Jewellery in Padanian Etruria
The Versatile Trade of Exotic Products

Michael Svetbird

While conducting research on ancient Umbria, northern Etruria, and the transitional Umbrian-Etruscan border regions for one of my previous articles, I realised that I had indeed overlooked an area deserving of greater attention: the late Etruscan territories located north of Rimini, referred to as 'Etruria Padana' or Padanian Etruria. Although I had previously examined in some detail the fascinating dynamics of trade routes and the importation of goods via the Adriatic Sea through hubs such as Numana and Ancona, it became evident that extending this geographical line further north along the Adriatic coastline is not only justified, but perhaps essential. From the perspectives of archaeology, historiography, and art history, it is impossible to disregard such prominent and influential trade centres as the Etruscan port cities of Spina and Atria (modern Adria), situated in the Po River Valley, northern Italy. In contrast to my earlier studies, which have primarily focused on ceramics, pottery, and vase-painting traditions, my aim here is to explore the importation and local production of jewellery. This shift in focus is intended to diversify and enrich our understanding of the artistic and everyday life of the inhabitants of the region in question.

It is appropriate to commence, however, with some geographical and historical context. The area known as Padanian Etruria – so named after the River Po (Latin *Padus*) – refers to the territory under Etruscan control following the so-called 'Second Etruscan Expansion', beginning around the sixth century BC. This region bordered the Celts (Gauls) and Venetians to the north, the Umbrians to the south, and was bisected in its upper third by the Po.

The Magic of Gold, display in the
Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Ferrara.
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Geographical context of the places mentioned in the present article. Public Domain, modified by Mark Merrony.

Today, the Po marks the administrative boundary between the Italian regions of Veneto and Emilia-Romagna.

Roughly at the centre of this expanded Etruscan domain was the city of Felsina (Bologna), established in the sixth century BC. In the same period, on the Adriatic coast, two important urban centres emerged. Spina, a maritime port located in the Po Delta, near modern Comacchio, Emilia-Romagna; and further north, Atria, primarily a riverine port situated upstream along the Po and its tributaries, approximately 20km from the Adriatic coastline, in the area corresponding to the modern city of Adria in the Veneto region.

When referring to the 'founding' or 'emergence' of cities such as Spina and Atria during the 'Second Etruscan Expansion', it is important to clarify that these were not wholly new urban creations. Rather, they were established atop or adjacent to earlier settlements. For instance, Atria is believed to have originated as a Venetic village, while Spina occupied a site previously inhabited by various pre-Etruscan Italic or Venetic-speaking groups, according to the Graeco-Roman historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 60–7 BC). These included the Pelasgians, although such identifications must be treated with caution due to their semi-legendary nature.

However, in the case of the modern city of Ferrara, neither the specific nature of the ancient settlement nor its original name has been securely identified as far as I am aware. Spina, Atria, Felsina, and Ferrara share a common historical 'post-Etruscan' trajectory. By the late fourth

century and throughout the third and second centuries BC, they were gradually assimilated into the Roman Republic. From a broader chronological perspective, their existence as recognisably Etruscan urban centres represent a relatively brief period, arguably no more than three to four centuries and therefore a fleeting phase in the longue durée of pre-Roman Italy.

It is also important to note that these cities were not part of the so-called Etruscan League, the traditional confederation of twelve major Etruscan city-states located in central and north-western Italy (in the modern regions of Lazio, Umbria, Tuscany, and Liguria). Nevertheless, their cultural-historical significance within the late Etruscan world cannot be overstated.

In addition to the Etruscan peoples, Padanian Etruria, like other Etruscan territories, hosted a diverse and substantial Greek population. Within this region, Spina and Atria, as well as other northern Etruscan 'new' cities – Felsina, Mantua/Mantuvia (Mantova), and Verona – from the sixth century BC, functioned as one of the most vital centres of trade and production.

As a prominent Adriatic port, Spina acted as a crucial logistical hub for the importation of goods and the exchange of technologies, artistic trends, knowledge, and craftsmanship related to the manufacture of various products. Through Spina, and to a considerable extent Atria, goods transported via Adriatic maritime trade routes (and, seemingly, to a lesser degree via overland routes from Gaul) were conveyed inland to Felsina and subsequently distributed throughout the Etruscan cultural sphere.

Celtic influence, particularly in imported materials and possibly objects, also merits attention. For example, grave goods from necropolises in Adria, include ceramic bracelets and fibulae with Celtic motifs, as evidenced by finds (below; page 18, right).

Moreover, archaeological evidence suggests that, following the integration of Padanian Etruria into the wider Etruscan world, there was an intensification of local production from the mid-fifth through the fourth centuries BC. This involved not only ceramics and bronze but also objects fashioned from gold, silver, glass, and amber, reflecting both the region's artisanal evolution and its growing importance within the broader cultural context of Etruria.

Spina was discovered in April 1922, during extensive agricultural reclamation and drainage carried out around Comacchio in the area of Valle Trebba. As excavations commenced, it soon became evident that a remarkable historical site had come to light. In the words of Pierluigi Negri, Mayor of Comacchio, writing a century later in the commemorative publication *Spina 100: Dal Mito alla Scoperta* (2022), 'Spina was unveiled, plunging into our history.' The most interesting aspect of archaeological research proved to be the Necropolis of Spina in the Po Delta. This extensive burial complex, still under excavation, has yielded over 4,000 tombs to date, with many preserved in excellent condition, and those buried there reconstructed artistically in many cases (page 11). The excavated tombs have produced a vast array of artefacts, providing an extraordinary insight into the lifestyles, social structures, and cultural practices of the population of Padanian Etruria (page 12). Among the most significant finds are Attic and Etruscan ceramics, articles of clothing and personal adornment, coloured glassware used for dining and perfume storage, as well as bronze, silver, and gold figurative artworks.

In particular, items associated with jewellery, the ancient 'beauty industry' and 'luxury' goods, have offered

Jewellery display (with alabastra).
'Celtic influence',
fifth–second century BC.
Jewellery mostly from 'Canalbianco'
Necropolis near Adria.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria.
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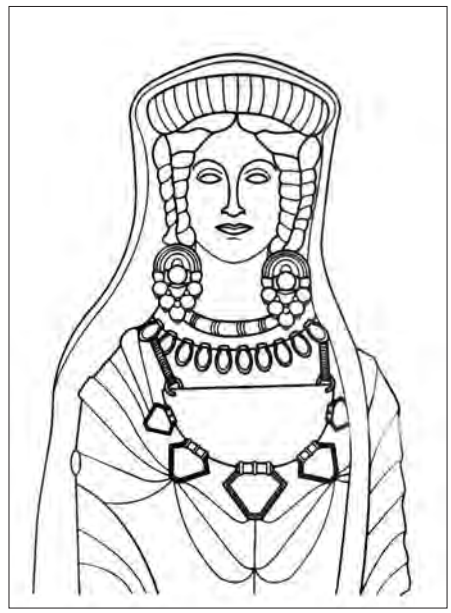
Archaeological drawing of one of the graves in the Necropolis at Campelli near Adria dating to the second half of the second century BC. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria.

Female elite adorned with jewellery. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara. Drawing © Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara, enhanced by Michael Svetbird for this article.



archaeologists a more intimate glimpse into everyday northern-Etruscan life and the cultural ideals of refinement and status.

As Negri poetically observed: 'When these finds emerged from the mud and water, archaeologists were thrilled to reveal the city's remains to the eyes of the world. An archaeological adventure is still in progress.' By the fourth century BC, Spina had undergone a series of transformations attributed to severe economic and historical crisis in northern Italy. This appears to have disrupted long-established trade routes and diminished imports of goods from Attica and other distant foreign regions, such as Asia Minor and perhaps Egypt. It seems that, in response, Spina developed its own local production, establishing a growing number of workshops and importing more 'local' Italic goods from other Etruscan centres, such as Malacena (near Volterra) and Chiusi, as well as Umbria and Apulia, particularly pottery, decorative art, and jewellery.

Curiously, despite this period of economic turbulence, the burials in the Po Delta do not exhibit any clear signs of significant decline in either the quantity or quality of grave goods. What may be observed instead is a probable redistribution of both foreign imports (from Corinth, Rhodes, and elsewhere) and internal Etruscan production. This period is characterised by the emergence of beautifully executed Etruscan objects, demonstrating a high degree of craftsmanship and aesthetic refinement.

Most of the material from Valle Trebba (excavated in 1922–1935, 1962–1965), Valle Pega (1956–1965), as well as the urban site of Spina, are currently housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara (hereafter MAN Ferrara), one of my favourite museums, with the most comprehensive collection dedicated to northern Etruscan civilisation. In addition, a notable selection of finds is preserved and displayed at Comacchio itself, in the Museo Delta Antico (Ancient Delta Museum). Particularly compelling to visitors are the so-called 'Fossa' graves, simpler, trench-style burials, in contrast to the more elaborate tumulus tombs and crypts found elsewhere in Etruria. Several of these graves, excavated from the Spina Necropolis, have been exposed within the museum, with associated artefacts, such as personal belongings, ceramic vessels, and items of everyday use, all carefully arranged as they were originally placed with the deceased (page 12).

While not as large as the MAN Ferrara, the Museo Delta Antico is an essential destination for those interested in the history of the Etruscan civilisation, especially in regard to its northern territories, funerary culture, and artisanal traditions. Its thoughtfully curated exhibits and modern interpretive displays make it especially rewarding for visitors seeking a comprehensive museum experience.

Today, the Necropolis of Spina is widely recognised as one of the richest burial sites of the Etruscan period, offering an unparalleled window into the artistic production, trade networks, and cultural interconnections of the late Etruscan world. As for the archaeological excavations of Spina, encompassing the ancient city, its port, and the necropolis, unfortunately, the site is not currently organised or maintained as a permanently accessible archaeological park. It opens to the public only on an irregular basis, often in connection with local events or temporary presentations. However, access is still possible through private guides. Those interested in visiting the site may enquire directly at

either MAN Ferrara or the Museo Delta Antico, both of which serve as cultural and logistical hubs for the area's archaeological heritage.

Regarding Atria, it is widely acknowledged that the Adriatic Sea took its name from this ancient settlement, although the city is inland and north-west of the Po Delta. One should proceed with caution here, but it is thought that Atria is linked to the Etruscan word 'atrium', which is taken to mean 'daylight' or, perhaps, 'light-filled opening'. So, this term is the presumed source of the architectural term 'atrium', referring to the open central court of a Roman house, which is still an architectural term used today.

During the sixth to fifth centuries BC, Atria was a flourishing Etruscan city and a prominent centre of trade, with an impressive port infrastructure built along the tributaries of the Po River and the 'Canalbianco'. It was also strategically integrated into overland trade networks that connected it with the Celts, Venetians, and, through complex intermediary routes, even with the Baltic regions, from which, for instance, amber was imported.

Beyond its economic significance, Atria was likely a strategically positioned Etruscan outpost, occupying a location of exceptional geopolitical importance. Atria was situated between two key river arteries, the Po and the Adige (the latter flowing through Verona), and in proximity to both the Adriatic Sea and the port city of Spina. It served, perhaps, as a kind-of 'frontier zone' between the Etruscan sphere and that of the Celts and Venetians. Its position and access to both maritime and riverine routes made it ideal for both trade and military observation, almost 'watchtower-like' in its function.

By the end of the third century and throughout the second century BC, Atria experienced a progressive loss of its distinctly Etruscan identity as it gradually became incorporated into the Roman Republic. This transformation appears to have occurred in stages. By the fourth century BC, the city had already become under the increasing influence, if not colonisation, of Greek settlers from Syracuse, who were expanding northwards along the Adriatic via maritime trade and cultural diffusion.

Syracusan Greeks also absorbed important ports, such as Ancona and Numana, as mentioned in my article last year. In the third century BC, Atria experienced incursions or occupation by the Gallic Celts, signalling its transition into a more contested and culturally hybrid zone prior to its full Romanisation. The once-prosperous Etruscan trade centre therefore became a cultural amalgam of Greek, Gallic, and, finally, Roman influences.

Spina, too, began to lose its significance within the Etruscan world from the late fourth to early third centuries BC, under the dominion of the Celts, which marked the gradual erosion of Spina's role as a commercial, cultural, and strategic centre in Padanian Etruria.

Several smaller necropolises from the Etruscan period are associated with Atria, and artefacts from these sites are also included in this article. While not comparable in scale to Spina's extensive burial grounds, these cemeteries nonetheless contribute important material evidence of funerary practices, craftsmanship, and cultural exchange in the Po Delta region.

Generally, when one considers Padanian Etruria, and particularly the geography of the Po Delta through the lenses of ethnic diversity and cross-cultural interaction, it becomes possible to conceptualise this area as a symbolic

Double grave, probably a married couple, inhumation burial of two people in a wooden crate.
Spina Necropolis, Valle Pega, Tomb 116D. Second half of the fourth century BC.
Museo Delta Antico di Commacchio.
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junction in the ancient world, a point of intersection where southern and northern Europe met. Each brought, through trade routes, their distinctive cultural traditions, sources of spiritual or material wealth, and trade partners, from Asia Minor and Egypt in the south, to the Baltic regions in the north.

The region's position enabled it to serve as a conduit for a wide array of goods, styles, and ideas, creating, as it seems, a cultural melting pot that distinguished it from more insular parts of Etruria, perhaps not so distinctive, accomplished and 'global' as Athens in Greece and, later, Rome, or even Arezzo and Chiusi in Etruria, but impressive nonetheless. Below I will elaborate upon this phenomenon and visually illustrate it.

Adria, a modest tourist-oriented town, typical of northern Italy, is home to the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria, a small but technically advanced institution known for its modern display techniques and informative curation. The museum houses a substantial and well-preserved collection of imported Attic and locally produced Etruscan ceramics and jewellery, as well as Roman-era glassware.

Of particular interest to me, especially in the context of Etruscan funerary culture and the broader question of what first drew me to the unique heritage of the Po Delta, is the notable absence of certain stereotypical Etruscan funerary objects. Surprisingly unrepresented in this region is the ubiquitous Etruscan cremation ritual. In contrast to the archaeological museums in Volterra, Florence, Umbria, the Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome, and other institutions dedicated to the Etruscan civilisation, the northern Etruscan museums feature surprisingly few examples of traditional funerary artefacts so emblematic of broader Etruscan culture, such as cinerary urns and ornate funerary receptacles with painted reliefs or sarcophagi with sculptural decoration. This suggests that there were different funerary customs in Padanian Etruria, unless there are fundamental gaps in the archaeological record.

Conversely, ritual and funerary practices in the region are largely represented through an amazing variety of life-affirming, brightly coloured, and artistically refined objects, such as splendid jewellery, along with colourful artefacts associated with personal care – balm and perfume containers (amphoriskoi and alabastra) (below).

It is important to acknowledge the role necropolises served as remarkable environments for the preservation and eventual discovery of artefacts, including jewellery. Spiritually, and considering the Etruscan worldview, necropolises were not necessarily perceived as sorrowful places, but rather liminal spaces between the earthly realm and the afterlife. As such, items that had belonged to the deceased, including jewellery, adorned them and were also placed elsewhere within the grave so that they accompanied a person on their journey and might be of practical use again. Archaeological drawings and museum displays help to visualise how these items were situated on or around the deceased, often positioned in a manner that mirrored their use in life. In so doing, they contribute to a fuller understanding of Etruscan identity and sensibility.

There is no doubt that such a large, important, and strategically placed trading hub as the Po Delta, served not only as a commercial centre but also as a point of concentration for international fashion trends. These were probably led by Greek influences, though local Etruscan characteristics also remained distinct. For example, there is less emphasis on gemstones, greater use of gold granulation, elaborately styled hair decorations, and other uniquely regional artistic motifs, all clearly traceable in the archaeological record.

Where jewellery is concerned, the variety of styles and materials used between the sixth and third centuries BC remains astonishing. My choices in this article are selective, confined to the jewellery of the Po Delta, concentrating on necklaces, earrings, diadems, bracelets, brooches, and rings; but also perfume vessels (alabastra and amphoriskoi), which are particularly representative for understanding both the culture and,

Amphoriskos. Spina Necropolis, Valle Pega, Tomb 28D.
Fourth century BC. Blown glass.
Museo Delta Antico di Commacchio
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Alabastra, 'eastern workshops'. Spina Necropolis.
Fifth–mid-third century BC. Blown glass.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Amphoriskoi, 'eastern workshops'.
Fifth–mid-third century BC.
Spina Necropolis. Blown glass.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

more broadly, the intersecting cultural influences present in this region.

Alabastra, small, narrow, elongated bottles, and amphoriskoi, miniature amphorae with handles, were designed to hold oil, balms, and perfume liquids. These exquisitely crafted items, dated from the fifth to the mid-third century BC, were made from blown coloured glass, a material that attests both advanced production techniques and aesthetic sophistication.

Many of these vessels were imported from centres such as Attica, Phoenicia, and Rhodes. They are typically classified as 'Eastern workshops', encompassing production centres in Phoenicia, Asia Minor, and possibly Egypt (regions historically known for their mastery in coloured glasswork), or 'East-Greek workshops'. They range from around from 7–8 to 18–20cm in height. Some examples of these vessels are from a domestic context rather than graves, found during excavations at Spina in 1988.

Typically, these vessels feature intricate, vibrant patterns in the form of 'feathered' zigzag ornaments. This effect results from the fusion of composite, multicoloured pieces of blown glass, which are then carefully polished after cooling in the final stage of their production.

In bright light, this patterned glass radiates a mystical, almost cosmic iridescence, reminiscent of the polished interior surfaces of exotic seashells.

Necklaces were perhaps known in Etruscan as *luth* or *monilia*, the latter is considered to have been absorbed into Latin. As quite large and therefore conspicuous when worn, this category of adornment permits us to assume certain social aspects of Etruscan society, in terms of the wearer's social status and wealth, based on the preciousness of the materials and the sophistication of their craftsmanship and therefore cost (page 15).

Materials range from amber sometimes in combination with stones, glass and/or bone beads, glass, and gold, the most precious and, of course, of the highest status. Amber necklaces were also highly prized, due to the exotic origin of the material itself from the Baltic Sea. Amber was usually imported in unprocessed form and remained relatively rare among the populations of the Adriatic, Magna Graecia (southern Italy) and Attica (the territory of Athens). Etruscan craft specialists worked this raw material to produce beads and amulets.

Amulets, beyond their symbolic or personal connotations, were also believed to serve therapeutic and apotropaic (to ward off evil) functions (page 16). Precious and semi-precious stones, such as ruby, agate, and carnelian, were also incorporated into Etruscan necklaces. These materials were valued for their rarity and deep, noble hues, as well as for their symbolic or metaphysical significance. Necklaces of multi-coloured glass beads were popular predominantly for their aesthetic appeal. The vibrant variety of colours, the interplay of patterns, and the potential for creative arrangements of bead size and hue made these items not only visually striking but also perhaps relatively affordable.

Earrings, possibly deriving from Etruscan *inauris*, was later incorporated into Latin. Some examples caught my attention, owing to the exquisitely intricate workmanship in gold on a miniature scale. These remarkable artefacts can only be fully appreciated under high magnification. For the purposes of this article, I have selected the most sophisticated examples, those that depict in miniature either zoomorphic creatures, identified as representations of a lion (Leo), a ram (Aries), possibly aquatic creatures, or human and divine figures, including female heads and the Greek river god Achelous (page 16, middle and below left, top right, bottom).

Alabastra, 'eastern workshops'.
Fifth–mid-third century BC.
Spina Necropolis. Blown glass.
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Necklace composed of thirteen cylindrical beads. Ca' Cima Necropolis,
Grave 4, excavated in 1994. First half of the fourth century BC.
Amber. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria.
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Bead necklace. Ca' Cima Necropolis,
Grave 13, excavated in 1994–1995. Late sixth–early fifth century BC.
Amber and bone. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria.
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Bead necklace. Spina Necropolis, Valle Pega,
Tomb 28D. Second half of the fifth century BC.
Amber and coloured glass. Museo Delta Antico di Commacchio.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Necklace composed of beads. Necropolis of Spina.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Imported amber, glass.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Bead necklace. Private house, Spina, excavated in 1988.
Mid-fifth century BC. Glass, perhaps painted.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
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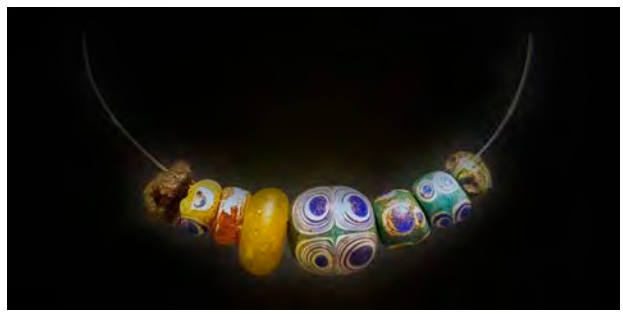

Bead necklace. Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Glass and stone.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Bead and plate necklace. Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Gold with granulation.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic amulets. Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Locally carved amber.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Zoomorphic earring (Aries). Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Plated gold with granulation.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Zoomorphic earrings (Leo). Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC.
Plated gold with granulation.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Earring. Spina Necropolis. Mid-fourth century BC.
Plated gold with granulation.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
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These curved, tubular ornaments present as compact, stylistically coherent objects, splendid works of art, outstanding examples of design, filigree, and finely calibrated craftsmanship involving the meticulous assembly of minute gold plates. Their overall composition demonstrates a high level of sophistication, particularly in the embossing and stamped detailing of their frontal sections, and in the granulated decoration applied to the neck and body of each piece.

The granulation technique, whereby minuscule gold granules are affixed to a surface to form decorative motifs, was extensively employed by Etruscan goldsmiths. However, taking into account the iconography of the imagery, the known trade networks of Padanian Etruria, and the broader scale of Etruscan commercial activity, it is widely presumed that gold jewellery in this region was both, imported from Attica and Magna Graecia, and locally produced.

It is though widely accepted, based on archaeological evidence, that Padanian Etruria was a prominent centre of Etruscan metallurgy, particularly with regard to bronze and iron production. However, conclusive evidence of goldsmithing workshops is

Right: anthropomorphic earrings
(female heads, Achelous) Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC.
Plated gold with granulation.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Diadem with plaques. Spina Necropolis.
Mid-fourth century BC. Plated gold.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Diadem with ivy leaves and the head of a Gorgon.
Spina Necropolis, Valle Pega, Tomb 58C. Mid-fourth century BC.
Plated gold sheets. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

limited. The most celebrated examples of Etruscan gold craftsmanship are, at present, predominantly associated with southern Etruria.

Further examples of technical finesse may also be observed in the larger earrings, more aptly described as ear pendants, featuring abstract floral, geometric, and scroll motifs. On closer examination, some of these also reveal human faces subtly incorporated into the flanking sections of the central design.

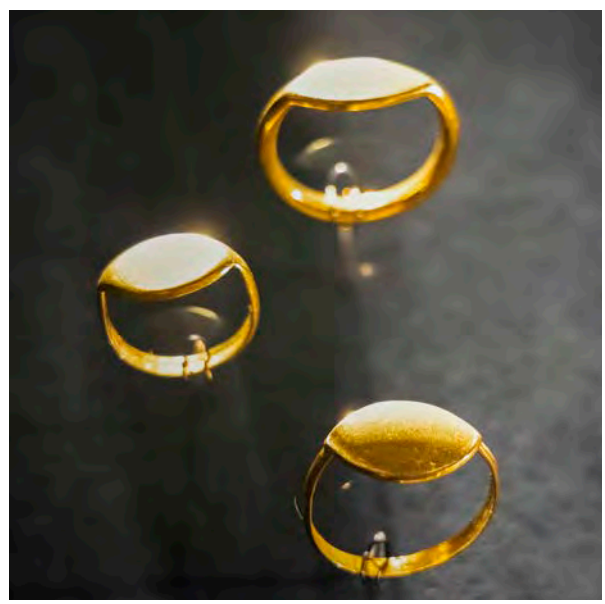
Diadems, commonly referred to as leaf crowns or gold wreaths (with the possible Etruscan root *stephanos*, borrowed from Greek) were produced in sheet gold, which was typical for this type of headdress in Etruria, at least judging by finds from so-called elite tombs (above). They are included in this article due to their relatively good preservation, demonstrative visual qualities, and the opportunity they afford to examine the intricacies of gold craftsmanship. It is generally thought that most Etruscan diadems and gold wreaths were produced locally, although it is possible that they were imported. Most designs incorporate Greek and eastern Mediterranean cultural elements, motifs, and artistic influences. The two gold diadems presented here depict a Scythian archer on horseback, with the head of a Gorgon either side, and a decorative combination of ivy leaf patterns, with a Gorgoneion (head of a Gorgon) at the centre and a horned goddess motif figure.

Finger rings (Etruscan term unknown) unearthed during excavations in the Po Delta are displayed in museum collections in considerable numbers, although not in an extensive variety of materials (below; page 18, left). Most examples are made of bronze and gold, although it should also be noted that rings made of silver and iron were also produced, but they are less frequently preserved due to the natural processes of oxidation and material degradation over time. Ceramic rings may have also been produced, similar to the bracelets discussed above and below, but they are not preserved in the archaeological record in this region.

Bronze rings are presented above due to a personal preference for the material in terms of its colour, texture, and volume; gold rings also feature because of their refined design and craftsmanship of gold rings were, of course, indicators of their owner's social standing, and many of these are preserved in remarkably fine condition.

The two bronze rings originate from the same female inhumation burial (Tomb 28D) from the Necropolis of Spina. One of the gold rings in the collection of MAN Ferrara, features a central agate inlay framed by a delicately ornamented, rounded gold setting. Although it is often stated that Etruscan finger rings were integrated with carved gemstones featuring figural depictions, inscriptions, symbols, or served as personal seals (signet rings), I have not encountered any such examples in the Po Delta collections.

Bracelets (Etruscan *armilla*, plural *armillae*) are represented predominantly by examples made from



Finger rings. Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Gold.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

ceramic, glass, and bronze. Interestingly, to the best of my knowledge, there are no large intricate gold bracelets comparable to diadems (wreaths) or earrings in terms of complex artistic execution, preservation, or physical substance (right and below right; page 19, right). Such material is frequently imagined, based on modern artistic reconstructions, representations in films, or illustrations attempting to recreate the fashion of classical antiquity, but, such pieces may have existed in northern Etruria.

Finger rings. Spina Necropolis, Valle Pega, Tomb 28D.
Second half of the fifth century BC. Bronze.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Commacchio.
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Finger ring. Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth–early fourth century BC. Agate and gold.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
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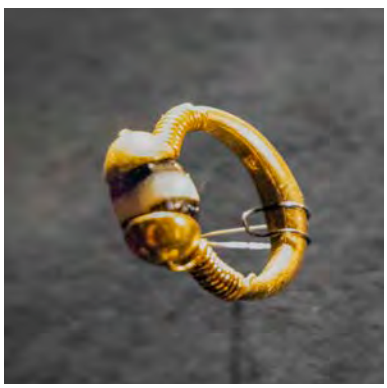

Bracelet in dark blue (now looking more like black).
Celtic tradition, late fourth–early third century BC.
Ceramic with yellow glass paste. The silver rings below were used to style hair. Below them is a gold earring.
Atria, Campelli Necropolis, Grave 8, excavated in 1957.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

On the contrary, the bracelets discovered in the Po Delta tend to be rather slender and elegant in design. I found the ceramic bracelets with colourful wave-like or serpentine decoration particularly compelling. These feature decorative motifs of Celtic origin. While the southern Celtic tribes were part of the broader Po Valley culture, with settlements in proximity to major Etruscan urban centres, as far as Felsina, their presence resulted in prolonged conflict with the Etruscans throughout the fourth and fifth centuries BC. This tension ultimately contributed to the gradual decline

Small bracelet with fibula (brooch).
Celtic tradition, late fourth–early third century BC.
Glass (bracelet), bronze (fibula).
Atria, Via Spolverin Necropolis, Grave 7, excavated in 1990.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Adria.
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of the northern Etruscan cities, as mentioned above, many of which fell under Celtic control.

Bronze bracelets are represented in substantial numbers. Aside from the inherent aesthetic and material value of bronze, it is difficult to identify their artistic features in detail, given the state of preservation in which they have come down to us. The bronze bracelet featured here is from Valle Treba (Tomb 264) of the Spina Necropolis. By analogy with fibulae, clasps, and other bronze objects, it is reasonable to assume that these bracelets were originally adorned with embossed ornamentation.

Brooches (possibly deriving from Etruscan *phuplu*), as visually prominent, and clearly status-related accessories, capable of drawing attention and signalling the wealth of their wearer, are presented here in cast gold, decorated with granulation and floral designs (below). Among these, the palmette motif is particularly striking. On several brooches, if examined closely, one can discern small symbolic details – faces in profile – embedded in the central design (visible in the second brooch from the top).

Geometric motifs are largely absent. Rather, the decorative elements tend towards complexity: scrolls, embossed circular designs evocative of tableware, fruit-like forms, 'woven' motifs suggestive of agricultural abundance, and palmettes.

Brooches of various forms. Spina Necropolis.
Late fifth century BC. Gold with plating and granulation.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Bracelet, Spina Necropolis, Valle Trebba, Tomb 264.
Late fifth century BC. Bronze.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

This brief and general overview of Etruscan jewellery (and to a lesser extent small perfume vessels) from the Po Valley is essentially a continuation of my previous article on the import, trade, and production of ceramic artefacts in northern Adriatic Italy. Most of the Etruscan artefacts discovered in the Po Valley, particularly from excavations at the port city of Spina, are on display at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Ferrara, Emilia-Romagna. On a personal note, I cannot help but wonder whether designers at Tiffany & Co, Cartier, or brands like Trollbeads and Pandora, ever studied the design of Etruscan jewellery?

Further Reading

Marcos Martinon-Torres. Modern and Ancient *Gold Jewellery Attributed to the Etruscans: A Science-Based Study*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009.

Valerio Massimo Manfredi and Luigi Malnati. *Gli Etruschi in Val Padana*. Milan: Mondadori Group, 2024.

Christoph Reusser (ed.). *SPINA 100, Dal Mito Alla Scoperta*. Rome: Teseo Editore, 2022.

Christopher S. Saladin. 'The Unspoken Bond: The Complex Relationship between Etruria and Greece'. Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, 2015. *Classics: Student Scholarship & Creative Works*. Available online.

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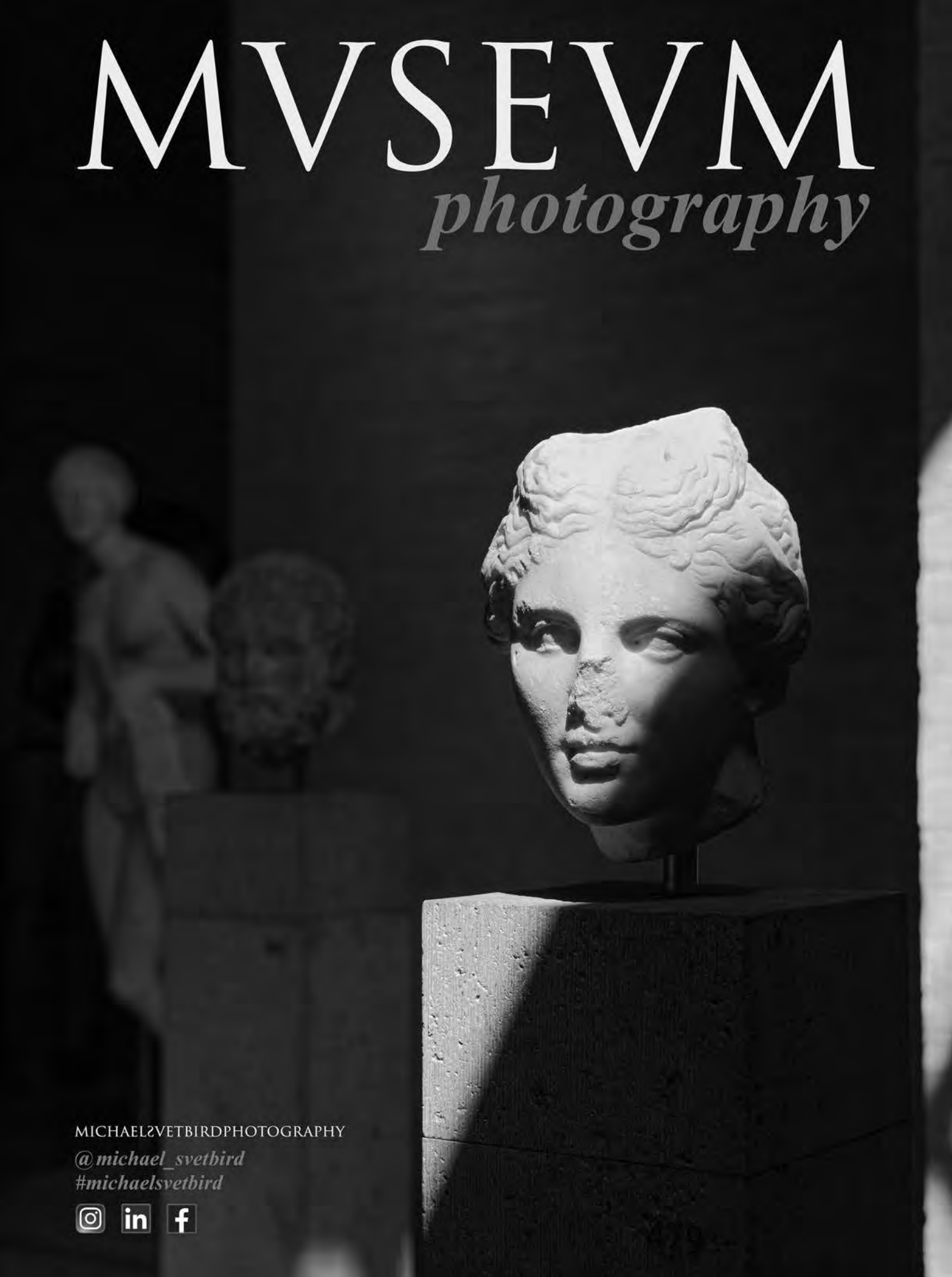
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