

FINGER RING

Unique ID: SF-9977A7

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

Description: A complete bust somewhat distorted gold and enamel finger ring dating to the Post-Medieval period, a variant on the 'memento mori' types. The ring demonstrates a circular bezel engraved with the design of a facing grinning skull. Around the skull, four sub-rectangular recessed panels forming a ring around it display the following Latin inscription (interestingly, rendered by moulding rather than engraving): RES/PIC/E FI/NEM (*RESPICE FINEM*). This translates broadly as 'think to the end', an allusion to the inevitability of death. Each side of the bezel, the recessed shoulders of the ring are broadly peltiform, a notch cut out of their midpoints on each side and two triangular projections extending from their bottom edges, flanking a rectangular area within which there are two consecutive crescentic cells that transition into a raised moulded ridge. At the centre of the shoulders themselves are projecting lozengiform bosses with central spherical knops. The hoop itself is 'D' shaped in section, bent inwards somewhat at its base and featureless with the exception of a maker's mark on its internal surface. This appears to consist the initials 'I P' within a cartouche, though is much worn from wear. The ring as a whole demonstrates considerable secondary decoration in the form of inlays. The bezel itself has been inlaid/covered with polychrome enamels, which survive variably. The skull itself was originally white, though the recessed field around it is filled almost entirely with a green enamel. In the panels containing the inscription a black enamel fills most of the recesses, the spaces between these cells infilled with further inlays of white enamel. The shoulders are also decorated with a white enamel inlay, while the crescentic cells set below them are infilled with a bright blue colour.

Date: c. 1550-1650

Dimensions: The diameter of the bezel is c. 12.62mm by 2.94mm thick at its midpoint, the width of the hoop below the shoulders c. 3mm in each case, the base of the hoop 0.7mm, the width of the shoulder panels themselves 7.5/7.7mm respectively. The hoop itself survives (not accounting for post-depositional distortion) to a diameter of c. 20.6mm. It weighs 5.25g.

Discussion: The inscription on this ring is apparently not paralleled in any known find from Britain, though it clearly fulfils the same function as the more commonly known corpus of 'memento mori' rings that served to remind the wearer of their mortality and the inevitability of death. These were most commonly known from the later 16th to earlier 17th centuries, and as such a similar date has been ascribed to this object. It may be relevant that the phrase 'Respice Finem' is also the title of a German print by Aldegraver dated 1529 with similar subject matter-a female figure holding an hourglass and pomegranate, a skull at her feet (see BM collection, 1853,0709.189).

The object contains more than 10% precious metal and is over 300 years old. Consequently, it qualifies as Treasure under the stipulations of the Treasure Act 1996 in terms of both age and precious metal content.

Inscription: RESPICE FINEM

Subsequent actions

Current location of find: Felixstowe Museum

Subsequent action after recording: Acquired by museum after being declared Treasure

Treasure details

Treasure case tracking number: 2018T568

Chronology

Broad period: POST MEDIEVAL

Period from: POST MEDIEVAL

Period to: POST MEDIEVAL

Date from: Circa AD 1550

Date to: Circa AD 1650

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Friday 20th July 2018

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Other reference numbers

Treasure case number: 2018T568

Materials and construction

Primary material: Gold

Secondary material: Enamel

Completeness: Complete

Surface Treatment: Multiple

Spatial metadata

Region: [Eastern](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Suffolk](#) (County)

District: [Suffolk Coastal](#) (District)

To be known as: Felixstowe

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: Centred on field

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

Current location: Felixstowe Museum

General landuse: Coastland

Specific landuse: Inter-tidal

finds.org.uk