

‘Goethe’—a New, Artful Jasper Engraving by Master Andreas Roth of Idar-Oberstein”

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(English translation by Johann Zenz using the translation software DeepL)

Andreas Roth is one of the very few remaining active gemstone engravers in Idar-Oberstein, Germany. He specializes in large cameos featuring biblical and literary motifs, crafted primarily from Brazilian agates. Many of his artistic creations are featured in private and public collections around the world.



A new idea

Master **Andreas Roth**, born in 1973, has already created several wonderful engravings for the author of these lines in recent years, such as a portrait of the Greek scholar and first to describe agates,

Theophrastus of Eresos (371–287 B.C.) based on an old copperplate engraving in a chalcedony (moss agate) from Winzing near Karlstetten, Lower Austria, or a cameo of the ancient Roman scientist and author

Gaius Plinius Secundus Maior (23–79 CE) in an old black-and-white “layered agate” from Brazil, dyed in Idar-Oberstein (ZENZ, 2024). About a year ago, the idea arose to immortalize another figure from agate history in a new project set in a suitable stone. The choice ultimately fell on the famous German poet and scholar **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** (1749–1832).

The Prince of Poets and Minerals

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was not only one of the most important German poets but also, among other things, an enthusiastic **geologist** and **mineralogist**. As head of the Mining Commission of the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, he had access to numerous mines that were active at the time and other sites where minerals were found. On his numerous travels, including trips to Italy, he repeatedly collected rocks and

mineral specimens. Remnants of his former collection, which once numbered around 18,000 specimens, can still be viewed today in Weimar and at Teplá Monastery (near Mariánské Lázně in the Czech Republic).

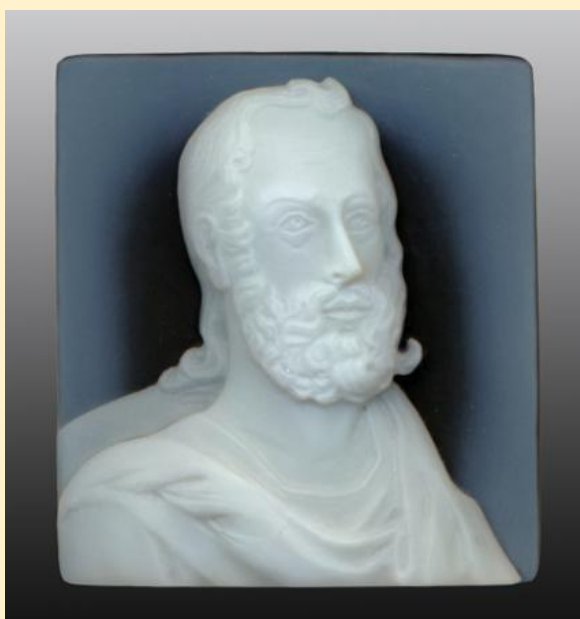
In several papers, he described mineral deposits and the stones found there. An iron oxide mineral was named **goethite** in his honor.

He also had a particular affinity for agates and jasper, which he discovered in **Sicily** during his **trip to Italy** (1786–1788) and which he collected and described himself:

“The agates are of the utmost beauty, especially those in which irregular patches of yellow or red jasper alternate with white, seemingly frozen quartz, thereby producing the most beautiful effect.”



Theophrastos of Eresos. Engraving by Andreas Roth in chalcedony (moss agate) from Winzing, Karlstetten, Austria.
Johann Zenz collection and photo.



Pliny cameo. Engraving by Andreas Roth in agate from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.
4.7x4.4x0.7 cm.

Johann Zenz collection. Andreas Roth photo.

It therefore seemed relatively obvious to select a suitable Sicilian rough stone for the planned project.

From the well-known collector, author, and museum curator (Bertholdsburg Castle, Schleusingen) **Ralf Schmidt**—who, in the course of several scholarly projects, has collected from numerous Sicilian sites and, in some cases, rediscovered them—allowed us to acquire several suitable pieces, and the choice ultimately fell on a reddish-brown-yellow jasper measuring about 11 cm from the Verdura region in southwestern Sicily. According to Ralf Schmidt's theory, as presented in one of his recent publications, this region is said to be the "home" of the river "Achates," first

mentioned by Theophrastus more than two thousand years ago, which ultimately gave the stone its name. The stone is cut on one side; the reverse side remains in its rough state.

Sicilian jaspers are generally quite richly colored and are likely the silicified remnants of ancient ocean floors. The specimen selected for the Goethe engraving has a brownish-yellow base color with predominantly vertical reddish and reddish-brown streaks. The fact that it was largely free of cracks and compact—with no distracting small cavities in this case—was an important factor to consider when selecting the rough stone for the Goethe project.



Jasper, rough cut. Sicily, Italy.

Height 11 cm.

Johann Zenz collection & photo.

The Original Painting

Numerous portraits of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe from various periods of his life have survived.

The painting “**Goethe in the (Roman) Campagna**” is considered one of the best-known and most significant of these. It is currently housed at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and was painted by **Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein** in 1787.

It depicts a rather pensive-looking Goethe in a loose-fitting traveling coat and a wide-brimmed hat, set against a typical Roman landscape rich in ancient artifacts.

For the stone engraving, however, only a portion of the image (the upper body in the upper left quarter of the picture) was selected. The following pages show the individual steps leading up to the completion of the Goethe engraving by Master **Andreas Roth** (photos: the Roth family).



Goethe in the Roman Campagna.

Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, 1787.

[<https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/de/werk/goethe-in-der-roemischen-campagna>]

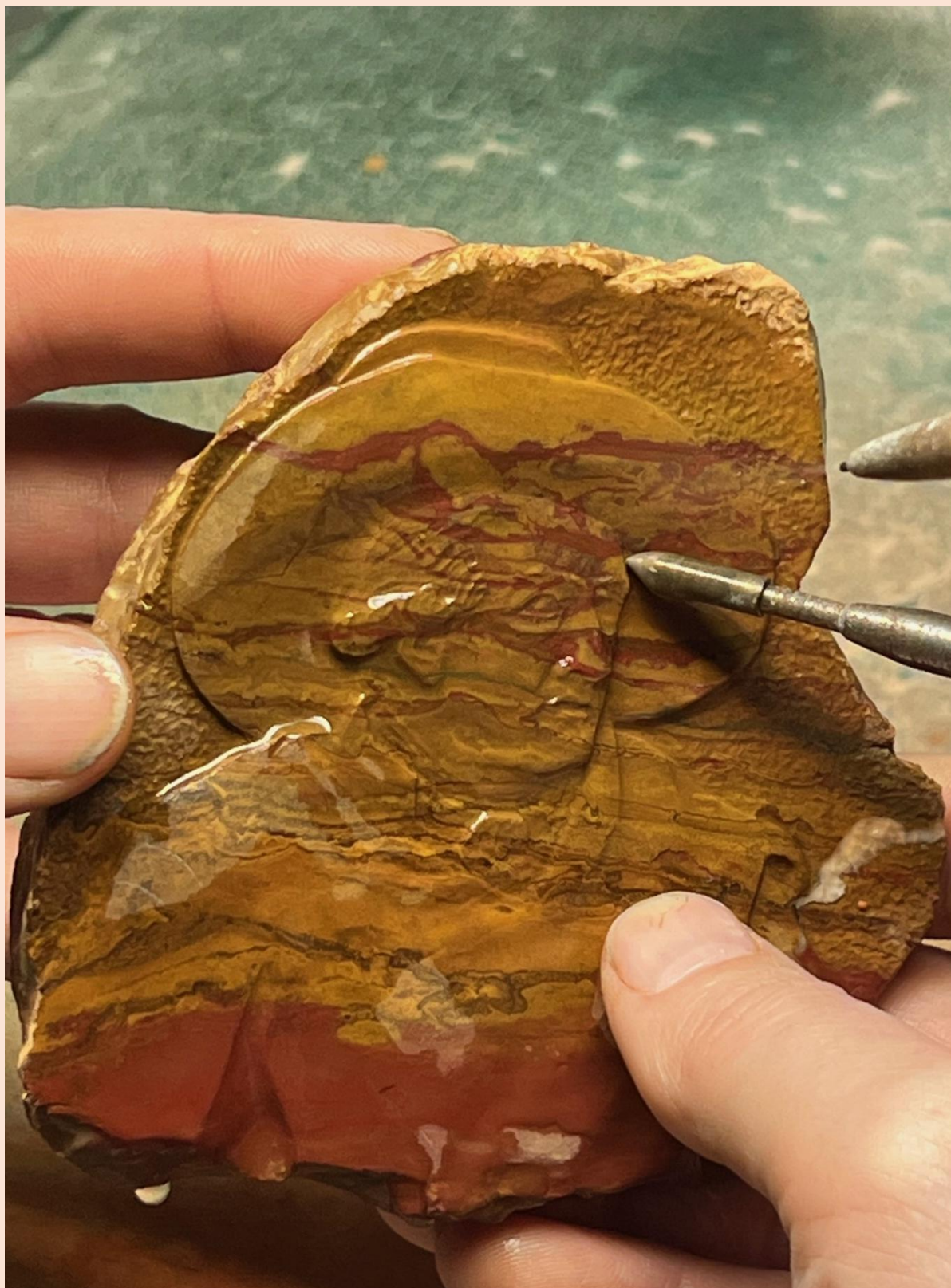
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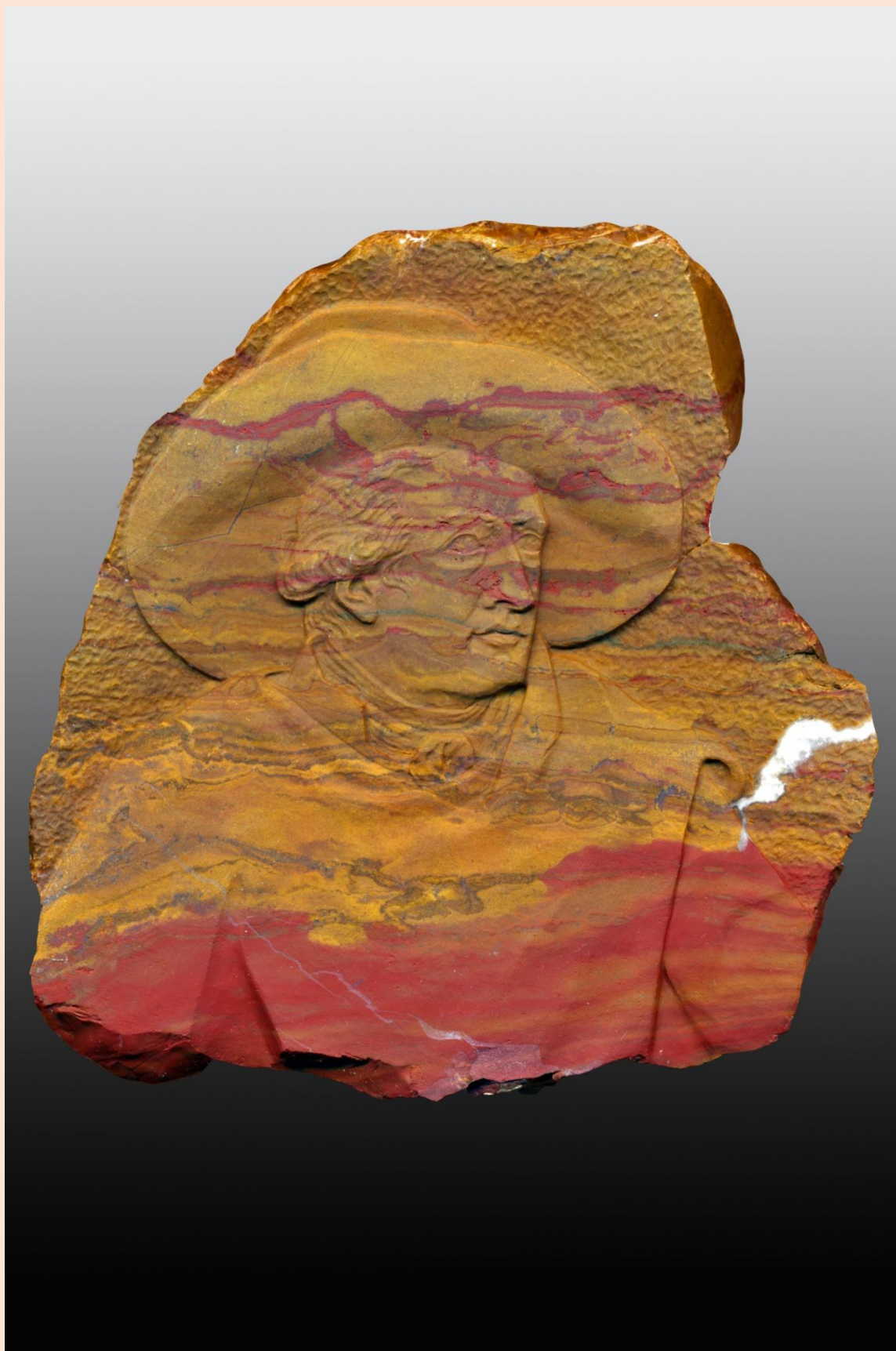












The finished artwork: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Andreas Roth photo.

References and further information:

<https://roth-cameo.com/>

ZENZ, J. (2024): „Plinius“ – an Agate Cameo is created. 16 p. Available online at <http://www.agates.click/media/files/plinius-an-agate-cameo-is-created-english-version.pdf>

ZENZ, J. (2023): A Visit to the “Master of Large Cameos” Andreas Roth in Idar-Oberstein, Germany. 11 p. Available online at <http://www.agates.click/media/files/andreas-roth.pdf>

Latest News

The **Goethe and Theophrastus engravings**, as well as the **Pliny cameo**, will be on display “in person” in a **collector’s display case (B2.SV25)** at the **Munich Mineral Show from October 22 to 25, 2026**.

Master craftsman **Andreas Roth** will also be presenting his latest creations in Munich and looks forward to seeing you at his booth, **B6.NDA1 (Hall B6)**!