscribed on the band invoking the Virgin Mary to protect the wearer. The fluting terminating at the shoulders to reveal a bulb recalls the Zucker ring with its elaborately scrolled shoulder design.

Merchant's ring
Europe, c. 1500
(Private collection)

27.

Renaissance Signet Ring with Crystal Intaglio HE

Germany?, c. 1600

Height 28.72 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 27.1 mm; bezel 13.57 x 17.92 mm
Weight 20.2 grams
U.S. size 11.75; U.K. size W

The square section hoop, which is enameled with a black work pattern of trailing foliated scrolls in gold reserved against black opaque enamel, merges with panels at the shoulders. On one side Fortune with billowing scarf is standing on a helm with visor (face guard) signifying victory, and on the other there is a coat of arms, still regrettably unidentifiable. The octagonal bezel is set with a foiled crystal intaglio shield of arms, as on the shoulder, with mantling and initials HE.

The enameling of the hoop and of the shoulders continuing around the sides of the bezel, exemplifies the application of blackwork ornament to jewelry, a style of engraved ornament limited in time, place, and purpose.[1] The earliest surviving print by Hans van Ghemart is dated 1585, and they disappear after 1620, when a new style of painted enamels was adopted. As for place, the majority of designers of blackwork engravings for jewelry are German, principally based in Augsburg, which was an important city for goldsmith's work, having eclipsed Nuremberg by the late sixteenth century. A characteristic form of black work was *schweifwerk*, combining strap and foliated scrolls in an allover flat pattern which was specifically designed for the decoration of the hoops, shoulders, and sides of ring bezels, and which has been adopted for the decoration of this ring.[2]

Worn on the index finger or the thumb, ready to hand, the arms and other devices on most signets were engraved on the surface of the gold bezel, but

the foiled crystal intaglio was for those aspiring to a more deluxe, eye-catching design. By this means, the arms or device engraved on the crystal were painted in the relevant colors on foil below at the base of the setting. Impressions could thus be taken from the crystal intaglio without exposing much admired bright colors to the damaging effects of hot wax used for sealing business documents and private correspondence. A similar foiled crystal heraldic intaglio signet, also with blackwork decoration at the shoulders and round the sides of the bezel, is in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.[3] Examples such as these survived because they were venerated as emblems of family pride and achievement and on the death of the owner might pass to his heir. Shakespeare alludes to this custom when Falstaff complains, "I have lost a seal ring of my grandfather's worth 40 marks" (Henry IV, Part 1, IV.3.394). The ring is individualized not only by the heraldry and initials but also by the figure of Fortune standing on a visored helmet, suggesting that she would favor the owner's military endeavors, and bring him victory over his enemies. **(DS)**

Provenance: Melvin Gutman (1886–1967), Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, May 15, 1970, Part V, lot 126; Thomas Flannery, Jr. (1926–1980), Winnetka, Illinois, Sotheby's sale, London, December 2, 1983, lot 308; Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Museum of Art, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Exhibited: Baltimore Museum of Art 1962–1968.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 42, no. 50.

Notes

1 Christie 1988, 4–20.

2 Christie 1988, figs. 2, 3, 7, 14, 15, and 22, and for rings decorated with blackwork patterns, figs. 18, 19, both in the Victoria and Albert Museum; Oman 1930, nos. 320, 663.

3 Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 62, pl. 22, no. 2.

One of the earliest examples of its type, this engraving signed in the lower center of the plate HANS. VAN. GHEMERT/ FECIT from 1585 shows a design employed in black work *(schweifwerk)* combining strap and foliated scrolls in an allover flat pattern specifically designed for the decoration of the hoops, shoulders, and sides of ring bezels.

Hans van Ghemert
Engraved design for a ring shoulder and bezel
The Netherlands, 1585
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 16969)

The shoulders of this gold signet ring with an octagonal bezel displaying a demi-eagle are decorated with black work enamel of a type perhaps a little later than that of the earliest designs of Hans van Ghemert.

Signet ring
Germany ?, 17th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F515)

DEATH-DEATH-DEATH-DEATH-

DEATH

Death was a central feature of life in the classical and medieval worlds. The survival of hundreds of sarcophagi from ancient Rome testifies to the solemnity with which families honored their ancestors, in funeral rites and with art in the homes.[1] It has recently been shown that antique funeral rituals influenced those of the Middle Ages and even into modern times. In the Middle Ages, death, Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory were commonly discussed and depicted. Mortal sinners went straight to the flames of Hell, but the majority of Christians spent a stretch of time in Purgatory before they earned the privilege of entering Paradise. Much medieval devotion, visual and literary, focuses on how to cut short the days in Purgatory, through the purchase of indulgences (the very practice Martin Luther railed against and Protestantism put an end to) and the repetition of certain prayers.[2] Imagery includes pictures of the act of dying, the Last Judgment, the angels and God in Paradise, and so forth.

By the later Middle Ages and especially in the Renaissance, death took on a more concrete form both in text and image. In a late fourteenth-century French poem, written right around the time of the Black Death, the Three Dead, portrayed as grotesque skeletons, confront the Three Living, a group of hunters out for a day of pleasure in the forest, with the warning "What we are, so you shall be." This era is also the beginning of the Dance of Death, or the *Danse Macabre*, portrayed for the first time on the walls of the Cemetery of the Innocents in central Paris (c. 1424–25); a dancing skeleton takes by the hand men, women, and children of all walks of life, rich and poor, healthy and infirm, young and old.[3] The theme of the Dance of Death was pan-European and long lived, occurring in frescos and wall paintings and manuscript illumination, engraved on knife handles and other metalwork, and, as here, in an independent sixteenth-century German drawing.[4] In the drawing, skeletons parade a cardinal, a king, an emperor, a bishop, a burgher, a monk, a schoolteacher, a knight, and finally a jester in a winding procession. Reminding viewers of the fragility of their own existence and the vanities of life on earth, the Dance concludes "Rich or poor [we are] all equal in death."

It is surprising that, considering the acute perception of death during the whole of the Middle Ages, extending back into Antiquity, there is virtually no "death jewelry" to speak of until the Renaissance – even until the late Renaissance. Medieval jewelry acknowledges death in other ways through the plethora of charms, prayers, and magical characteristics found in different examples; just saying once the prayer, "Hail Mary full of Grace … pray for us," reduced by 300 days the amount of time the wearer had to spend in Purgatory (cat. no. 6). The *Salve sanctes* ("O Holy Face") prayer before the Vera Icon was similarly effective, and the recitation of the names of the Three Magi defied the "falling sickness" or death-provoking rabies (cat. no. 5). Even stones protected against death, like the sapphire, a symbol of the celestial skies and the Virgin Mary (cat. nos. 23–25). Although these examples exhibit an anxiety about death, to call them "death jewelry" would be going too far.

By the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth, however, "death jewelry" appears to have enjoyed a vogue. The rings included here vividly picture aspects of death with images of skulls, diamonds in their eyes, crossbones, snakes, and grave-diggers tools. Most of these rings commemorate actual people, so recently departed, whether Lieutenant Colonel Thomas, the Viscount Kilmorey, or the anonymous W.H., who the inscription states is "not lost but gone before" and whose tangible presence lives on in the ring with a lock of her (?) hair (cat. nos. 29, 30, 31). These rings mark a new attitude, it seems to me, toward death; death is more concrete, and it can be celebrated as much (or more) than it is feared. It is worth asking whether the Protestant Reformation's banishment of Purgatory played a role in these changes of attitude toward death. Now, as the deceased imagined a direct confrontation with his or her maker (as in the Dance of Death), he or she also looked forward eventually to joining loved ones and family. There was no obstacle like the perplexing place known as Purgatory standing in the way of life and the hereafter. Unlike medieval jewelry with its powerful charms, magic, and symbolism that served to keep death and the afterlife at bay, memorial and mourning jewelry makes palpable death in ways the living could find triumph. **(SH)** ○

1 Edwards 2007.

2 See Muldoon 2013, especially George Dameron, "Purgatory and Modernity," pp. 87–106; and of course Le Goff 1984.

3 See Oosterwijk and Knöll 2011.

4 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 1996.70, pen and brown ink, watercolor and gouache, with touches of gold,

28.

Memento Mori Ring with Enamel and Diamonds

England, late 17th to early 18th century

Height 22.52 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 20.81 mm; bezel 8.98 x 8.97 mm
Weight 3.1 grams
U.S. size 7.25; U.K. size O

The double hoop that composes this gold ring is formed from two interlaced snakes, their imbricated scales enameled black terminating in shoulders each set with a table-cut diamond supporting the bezel with a white death's head above crossed bones; the eye sockets are filled with rose-cut diamonds.

During the seventeenth century, scarcely a year passed without a serious outbreak of fever, cholera, plague, smallpox, or typhus. In addition to these epidemics of sickness, the population of Europe was decimated by famines and by wars, of which the worst, the Thirty Years War, did not end until 1648, and in the latter part of the century, the Anglo-Dutch War from 1665 to 1667 was followed by the long campaigns waged by Louis XIV against most of the continent. The disastrous mortality rates are mirrored in numerous rings, such as this example, with the snakes on the hoop echoing the biblical passage "For when a man is dead he shall inherit creeping things, beasts and worms" (Ecclesiasticus 10:11), the jeweler having substituted the more horrific snakes for the worms.

This aspect of death was very much in the thoughts of the serious-minded Countess of Warwick, who meditated upon it early every morning while her husband lay asleep. In 1671, as she contemplated her own future in the family mausoleum opened to receive the corpse of her brother, she "found the thought of lying in my cold bed and of the worms feeding upon me and of my turning into dust to be a little frightful and amazing to me but it pleased God

to let me all of a sudden find an extraordinary and reviving joy to think that … my body should be raised and made a glorious one."[1] To support this Christian view of life as a preparation for a holy death, people liked to carry with them powerful reminders of mortality, especially the skull and crossed bones as occur here.

In spite of their solemn religious purpose, such objects were not always penitential in character as this deluxe version of the *memento mori* type illustrates. Since the late seventeenth century is the age of diamond jewelry, the skull is flanked by table-cut diamonds at the shoulders, and there are rose-cut diamonds glittering in the eye sockets. The choice of thick white enamel suggests that the wearer was unmarried as rings enameled in black indicated a married person. Similar rings are in the Victoria and Albert Museum,[2] the British Museum,[3] and the Ashmolean Museum.[4] Of course, the unknown wearer might have looked on the ring not only as a *vanitas* symbol but also as an encouragement to "Carpe Diem," or make the most of every day given to him or her while alive. **(DS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985-2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 226.

Notes

1 Smith 1901, 154.
2 Oman 197, no. 85G.
3 Dalton 1912, no. 1493.
4 Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 58, pl. 20, nos. 2, 3, and 4.

The disastrous mortality rates in the seventeenth century, the result of plagues, famines, and wars, are mirrored in the popularity of *memento mori* rings. Often enameled in white, as here, examples could be more or less realistic, and many different models survive: with precious stones, inscribed, and as keepsakes that open.

Memento Mori ring
West Europe, 1600-1700
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 528-1868)

Skull rings were often combined with diamonds, the seventeenth century being the age of diamond jewelry, such as here where sparkling rose-cut diamonds define the eyes of the skull compelling the viewer's (and wearer's) attention.

Memento Mori ring
West Europe, 1680-1720
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 922-1871)

29.

Memento Mori Memorial Ring of the 10th Viscount Kilmorey

England, c. 1700

Height 23.45 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 18.14 mm; bezel 11.18 x 9.07 mm
Weight 6.3 grams
U.S. size 1; U.K. size B

The hoop of this gold locket ring is composed of two bones supporting the hinged death's head bezel with cavity. The inside of the bones are inscribed John Needham Viscount OB 27 MAY 1791 AET 81.

As a container for a personal relic such as a lock or curl of the hair of a deceased individual, to keep him "in remembrance," the locket bezel offered an alternative to the hollow hoop ring. The strongly sculptural character of the realistic death's head and of the substantial pair of bones supporting it is an unusual feature, for in the majority of English rings the *memento mori* symbols lie flat on the metal surfaces.

The message sent out by the ring is an unmistakable admonition to prepare for death, following the teaching of the influential Reverend Jeremy Taylor: "It is a great art to die well and to be learnt by men in health: he that prepares not for death before his last sickness is like him that begins to study philosophy when he is going to dispute publicly in the faculty. Learning duties requires study and skill, time and understanding in the way of godliness. Place your coffin in your own eye, dig your own grave."[1] In this spirit, *memento mori* motifs and inscriptions met the eye almost everywhere – on the exterior decoration of town houses, on dishes for eating and beakers for drinking, and some people, such as John Evelyn, posed for their portraits beside a skull.[2] Similarly, jewels and rings were decorated with skulls and skeletons, as John Fletcher alluded in his play *The Chances* first published in the Beaumont and Fletcher folio in 1647: "I'll keep it as they keep death's heads in rings, to cry Memento to me."

Although inscribed with the name, title, and date of death of John Needham, posthumous son of the 7th Viscount Kilmorey, who in 1768 succeeded his two childless elder brothers as the 10th Viscount Kilmorey, the ring seems closer to examples dating from the life of his father, the 7th Viscount (1683–1710), than to those in fashion at the time of his death at the end of the century. Since the Neoclassical mourning ring of the late eighteenth century is much less admonitory, featuring funerary urns on pedestals, and elegantly draped women seated under cypress trees or weeping willows, the present example could have been kept in the family until brought out for use as a memorial ring on the death of the eighty-one-year-old 10th Viscount in 1791. After a brief career in the army on assuming the title, he devoted himself to his Shropshire estates, where he was painted around 1768 by Thomas Gainsborough as the epitome of the prosperous Georgian country landowner.[3] **(DS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick, 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 225.

Notes

1 Taylor 1651, vii.

2 Robert Walker, Portrait of John Evelyn, 1648, National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 6179.

3 Now in Tate Britain, Millbank, London, N04777.

This is one of the finest examples of *memento mori* rings, the shoulders chased with scrolled leaves and with two graduated diamonds, and the bezel shaped to connote both the skull and cross-bones in black and white enamel and diamonds in the eyes, nose, and elsewhere.

Memento Mori ring
Netherlands, 17 th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F476)

***Memento mori* jewelry was not restricted** to rings, as this fire gilt copper skull, worn suspended as a pendant, demonstrates. Worn as talismans, skull rings and pendants often opened to disclose containers, in the case of the present example the opened skull revealing on one side three tiny relics of saints and on the other side a monstrance. The articulated jaw of this example enhances its character as a memento mori, reminding the beholder of his mortality while placing him under the protection of the saints.

Memento Mori pendant
Germany, 17th century
(Les Enluminures)

30.

Memorial and Memento Mori Ring

England, dated 1661

Height 23.22 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 21.29 mm
Weight 3.25 grams
U.S. size 6.25; U.K. size M

This gold hoop ring is enameled black outside with a white skeleton, a skull, an hourglass, skull and crossed bones, a snake, a crossed pick and shevel; it is inscribed within WH Nov. 18 1661 NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE. A lock of the deceased's hair is inside the hoop.

The loss of life resulting from the Civil War in England, the Fronde in France, and the Thirty Years War in Germany, as well as successive epidemics of the plague, strengthened the Christian view of life as a preparation for a holy death. This belief is mirrored in jewelry, and especially in rings, as occurs here in an chased band, ornamented with various *memento mori* motifs, comprising skulls, skeletons, crossed bones, the grave digger's pick and shovel, coffins, and hourglasses. In England, from the mid-seventeenth century, the *memento mori* ring merged with the memorial ring marking the death of an individual, identifiable by initials, dates, and coats of arms that transformed it from an exhortation to godly living to a memorial of a person such as this WH, who died on November 18, 1661.

The motifs round the outside of the hoop are the same as those depicted on the title page of a collection of Bills of Mortality printed in 1665, the "Year of London's Dreadful Visitation " the Great Plague which lasted from December 24, 1664 until December 19, 1665.[1] The inscription, stating belief in a life beyond the grave, occurs within another seventeenth-century hoop ring in the British Museum, and on many others of a later date.[2] Quoted by Matthew

Henry (1662-1714) in his popular biblical commentary (Matthew 2:18), the phrase was probably already current in the English language, derived from the ending of a letter sent by Seneca to Lucilius.[3] Various alternative formulae such as "Memento Mori," "Prepare to Follow," "Hodie Mihi Cras Tibi," and "None can Prevent the Lord's Intent" also occurred frequently. The hoop was left hollow so as to insert a lock of hair, considered the most imperishable part of the body and usually cut from the head of the corpse, although some people were shorn while living since hair was not reserved for memorial jewels but exchanged by friends, lovers, and family members for setting in jewels of sentiment. Bequeathed in wills or distributed at funerals, rings with designs like this one, with its stark warning of the inevitability of death and evocation of a beloved or respected individual, continued in use in England, then experiencing a religious revival, until the 1730s. **(DS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

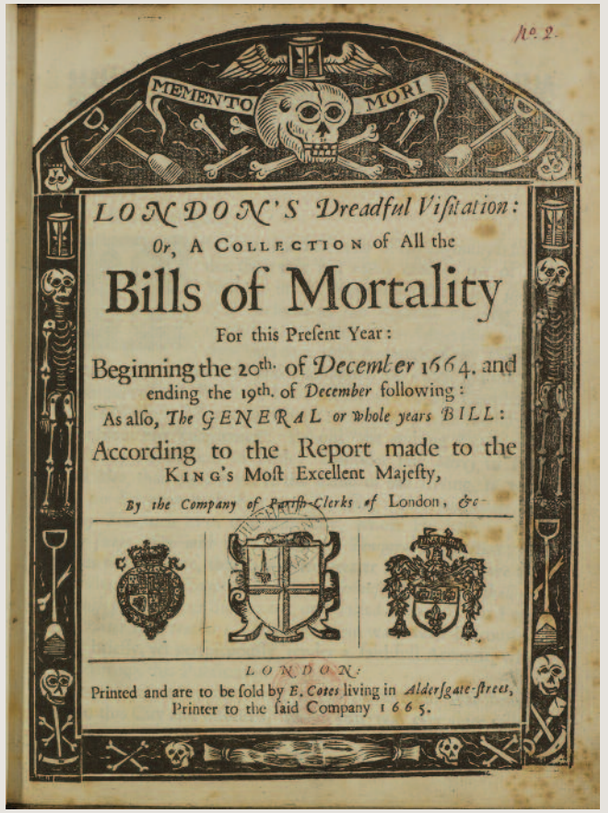
Literature: Scarisbrick 1993, p. 140; Scarisbrick 2007[repr. 2013], no. 30.

Notes

1 Oman 1974, 73.

2 Dalton 1912, no. 1485. For the British Museum collection of rings with skeletons and other *memento mori* symbols round the outside of the hoop, as here, see nos. 1529–50.

3 Seneca, *Epist.* 63, l. 16. "Et fortasse, si modo sapientium fama est recipitque nos locus aliquis, quem putamus perisse praemissus est": "and perhaps if only the tale told by wise men is true and there is a bourne to welcome us, then he, who we think of as lost, has only gone before."



In the summer of 1665 in London during one of the outbreaks of the Black Death, special bills of mortality listed causes of death. These ephemeral handbills were posted in public places to warn people of the spread of the plague. On the front of this bill listing the final count of the dead for the year 1665, skeletons, crossbones, and grave digging tools decorate the borders, and these are the same designs found on rings and *memento mori* jewelry.

London's Dreadful Visitation: Or, A Collection of All the Bills of Mortality ... Beginning the 20th of December 1664
(London, Guildhall Library, A 1.5 no. 2 in 98)

This mourning ring of the same shape as the Zucker ring consists of a hoop enameled with a death's head in white over black, as well as the coats of arms of the family. It commemorates the death of Samuel Nicholets of Hertfordshire on 7th July 1661, as is recorded in the inscription inside the ring. A lock of hair curls around within it, visible through the openwork of the enameled decoration.

Mourning ring
England, 1661
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.156-1962)

31.

Mourning Ring of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas

England, 1815

Height 21.88 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.56 mm; bezel 12.95 x 10.18 mm
Weight 3.70 grams
U.S. size 7.25; U.K. size O

The ring is composed of a thin plain flat hoop made of gold (?) with column-shaped ends in relief as shoulders. Attached to these is a double-sided bezel in oblong rectangular form with a swivel mechanism. One side is set with a flat gemstone made of glass and framed by a black enamel surround; the black glass stone shows some damage and a red streak. The other side has a black enameled plaque with an inscription in gold lettering: 'LT COL THOMAS 1ST REGT OF GUARDS FELL AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.

It is likely that the ring was worn with the stone side up and the comme-morative inscription on the underside resting on the finger. The mourning ring commemorates Lieutenant Colonel Charles Thomas of the 1st Foot Guards, who died at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815. It was a momentous day at Waterloo, just south of Brussels (part of the Netherlands at the time): Napoleon Bonaparte suffered defeat at the hands of the Duke of Wellington, with the help of the British and Prussian armies. The loss of life was great, and although estimates vary, it was thought that Napoleon lost over 30,000 men and the allies about 24,000. The battle marked the end of the Napoleonic era and the beginning of a new chapter in European history. Journals of the House of Commons list the allowances paid to relatives of those killed at the battle.[1] Thomas's wife, Sarah Carly Thomas, was eligible for an annual pension of £200.[2]

A stone plaque in the Royal Chapel and St. Joseph Church of Waterloo commemorates the deaths of those who fell during that war; one entry reads: "Sacred to the Memory of . . . Lieut. Colonel Charles Thomas . . . of His Britannic Majesty's 1st Regiment of Foot Guards who fell Gloriously in the Battles of Quatre-Bras and Waterloo on the 16th and 18th of June 1815."

As a part of the ritual of mourning, which was strictly followed at the time, this ring would have been worn by a friend or member of the family in remembrance of the hero's tragic death while defending his country in one of the most famous battles in history. The flaw in the glass stone may be due to damage after it was set in the ring, or the flawed stone itself might have had some significance; perhaps it was a relic once belonging to the deceased.

The Duke of Wellington and his victory at the Battle of Waterloo are commemorated in medals and finger rings, and following his death in 1852 in mourning rings, for example, in the British Museum, London, and in the Museum of London.[3] **(BCS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 272.

Notes:

1 Volume 71, Appendix, p. 597.

1 His name is also mentioned in *The Battle of Waterloo: Containing the Series of Accounts Published by Authority, British and Foreign, with Circumstantial Details, Previous, During and After the Battle, from a Variety of Authentic and Original Sources, with Relative Official Documents, Forming an Historical Record of the Operations in the Campaign of the Netherlands* (London, 1815), 293.

1 British Museum, London: Tait 1984, no. 360; Museum of London: Murdoch 1991, no. 39a; see also Oman 1974, pl. 91F (without reference to location).

Losses at the Battle of Waterloo prompted occasions for memorial jewelry, such as this gold and blue enameled ring commemorating the death in 1852 of one of Britain's greatest military heroes and prime minister, Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, famous for defeating Napoleon in 1815. A gold medallion of the bust of the duke appears within a blue enameled border inscribed WATERLOO.

Duke of Wellington commemorative ring
England, 1852
(London, Rowan and Rowan, REF 2118)

Battle scenes became a popular genre in nineteenth-century painting, and Denis Dighton who studied at the Royal Academy, and then for a time enjoyed the title Military Painter to the Prince Regent, went to Belgium in 1814 to observe firsthand scenes of battle. He is famous for his pictures of the Peninsula War, the Battle of Trafalgar, and the Battle of Waterloo, at which the wearer of our memorial ring, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas, fell.

Dighton Denis (1792-1827) *The Battle of Waterloo, 18th June 1815*
(Private collection)

ETERNITY

When Diana Scarisbrick recounted the intertwined story of Benjamin Zucker's life as a gem dealer and a ring collector, she credited him with forming "a collection of diamond jewelry that is unrivalled anywhere, even by De Beers."[1] She tells how Benjamin's interest in diamonds began at the tender age of seven when his uncle Aaron Gutwirth took a pebble out of his pocket and asked his nephew what it was. Eventually this incident led to the purchase of the well-known second- or third-century Roman Octahedral Diamond (cat. no. 32), of which De Beers wrote "the story of the diamond begins here."[2] Not surprisingly, the Zucker Family Collection outlines the story of the diamond, its origins in jewelry and the evolution of finding, cutting, and setting diamonds from late Antiquity up to almost the present day. The rings included in this section thus allow us to present a kind of mini-history of the diamond ring.

The ancient world already knew diamonds, probably first through India, from whom the Greeks and Romans discovered them. Indian accounts focus not only on the hardness of the diamond but on the spectral qualities – how it gives off an entire rainbow of light – and the Indian name for diamond is, as a result, related to lightning and thunder. In Pliny's *Natural History* (c. AD 77-79), distinguishing six different types of diamonds, the Roman historian flatly stated that the diamond "possesses the greatest value, not only among the precious stones, but of all human possessions."[3] It was from Pliny that the diamond got its Greek name "adamas," from "unconquerable," "indomitable," or "eternal," hence *Eternity* as the title of this section.

Until nearly the eighteenth century with the discovery of diamonds in Brazil in c. 1725, India was the exclusive source for diamonds, specifically the famed commercial center of Golconda located in south central India. Mining there was legendarily hazardous. Marco Polo's *Marvels of the World*, a travelogue of his voyages in the late thirteenth century, includes a detailed account of sourcing diamonds,[4] but his version in many of its details seems to derive from that of the Pseudo-Aristotle's *Secret of Secrets*, a letter purportedly written to King Alexander by his tutor Aristotle, but probably actually of Arab origin before the tenth century AD.[5] According to the Pseudo-Aristotelian text, diamonds occur deep in the valleys of the hilly region of India (Muftili, according to Marco Polo, or Golconda), where they are inaccessible to mankind because they are surrounded by venomous snakes. To secure the diamonds, men threw pieces of meat to the snakes, the diamonds stuck to the meat which the snakes devoured, only to be subsequently consumed by vultures (eagles, according to Polo), which were in turn captured and disemboweled by the diamond-seekers.

The Roman Octahedral Diamond in the Zucker Family Collection sets the stage for the history of diamonds through the nineteenth century (cat. no. 32). From the collection of Louis de Clercq, and thus of an unusually long and sterling provenance, this ring is set with an uncut diamond crystal in a bold openwork design. The spectral qualities for which the ancient Indians praised the diamond readily emerge in the prism of hues this ring emits as it turns in the light. The next step in the history of the diamond does not occur for over a millennium. In the fourteenth century, stone-cutters finally learned how to fashion a piece of rough crystal into a neatly cut pyramidal point, sharp enough to cut glass. There are romantic accounts of lovers using diamonds to write amatory messages on windows.[6]

An example of the pyramidal point is in the Zucker Family Collection (cat. no. 34), but one of the most famous examples comes, in fact, from an untitled illuminated manuscript, the presentation copy of an account of the celebration of the wedding of Costanza Sforza and Camilla Marzano d'Aragona at Pesaro in May 1475.[7] Illustrated with thirty-two miniatures and an extensive accompanying text in the form of a nuptial oration, this extraordinary manuscript describes in detail the lavish events, including the ongoing banquet, which took place over the four-day wedding ceremony. It begins with the Ship of Welcome that brings Camilla to Pesaro, and continues to the Triumph of Chastity, followed by personifications of the Gods and Muses, to the

Seven Planets, the Latin and Greek Poets, and finally to the chariots signaling the Triumph of Love and the Triumph of Fame. Each figure, opulently dressed in appropriate costume, also presented courses of the banquet. The much-illustrated miniature that introduces Eternity features Hymen, the blond youth who is the god of marriage and present at every wedding. He says "I am Hymen, who places upright love/ In the chaste hearts of bridal couples ... To you remarkable bride and groom who have/ Linked souls in one enterprise, I give my emblem / Of two torches in a ring of burning fire,/ Two minds, two hearts, two fires, show/ We are joined by diamond chains/ Never loosened and always fitting …." Not only is his garment patterned with pointed diamond rings, but an oversized pointed diamond sits on a wooden tray on a circular stone slab. This is perhaps the first text that makes explicit the link between the pointed diamond and marriage, a union that would endure to the present day.

The remaining diamond rings in this section, all amply described in the following entries, trace the evolution of cutting stones and matching them to different types of metal to maximize the brilliance of the gem. Some examples are clearly transitional, combining the table cut (the first real cut subsequent to the polished pyramid) and the rose cut (cat. no. 33); others experiment with metal and gem to set off the stone, such as the beautiful and unusual rose-cut diamond butterfly (cat. no. 38). The collection does not include examples of colored diamonds, and it stops short of the multi-faceted modern brilliant cut (although see cat. no. 39, an early near-brilliant cut combined with rose cuts), of which the most celebrated example is now the Pink Star, sold in 2014 for approximately 83 million dollars. But this pageant of valuable diamonds from the Zucker Family Collection suggests that the real success of De Beers's "diamonds are forever" lies not in the slogan itself but in the fact that it merely reinforced a longstanding, deeply entrenched attitude toward the "gem of gems."

We conclude not with a diamond but with a perpetual calendar ring. As the upper and lower rims of the hoop turn, this ring (cat. no. 41), which was apparently quite the fashion in nineteenth-century Europe, permitted wearers to follow the days of the week, the months of the year, through the years – through the Cycles of Life – with a mere glance at their finger. Nothing better illustrates the eternal timelessness of the finger-ring. **(SH)** ○

1 "Multi-faceted Benjamin Zucker," *Apollo* 169, no. 564 (April, 2009), 14.
2 Levi 1988, 4.
3 Pliny, *Natural History*, xxxvii, 15.
4 *Travels of Marco Polo* (Yule-Cordier ed.), iii, 19 (available online).
5 Williams 2003.
6 A poet in her own right, Mary Queen of Scotland is said to have written a distich on a window in Fotheringhay Castle with a pointed diamond, according to Thomas Fuller 1868, 136.
7 Vatican Library, Codex Urb. Lat. 899, recently published in a facsimile and with a translation by Jane Bridgeman (2013).
8 Bridgeman 2013, 65–67, 142–43 (f. 56v in the Vatican codex).

32.

Roman Octahedral Diamond Ring

Roman Empire, second half of the 3rd century to early 4th century AD

Height including diamond 30.73 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 25 mm;
bezel 6.32 x 8.55 mm
Weight 9.2 grams
U.S. size 5.75; U.K. size L

This ring is constructed from several separate gold components each hammered and formed to shape, then soldered together. The shoulders on the hoop have the angular form typical of many later Roman rings, and the high bezel with open sides is of a type that began to be used for transparent gemstones at this same period. This style of setting allowed light to pass through the stone.

The high bezel is set with a natural octahedral diamond crystal weighing about 1.65 carats. The only source of diamonds in the ancient world was India, and those that reached the Roman world by trade were rare and small. There is documentary evidence for diamond rings in the Roman Empire in the first century AD, but the earliest surviving example dates from the later second century, and although very rare, they are best known from the third century.[1] Of perhaps two dozen that have been published, most of those with known provenances come from Syria or the Roman East, near the overland trade routes leading from India. Ancient writers, such as the Roman writer Pliny, who mention the diamond remark on its great hardness. Indeed, diamond was too hard to be cut or polished in ancient times.

This ring was formerly in the collection of Louis de Clercq (1836–1901), a French photographer, politician, and avid collector of antiquities. His collecting started in 1859, when he joined a French archaeological expedition in Syria and developed a collection that included an unrivaled assemblage of Late

Roman and early Byzantine jewelry. The collection remained in the family until it was dispersed in 1967. Much was acquired by the Musée du Louvre in Paris; the remainder passed onto the open market. In 1911, André de Ridder, a curator at the Musée du Louvre, catalogued the jewelry. He provided only brief details and illustrated just a handful of the pieces. However, the present ring is one of those few illustrated ones; it is number 2065 in the catalogue, although wrongly described there as set with a pointed topaz. A similar style of ring, of unknown but almost certainly Eastern Roman provenance, is in the Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen. This is unusual in having a colored gem side-by-side with the diamond – a bright green emerald. There is a similar ring with two diamonds side-by-side in the British Museum. Also in the British Museum is a late Roman ring of near-identical form to the present ring, but set with an emerald.[2] Similar forms of rings set with rock crystal imitations of natural diamond crystals are also recorded.[3]

According to de Ridder, the present ring was from Tartus in Syria. Tartus was an ancient port on the Syrian coast, originally founded by the Phoenicians and an important settlement and trading post through Hellenistic, Roman, and medieval times. Another diamond ring formerly in the de Clercq collection, also there mis-described as set with a topaz, is from Amrit, just south of Tartus.[4]

Interestingly, the top apex of the octahedral diamond in the present ring is more rounded than the lower, suggesting that "use" is the cause. Diamond was celebrated for its hardness, and no doubt the lucky owner of such a ring would have delighted in demonstrating this. It is unlikely that such abrasion of the stone could be due to natural wear while on the finger. **(JO)**

Related in form to the de Clercq diamond ring, this ring with its openwork *à jour* mount, is unusual in having a colored gem set side-by-side with a diamond, in this case a bright green emerald.

Ancient ring with inserted stones
Roman Empire, 3rd-4th century AD
(Copenhagen, Thorvaldsens Museum, H1804)

In this ring, the high bezel with its crisp openwork hoop and the sculpturesque form beneath the stone is a close comparison to the de Clercq diamond ring; however, the stone is a rock crystal imitating a diamond crystal.

Gold ring set with a rock crystal
Roman Empire, 3rd century AD
(Private collection)

Provenance: Louis de Clercq (1836–1901), Paris [a French photographer, politician, and avid collector of antiquities, said to have been found at Tartus, Syria]; Benjamin Zucker, New York.

Exhibited: Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2013–2014.

Literature: de Ridder 1911, no. 2065; Levi 1988, 4; Zucker 1984 [repr. 2003], 77, pls. 87–88; Osmiridium Ltd, Technical Report no. 030602, June 27, 2003; Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 299–300, figs. 417–18.

Notes

1 See Ogden 1983, 95–96; for a full study of diamonds in the Roman period, including a discussion of this ring, see Ogden forthcoming. For the 2nd-century example, see Bedini et al. 2012; also Bedini 1995. See also Harlow 1998, with a brief survey by A. A. Levinson, "Diamond Sources and Their Discovery," 72–104.

2 For the British Museum parallels, see Marshall 1907 [repr. 1968], 128–31, in particular nos. 790 and 794.

3 Ogden 1973a, 179–80.

4 Ogden 1973b; de Ridder 1911, no. 2061.

33.

Renaissance Cusped Diamond Ring

Western Europe, early 16th century

Height 25.9 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.84 mm; bezel 8.1 x 9.85 mm
Weight 3.7 grams
U.S. size 7.25; U.K. size O

The square section hoop of this gold ring terminates in a line of crescents surmounted by bosses within projecting scrolled shoulders that support the raised quatrefoil bezel set with a table-cut diamond, secured by claws. The back of the bezel is not decorated but repeats the shape of the quatrefoil. There are traces of white enamel.

The ring not only exemplifies the elegant proportions of classic Renaissance design but introduces two important new developments in stone faceting and setting. First, it marks an important stage in the evolution of diamond cutting from the primitive point cut, for here the points have been removed from the top and the base of the natural octahedron and, instead, a flat, smooth, softly shining table top remains, set, as was usual, as a solitaire. Second, it represents the development of the cusped sides of the medieval bezel into the petals of a flower or quatrefoil, which here are left plain and flat but from around 1540 will be subdivided and receive additional chased and enameled ornament. A ring with similar plain quatrefoil bezel also set with a table-cut stone is in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.[1] This stone would have been mined in India, and brought to Europe from the fabled Golconda mines either via caravan to the ports of the Mediterranean or by ship from Goa to Lisbon, and thence to Antwerp for cutting.

Because of its properties of indestructibility and fortitude, the diamond was adopted as an emblem of sovereign authority by kings and queens and as the

symbol of harmony and fidelity in marriage. For this reason, at Greenwich in 1518 when the infant Mary Tudor was married by proxy to the infant Dauphin of France, Cardinal Wolsey, officiating, put a diamond ring on her finger, and at Holyrood in 1565, Mary Queen of Scots wed Henry Darnley with three rings, of which she considered the diamond most important. Other powers were attributed to it, as John Lyly in his *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, published in 1578, suggests: "is not the diamond of more valew than the Rubie because he is of more virtue?"[2] These powers were listed by Camillus Leonardus in *Speculum Lapidum* in 1502: "the diamond withstands poison, tho'ever so deadly, is a defense against the arts of sorcery, disperses vain fears, enables the quelling of quarrels and contentions, is a help to lunatics and such as are possessed of the devil: being bound to the left arm it gives victory over enemies, it tames wild beasts, it helps those who are troubled with phantasms and the nightmare and makes him that wears it bold and daring during his transactions." Belief in the efficacy of the diamond in assaying poison was expressed by Mary Queen of Scots when she reminded Lord Ruthven of a diamond ring given her by her Italian secretary David Riccio: "Remember ye not that ye said it had a virtue to keep me from poisoning?"[3] It continued, unquestioned, into the next century according to Thomas Nicols, who wrote that "the diamond could frustrate all the maligne contagious power of poysons."[4]

In creating this gleaming gold ring with its noble silhouette, the Renaissance jeweler has risen to the challenge of providing a setting worthy of this diamond, prized not only for its beauty and rarity but also for its symbolism and protective powers. **(DS)**

Rings like the present example epitomize Renaissance high fashion, its fine opulence and keen interest in delicate and detailed design. Evidence of this style's popularity can be found in Renaissance paintings, design books, and in museum collections. The basic form of the deeply cusped bezel was sometimes elaborated with more intricate treatment of the lobes and of the shoulders.

Renaissance diamond ring
Western Europe, c. 1500-1550
(Private collection)

The design of the quatrefoil bezel set with precious stones and ornamented with cusped shoulders was adaptable to all sorts of gems, not only diamonds, and it occurs here set with a table-cut ruby.

Renaissance ruby ring
16th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F493)

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Notes

1 Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 56, pl. 19, no. 1.
2 Lyly 1578, 58.
3 Robertson 1863, xii n.1.
4 Nicols 1652, 51.

34.

Renaissance Octahedral Diamond Ring

Western European, mid- to late 16th century

Height 24.96 mm; width across shoulders 18.3 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 18.47 mm; bezel 10.28 x 12.93 mm
Weight 5.8 grams
U.S. size 5.25; U.K. size K

The hoop rises to widened shoulders with side scroll motifs supporting a high bezel of quatrefoil form set with an octahedral diamond crystal. The flanges of the quatrefoil have stylized floral scrolls worked by a combination of chasing, carving, and engraving. The engraving is done with a V-sectioned graving tool, a form that was beginning to replace the earlier, more rounded tool at this time. The engraved design was originally enameled, and there are traces of red and green enamel in some of the depressions. Enameling involves relatively high temperatures and so had to be carried out before the diamond was set in place. Being able to set gems without cracking the enamel in the surrounding gold was a constant challenge to Renaissance jewelers.

This type of quatrefoil bezel with enameled floral designs is typical of the sixteenth century, as is the form of scalloped edge.[1] Diamonds had been in occasional use in jewelry since Roman times (see cat. no. 32), traded overland from India, then the only source. Few diamonds reached Europe following the Roman era until the growth of Eastern trade in the wake of the Crusades. Diamonds then begin to be mentioned in medieval inventories, and from the later fourteenth century we have a small number of surviving diamond-set rings and other jewelry.[2] With the opening up of the direct sea trade with India around 1500, diamonds began to reach Europe in greater numbers, and diamonds became a valuable but relatively abundant accent in jewelry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[3]

The present diamond, estimated to weigh about 0.4 carat, is a natural octahedral diamond crystal of particularly fine, bright form. Two of the exposed octahedral faces are clearly "natural" but the other two faces have a very high flat surface that may well be the result of polishing. This type of superficial polishing of the natural crystal faces of a diamond seemingly first occurs in the later fourteenth century in Europe and represents the first steps in diamond polishing.[4] Such minimal surface polishing of some or all of the crystal faces continued in parallel with a more drastic polishing, what is termed "point cutting," that reduced the height of the crystal while making the faces more regular and smooth, and the point sharper. By the time this ring was made in the sixteenth century the point cut had almost completely superseded the earlier forms, making this ring a rare example.[5] Possibly the diamond had been mounted previously in a piece of later medieval jewelry, then re-set in the sixteenth century. The edge of the setting shows that it has been adjusted in recent times, perhaps when the diamond had become loose.

Interestingly, there is some very slight chipping on the apex of the stone. It is just possible that this is the result of the diamond being used to write love messages on glass windows. This practice is recorded from the sixteenth century and with such notables as Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh, but was probably less prevalent in reality than in popular imagination.[6] **(JO)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985-2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 307, nos. 428, 429 (described as "point cut").

Notes

1 For discussion of the type, see Chadour 1994, 1:208–10, nos. 678–686; also Dalton 1912, 271–73, nos. 1920–1938. For the comparison, see Church 2011, 31, fig. 34.

2 See Campbell 2009, 17.

3 For the use of diamonds and early history of their cutting, see Ogden forthcoming. For an earlier study of diamond cutting, see Tillander 1995. For a history of diamonds in general, see Lenzen 1970; and Harlow 1998.

This substantial Renaissance ring is mounted with a red glass stone to resemble a ruby and cut to a point, like the Zucker pointed diamond ring. Other features such as the lavish chasing, once filled with enamel, and the large intricately worked lobes, are typical of rings of this period popular throughout Europe.

Gold and red glass ring
Western Europe, mid 16th- early 17th century
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 21,38)

4 Tillander 1995, 22–23.

5 See also Harlow 1998, 136 ff.

6 This practice is frequently mentioned in books on diamonds, but seldom referenced to specific examples. The Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh instance was first noted in 1662 by Thomas Fuller in his *History of the Worthies of England*; see the edition by P. Austin Nutall, Fuller 1840,1:419.

Paintings of portraits are an excellent source for what jewelry looked like, how it was worn and by whom, and even roughly when it dates. In this detail from a portrait of a Netherlandish ship owner and his wife, the large diamond (pointed?) ring proudly worn on her forefinger is mounted in a massive gold setting intricately chased, as is the Zucker ring. She wears two rings on her other hand, and her husband also wears rings, once of them surely a signet.

Maerten de Vos (1532-1603)
Portrait of Gillis Hooftman, Ship owner, and his wife Margaretha van Nipsen
Antwerp, July 1570
(Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-1717)

35.

Late Renaissance Rose-Cut Diamond Ring

European, mid- to late 17th century

Height 20.1 mm; width 17.3 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 17.1 mm; bezel 8.23 x 9.03 mm
Weight 1.9 grams
U.S. size 4; U.K. size H

The D-section gold hoop flares slightly upwards to support a circular bezel holding a rose diamond. The upper parts of the hoop are decorated with an engraved scrolling floral design still retaining some of the original black enamel. The sides of the bezel are also enameled, here with black "petals" with white dots.

The overall style of the ring places it in the second half of the seventeenth century.[1] The diamond, estimated at about 0.75 carats, is a circular rose cut, a form of multi-facet diamond cut developed during the sixteenth century, popular in the seventeenth, but slowly displaced by the new brilliant cut from the late seventeenth century onwards. The regularity of shape and precision of the cutting, with twenty-four precise triangular facets, is very different from the rose diamond in the center of cat. no. 36 and is consistent with the finest northern European cutting. Very slight traces of polishing lines can be seen on some facets of the diamond and these indicate a more random orientation of cutting than would be expected with modern cutting. The flat base of the rose diamond is polished and highly reflective, so the nature of the bedding material inside the setting is unclear; it was most typically a black mixture of soot or other burnt carbonaceous material plus a resin or gum as binder.[2]

The missing enamel on the hoop allows us to see that the engraved depressions were produced with a combination of shallow curved graver and sharper one, although not a sharp "V" as on cat. no. 34. The dark enamel appears black, but is actually a very dark blue. In the seventeenth century black enamel was often

produced with cobalt as a main coloring agent. This yielded what is actually a very dark blue color. In 1611Antonio Neri published his great work on glass including enamels, *l'arte vetraria*. In 1662 Christopher Merret produced an English version titled *The Art of Glass, wherein are shown ways to make and colour glass, pastes, enamels, lakes and other curiosities*.[3] The sixth section provided recipes for enamels for gold, and Merret described just such cobalt-based enamel as "a fair black." More generally, he charmingly noted that "Enamelling on gold and other metals is a fair and pleasing thing … enticing beyond measure the eyes of the Beholders."

The use of predominantly black enamel does not mean that this was a mourning ring. Black enamel was popular in seventeenth-century jewelry, particularly around diamonds. On the underside of the bezel are incised the letters "JM," presumably the initials of the owner or the person from whom the owner received the ring. They are simply incised and so probably not added by the goldsmith.

Another example of a seventeenth-century, rose-diamond set ring of slightly different form, also with black enamel, is in the Zucker Family Collection, and a version of this last, but set with a rock crystal imitating a rose diamond, is in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection. **(JO)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 311, 314, fig. 439.

Notes

1 For the parallels, see Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 312–13, figs. 435 and 438; Chadour 1994, 1:233, no. 760.

2 J. Whalley, "Smoke and Mirrors: The Enhancement and Simulation of Gemstones in Renaissance Europe," in Saunders, Spring, and Meek 2013, 79–89 (85).

3 Reprinted by the Society of Glass Technology: Cable 2001.

The blackwork patterns on the sides of the hexagonal bezel continue on the shoulders and suggest the date of the ring, which is set with an important rose-cut stone in the early seventeenth century.

Baroque diamond ring
European, c. 1610
(Zucker Family collection)

This is another example of a rose-cut diamond with intricately applied black enamel, as was the fashion in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The rose cut became more frequent in the seventeenth century; with its flat underside and many small geometric facets, it radiated more brilliance than earlier cuts and was often used with a circular stone.

Rose-cut diamond ring
Western Europe, late 17th century
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 28,34)

36.

Late Renaissance Diamond Cluster Ring with Opium Compartment

Spain?, about 1630–40

Height 25.31 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 21.00 mm; bezel 16.14 x 15.6 mm
Weight 7.4 grams
U.S. size 6; U.K. size L ½

This ring has a slightly tapering, D-section hoop rising to support a circular bezel. The bezel is a round cluster of diamonds, all roses apart from a single table-cut, and this opens to reveal a compartment. There is white enamel within the bezel, on the shoulders and around the lower edge of bezel, the latter in petal form with central red spike and black dots. The enamel on the hoop and under the bezel was applied and polished before small linear engraved lines were added between the upper parts of enameled petals. Where the enamel is now missing, shallow engraved grooves to help key the enamel are visible of a type consistent with a seventeenth-century origin.

The overall style of the ring, including the circular bezel and the "pie crust" style of settings, points to a date in the fourth decade of the seventeenth century and can be closely paralleled in other jewellery of this period.[1] Here the circular bezel is set with a central diamond surrounded by eight smaller ones.[2] All are rose cut apart from one small table cut. The rose diamonds are well cut but have an irregularity of outline that supports a date toward the end of the seventeenth century rather than the eighteenth century, when as a rule of thumb cutting became more regular. Details of construction and wear are similarly consistent with such age and past use. Compare, for example, drawings of similar settings in the Llibres de Passanties, as well as jewels recovered from the Spanish galleon, the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, which sank in 1638.[3]

What makes this ring exceptional is the way in which the bezel opens to reveal a secret compartment. Some such rings were "locket rings," which contained miniature representations of loved ones or of royal or political persons (in some cases people to whom allegiance was unwise to broadcast).[4] Some rings with compartments held religious relics, but others were intended to contain poison to allow the surreptitious removal of enemies or rivals by lacing their food or drink. The present ring seemingly is none of these. The compartment was perhaps intended to contain an opiate in some form or other. This use can be suggested on the basis of the form of the ring and its interior. The white enamel petals around the base of the bezel, with their central red spike and black dots, appear to represent the petals of the white opium poppy – the main source of opium in the past. The whole bezel thus represents the poppy. The excellent condition of this enamel, and that on the shoulders, is in marked contrast to that on the interior of the compartment, which one would expect to be the better preserved. Indeed, the interior enamel is heavily abraded, apparently as the result of some deliberate grinding process. The white enamel on the inside of the ring is not simply what is termed a "counter enamel" to counteract the distortion that can occur if only one side of thin sheet gold is enameled. Originally it bore small gold foil stars impressed into the enamel before firing. All these stars are now lost, but the depressions left by them can be seen, as well as minute traces of gold foil. The original number of stars is unclear, but traces of at least five can be seen and if they were fairly evenly distributed originally, there were probably about a dozen.

Although opium has been a component of poisons – and medicines – since antiquity, the presence of stars might indicate that a sleeping potion was the intended content. Opium has also long been used to induce sleep, indeed the Latin name of the opium poppy, *papaver somniferum*, means "sleep-bringing poppy." Sleeping potions crop up in medieval and later literature. For example,

Shakespeare famously involves one in his *Romeo and Juliet*. The capacity of the ring is certainly sufficient to contain enough opium to induce sleep. However if the contents were intended as a cure for the wearer's insomnia, why did it need to be so surreptitious and portable? In any case, the frequent use indicated by the abraded interior would soon lead to addiction, and so possibly the ring was simply a portable stash for an addict, the stars connected with hallucinogenic opium-dreams. Use as a container for an opiate is by no means certain, but such a use would account for the nature of the interior wear, the poppy flower form, the enamel color of the underside, and the little gold stars. **(JO)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 314, no. 440 (where it is simply described as a 'locket ring').

Notes

1 Scarisbrink 2007 [repr. 2013], 312–13, no. 436; Also compare the center motif of a large rose-diamond-set gold ornament of the second half of the seventeenth century belonging to the Archdiocese of Évora, Portugal: de Carvalho 2006, 22, fig. 3 and p. 29.

2 For the general form of the cluster and the style of diamond mounting, see Chadour 1994, 1:241, no. 782; Dalton 1912, 284, pl. 28.

3 See Llibres de Passanties, Llibre 3, no. 461; compare also settings from jewelry recovered from the galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* (see their website www.pacificsearesources.com), William M. Mathers et al., *Archaeological Report: The Recovery of the Manila Galleon Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* (Pacific Sea Resources, 1990), with a discussion of the jewelry by Beatriz Chadour, 130 ff; cf. nos. 7 and 8.

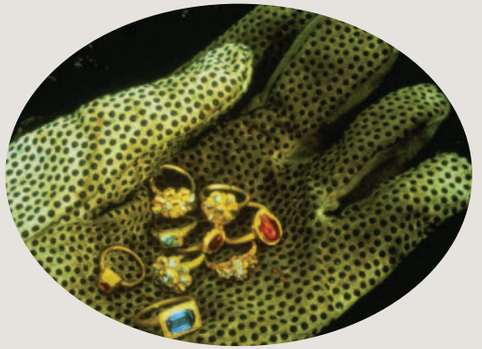
4 For a ring with a concealed portrait of Napoleon, see Ward et al. 1981, pl. 276; for a seventeenth-century locket ring with a carnelian intaglio showing Charles I, see Scarisbrick, 2007 [repr. 2013], 190, figs. 253–54; and another locket ring, also English, from a private collection, see *A Sparkling Age* 1993, 106–7, no. 31.

This finger ring belongs to a group of closely related cluster rings from the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, an Acapulco-bound Spanish galleon that sunk in 1638 and was recovered through a project sponsored by Pacific Sea Resources beginning in 1987. Composed of rosette petals set with diamonds and a raised centerpiece also set with a gem, it bears similarities with other rings from the same treasure thought to derive from one goldsmith's workshop, and shares the combination of rose and table cut with the present locket ring.

Diamond cluster ring
Spain, early 17th century

This drawing signed and dated by Pere Juan Calmel, showing a cluster ring suspended from a ribbon, gives us evidence of the fashion of diamond cluster rings during the period of the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*. The *Llibres de Passanties* is a set of volumes housed in Barcelona containing master drawings by applicants for admission into the Barcelona goldsmith's guild.

Llibres de Passanties
Drawing by Pere Juan Calmell, dated 1632
Vol. IIII, f. 12, no. 469
(Museu d'història de la Ciutat, Barcelona, 2B.41-16)



Taken during the recovery of the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción,* this photograph shows three diamond cluster rings, along with other Renaissance gemstone rings of different designs. Several thousand pieces of gold jewelry set with emeralds, rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and amethysts were found nearly intact.

Renaissance gemstone rings from the Nuestra Señora de la Concepción
Spain, early 17th century
(Pacific Sea Resources, B1108, B2051, B2257, B563, B1388, B2226, B848, B1545, A1005)

37.

Baroque Brilliant- and Table-Cut Diamond Ring

European, mid- to late 17th century

Height 23.87 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.53 mm; bezel 9.3 x 20.43 mm; bezel at middle 7.05 x 8.13 mm
Weight 3.4 grams
U.S. size 6.75; U.K. size N

The all-gold ring has a simple, D-section gold hoop tapering slightly outwards to support the attenuated bezel, which consists of a central square, pyramidal setting with diamond and triangular settings to each side, each with three diamonds. The settings have a dog-tooth surround at their widest part, and taper down below with vertical grooves with traces of the original black enamel. Black enamel in vertical lines adorns the underside of the bezel.

This style of ring is typical of the later seventeenth century, the distinguishing characteristics being the central stone setting flanked by stone-set chevron and the "pie-crust" edge to the settings – a functional, albeit decorative, part of the assembly. Rings of this type are well represented both with diamonds and with colored gems. When set entirely with diamonds, these are usually table cuts or rose cuts; the present ring has a combination. The central diamond is a fairly symmetrical early form of brilliant cut, while three of the side diamonds are simple table cuts; one is irregular with ten side facets, and the other two are irregular forms of simple brilliant.[1] The so-called brilliant cut, the modern version of which is the most popular form of diamond cut, was developed during the second half of the seventeenth century, and its presence here recalls a similar ring in the Musée du Louvre.[2] Compare also a ring of the same design with fifteen table-cut diamonds.[3]

Combinations of cuts are known in other rings of this type,[4] but later replacement can seldom be ruled out. By the later seventeenth century, jewelers

were beginning to set diamonds in silver settings, typically backed by gold. The use of all gold here points to a seventeenth- rather than early eighteenth-century date for the ring. After the later seventeenth century there was a move to silver settings for diamonds (see cat. no. 38) although all-gold settings appear to have survived a little longer in the Iberian Peninsula. The relatively small size of the diamonds in this ring, as in most jewelry of this period, is a reminder that the rich diamond fields of Brazil were discovered only in the early eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century the only sources were still those in India and, to a lesser extent, Borneo. The Brazilian discoveries led to a far wider use of diamonds in jewelry, and they began to be used more flamboyantly than they are in the present ring.

The vertical, linear enameling on the sides of settings is also a characteristic of the seventeenth century, although its significance is unknown. It may have been intended to give the illusion of an open-backed setting. The missing enamel is part of the overall wear seen on the ring, which attests to considerable use in the past. It must have been a favored possession. The hoop also has three solder joins, showing that it was sized or repaired at least once in its life. **(JO)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 325 fig. 442 (where the center is described as a table-cut).

Notes

1 For the history of diamond cutting, see Ogden forthcoming; Tillander 1995, esp. 130 ff.

2 For the style of setting, including the enamel work, see Chadour 1994 1: 236, nos. 768–69; for a British Museum ring said to be set with "brilliants" on each side of a sapphire, see Dalton 1912, 285, no. 2034 and pl. 27.

3 Kockelbergh, Vleeschdrager, and Walgrave 1992, 85; cf. also *A Sparkling Age* 1993, 173–78, nos. 68, 70–73.

4 For an all-diamond example said to have a mixture of cut styles, see Bury 1984, 32, fig. 35b.

Rings of this type – a central stone flanked by two chevron forms set with three stones each – are well represented with diamonds and other colored stones, rubies and emeralds, or even, as here, glass imitating emeralds. A drawing dated 1677 in the *Llibres de Passanties* helps secure their date in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and suggests a Spanish origin.

Gold and emerald ring
Spain, about 1680
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 26,32)

This example recalls the Zucker ring in its use of diamonds as well as its style of setting. The side diamonds are table cuts, the centre stone a more complex faceted form.

Diamond and gold ring
Western Europe, 17th century
(Paris, Musée du Louvre, ECL15553)

38.

Rococo Diamond Butterfly Ring

Western Europe, 18th century

Height 20.65 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 19.31 mm; bezel 12.35 x 10.56 mm
Weight 2.1 g
U.S. size 5.5; U.K. size K ½

The hoop of the ring, in a reddish gold, divides in its upper part to represent plant fronds or twigs on top of which settles a butterfly with red gold legs and antennae; the butterfly's head, body, and wings are composed of twenty-four rose-cut diamonds set in silver.

This ring is a delicate masterpiece, carefully planned so that the legs and body join the hoop fronds to form a perfect support and framework for the applied butterfly motif. The use of gold backs with silver settings, to set off best the rose diamonds, was an aesthetic innovation of the later seventeenth century. The diamonds set in the wings are simply bezel set, that is, the edge of the setting is burnished over the edge of the diamond. In contrast, the setting of the diamonds in the head and body has the addition of little raised grains. This variation seems to have been less about construction or strength than about appearance, for it provided a visible contrast between the body and the lighter wings.

By the early eighteenth century the symmetry that had been very much the norm in jewelry was beginning to give way to the greater naturalism of the Rococo movement. The most obvious examples of this trend with rings were the little *giardinetti* or flower-pot rings, which became popular after about the 1740s.[1] This beautiful little butterfly ring is another, rarer, manifestation of the style.[2] It is almost symmetrical, but the slight naturalistic curve to the body and tail give it sophistication and life. Perhaps unusually for a butterfly jewel, the gems are all diamonds.

The diamonds are all well-cut rose diamonds in pear shapes for the wings, round for the tail, and a slightly asymmetric oval for the body. This latter was probably a deliberate choice since it is set in a way to help define the curvature of the body and tail; a subtle touch. The discovery of the diamond fields of Brazil around 1725 made diamonds far more available than before. This led to major changes in jewelry styles. Diamonds or other gems, could now be the entire focus of a jeweled object, the precious metals being relegated to, literally, just a supporting role.

Butterflies have had various symbolic associations is Western art, but in jewelry are normally seen as representing the spiritual aspect of love.[3] In second-century Roman mythology, the beautiful Psyche was lover of Cupid and eventually united with him in heaven. She symbolized the soul and was often represented as a butterfly. The full story was a complex tale of sex, passion, and even elements reminiscent of the Beauty and the Beast folk tale, but eighteenth-century Neoclassicism, combined with the Romantic movement, stripped the myth to its simplest form: the butterfly represented the soul and the triumph of love.

Butterfly rings are not common. A late eighteenth-century ring in the British Museum has a butterfly in profile. This also has rose diamond wings, but the body includes a ruby and chrysoberyl. The example of an eighteenth-century *giardinetti* ring in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, shown here is in the form of a floral spray but it shows a similar delicate design that was carefully planned to combine naturalism with structural strength. It also is in reddish gold with silver settings for the diamonds.[4] **(JO)**

The butterfly form is in profile on the bezel of this ring of Italian origin, fashioned with a scalloped gold hoop and with rose diamond wings and a body composed of a ruby, a garnet, and a chrysoberyl.

Finger ring with bezel in the form of a butterfly
Italy, 18th century
(London, British Museum, 1978,1002.320)

This eighteenth-century *giardinetti* (meaning "little garden") ring is in the form of a floral spray composed of many smaller gems, but it shows a similar delicate design that was carefully planned to combine naturalism with structural strength. It is in reddish gold with silver settings for the diamonds to avoid the yellow reflections.

Gold ring with quatrefoil bezel
English, Mid-to-late 18th century
(Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA1897.CDEF.F578)

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985-2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 320, fig. 450 (where the insect is identified as a fly).

Notes

1 Dawes 2007, 141–44. The Alice and Louis Koch Collection has numerous examples (vol. I: 911, 912, 913 with birds and then flowers; see also the drawings by Jean-Henri-Prosper Pouget (cat. no. 26).
2 For two rings with birds, see Chadour 1994, 1: 276, nos. 911–12.
3 Munn 1993.
4 For the British Museum butterfly ring, see Ward et al. 1981, no. 241; for the Ashmolean Museum floral spray ring, see Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 68–69, pl. 25.5.

39.

Rococo Diamond Cluster Ring

Western European, 18th century

Height 24.44 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 20.35 mm; bezel 14.67 x 14.40 mm
Weight 7.51 grams
U.S. size 7.5; U.K. size O ½

A gold hoop, of rectangular cross section divides at each end into a small, attenuated U form that joins a tri-lobed gold support for four rose-cut diamonds in silver settings. These shoulder motifs flank a central, circular bezel with a cluster of diamonds in silver settings on a gold backing. The cluster consists of a central, square near-brilliant-cut diamond, surrounded by four similar but smaller diamonds in a cruciform pattern, interspersed with four smaller rose diamonds.

Once into the eighteenth century, the diamond cluster ring began to take on the form in which we still find it: diamonds best set off with minimal setting visible (compare the present ring with the seventeenth-century style of cat. no. 36). The elaborate diamond-set shoulders here make the present ring a particularly elaborate version of the type. Four of the diamonds, apart from the twelve rose cuts, are not full-cut eighteenth-century brilliants, but represent slightly simplified forms also encountered in the eighteenth century. One of the diamonds is a full brilliant, but although probably of eighteenth-century date, has been reset with the help of adhesive.

Diamonds cut in a multi-faceted form, such as brilliants or rose cuts, have a sparkle that is best set off when they are set in silver. The negative side is that silver can stain the skin or clothing. The solution, as also seen with cat. no. 38, was to use silver for the settings, gold for the components that would be in contact with the skin. Also, in the later eighteenth century, as brilliant-cut

diamonds predominated, open-back settings came into vogue. Brilliants have a shaped lower surface, unlike the flat-backed rose cuts, and thus did not require a backing material to maximize reflection and thus sparkle. Open-backed settings also allowed some light to be reflected through the stone. Here, in a ring with both rose- and brilliant-cut diamonds, the settings are still enclosed.

The combination of old brilliant-cut and rose-cut diamonds must be seen against an underlying conflict: what we might describe as the war of the roses. The brilliant style of diamond cutting was developed toward the end of the seventeenth century and was soon supplanting the far older rose cut.[1] Indeed rose cuts started to be re-cut as brilliants, despite the significant loss in weight that this entailed. This growing supremacy of the brilliant cut was not without its opponents. The diamond dealer and expert David Jeffries, author of what soon became the standard work on diamonds, wrote in the 1740s of "the corrupt taste that has of late prevailed, in converting Rose Diamonds into Brilliants."[2] He protested that "Rose Diamonds, when truly manufactured, are not inferior to Brilliants, all circumstances considered." Jeffries's attempt to discredit brilliants seems to have stemmed largely from his fear that the change in fashion would result in a fall in value of the rose diamonds he had sold to his customers.

A cluster ring in the British Museum, although set with more crudely cut diamonds, shows a similar setting type and a simpler version of the scrolling, bifurcated section where the hoop joins the bezel.[3] However, the outer surface of the hoop is enameled and bears an inscription identifying it as a mourning ring in memory of a woman who died in 1758 – thus showing the year of manufacture for this ring and helping to date others of similar form. Incidentally, we can note that the use of white enamel on the British Museum ring shows that the deceased woman was unmarried. A simpler version of this type of ring, with all rose diamonds, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, dated to around 1760. **(JO)**

Although set with more crudely cut diamonds, this cluster ring shows a similar setting type, using eight silver settings, and a similar version of the scrolling. Inscribed with the date 1758 because of its use as a mourning ring in memory of a woman, the ring helps us date others of similar manufacture.

Mourning ring with diamonds
England, 1758 (date of inscription)
(London, British Museum, AF.1698)

Another cluster ring with an octofoil bezel is set with table-cut diamonds, a cut that was archaic by this time. The ring displays radiating gadroons behind the diamonds, forked shoulders, and a pierced foliated hoop.

Gold ring set with table-cut diamonds
Spain, 1700-1750
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.213-1962)

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 322, fig. 452.

Notes:

1 On diamond cuts, see Tillander 1995 and Ogden, forthcoming; and on the shape, see also drawings by Jean-Henri-Prosper Pouget (cat. no. 26).

1 For David Jeffries' comments, see Jeffries 1751, 34.

1 For the British Museum ring, see Dalton 1912, 233, no. 1629 (BM AF 1698). For another closed-back diamond cluster ring of around 1770, see Dawes, Collings, and Dawes 2007, 80.

40.

Late Renaissance Ruby and Diamond Ring with Enamel

Western Europe, c. 1650

Height 23.61 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 20.22 mm; bezel 10.93 x 12 mm
Weight 3.7 grams
U.S. size 6.25; U.K. size M

The convex hoop of this gold ring terminates at shoulders engraved with trails of flowers and leaves with traces of black enamel; these support the hexafoil bezel set with six foiled table-cut rubies surrounding a table-cut diamond. The arcaded sides of the bezel are filled with thick black enamel dotted with white.

The restrained design of this ring is characteristic of seventeenth-century jewelry, in which the focus was on the stones rather than on the setting, which is now much simpler than in the previous period. In keeping with this sobriety, the enameling is not bright, but black, with the occasional white dot in the arcading round the sides of the bezel. The rubies and diamonds are foiled.

The ruby was highly prized, according to Robert de Berquen, who described it as "the most beautiful of all colored stones."[1] Rare and expensive, as well as beautiful, the ruby was usually available in small sizes only, as here, where the six rubies have been clustered together around the table-cut diamond so as to give an impression of weight and importance. The trails of flowers and leaves at the shoulders, which also occur in mourning rings of the period, were described by one owner, Elizabeth Freke, as her "floured rings," and to some eyes the hexafoil bezel could be interpreted as an imitation of a six-petaled flower, echoing the contemporary interest in Nature.[2] It offered an alternative to the standard seventeenth-century setting, which grouped seven stones into three pairs flanking the larger gem in the center (see cat. no. 37).[3]

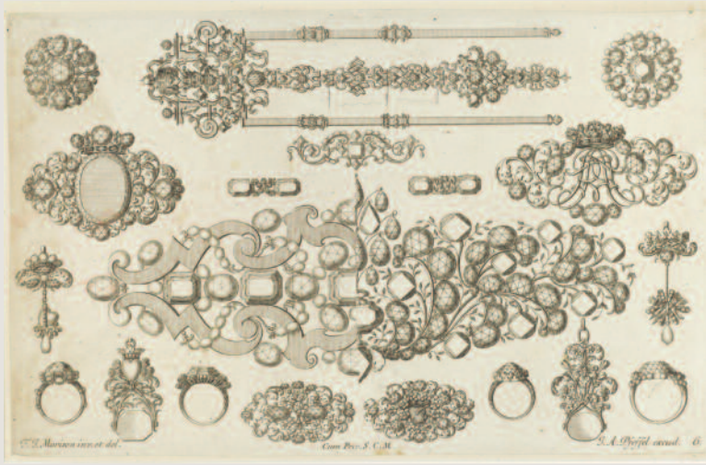
Writing not only for dealers and jewelers but also for people desiring to know more about the stones they possessed, the Cambridge scholar Thomas Nicols offers a guide to the mind of the owner of this mid-seventeenth-century ring. In the opinion of Nicols, in its "externall glory" the ruby "doth emulate the bright shining of a flame of fire" and "though it be a very glorious stone of excellent beauty." Since according to the subtitle of his book Nicols was writing to inform professionals, he recommended foiling, as for all transparent stones. He then went on to suggest "a foyl made of tinctured Mastick, or of a dyed vitreous substance, or else a clear red gold foyl be used about it." As belief in the healing and magical powers of gems continued to be strong, Nicols, quoting Anselm de Boot,[4] physician to Emperor Rudolf II, lists the various properties or "internall symbolical virtues" attributed to the ruby: "if worn in an amulet it is good against poison and against the plague and to drive away sadnesse, evil thoughts, terrible dreams and evil spirits. It is also said that it cleareth the mind and keepeth the body in safety, and that if any danger be towards it, it will grow black and obscure and that being past return to its former colour again."[5] The six rubies, highlighted by the contrast with the diamond in the center, would not only feed the eyes "with much pleasure in beholding" but at the same time "no less feed the spirit with delight." **(DS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 344.

Notes

1 De Berquen 1661.
2 Oman 1974, 72–73.
3 Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 60, pl. 21, no. 2.
4 De Boot 1636.
5 Nicols 1652, 54–58.



Engraved ornament books boasted designs for metalworkers, especially jewelers, and other artists to copy; these could also be collected as prints. The present plate is one of a set of eight designs first published in Vienna. The draftsman, Friedrich Jacob Morrison, was active c. 1693-1699. This plate includes floral-inspired designs for rings, pendants, hat pins, and other jewelry, and the designs are echoed in creations of the period.

Friedrich Jacob Morison, Jeremias Wolff, ***Fortsetzung von verschiedenen neuen und curieusen Inventionen von Geschmuch, Zierathen, und Gelanterien…***
Germany, c. 1690-1700 (published)
(London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 27862:6)

The contemporary interest in Nature influenced the creation of floral-type settings in the seventeenth century, such as this ornament from the Cheapside Hoard composed of six foiled rose-cut amethysts and seven diamonds, the reverse enameled in black and white. Discovered in 1912 in Cheapside, London, this collection consists of more than 400 pieces of Elizabethan and Jacobean jewelry from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries buried in a wooden box in a cellar.

Hat ornament with amethysts and diamonds
England, 16th-17th century
(London, Museum of London, A14082)

41.

Perpetual Calendar Ring

England, c. 1830

Height 21.42 mm; exterior diam. of hoop 21.42 mm
Weight 9.7 grams
U.S. size 8; U.K. size P ½

The ring is composed of an inner band of gold with the surrounding edges curved outwards to form a setting for the three-part calendar in the center. The outer hoop is formed of three elements: First, a flat central band with number sequences in black enamel; these are grouped and separated by elongated diamond shapes. Second, above in a rounded frieze are the days of the week in English: the majuscule letters are in gold embedded in black enamel. And, third, below in a rounded gold frieze the abbreviated names of the months of the year are shown in contrasting black enamel. The enamel is missing in parts through wear of the ring. Interestingly, this is more obvious in the lower part, where the months of the year are indicated, which suggests that the ring was worn with this part near the hand. When on the hand the ring's calendar would have faced the wearer.

The fashion for calendar rings reached its zenith in the 1820s and 1830s. Diana Scarisbrick quotes from the August 1828 issue of the weekly fashion magazine *Le Petit Courrier des Dames* published in Paris: "they have such a huge appeal that jewelers are working hard to make them even more attractive."[1] The present example is of an exceptional design and quality, constructed in heavy gold. Other examples of the period are made of gold sheet metal with the lettering and numbers shown in gold against a backdrop of multicolored painted enamels, mainly in opaque shades of green, blue, black, white, and even translucent brown.[2] In some instances the colors used for the months vary according to the four seasons. The languages found on these rings with

perpetual calendars suggest that that were worn in France and Germany, although a French inscription is no indication to where the rings were made. French was not only the language of love, but also the international diplomatic language at the time; thus rings with French inscriptions might have been worn in other parts of Western Europe.

In the nineteenth century novelties were popular in jewelry – for example, rings with gadgets such as a vinaigrette, microscopic lenses, spy glasses, and miniature photographs (a new invention in the period), or even rings with party gags. The calendar ring undoubtedly belongs to this category of jewelry. Jewelers in recent years have made the perpetual calendar ring again fashionable, and these can be found in varying designs and metals, either in gold, silver, and steel, often set with a diamond to indicate the date of an engagement or wedding. Calendar rings were thus intended not only to keep track of the day, but might have also been given as a token of love to mark a special occasion. **(BCS)**

Provenance: Benjamin Zucker, New York; on deposit, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 1985–2013.

Literature: Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], no. 482.

Notes

1 Scarisbrick 2007 [repr. 2013], 345.

2 A ring with the weekdays and months in German was once in the collection of the Berliner Schloss museum (Battke 1938, no. 138, lost during World War II). A further example with French lettering is in the Alice and Louis Koch Collection (Chadour 1994, 2: no. 1475). Belonging to this type is another example in the Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim, formerly in the Jeidels Collection (Hughes 1972, 98).

Multicolor enamels distinguishing the months of the year set off this calendar ring from the Zucker example, and the organization of the months, days of the week, and dates vertically in relationship to the hoop is also distinctive and would have made the ring less functional as a time-keeping device, although the colors made it more striking as a fashion accessory.

Perpetual calendar ring
England (?), early 19th century
(Pforzheim, Schmuckmuseum)

The languages found on these rings with perpetual calendars suggest that that were worn in France, Germany, and England (and they were promoted in French fashion magazines of the day). However, French wording for the months and days of the week, as occurs in this example, is no indication as to where the rings were made; a model book from a jewelry firm in Schwäbisch Gmünd in Germany includes perpetual calendar rings in French, and French was not only the language of love, but also the international diplomatic language at the time.

Perpetual calendar ring
Germany or France (?), about 1820-1830
(The Alice and Louis Koch Collection, 43,13)

Books

- *How to Invest in Gems*. New York, 1976.
- *How to Invest in Gems: A Layman's Guide*. Poole, 1979.
- *How to Buy and Sell Gems: Everyone's Guide to Rubies, Sapphires, Emeralds and Diamonds*. New York, 1979; translated as *Acheter des pierres précieuses: Pourquoi, quand, comment – Guide d'achat des rubis, saphirs, émeraudes et diamants* by Bethsabée Süssmann. Geneva, 1981.
- *Gems and Jewels: A Connoisseur's Guide*. New York, 1984; repr. 1991 and 2003; translated as *Gemmes et joyaux: Mystères, passions, magies* by Bethsabée Süssmann. Geneva, 1988.
- *Cameos in Context: The Benjamin Zucker Lectures*, ed. M. Henig, introduction by B. Zucker. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1990.
- With Derek Content, Emmanuel Fritsch, et al. *A Green Diamond: A Study in Chameleonism*. London, 1995.
- *Blue: A Novel*. Woodstock, NY, 2000.
- *Green: A Novel*. Woodstock, NY, 2004.
- *White: A Novel*. Woodstock, NY, 2007.
- With Diana Scarisbrick. *Elihu Yale: Merchant, Collector, and Patron*. London, 2014.

Articles

- "Connoisseurship in Rubies." *The Connoisseur* 202 (1979): 236–41.
- "Connoisseurship in Sapphires." *The Connoisseur* 203 (1980): 204–8.
- "Connoisseurship in Emeralds." *The Connoisseur* 204 (1980): 52–55.
- "Connoisseurship in Coloured Diamonds." *The Connoisseur* 205 (1980): 252–59.
- "Connoisseurship in White Diamonds." *The Connoisseur* 206 (1981): 300–305.
- "Connoisseurship in Pearls." The Connoisseur 208 (1981): 194–97.
- "Note on a 'Ghaznavid' Gem." In *Islamic Rings and Gems: The Benjamin Zucker Collection [= Khawatim wa jawahir Islamiya]*, ed. Derek J. Content, 363–65. London, 1987.
- "An Historical Overview of Diamond Cuts." *In The Nature of Diamonds*, ed. George Harlow, 136–41. Cambridge, 1998.
- "From Alexander the Great to Elihu Yale: A Study of India and the Diamond Trade." *Gems & Gemology* 42 (2006): 160–61.

About

- Traub, James, and Michael Freeman, "Mysterious Pearls," *Smithsonian* 28, no. 4 (1997): 70.
- Weideger, Paula. "Lord of the Rings." *Art and Auction* 32 (September 2008): 104.
- Scarisbrick, Diana. "Multifaceted Benjamin Zucker." *Apollo* 169, no. 564 (April 2009): 14-18.

Albersmeier, S.
Bedazzled: 5,000 Years of Jewelry. [Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.] London and Baltimore, 2005.

Areford, D.S., and **N.A. Rowe**, eds. *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, and Audiences: Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*. Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, Vt., 2004.

Badde, P.
The True Icon: From the Shroud of Turin to the Veil of Manoppello. San Francisco, 2012.

Baldini Lippolis, I.
L'oreficeria nell'Impero di Costantinopoli tra IV^e VII secolo. Bari, 1999.

Battke, H.
Die Ringsammlung des Berliner Schloßmuseums zugleich eine Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte des Ringes. Berlin, 1938.

Beccatti G.
Oreficerie antiche dalle Minoiche alle Barbariche. Rome, 1955.

Bedini, A.
Mistero di una Fanciulla: Ori e gioielli della Roma di Marco Aurelio da una nuova scoperta archeologica. Rome, 1995.

Bedini, A., et al.
"The Vallerano Diamond from Ancient Rome: A Scientific Study." *Gems and Gemology* 48 (2012): 39–41.

Benjamin, C.
The Stieglitz Collection: Masterpieces of Jewish Art. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Jerusalem, 1987.

Bianchini, M.C., ed.
L'or des princes barbares: Du Caucase à la Gaule, V^e siècle après J.-C. Exh. cat., Musée des antiquités nationales, château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and Reiss-Museum Mannheim. Paris, 2000.

Bivar, A.D.H.
Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Stamp Seals, 2: *The Sassanian Dynasty*. London, 1969.

Blick, S., and L.D. Gelfand, eds.
Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art. Leiden, 2011.

Boardman, J., and D. Scarisbrick.
The Ralph Harari Collection of Finger Rings: published on the occasion of an exhibition ... 1976. London, 1976.

Boardman, J., and D. Scarisbrick.
The Ralph Harari Collection of Finger Rings. London, 1977.

Boardman, S., J.R. Davies, and E. Williamson, eds.
Saints Cults in the Celtic World. Woodbridge, 2009.

Bridgeman, J.
A *Renaissance Wedding: The Celebrations at Pesaro for the Marriage of Costanzo Sforza and Camilla Marzano d'Aragona, 26–30 May 1475*. London and Turnhout, 2013.

Bury, S.
Jewellery Gallery: Summary Catalogue. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1982.

Cable, M.
The Art of Glass. Sheffield, 2001.

Cabrol, F., and H. Leclercq.
Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie. Paris, 1924.

Campbell, M.
Medieval Jewellery in Europe, 1100–1500. London, 2009.

Cellini, B.
The Treatises of Benvenuto Cellini on Goldsmithing and Sculpture. Trans. C.R. Ashbee. London, 1898.

Chadour, A.B.
Rings: The Alice and Louis Koch Collection – Forty Centuries Seen by Four Generations. 2 vols. Leeds, 1994.

Chadour, A.B., and R. Joppien.
Schmuck, 2: *Fingerringe*. Cologne, 1985.

Christie, R.
"Blackwork Prints: Designs for Enamelling." *Print Quarterly* 5 (March 1988): 1–25.

Colnaghi and Co.
Objects for a Wunderkammer. Exh. cat., London, 1981.

Crawford, D.S., ed.
Faud I University Papyri. Alexandria, 1949.

Church, R.
Rings. London, 2011.

Dalton, O.M.
"Medieval Personal Ornaments from Chalcis in the British and Ashmolean Museums." *Archaelogia* 62 (1911): 391–404.

Dalton, O.M.
Catalogue of Finger Rings, Early Christian, Byzantine, Teutonic, Medieval and Later. London, 1912.

d'Ambrosio, A. *Women and Beauty in Pompeii*. Rome, 2001.

Davidovicz, D.
"Jüdische Hochzeitsbräuche, Kettuboth, Siwlonoth und Hochzeitssteine." *Ariel* 15 (1972): 66–85.

Dawes, G.R., O. Collings, and T. Dawes.
Georgian Jewellery, 1714–1830. Woodbridge, 2007.

de Berquen, R.
Les merveilles des Indes orientales et occidentales. Paris, 1661.

de Boot, A.B.
Gemmarum et Lapidum Historia. Lyons, 1636.

de Carvalho, R.G.
Pedras preciosas na arte e Devoção. Evora, 2006.

Deloche M.
Étude historique et archéologique sur les anneaux sigillaires et autres des premiers siècles du Moyen Age. Paris, 1900.

de Montégut, H.
"Inventaire de bijoux de Jeanne de Bourdeille, Dame de Saint-Aulaire et de Lanmary." *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Archéologique du Périgord* 8 (1881): 232–56.

Deneke, B., and W. Oppelt.
Ländlicher Schmuck aus Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. Exh. cat., Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg. Nuremberg, 1982.

de Ricci, S.
Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient Rings formed by the Late E. Guilhou. London, 1912.

de Ridder, A., et al.
Collection de Clercq, 7: Les bijoux et les pierres gravées. Paris, 1911.

Descatoire, C., ed.
Treasures of the Black Death. Exh. cat., The Wallace Collection, London. 2009.

Diamonds and the Power of Love:
The Diamond Engagement Ring – A Commitment to Love over the Centuries. Exh. cat., Diamond Trading Company, London. 2002.

Duffy, E.
The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580. New Haven, 1992.

Edwards, A.S.G., ed.
Life of St. Edmund, King and Martyr: A Facsimile. London, 2005.

Edwards, C.
Death in Ancient Rome. New Haven, 2007.

Elmhirst, E.M., and L. Dow.
Merchants' Marks. London, 1959.

Entwistle, C., and N. Adams, eds.
Intelligible Beauty: Recent Research on Byzantine Jewellery. London, 2010.

Evans, J.
Magical Jewels of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Particularly in England. Oxford, 1922.

Evans, J.
A History of Jewellery, 1100–1870. London, 1953.

Fishof, I.
From the Secular to the Sacred. Exh. cat., The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Jerusalem, 1985.

Fuller, T.
The History of the Worthies of England, ed. P. Austin Nutall. London, 1840.

Fuller T.
The Poems and Translations in Verse. London, 1868.

Garside, A., ed.
Jewelry Ancient to Modern. [Walters Art Museum, Baltimore]. Baltimore, 1979.

Girling, F. A.
English Merchants' Marks. New York and Toronto, 1964.

Goitein, S.D.
A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities in the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, 3: *The Family*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1978.

Gutmann, J.
The Jewish Life Cycle. Leiden, 1987.

Hadjadj, R.
"Les bagues d'époque mérovingienne en Gaule du nord". 2 vols. Doctoral diss., Université Paris I/Panthéon-Sorbonne. Paris, 2004.

Hadjadj, R.
Bagues mérovingiennes: Gaule du nord. Paris, 2008.

Haedecke, H.-U.
Schmuck aus drei Jahrtausenden: Sammlung Hanns-Ulrich Haedecke. Cologne, 2000.

Harlow, G.E., ed.
The Nature of Diamonds. Cambridge, 1997.

Harris, S.
"The *Historia trium regum* and the Mediaeval Legend of the Magi in Germany." *Medium Aevum* 28 (1959): 23–30.

Hersch, K.
The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity. Cambridge and New York, 2010.

Hindman, S., I. Fatone, A. Laurent-di Mantova, and D. Scarisbrick.
Toward an Art History of Medieval Rings: A Private Collection. London, 2007, repr. 2014.

Hughes, G.
The Art of Jewelry: A Survey of Craft and Creation. London and Chicago, 1972.

Immonen, V.
"Medieval Vernicle Finger Rings in Finland." *Fornvännen* 99 (2004): 103–18.

Itnyre, C., ed.
Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays. New York, 1996, repr. 2012.

Jeffries, D.
A Treatise on Diamonds and Pearls. 2nd ed. London, 1751.

Jensen, J. S., et al.
Danmarks middelalderlige skattefund c. 1050–c. 1550. 2 vols. Copenhagen, 1992.

Johns, C.
The Jewellery of Roman Britain: Celtic and Classical Traditions. London, 1996.

Johns, C., and T. Potter.
The Thetford Treasure. London, 1983.

Jones, J.W.
"Observations on the Origin of the Division of Man's Life into Stages." *Archaeologia* 35 (1853): 167–89.

Kalavrezou, I., ed.
Byzantine Women and Their World. Exh. cat., Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass. New Haven and London, 2002.

Keen, M.
Jewish Ritual Art in the Victoria and Albert Museum. London, 1991.

Klagsbald, V.
Catalogue raisonné de la collection juive du Musée de Cluny. Paris, 1981.

Klusch, H.
Siebenbürgische Goldschmiedekunst. Bucharest, 1988.

Kockelbergh, I., E. Vleeschdrager, and J. Walgrave.
The Brilliant Story of Antwerp Diamonds. Antwerp, 1992.

Kotansky, R.
"A Silver Phylactery for Pain." *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 11 (1983): 169–78.

Kotansky, R.
Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae, Part 1: *Published Texts of Known Provenance*. Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensia 22, no. 1. Opladen, 1994.

Kunz, G.
The Curious Lore of Precious Stones. Philadelphia, 1913.

Kunz, G.
Rings for the Finger. Philadelphia, 1917.

Lenzen, G.
The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade. London, 1970.

Lesley, P.
Renaissance Jewels and Jeweled Objects from the Melvin Gutman Collection. Baltimore, 1968.

Levi, K.
The Power of Love: Six Centuries of Diamond Betrothal Rings. London, 1988.

Lewer, W.
"The Testament and Last Will of Elizabeth, Widow of John de Veer, 13th Earl of Oxford." *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 20 (1933): 7–16.

Lipis, M.L.
Symbolic Houses in Judaism: How Objects and Metaphors Construct Hybrid Places of Belonging. Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series. Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, Vt., 2011.

Lyly, J.
Euphues. London, 1578.

Le Blant, E.
750 inscriptions de pierres gravées inédites ou peu connues. Paris, 1896.

L'Engle, S., and R. Gibbs.
Illuminating the Law: Legal Manuscripts in Cambridge Collections. Exh. cat., Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. London, 2001

Marshall, F.H.
Catalogue of Finger Rings Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the Department of Antiquities, British Museum. London, 1908; repr. 1968.

Medvedeva, G., ed.
Russian Jewellery, 16th–20th Centuries: From the Collection of the Historical Museum, Moscow. Moscow, 1987.

Menghin, W., ed.
The Merovingian Period – Europe without Borders. Exh. cat., Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Berlin, 2007.

Muldoon, J., ed.
Bridging the Medieval-Modern Divide: Medieval Themes in the World of the Reformation. Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, Vt., 2013.

Munn, G.
Castellani and Giuliano: Revivalist Jewellers of the Nineteenth Century. London, 1984.

Munn, G.
The Triumph of Love: Jewelry, 1530–1930. New York, 1993.

Murdoch, T.
Treasures & Trinkets: Jewellery in London from Pre-Roman Times to the 1930s. Exh. cat., Museum of London. London, 1991.

Musée du Louvre: Nouvelles acquisitions du département des Objets d'art, 1985–1989. Paris, 1991.

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. *Sechs Sammler stellen aus: Ausstellung vom 7. April bis 11. Juni 1961*. Hamburg, 1961.

Nicols, T.
A Lapidary or the History of Pretious Stones with cautions for the undeceiving of all those that deal with Pretious Stones. Cambridge, 1652.

Nieuwenhuisen, K.A.
"The Consent in Pictures: Marriage Representations in Medieval Manuscripts of the *Liber Extra* (1250–1400)." http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/202234.

Nordenfalk, C., et al.
Medieval and Renaissance Miniatures from the National Gallery of Art. Washington D.C., 1975.

Oates, F.A.H.
Catalogue of Finger Rings. [London], 1917; repr. London, 1981.

Ogden, J.
"Roman Imitation Diamonds." *Journal of Gemmology* 13 (1973): 179–80 [1973a].

Ogden, J.
"A Further Note on Diamonds, Real and Imitation, in the Roman Period." *Journal of Gemmology* 13 (1973): 315 ff [1973b].

Ogden J.
Jewellery of the Ancient World. New York, 1983.

Ogden, J.
"Gold Jewellery in Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine Egypt." Doctoral diss., Durham University, 1990.

Ogden, J.
"Terms of Engagement." *Metalsmith Magazine* 34 (2014): 36–43.

Ogden, J.
The King of Gems: Diamonds from the Earliest Times to 1725 (forthcoming).

Oman, C.C.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Catalogue of Rings. London, 1930, repr. 1993.

Oman, C.C.
British Rings. 800–1914. London, 1974.

Oosterwijk, S., and S. Knöll.
Mixed Metaphors: The Danse Macabre in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Cambridge, 2011.

Pappenheim, S.
The Jewish Wedding. Exh. cat., Yeshiva University Museum, New York. New York 1977.

Reinberg, V.
French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer. Cambridge, 2011.

Robertson, J.
Inventaires de la Royne Descosse. Edinburgh, 1863.

Rohrwasser, A.
Österreichs Punzen: Edelmetall-Punzierung in Österreich von 1524 bis 1987. 2nd ed. Perchtoldsdorf, 1987.

Röhrs, U.
Der Ring: 500 Jahre Schmuck, Magie, Handwerk und Design. Die Sammlung des Museums im Prediger, 2011.

Rushforth, G.
"The Wheel of the Ten Ages of Life in Leominster Church," *Proceedings, Society of Antiquaries* 26 (1914): 47–60.

Rymer, T., ed.
Foedera, Conventiones literas ... inter reges Angliae, vol. 15. London, 1704–26.

Sandler, L.
The Psalter of Robert de Lisle in the British Library. London, 1983; repr. 1999.

Sas, K., and H. Thoen, eds.
Schoene Schijn Brillance et Prestige: Romeinse juweelkunst in West-Europa. Leuven, 2002.

Saunders, D., M. Spring, and A. Meek, eds.
The Renaissance Workshop. London, 2013.

Scarisbrick, D.
Rings: Symbols of Wealth, Power and Affection. London, 1993.

Scarisbrick, D.
Tudor and Jacobean Jewellery. London, 1995.

Scarisbrick, D.
Historic Rings: Four Thousand Years of Craftmanship. Tokyo, 2004.

Scarisbrick, D.
Rings: Jewelry of Power, Love and Loyalty. London, 2007; repr. 2013.

Scarisbrick, D.
"Multifaceted Benjamin Zucker." *Apollo* 169, no. 564 (April 2009): 14.

Scarisbrick, D., and M. Henig.
Finger Rings: From Ancient to Modern. Oxford, 2003.

Schahar, I.
Jewish Tradition in Art: The Feuchtwanger Collection of Judaica. Jerusalem, 1971; repr. 1981.

Schandel, P., I. Hans-Collas, et al.
Manuscrits enluminés des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux, 1: *Louis de Bruges*. Paris and Leuven, 2009.

Seidmann, G.
"Marriage Rings Jewish Style." *The Connoisseur*, January 1981, 48–51.

Seidmann, G.
"Jewish Marriage Rings." *Jewellery Studies* 1 (1983–84): 41–44.

Seidmann, G.
"Jewish Marriage Rings." *The International Silver & Jewellery Fair & Seminar*, London, 1989, 29–34.

Shire, Rabbi Dr. Michael.
Mazal tov! The Rituals and Customs of a Jewish Wedding. British Library. London, 2002.

Siviero, R.
Jewelry and Amber of Italy. New York, 1959.

Smith, C.F.
Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick (1625–1678), Her Family and Her Friends. London, 1901.

Soros, S.W., and S. Walker.
The Castellani and Italian Archaeological Jewellery. Exh. cat., Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts. New Haven, 2004.

Sotheby and Co., London.
Catalogue of the Superb Collection of Rings ... formed by the Late Monsieur E. Guilhou of Paris, November 9–12, 1937.

The Thomas F. Flannery Jr. Collection, December 1, 1983.

Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York.
The Melvin Gutman Jewelry, Part V (Rings and Medals), May 15, 1970.

A Sparkling Age: Seventeenth-Century Diamond Jewellery. Exh. cat., Diamantmuseum, Antwerp, 1993.

Spier, J.
Byzantium and the West: Jewelry in the First Millennium. London, 2012.

Tait, H.
Catalogue of the Waddesdon Bequest in the British Museum, 1: *Jewels*. London, 1986.

Tait, H.
7,000 Years of Jewellery [British Museum, London]. London, 1986.

Taylor, G., and D. Scarisbrick.
Finger Rings from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day. London, 1978.

Taylor, J.
The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Holy Dying. London, 1651.

Tillander, H.
Diamond Cuts in Historic Jewellery, 1381–1910. London, 1995.

Treggiari, S.
Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian. Oxford, 1991.

Vallet F., and P. Perrin.
"L'étude des pièces d'orfèvreries rehaussées de grenats." *Dossiers d'Archéologie* no. 297 (October 2004): 34.

Ward, A., et al.
The Ring from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century. London, 1981.

Weininger, P.
"Lord of the Rings." *Art and Auction* 32 (September 2008): 104.

Wijsman, H.
Luxury Bound: Illustrated Manuscript Production and Noble and Princely Book Ownership in the Burgundian Netherlands (1400–1550). Burgundica 16. Turnhout, 2010.

Williams, D., and J. Ogden.
Greek Gold: Jewellery of the Classical World. Exh. cat., British Museum, London; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. London, 1994.

Williams, S.J.
The Secret of Secrets: The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages. Ann Arbor, Mich., 2003.

Wilson, J.C.
Painting in Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages: Studies in Society and Visual Culture. University Park, Penn., 1998.

Vikan, G.
"Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990): 145–63.

Vikan, G.
"Early Christian and Byzantine Rings in the Zucker Family Collection." *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 45 (1987): 32–43.

Yeroulanou, A.
"Important Bracelets in Early Christian and Byzantine Art." In *Intelligible Beauty: Recent Research on Byzantine Jewellery*, ed. C. Entwistle and N. Adams, 40–49. London, 2010.

Yeroulanou, A.
Diatria: Gold Pierced-Work Jewellery from the 3rd to the 7th Century. Exh. cat., Benaki Museum, Athens. Athens, 1999 .

Zehnder, F.G., ed.
Die Heiligen Drei Könige – Darstellung und Verehrung. Exh. cat., Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in der Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle. Cologne, 1982.

Ziskind, J.R.
John Selden on Jewish Marriage Law: The Uxor Hebraica. Leiden, 1991.

Zucker, B.
Gems and Jewels: A Connoisseur's Guide. New York, 1984; repr. 1991 and 2003.

COPYRIGHTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the help of the following

Barry Ager, Richard Edgcumbe, Gurr Johns, Lanz Hanspeter, Jim Harris, Susan Harrison, Zachary Levy, William Mathers, Sharon Mintz, Corina Nicolae, Katherine Purcell, Charles Truman, and the entire team at *Les Enluminures*.

PHOTOS FOR SECTIONS

pp. 22-23, Wheel of the Ten Ages of Man (by the Madonna Master), Psalter of Robert de Lisle, England [London?], c. 1310, British Library, Arundel MS 83, f. 126v (upper half of folio).

p. 29, Birth of Siware's Son Edmund, John Lydgate, *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund*, England, Bury St. Edmunds, 1434-39, British Library, Harley MS 2278, f. 13v (detail).

p. 65, The Marriage (by Niccolò di Giacomo da Bologna), Johannes Andreae's commentary on Gregory IX's *Decretales*, Bologna, c. 1350s, Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection 1961.17.5 (single leaf, detail).

pp. 120-121, The Jewelry Shop (by the Master of the Flemish Boethius), Platerius, *Livre des simples médecines autrement dit Arboriste, Le Lapidaire … messire Jehan de Mande[ville]*, Bruges, c. 1480-90, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 9136, f. 344 (detail).

p. 177, Dance of Death (Anonymous), Drawing, Germany, 16th century, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1996.70 (detail).

p. 201, Hymen, God of Marriage, *Marriage of Costanzo Sforza and Camilla Marzana d'Aragona*, Lombardy, c. 1475, Biblioteca Vaticana, MS Urb. Lat. 899, f. 56v (detail).

Les Enluminures ltd.
23 East 73rd Street
7th Floor
New York, NY 10021
Tel: (212) 717 7273
Fax: (212) 717 7278
newyork@lesenluminures.com

Les Enluminures ltd.
2970 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Il 60657
tel: (773) 929 5986
fax: (773) 528 3976
chicago@lesenluminures.com

Les Enluminures
1, rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau
75001 Paris
Tel (33) (0)1 42 60 15 58
Fax (33) (0)1 40 15 63 88
info@lesenluminures.com

www.lesenluminures.com
www.medieval-rings.com

Sandra Hindman is Professor Emerita of Art History, Northwestern University, and Owner of Les Enluminures. She has written many books on medieval manuscripts and early printed books including *The Robert Lehman Collection*, IV. *Illuminations*, 1997; *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age: Recovery and Reconstruction* 2011; *Books of Hours Reconsidered*, with James Marrow, 2013. She is lead author of *Toward an Art History of Rings: A Priivate Collection*, 2007 (repr. 2014) in the same series.

Beatriz Chadour-Sampson was Consultant Curator of the Victoria & Albert Museum's William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery and works as an Independent Scholar in London. She is author of many books on jewellery and the history of rings, ancient to modern, including *Schmuck*, with R. Joppien, 2 vols., 1985; *Rings: the Alice and Louis Koch Collection*, 2 vols., 1994; *Antike Fingerringe: Die Sammlung Alain Ollivier / Ancient Finger Rings*, 1997; and *Pearls* with H. Bari, 2013. She is also curator of the Alice and Louis Koch collection.

Reine Hadjadj is an Independent Scholar based in France. Her doctoral thesis from the University of Paris (Sorbonne, 2004) was on Merovingian rings. She is author of *Bagues mérovingiennes, Gaule du nord*, 2008.

Jack Ogden is an Independent Scholar in London. His doctoral thesis (Durham University 1990) was on gold jewelry from Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine Egypt. He has written extensively on the history and technique of ancient jewelry, including: *Jewellery of The Ancient World*, 1983; *Ancient Jewellery (Interpreting the Past)*, 1992; *Greek Gold: Jewelry of the Classical World*, with D. Williams, 1994; *Jewellery (Intelligent Layman's)*, 2010; and *The Art of Adornment: Jewellery of the Islamic Lands*, 2013.

Diana Scarisbrick is an Independent Scholar based in London. A jewelry historian of considerable renown, she has published widely on jewelry of all ages, including: *Rings, Symbols of Wealth, Power and Affection*, 1993; *Historic Rings: Four Thousands Years of Craftsmanship*, 2004; and *Jewelry of Power, Love, and Loyalty*, 2007 (repr. 2014); *Portrait Jewels: Opulence and Intimacy from the Medici to the Romanovs*, 2011; and *Elihu Yale: Merchant, Collector and Patron*, with Benjamin Zucker, 2014.

9 780983 854654