



Auction 66 GLYPTICS

London, 10th July 2019

AUCTION

10th July 2019
at 3.00 pm GMT

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10 Lower Thames Street,
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EXHIBITION

3rd - 9th July 2019
at 10.00 am - 5.00 pm GMT

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AUCTIONEER

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A rare roman agate intaglio. Harbour with ships.

The harbour structure is hexagonal in shape and is characterized by the entrance area from the sea by colonnaded and covered porticos (with a sixth-arched entrance), to continue with square buildings (warehouses) and two long colonnaded porticoes; the structure ends at the bottom with a temple characterized by columns and a double entablature register (interrupted by a sixth-arched niche). Inside, a statue of a divinity flanked on either side by two shields (?). Above, a star, perhaps referring to the reference star for the navigation routes. Three boats inside the harbour, engraved in detail (two ships have a mast and a closed sail, and there is the presence of the rudder, the rostrum and some sailors). Below, maritime allegorical emblem: two dolphins on the sides of a trident. Interesting variety of red-orange agate with small reddish inclusion and a whitish opaque band layer (in the lower half of the scene). Hexagonal shaped bezel. Signs of wear and chipping on the obverse side of the bezel. Intaglio performed with skill. Extremely rare and of considerable historical importance. The most compelling iconographic comparison is the cooling of the Port of Trajan (Ostia) on the reverse side of the emperor's sesterius, coined between 112 and 115 AD (RIC II 631, BMCRE p. 205, Cohen 306), for ships, a comparison with Nero's well-known sesterius with the port of Ostia is useful. The iconographic and compositional similarity between the representation of the intaglio and the one on the sesterius is very narrow, however there is not just few variations. Often there was a correspondence between the engraver of the coinage and the seal in hard stone, or the coins were taken as a source of inspiration from ateliers far from the place that was wanted to be represented, and taken as a model to be enriched and eventually changed. Despite the variations compared to a codified model (in this case the the most faithful term of comparison is the reverse of the coin), the unmistakable hexagonal structure of the port (attributed to Apollodoro di Damasco) and numerous architectural details present on the intaglio, let consider the gem an unpublished interpretatic the Ostiense port; presumably the only one kn at the moment in the glyptics. English private lection, before 1970.

2nd century AD.

18 x 20 x 5 mm

1.000

4.000-5.000

