

A PAIR OF GOLD EARRINGS WITH PEARLS AND EMERALDS

Byzantine, 6th century A.D.

pearls and emeralds

Width: 4.3 cm

Reference: 15063



Each of the two splendid earrings consists of a thick, boat-shaped body, made of gold sheet and an ear hook hinged to one side of the opening. Attached to the outside are three pearls alternating with emeralds. The pearls are held by short pins and supported by an ornament of twisted wire while the emeralds are set in square box settings tapering towards the base. No direct parallel to this splendid pair of earrings is known. Style and technique suggest, however, an origin in the Early Byzantine period.

This dating is evidenced by a decree from the attested Codex Justinianus (between the 5th and 6th century A.D.) that restrained the usage of gold, pearls and emeralds to imperial ornaments. This law, aimed at refraining the Byzantines' passion for precious stones, hence rare of the markets, did actually make an exception for feminine jewelry. This delicate and pragmatic attention has allowed us to contemplate this magnificent pair of earrings, which sharpness and color contrasts (white, green and gold) all draw attention.

PROVENANCE

Provenance: German Art market, acquired in 2001.