

## Victorian Etruscan Micromosaic, 14k Yellow Gold Brooch.

As tourism began through the institution of the Grand Tour, many travelers were inspired to memorialize their time abroad through the purchase of Roman jewelry, making fine micromosaic brooches a supremely popular item amongst the wealthy in the early Victorian Era. Surviving examples show evidence of the excellent craftsmanship expected by these young aristocrats and continue to hold their value to this day. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a **Victorian Etruscan Micromosaic, 14k Yellow Gold Brooch** (\$1,5/2,500) in our March Gallery Auction on Friday, March 15th.

The brooch consists of three round mosaics placed across the bow of the golden brooch, one of which is larger



and centered. Each micromosaic features a scarab, the larger, centered scarab has green wings, while the two on the edges have orange wings. The scarab beetles are surrounded by a white plane, which is encircled by a triangular blue border, which extends to two rows in the largest mosaic. Each micromosaic is circled by two rows of gold ornamentation, which in the smallest two mosaics are separated by a ring of plain gold. Between the center mosaic and each of the edges lies a floral design raised against the surface of the bow, while small ball-shaped golden ornaments extend from the brooch, both

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around the center and along the edges of the bow.

The scarab or beetle motif has a long history, dating back to the early Bronze Age in Egypt, where they were connected to Khepri, the god responsible for the movement of the sun. Just as scarab beetles roll balls of dung across the desert, it was believed that Khepri moved the sun across the sky each day, making the scarab motif a common amulet and auspicious motif representing rebirth and regeneration. The beetle as a good luck charm soon spread throughout the Mediterranean. In ancient Rome, children wore beetles hung from pendants to ward off illness, and gemstones were frequently carved into the shape of the scarab beetle as a protective object. These traditions continued into the modern era, as many continued to see the motif as a symbol of

good luck, making it a popular design choice for jewelry.

Micromosaic is an ancient technique that consists of small pieces of glass, or later, enamel, pieces set together to create an image, all at a much smaller scale than typical mosaic pieces. There are fine surviving examples from Pompeii, however, the best works can be found in the former Byzantine empire, whose preeminent examples from the late Middle Ages match or exceed work from the modern period. Some of these works made their way to Rome's prominent people, where they became broadly popular by the 17th century. Their popularity was maintained until the end of the 19th century by the aristocratic practice of the Grand Tour, where young Northern European nobles (primarily English) would travel for months or years through France and Italy to culture

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themselves. Micromosaic jewelry became an especially popular purchase for these travelers as they finished their travels in Rome, becoming one of the first souvenirs produced especially for tourists.

Brooches have an even longer history, beginning as a purely functional means of fastening clothing in the third millennium BCE. Serving a role essentially similar to a modern safety pin, brooches were essential for holding together outerwear items such as cloaks before the spread of buttons and other fasteners. Brooches became increasingly ornate over the centuries, and by the Middle Ages they had begun to feature jewels and other luxury materials, which became even more popular with the great increase of wealth during the Renaissance. By the Victorian Era, brooches came to integrate cameos or micromosaic portraits, first for

mourning and later as a reminder of living relatives.

**A Victorian Micromosaic,  
14k Yellow Gold Brooch**

(\$1,5/2,500) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions March Gallery Auction on Friday, March 15th, which features many fine artworks from notable artists, in addition to excellent examples from the Jewelry and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by the Fine Art Department, which will be offering oil paintings by Frank Duveneck and a lithograph by Stow Wengenroth. Also included in the sale is a contemporary artwork by Pratchaya Charernsook, a micromosaic gold brooch, and a gold pocket watch.

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