

Gold Wreath

Etruscan

4th - 3rd Century B.C.

Gold

H: 28cm

The gold wreath consists of a large hammered gold strap ornamented with a central rosette, confronting leaves and repoussé scenes. The two semi-circular end sections of the gold wreath contain matching scenes showing Philoctetes's wounded foot being treated. The story, taken from Homer's Iliad, is best known from Sophocles's play Philoctetes, performed at the City Dionysia in 409 BC during the Peloponnesian War. Philoctetes was a member of the Greek army that set out to besiege Troy but was bitten by a snake in the foot and the wound went putrid and stank, so the army abandoned him on the island of Lemnos. Philoktetes, however, possessed Herakles's bow, and his aid was needed. Neoptolemus and Odysseus returned to bring the disabled Philoktetes back to Troy. The scene on each end sections depicts the hero's wounded foot being tended to by his penitent colleagues. Gold jewellery was made with great skill and artistry in Etruria (now western Tuscany). The Etruscans were a non- Italic people whose Greek-based culture influenced the Romans from the 7th to the 5th century BC, when they were invaded by the Gauls and later overcome by the Romans. Etruscans excelled in their own styles and methods of workmanship, producing pieces of technical perfection and great variety. During the early Etruscan period they became experts in the art of goldwork, using decorative granulation, repoussé, filigree and engraving. Pieces have also been found with inlays of glass originating from Phoenicia.

Exhibitions

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1966, loan L66.36.1

Literature:

Jan Mitchell, 'The Varied Tastes of a New York Connoisseur', Architectural Digest, November 1987, p. 298

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