

BRACELET WITH FELINE-HEAD FINIALS

Lydian, 5th century B.C.
Copper with Gold Leaf
D: 8.1 cm (3.2 in)
Reference: 18803



This bracelet is composed of a plain thick hoop made of a copper alloy covered with hammered gold foil (the join between the two sides of the leaf is clearly visible inside the bracelet). It is decorated, at both ends, by two felines protomes. The wide collar between the head and the hoop carries an elaborate decoration of small chains, rows of beads and garlands of dots in relief. The finials are composed of two hammered half-heads (left and right), soldered prior to the adding of the final details. They are rendered in a stylized manner, but very carefully detailed, regarding their miniature size especially. The presence of small incised lines between the ears, which probably represent the mane, seems to indicate that the animal represented is a lion rather than a panther.

Ornaments provided with animal heads are a standard type of jewelry, and have a very long tradition in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean world. Bracelets made of precious metal (bronze, silver, gold) and adorned with feline-head finials were largely widespread in Achaemenid Iran and in the Anatolian world from the 1st millennium B.C. These examples most probably served as models for other pieces of jewelry produced by the Greek craftsmen in the Classical and Hellenistic period, as attested by our beautiful bracelet.

Such pieces often come from necropolises and usually appear in pairs. The presence of the lion can be related to the prophylactic role attributed to the feline, which was supposed to protect the owner of the bracelet and his/her last residence. Among the closest parallels for this armband, one should mention the four pairs of bracelets now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

CONDITION

Complete and in excellent condition, some superficial wear and traces of dents, the gold leaf is partially worn.

Copper is slightly corroded near the protomes.

PROVENANCE

Ex – Elie Bustros collection, Beirut, ca. 1950;

Ex – European private collection, 1970's.

EXHIBITED

GSTAAD, 2017

VERNISSAGE, 2020

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WILLIAMS D. – OGDEN J., *Greek Gold, Jewellery of the Classical World*, London, 1994, p. 250, no. 189 (New York, Met. Mus.).