

S.J. PHILLIPS



19th century nicolo cameo depicting King George IV, British 1821, attributed to Benedetto Pistrucci (1783-1855), later gold ring mount,

the onyx cameo in white-on-black, carved to depict the left facing bust profile of the King wearing crown, curly-haired sidewhiskers and draped robes about the shoulders, the cameo inscribed on the reverse: GEORGIVS / IV / D.G. BRIT / REX / MDCCCXXI, the later 18ct gold ring mount with London hallmarks.

Probably commissioned by King George IV as Prince Regent or King prior to his Coronation between February 1820 and September 1821.

This beautifully executed cameo can be convincingly attributed to Benedetto Pistrucci and identified as probably being one of the gems commissioned by George IV before his Coronation. Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti and John Boardman have cited invoices for the purchase of 'twenty-one rings bearing cameo portraits of George IV in onyx, carnelian and sardonyx; and a further twenty rings set with intaglios...'. They conclude that 'George IV spent heavily at Rundell, Bridge and Rundell on souvenirs of his coronation, buying numerous rings, lockets and medallions for presentation to his family and courtiers' (op. cit., p. 173). These cameos and intaglios mounted in rings were purchased between February 1820 and September 1821 while George IV was Prince Regent and King. Although a number are presently in collections including the British Museum, the Royal Collection, the Museum of London, and the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, few have been identified.

The present cameo is particularly rare because it depicts George IV crowned (almost certainly wearing St Edward's Crown) rather than as an Emperor, with laurels (which was his preferred mode of portrayal). The composition and the quality of carving is very close to another cameo of George IV as Emperor in the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, which came from the collection of the King's brother, Ernst August I of Hanover. The model appears to relate to a medal by Thomas Wyon Jr (1792-1817) for Rundell, Bridge and Rundell. After Wyon's death in 1817 Pistrucci took over as Principal Engraver and Chief Medallist of the Royal Mint. He also worked for Rundell's from 1817, and is the most likely candidate as the engraver of the present gem since their other engravers - Nathaniel

Marchant, Edward Burch and Giovanni Battista Cerbara - had died by the time of the Coronation. The remaining engraver, Giuseppe Caputi worked sporadically for Rundell's and lived in Rome.

An intaglio with George IV attributed to Pistrucci in the Museum of London has the same inscription as the present gem. Numerous further gems representing the sitter in the Royal Collection have near-identical inscriptions with some variations (such as 'DEI GRATIA' as opposed to the shortened 'D.G.' in the present gem). Compare with an intaglio following the same model as the Museum of London example and inscribed: GEORGIUS IV / DEI GRATIA / BRITT REX / MDCCCXXI, which is likewise believe to have been part of George IV's commission in the run up to his Coronation (inv. no RCIN 107334; Aschengreen Piacenti and Boardman, op. cit., no. 173); this gem relates to another in the British Museum traditionally given to Pistrucci. Such reverse inscriptions are found on numerous gems of the period attributed to Pistrucci and ultimately follow conventions used by Rundell's, for example in the 1820 Assession Medal of George IV.

RELATED LITERATURE

K. Aschengreen Piacenti and J. Boardman, *Ancient and Modern Gems and Jewels in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, cat. Royal Collection, London, 2008, pp. 172-174, nos. 271-273

Length 2cm / $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Weight: 7.5g