

A very rare George III Silver gilt Snuff Box made in London in 1813 by Daniel Hockley inset with a signed micro mosaic panel by Gioacchino Barberi 1779-1857.

Sold



Description

The box is silver gilt, with a broad rectangular form, with incuse corners. The base, sides and cover are engraved with engine turned designs and the cover is inset with a micro mosaic panel depicting a spaniel and game bird, in a rural setting. The mosaic is signed G. Barberi in the bottom right corner. This is all surrounded by an oval silver gilt frame. The interior displays very fine gilding and a full set of crisp marks in the base and the maker's mark, sterling mark and date letter in the cover. Daniel Hockley was a superior maker of boxes at this date and this example is of a very good weight and gauge. This mosaic was most probably purchased in Italy by a wealthy individual on the Grand Tour and then inset in the box, one they had returned to England. Most micro mosaics are unsigned and to find a signed example, by a very fine mosaicist, is highly desirable. In the 18th and early 19th century, the Rome-based Barberi family were in high demand by members of the European and Russian aristocracy for their skilful techniques of micromosaics. While 'Cavaliere' Michelangelo Barberi (1787-1867), produced mainly wonderful table tops, his uncle Gioacchino Leone Ulisse (1782-1857) was listed in 1847 as one of the leading miniature micromosaicists in Rome. His workshop was located at 99 Piazza di Spagna. At his death, he was credited with the invention of black enamel smalti, which he used for backgrounds in compositions taken from wall paintings at Herculaneum. Gioacchino Barberi also produced table tops, including one for Prince Anatole Demidoff (see Sotheby's New York, 12 April 2011, lot 254) but his main production was smaller panels, including animals subjects, such as a panel representing a dog and cat fighting, mounted in a gold box, A.J. Strachan, London, 1807-1808, illustrated by Jeanette Gabriel, *The Gilbert Collection, Micromosaics*, 2000, cat. 18. For a short period of time, Gioacchino Barberi had also entered a rather successful partnership with the renowned Geneva firm of Moulinié, Bautre and Moynier, as a handful of high quality gold and enamel snuff boxes, inset with micromosaic plaques by Barberi, demonstrate (for a magnificent example, see Sotheby's London, 10 May 2016, lot 254). BOX: Length: 2.75 inches. Width: 2.1 inches. Depth: 0.95 inches. MICRO MOSAIC Length: 1.9 inches. Width: 1.15 inches.