

ON THE ROCKS

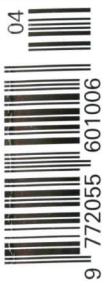
A MAGAZINE ON THE SUBJECT OF JEWELLERY

ONCE IN A LIFETIME
James Taffin de Givenchy

THE OUTSIDERS
Singers, surrealists and situationists

FLASH POINT

Alex & Lee's Devotional Talismans



THE CAT'S MOTHER

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PHOTOGRAPHY Matthieu Lavanchy



The ancient Egyptians adored their cats. They even worshipped a cat goddess named Bastet. In a regal pose, Bastet is rendered on this exceedingly rare, turquoise-blue ceramic ring from the New Kingdom (1540–1295 BC). But, she is not alone. Nestled at her feet is her newborn litter of kittens – seven (out of eight, one is broken) to be precise – because Bastet promised not only fertility but also safe birth. The number of kittens may indicate the desire of the wearer; this one wanted an especially big family. Sprouts of papyrus leaves and lotus flowers vividly evoke the fertile landscape of the Nile, through which the revered felines wandered. Cats not only participated in the creation of life, as on this ring; so beloved were they to the Egyptians that they even escorted their owners into the Afterlife. Thousands of extant cat mummies, full-grown and kittens, are individualised with fabrics of stripes and spots, dyed in brown, white, and black, their faces realistically painted with eyes, nose, mouth, and whiskers. As for rings of this nature, they too would have accompanied their wearers to the Afterlife: small and eminently portable, these were dimension-spanning talismans that could be worn under the embalmment.

Egyptian ring, on view as part of *Rings Around the World*, Sam Fogg Gallery, until 11 November, and at Les Enluminures, New York, from 17 November to 3 December.