

ARMLET

European, 1300 B.C.

Bronze

L: 32 cm (12.6 in)

Reference: 26745



The pure geometric motif is combined in this piece with high precision of modeling. The direct use of such work is not known; it was described as wrist-guard or arm-guard. This arm-guard was designed for the left arm and, most probably, made a pair with the right one. Executed by repeated hammering with annealing, the thick bronze wire is square in cross-section. The concentric spiral forms two perfectly discoid shapes; it is thought that the spirals served to deflect the blow of a sword. The spiral finials of fibulae or wire-spirals as bracelets, made of bronze or gold, wire were popular designs in the jewelry of the European Bronze age. This arm-guard employs the same design on a monumental scale; the piece is considerably heavy but the spiral preserves a complete flexibility.

A more reasonable hypothesis would be that such objects had a ceremonial and decorative purpose, as "parade weapons", or that they were used exclusively in the funerary sphere. At a time when bronze was still rather rare and hard to work, owning a piece such as this one, with its massive weight and size, would have elevated the social status of its owner: only the noblemen, or the princes, would have been able to commission such extraordinary armbands.

CONDITION

Complete, with dark green patina

PROVENANCE

Ex- K.J. Hewitt collection, UK, late 1960's;

US private collection, acquired on the London art market, 1994

EXHIBITED

SOFA, Chicago 2017

BIBLIOGRAPHY

HÄNSEL A., B., Gaben an die Götter, Schätze der Bronzezeit Europas, Berlin, 1997, p. 184.

In Pursuit of the Absolute Art of the Ancient World: From the George Ortiz Collection, Berne, 1994, no. 71.