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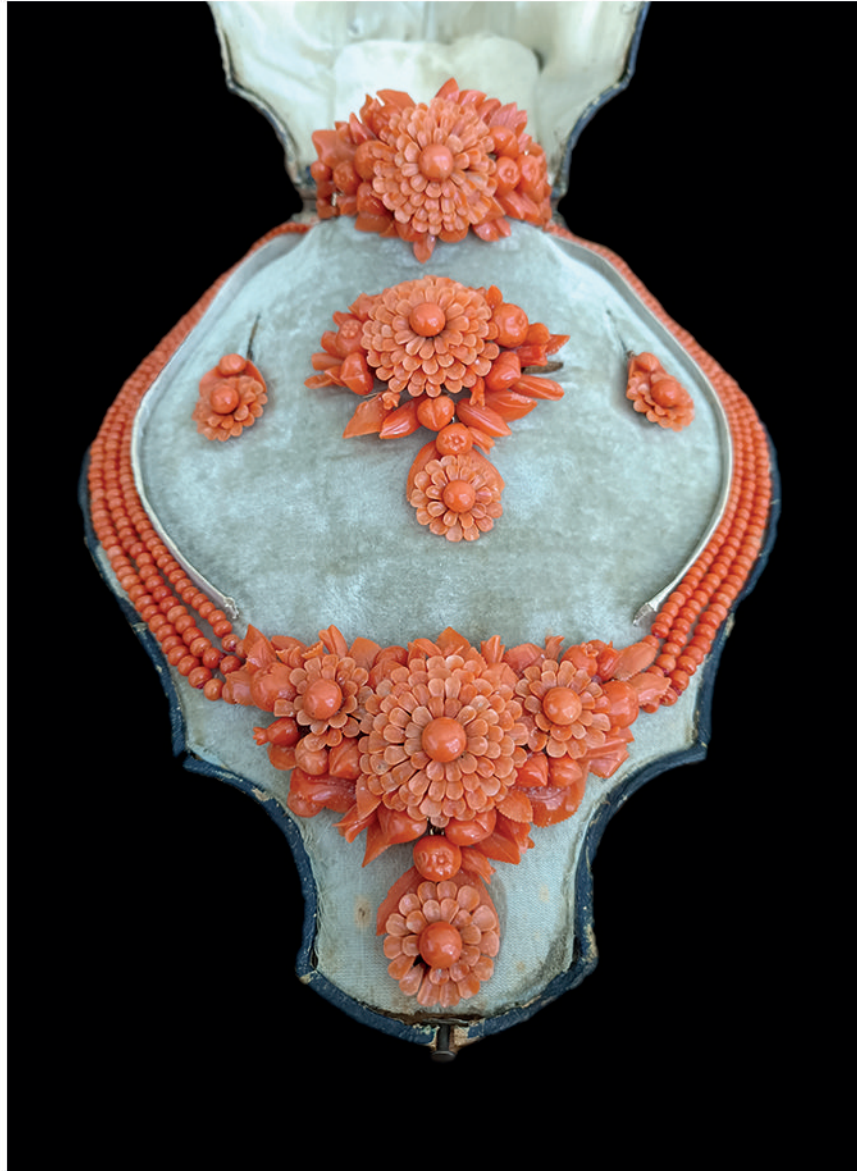


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FABBRI ARTE

Alto Antiquariato



Coral parure

*Mediterranean coral, gold
Southern Italy
Half of 19th Century
Maximum measure: 20 in*

Work analysis

The work under analysis is a parure in Mediterranean coral and gold, datable to the mid-19th century and coming from southern Italy, probably from Naples.

It consists of a necklace, two earrings, a bracelet and a brooch.

Unlike the choker, whose balls are held together by a thread, each part features structural elements in gold.

Specifically, the measures are as follows:

Necklace: 20 in

Earrings: 1 in

Brooch: 2,5 x 2 in

Armlet: 8 in

There are no punches, as in these specific artefacts the metal is present in small support elements or in thin wires.

It should also be noted that in Italy the punching obligation was introduced only starting from 1935.

On a conservative level, the work is in excellent condition.

The parure shows a skilful and rich phytomorphic carving, in the form of flowers, leaves and buds.

A large central flower is placed in the center of each element, in order to create a harmonious composition.

The naturalistic subject with refined modeling and qualitatively remarkable workmanship, combined with the compositional and structural characteristics suggest, as mentioned above, a dating to the mid-nineteenth century.



Detail

Mediterranean coral

Peoples have attributed it to the branched red coral since classical antiquity Mediterranean an apotropaic meaning of powerful amulet, able to protect and give good health to the wearer.

This is confirmed by numerous written testimonies, from the *Historia Naturalis* of Pliny the Elder, to the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.

Given its particular shape and the consolidated apotropaic value in popular tradition, in Christian symbology it is maintained and re-read by assimilating it to the Blood of Christ, attributing to it the power to ward off the evil one and heresy: hence the rich production of sacred objects by the Trapani coral masters of the 16th-17th century. Furthermore, numerous Renaissance paintings by Mantegna, Ghirlandaio and Piero della Francesca testify to the persistence of coral as a protective amulet for infants. In addition to ancient testimonies and popular propitiatory and ornamental customs Widespread in the past, the aesthetic value and ease of working with coral made it one of the most popular materials over the centuries for making jewelery and applied art objects.

Used throughout the nineteenth century in Torresi and Neapolitan manufactures, from 1976 the Sciacca variety while after '89 the varieties imported from Japan.



Torre del Greco and Naples manufacture

In this area, historically devoted to coral fishing and trade, the processing was encouraged above all from the early 1800s by Ferdinando IV of Bourbon, and later strongly supported by the Bonapartes.

It begins to have considerable success and quickly establishes itself as the most important production center in the Mediterranean.

During the 19th century various types of workmanship were tested and perfected, and styles and subjects also evolved following the taste of the time.

We make use of mainly female labor for the production of necklaces, initially in threads of various sizes with smooth processing, and subsequently faceted and engraved.

After a few years, the manufacture also evolves towards an artistic production of cameos and sculptural subjects, thanks to the contribution of skilled Roman carvers. With the restoration, the sober neoclassical elegance is followed by elements of eighteenth-century taste and liveliness, as well as mannerist references to the seventeenth-century tradition of Trapani; from bas-relief we often pass to high-relief, or to full-relief images.

In the 1930s and 1940s the two great strands also began to take shape in coral of 19th-century jewellery: historicist revival (especially neo-Renaissance and Pompeian) and naturalism.

At the great international exhibitions, for example in London in 1851 and 1862, and in Paris '78 and '89, which served as a vehicle for trend updates and as an occasion for cultural exchanges, the Torresi and Neapolitan coral jewels were widely present.

It is no coincidence that the most valuable production is often destined abroad, where there is a considerable demand for coral as a "souvenir d'Italie".

The discovery of the great coral reefs near Sciacca in 1875 will lead, a decade later, to the saturation of the market and the consequent drastic decline of the manufacturing quality in the late eighties; on the other hand, some of the more solid firms will try to distinguish themselves by veering towards artifacts of particular virtuosity and complexity.