

PAN

AMSTERDAM

KUNSTHANDEL INEZ STODEL



17th century gold and enamel boîte a portrait

This 17th-century enamel and gold pendant, known as a boîte à portrait, showcases the artistic and technical achievements of its time while drawing on mythological themes. It features two iconic femme fatales, Cleopatra and Lucretia, depicted at the moment of their tragic deaths. When the pendant is opened, it reveals a pictorial scene of shepherds, and it is believed that a portrait once adorned the interior, likely representing a loved one. Boîtes à portraits often served as diplomatic gifts encapsulating ideas of friendship, wealth, prestige, and beauty.

The intricate enamel portraits demonstrate a sophisticated technique often described as 'painting with glass.' In 17th-century France, enamelling reached new heights, with jewellers creating pieces that rivalled the vibrancy and intricate details of paintings. This pendant was likely crafted by an artist in the circle of Jean II Toutin, a prominent figure in the development of enamel art.

The portrayal of Lucretia is based on a print of a painting by the French 17th-century artist Simon Vouet, illustrating how enamels were often inspired by other forms of art. Both Lucretia and Cleopatra are shown bare-breasted as the focal point, a characteristic commonly found in 17th-

century art, where the female nude was often framed within moralising historical or mythological narratives. Figures like Susanna, Lucretia, and Daphne were used to symbolise the triumph of chastity, although interpretations varied. While some viewed such works as indecent, modern perspectives might see them as reflecting a sexualised gaze, catering to male viewers' pleasure.

weight: 9.8 g

height: 4.65 cm