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In-Depth Studies : Jewelry from the Campana Collection



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Pastiches

The Campana jewelry collection, which was acquired by France in 1861, consists for the most part of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman pieces, together with a number of pastiches assembled from ancient and modern elements that played a major role in the history of jewelry styles and techniques in the 19th century.

In its time, the collection assembled by the marchese Giovanni Pietro Campana, which was made up of very diverse pieces from both antiquity and the 19th century, was thought to be one of the biggest and most varied in Europe. When it was put on sale, it was coveted by the leading European museums, but it was France that acquired the biggest portion in 1861.

When it was put up for sale, pieces that formed one of the original cores of this collection were given to the Castellani workshop for restoration (1858–59). They enabled this famous family of Roman goldsmiths to study ancient techniques, providing them with models and sources of inspiration for their own creations. Exhibited at the Palais de l'Industrie in 1862, and then at the Louvre from 1863, the pieces from the Campana collection helped create a vogue for this type of jewelry. They thus played an important role in the history of archaeological jewelry throughout Europe at a time when the fine arts and industry were coming together, resulting in the creation in 1863 in Paris of the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie and in 1872 in Rome of an industrial arts museum.

Today, the jewelry from the Campana collection forms a major part of the Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities' collection of goldwork.

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Etruscan jewelry

Etruscan jewelry from the Orientalizing period (720–580 BC)

Gold, a rare mineral in Etruria and probably mostly imported, was used to make jewelry from the 9th century BC. It was often combined with the more commonly used bronze. During the Orientalizing period, Etruscan goldwork flourished, due in part to Etruria's economic power. Thanks to its location at the heart of the Mediterranean region, its openness to the sea, and the exploitation of deposits, in particular iron, it became the hub of a vast network of exchange that facilitated the spread of technology and culture. Contacts with the Greek world and the east led to the emergence of an aristocracy that profited from the growth in trade. During this period, large quantities of jewelry were placed in the tombs of aristocrats, testifying to the high social rank of the deceased. With its exceptionally rich decoration, the jewelry bears witness to the skill of the goldsmiths, who excelled in the decorative techniques learned from, or developed with, craftsmen from the Middle East, and in particular Phoenicia. Sumptuous parures of extreme refinement were made, often combining the elaborate techniques of granulation and filigree, which appeared in Etruria in the mid-7th century BC.

Etruscan jewelry from the Archaic period (580–450 BC)

In the 6th century BC, when the city-states of Etruria had reached their apogee, jewelry became less ostentatious. It remained as popular as ever, however, continuing to reflect the taste for luxury and refinement among the rich. The wealthy clientele attracted artists from the large Greek cities on the west coast of Asia Minor, who were forced into exile under pressure from the Persians. Jewelry inspired by the Greek and eastern styles (ear studs and rings with "cartouche" bezels) spread extensively in the main centers of Etruria. But Etruscan goldsmiths sometimes deviated from the models borrowed from the Near East or eastern Greece, adopting typically local solutions, such as the baule earring. The use of refined granulation and filigree continued, while enamel was sometimes used to accentuate the glint of the gold.

But the 5th century BC signaled the beginning of the decline. The crisis that followed the naval defeat of the Etruscans off Cumae in 474 BC mainly affected the centers of southern and coastal Etruria. It led to a reduction in the number of luxury objects placed in tombs in this region, which went through a period of eclipse. Less jewelry was made, and to trace its evolution it is often necessary to turn toward the centers in the Tiber valley, which prospered as a result of the transfer of trade to the Adriatic route.

Etruscan jewelry from the Classical and Hellenistic periods

At the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 4th century BC there was a marked revival in southern Etruria. Throughout Etruria old aristocratic families flaunted their wealth again, as demonstrated by the votive figures and funerary monuments. During this period, Etruscan craftsmen adopted new types of jewelry, developed for the most part in a local idiom that was far removed from Greek models. Sometimes large but very light, these pieces were often made for ceremonial or funerary use. Wide bands decorated with leaves, earrings in the form of bunches of grapes, and bullae worn as pendants reveal the taste of the people of Etruria and Latium for lavish decoration and mythological scenes, created for the most part by stamping.

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Greek and Roman jewelry

Greek jewelry

The earliest examples of Greek gold jewelry come from Crete and date back to around 2300–2100 BC and the Minoan period, but these were isolated cases. Gold jewelry was produced in more substantial quantities in around 1600–1500 BC, in Mycenae. However, following the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization, gold jewelry was produced in insignificant quantities for several centuries. A resurgence came from the east in the 9th century BC. Following the growth of trade links with various Greek centers, new techniques appeared, together with a new repertoire, which included griffons, lions, and the mistress of the animals. In the 7th century, the most prosperous workshops were in Rhodes. Unfortunately, the Campana collection did not include any examples from these periods, and it contained just a few examples of Archaic jewelry, for the most part silver rings. Very few pieces of jewelry from the 6th and 5th centuries have survived, because it became more unusual for objects to be placed in graves. Also, the Greco-Persian wars led to a scarcity of raw materials in Greece.

In the late 5th century and right throughout the Hellenistic period goldwork flourished in the Greek world, right to its furthest reaches, including Taranto in southern Italy, in the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and at Alexandria and Antioch. The conquest of land from the Persian empire by Alexander the Great provided access to new goldmines and new materials, leading to the blossoming of a new style combining gold and colored stones, semiprecious stones, amber, glass, and enamel. It is from this period that most of the Greek jewelry and Greek-style jewelry in the Campana collection comes. The former was made either in Greece proper or, most commonly, in the cities of southern Italy; the latter was made by Greek artists who emigrated to Etruria or by local workshops drawing on models developed in the Greek world.

Roman jewelry

Roman jewelry, of which there were few examples in the Campana collection, was influenced by Greek and Etruscan goldwork. Initially, however, in contrast to Hellenistic goldwork, the style of the republic tended toward austerity, with luxury being deplored. The jewelry of this period was simpler and less abundant, the Oppia law of 215 BC forbidding women from possessing more than half an ounce of gold. With the advent of the empire in 27 BC, the situation changed. Production of necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, and breast chains increased, but they remained simple in style, as demonstrated by the jewelry found at Pompeii and Herculaneum, and in the Vesuvius region more generally. Rings were particularly popular with both men and women, who wore them on all their fingers. The 3rd century marked a turning point in Roman goldwork. A taste for the polychromy and colored stones of Hellenistic jewelry persisted, but with the increasingly systematic addition of stones or inlaid pâte-de-verre. A new decorative technique appeared at this time known as opus interrasile, in which a series of small holes were made in a sheet of gold to create an openwork decoration, producing an interplay of light and shadow. The two techniques were often combined, being used right up to the end of the empire.

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Pastiches and restorations

Necklace with scarabs

The “necklace with scarabs” (Bj 521–544; fig. 1) is one of the best-known pieces in the Campana collection, and occupies an important place in the history of archaeological jewelry. Archive documents suggest that it was acquired by the marchese Campana from the Princess of Canino, and that all or some of the ancient elements used to make it come from the first excavations undertaken at Vulci on the latter's land.

But this necklace made up of ancient elements from different dates and places was in fact quite different when it was part of the Campana collection. A reconstruction of the original piece based on the descriptions in the different documents written before Castellani's restoration of 1859 reveals a much more complex piece (fig. 2). The necklace would have been composed of ancient and contemporary elements: the scarabs were grouped in threes and arranged in festoons, in keeping with 19th-century fashion, and suspended in the center from a crescent-shaped element (actually an element from a Fatimid earring). The necklace's current state is the result of Castellani's restoration. In 1859, when the workshop was given the whole collection to restore, the contemporary pieces, according to Augusto Castellani himself, were removed to “bring out their original beauty even more.” Since then, it has generally been regarded as the prototype of a large series of scarab necklaces produced not only by this workshop, but also by that of Giacinto Melillo among others (fig. 3).

Articulated bracelets

The Louvre's Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities possesses three articulated bracelets from the Campana collection. They entered the museum in 1863 as Etruscan jewelry. These bracelets are made from small squares joined by means of hinges. Each square is backed by a gold plaque. Two of the bracelets have nine plaques, while the third possesses thirteen and ends in two hemispherical plaques. Recent studies at the laboratory of the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France have confirmed the hypothesis generally accepted for several years that the bracelets are 19th-century pastiches. For a long time the decoration on the plaques, borrowed from 6th-century BC Etruscan baule earrings, led people to think they were of Etruscan origin. In reality, the bracelets combine elements from baule earrings (square or circular elements given the same form and dimension thanks to 19th-century additions) and squares that were entirely made in the 19th century but in the Etruscan style. The hemispherical ends of the bracelet Bj 988 correspond to the upper parts of certain baule earrings. It is not known who made these pastiches, which inspired jewelers such as the Castellanis and Giacinto Melillo, their successor at the head of their Naples branch, to make several copies.

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Additional purchases

The François tomb

When Léon Renier and Sébastien Comu were sent to Rome by Napoleon III to negotiate the purchase of the Campana collection, there was some money left over from the sum allocated for the purchase, enabling them to make a few additional purchases. From A. Noël des Vergers, they bought a pair of Etruscan earrings from a tomb discovered during excavations undertaken at the mouth of the Cecina and jewelry from the François tomb. This tomb, unearthed in 1857 in Vulci by A. Noël des Vergers and A. François, contained, in addition to the famous frescoes, a beautiful jewelry set from the Hellenistic period consisting of earrings, necklaces, rings, scarabs, and diadems.

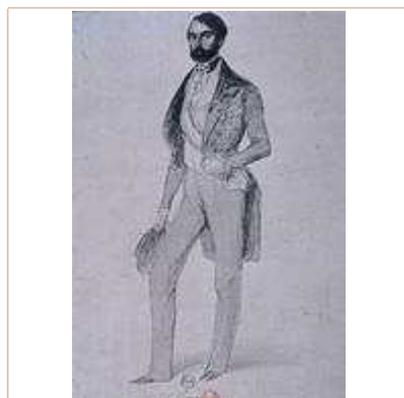
A few isolated purchases

Renier and Comu also made a few isolated purchases. They acquired a pair of earrings from the Hellenistic period found in the tomb of Poggio Sala, near Bolsena, and two roman rings discovered during the construction of a new tobacco factory in Rome, near the church of Madonna dell'Orto. These pieces met with the same fate as the jewelry in the Campana collection, and were sometimes confused with the latter, playing a similar role in the development of archaeological jewelry.

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Giovanni Pietro Campana (1808–1880)

Giovanni Pietro Campana (1808–1880)

Born into a noble family from Aquila, Giovanni Pietro Campana was one of the 19th century's great collectors. He began collecting at an early age, adding to the collections that he inherited from his grandfather Giampetro and his father Prospero. These consisted of a gallery of antique statues, bronzes, paintings, and a large collection of coins and medallions.

In 1831 Campana became an assistant at the Monte di Pietà in Rome, where his father and his grandfather had occupied important administrative posts. Two years later, he became director of this institution. While pursuing a career as an administrator, he was also an archaeologist, antique dealer, and collector. A member of numerous scholarly commissions and societies, he undertook or organized excavations in and around Rome, either on his own land or that of his acquaintances.

Through acquisitions and archaeological finds, Giovanni Pietro Campana gradually created a vast museum, praised throughout Europe. Its collections were distributed at various locations in Rome, in his villa in Laterano, at the Monte di Pietà, in different storerooms, and with dealers. To the original core of terracottas and jewelry, he added sculptures, ceramics, bronzes, and paintings were added to the original core. Up until then jewelry had been little sought after by collectors, but Campana helped to draw attention to it.

The creation of the jewelry collection

The discoveries made at the end of the 1820s at Vulci and a few years later at Cerveteri no doubt stimulated Campana's interest in jewelry. A first inventory of the collection drawn up in 1838 already features some major works among the list of seventy-four pieces, such as the pendant in the form of the head of Achelooos (Bj 498) and the reels with representations of Pegasus (Bj 1887–1888). The collection grew rapidly. Two unpublished manuscripts preserved at the British Museum, one written in 1856 by S. Birch and C. Newton, the other in 1859, contain far more extensive lists. The collection that entered the Louvre is made up of two large cores consisting of Etruscan jewelry and Greek-type jewelry made in Greece, southern Italy, and Etruria. Most of this jewelry, which doubtless came from excavations directed by Campana in Latium and Etruria, together with pieces acquired on the antiques market, came with no indication of provenance. The collection also contained a few isolated pieces or series, discovered on the fringes of the classical world, together with a few Roman pieces and some items from late antiquity and the Byzantine world. It also included pastiches, comprising ancient and modern elements, made by various goldsmiths and of varying provenance. These pastiches typify the taste of an era when restoration could entail the complete reworking of a piece.

The Campana affair and France's acquisition of the collection

Although he undertook archaeological research himself, Campana was quick to take advantage of any opportunity to make a purchase, not only at the excavation site, where the sometimes ill-advised methods used did not always meet with the approval of his contemporaries, but also from antique dealers, sometimes with the help of intermediaries. Bankrupted by his passion for collecting, Campana was forced to pawn his own collection of jewels to the Monte di Pietà in 1854, and thereby ended up freezing all the institution's assets. Accused of embezzlement and personal gain, he was arrested and in 1857 he was sentenced to twenty years in prison. Thanks to the support of his friends and a section of the press, the pope commuted the sentence to exile outside the papal territories. His

collections were put on sale by the papal state, and on May 20, 1861, the French government signed the contract of purchase, as a result of which almost all the jewelry ended up in France. Léon Renier and Sébastien Cornu, the emissaries sent by Napoleon III to Rome to negotiate the purchase, also made some additional acquisitions, which were similarly well received and played a similar role as the Campana jewelry in the history of archaeological jewelry.

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The Castellani family

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The son of a goldsmith, Fortunato Pio (1793–1865) opened his own workshop in 1814 at a time when French jewelry was fashionable. He quickly became known for his parures decorated with precious stones.

However, at the beginning of the 19th century more and more archaeological discoveries were being made, although fewer at this time in the region of Vesuvius than in Etruria, where for example the Regolini-Galassi tomb was discovered in 1836. Fortunato Pio was asked in his capacity as expert to examine the jewelry, and subsequently began studying ancient goldwork techniques, and in particular granulation, which he would succeed in reproducing after numerous experiments. He also opened a school of goldwork. Between 1848 and 1850, his two sons Alessandro (1824–1883) and Augusto (1829–1914) gradually took over the family workshop and the sale of jewelry. In around 1860, Alessandro, forced into exile for political reasons, became the ambassador for Castellani jewels throughout Europe, as well as the United States. He opened shops in Paris and London, and he founded a workshop in Naples that would be taken over in 1870 by Giacinto Melillo, who also made beautiful archaeological jewelry.

Castellani and Campana

The latest research carried out in the archives suggest that the earliest contacts between the Castellani goldsmiths and the marchese Campana would appear to date back to at least 1843, when the Castellani workshop made a certain number of medallions for Campana corresponding to the decorations that he had just been awarded. In 1853, the Castellani also produced Campana models, and in 1859 the papal government entrusted them with the restoration of the jewelry from the Campana collection so that it could be sold. New copies and pieces inspired by the Campana models were then made in the Castellani workshop. When Alessandro went into exile in Paris in 1860, he took with him an important quantity of Campana jewelry, which he sold to the imperial family and to the French aristocracy. Following some large private and public exhibitions in London, Florence, and Paris, these Castellani copies became a huge success first in Europe and then in the United States. Exhibited at the Palais de l'Industrie in Paris in 1862 and at the Louvre the following year, the Campana jewelry became, in a more general way, a source of inspiration for late 19th-century jewelry, inspiring in France, for example, Fontenay and Wiese.

The Castellani collection

The Castellani began collecting ancient jewelry in the early 1850s. They made numerous purchases after the sale of the Campana collection, which they attempted in numerous ways to keep in Rome and whose departure for France they regretted. Following Fortunato Pio's death in 1865, his jewelry collection was shared between his two sons Alessandro and Augusto. Alessandro sold his share to the British Museum in 1872. Augusto's share was given in 1919, after his death, to the museum at the Villa Giulia by his son Alfredo. It was put on display there in 1929.

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