

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

Volume 10 Number 12 December 2007

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Dues: \$20.00/Year \$35.00/2 years

What's New on Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

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Coming Events

January 12, 2008, membership meeting at the New York International Show. Time: 12 noon. Speaker: Ira Rezak on: A Century of Medals and Still Counting: Anniversaries of the Jews in America.

From the Editor

There is a lot going on in our club and I hope you can make our meeting on January to check it all out. John Sallay, our Vice president, will take you through plans for the ANA Convention in Baltimore in August and he will also describe plans to recruit new members more aggressively. We seek your contribution on both of these issues and others as well.

Q. David Bowers' 100 Greatest Medals and Tokens represents an exceedingly important milestone for our corner of the hobby. For the first time, there is an accessible book that showcases a rich, varied menu of what there is to collect, along with handsome pictures thereof. This book is a must for you (you probably own it already), your children and your grandchildren. I have purchased a supply on behalf of the Club and will offer copies to those who write letters or write articles or sign up new members or otherwise enrich the subject that we all hold dear.

Thanks to an exceptional roster of contributors, The Advisory has had a banner year. The coming year bodes well to continue apace. The January issue will be devoted entirely to a simply superb article on the Thomas Truxton medal, authored by Chris Neuzil, Lenny Vaccaro and Todd Creeekman. Building on an article that originally appeared in The Numismatist, but going far beyond this article, they answer most of the vexing questions that have long surrounded this medal. You will feast on a combination of fine writing and outstanding research.

At \$20 dues per annum, Club membership is indeed a bargain. The number should probably be raised but, at the moment, we don't need the money. However, we also don't need the aggravation of chasing you to send in your checks. Your dues are payable **NOW**! We will hold future issues of the Advisory for you but, after three months, the names of non-payers will be dropped from the list. If you have any questions about whether

you are paid up, email Barry Tayman at bdtayman@comcast.net

Admiral Vernon A Call for Help (by John W. Adams)

I have begun work on a possible book on the Admiral Vernon medals. My first cut has been to review the literature, which consists of about a dozen writers who have devoted systematic thought to the subject. Much of what has been written is outstanding, but a universal failing is the lack of images showing the major and minor differences between varieties. When enough images are assembled, the number of unreported varieties—already 25 or so—will probably double or triple.

Even after sifting the major institutional collections, I have not located half a dozen McCormick-Goodhart numbers and have another fifteen where the best available image is no better than VG. My continuing search is for MG numbers 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 31, 107, 108, 11, 62, 80, 154, 160, 198 and 202. I would appreciate hearing from:

- 1) anyone owning one or more of the above;
- 2) anyone interested in discussing what the book needs to be; and
- 3) Any one who would like to make contributions, large or small.

In one respect, the Admiral Vernon medals are ugly ducklings. Sophisticated numismatists (especially the British) have derided them for poor design and poor execution. Guilty, of course, but such criticism overlooks a certain innate charm that has attracted the likes of Edward Hawkins, C. Wyllys Betts and Jose Medina. Given an adequate pictorial reference, the Vernons could become a relatively low budget haven for collectors who have been priced out of other more popular segments or for newcomers attracted by history, multiplicity of varieties, many still unsolved mysteries and the like. But

we do need that pictorial references and, to accomplish that, I need your help.

John W. Adams/jadams@canaccordadams.com

A Renaissance Festival of Medals and More at Princeton University

(by Donald Scarinci)

On the eve of the publication of the second edition of Cornelius Vermule's classic work, *Numismatic Art in America*, Princeton University opened an exhibit displaying medals by Pisanello that Vermule donated in the memory of his wife. Alan Stahl, curator of coins and medals at Princeton University, could not have chosen to display these medals any better.

Vermule's Pisanello medals are one of the many highlights of the exhibit at Princeton University's Firestone Library called, *Numismatics in the Renaissance* which opened on November 9, 2007. Anyone interested in Renaissance medals, manuscripts, ancient coins or early coin collectors must not miss this exhibit.

The Pisanello medals include, John V111 Palaeologus (K.1); Filippo Maria Visconti (K3); Francesco Sforza (K.5); Leonello D'Este (K.10); Cecilia Gonzaga (K.17); and Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (K.12). Not all of them are original casts, but they are certainly close enough aftercasts to warrant close inspection with one of the magnifying glasses available for use at the exhibit.

In addition to the seven Pisanello medals, there is a display of Giovanni Cavino imitations side by side with the original Ancient coins they imitate. The opportunity to see the Caligula, Domitian, Faustina Younger and Lucius Verus side by side with their Cavino counterpart is very special.

Cavino was not the only imitator on exhibit. Valerio Belli (1486 to 1546), a

favorite of Cardinal Farnese and Paul 3 in Renaissance Rome, made imitations of Roman coins and several of his medals were on exhibit as well.

Highlighting a display of other Renaissance artists who imitated ancient coins is an original text by Benvenuto Cellini writing about how ancient coin dies were made. One could only imagine that this very book was likely to have been the Renaissance textbook for these great imitators.

Another amazing section of the exhibit for those of us who are interested in medallic art is the various depictions of Cosimo 1 de Medici. There were three portrait medals by three different Renaissance artists—Domenico de'Veba (1480 to 1547); Domenico Poggini (1520 to 1590) and Pier Paolo Galeotti (1520 to 1584). The artistic difference in the portrayal of the same subject is a study unto itself.

With all of these riches, medals were a small part of the exhibit. The original Renaissance books and Ancient coins on display is overwhelming. Highlights include a complete denomination set of Roman coins from the third Century BC, the late Republic and the early empire. There are Byzantine coins, Greek coins and of course, Renaissance coins brilliantly displayed next to Renaissance texts.

For the bibliophile, the original Renaissance books are little works of art by themselves. Stahl's selection of ancient coins to display next to line drawings of the very same type brought it all together and put you in the armchair of a Renaissance numismatist studying ancient coins at the very beginning of the study of this subject.

Book after book, carefully spread open under glass like the book by Hubert Goltzius, clearly made the point that illustrations of Ancient Coins had an ornamental function in Renaissance books. These illustrations enhanced the text and added great beauty to the book which was, by itself, art.

Princeton University hosted a symposium on the opening day of the exhibit, The Rebirth of Antiquity: Numismatics, Archaeology, and Classical Studies in the Culture of the Renaissance. It was both well attended and well received. People like Paul Bosco and Cory Gilliland spent the day listening to a total of six lectures by a cross section of areas that together created a three dimensional look into Renaissance period numismatics and art.

In a question at the morning session by Paul Bosco, he prefaced with a comment about how good it felt to be "back in school." The lecturers were indeed great teachers from America's top Universities.

Following a greeting by Karin Trainer, the Princeton University Librarian, and the morning speakers included: John Cunnally, Department of Art and Design, Iowa State University; Peter N. Miller, Chair of Academic Programs at Bard Graduate Center; and Brian Ogilvie, from the History Department of the University of Massachusetts.

These speakers gave a range of talks from the anthropology of gift giving in primitive societies to the difficulties of translating medieval Islamic Coins during the Renaissance, to a discussion of Renaissance collections and collecting through the eyes of a Renaissance numismatist—Ezekiel Spanheim.

After being treated to lunch in a room with panoramic views of Princeton, the lectures continued with another three speakers:
William Stenhouse from the History
Department at Yeshiva University spoke about,
"Onofrio Panvinio Versus the Numismatists:
The Right to Interpret Antiquity," Christopher
Wood of the History Department at Yale
University spoke about, "The Temporal
Instability of the Artifact;" and Tamara Griggs
of the History Department of the University of
Chicago spoke about "Controlling the Past in
18th Century Rome."

This exhibit and the symposium on the day of its opening could only have been

assembled by someone with the depth of knowledge in numismatic and medallic art that someone like Alan Stahl possesses. His scholarship and use of the resources available to him at Princeton University was nothing short of masterful.

According to Princeton University's web site, the show will run until Sunday, July 20. The library gallery is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, from 9 a.m. to 7:45 p.m. Wednesday, and from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Exhibition tours will be offered to the public at 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 18, March 16 and June 1.



Augustine, Dialogues 1



Augustine, Dialogues 2



Roman Coins



Bosco (Gilliland) and Stahl



Exhibit Hall



Pisanello Photos courtesy of Mary Schaefer

Letters to the Editor

Hank Spangenberger has kindly sent us a lovely brochure with various medallic offerings of medals made by John Pinches. Whoever would cherish this item, you may have it by asking.—ed.

Dear John:

I just started reading your Comitia Americana book and it is outstanding. I am learning a great deal about early medals already and I look forward to continuing to understand these items in their historical context.

In one part of the book, you discuss the various known sets of the medals in existence. Specifically, for the "Vienna Set" of the medals (beginning on page 19), you note that this set contains several medals in silver, and state, "the silver medals are the finest seen, having been struck from polished dies and given multiple blows to bring up the detail in the design."

You then discuss two theories on the background of the medals—the aristocratic family theory and the ambassador theory, but state that neither theory is satisfying to you. You then indicate that if a better explanation does not surface, you are inclined to attribute

the set to Marie Antoinette, and only she or King Louis XVI would have had the power to cause this specially prepared set to have been made. Further, you comment, "only she ... would have been forced to break up the set in order to deliver the medals out of the country. As wild as this theory may seem, it has the advantage of fitting all of the presently known facts."

I was just curious whether the Marie Antoinette/Louis XVI theory is well accepted in the medal community. It seems somewhat logical to me, however, I was curious what sorts of documents you reviewed in order to propose the theory. I know that your book is extremely well researched, and given my interest in history, I was wondering about the documentation that you found when you formulated the theory.

As I noted already, your book is excellent and I hope it is acceptable for me to make an inquiry about the item above directly to you.

Kind regards,

Michael Savinelli

Hi Michael - Truly great questions!

The theory has just been floated, so I have very little idea of how it is resonating. Documentation is sparse. We know from a letter from TJ to his friend Madison, with which he enclosed a complete set in tin, that he the one responsible for the whole project, did not feel empowered to risk the dies on strikings in silver. We know from the Vienna end that the medals came in to the museum in one's and two's, sources now unknown. As I point out, it is simply impossible that they were procured in one's and two's and the common fabric gives one 99.44% confidence that the medals were made as a set. So who made them? Who else had the clout to risk the dies, save the Queen or the King?

I have read two biographies of Marie Antoinette and, as the royal couple were confined ever more closely, she did attempt to smuggle items as well as correspondence out ot the country; indeed, they made one nearly successful attempt to smuggle themselves out. No mention of the medals, of course. The weak link in my theory is that there must have been much more valuable items to smuggle but perhaps these had been confiscated and the medals, given their association with democracy, were allowed to be retained.

The staff at Kunsthistoriches is not overly cooperative but, Lord willing, we will make a trip to Vienna where I will overpower them with my utterly charming, German-born wife. Until then, what do you think?

Warmly,

John Adams

Dear Dr. Dembski,

Back in 2004-2005, I corresponded with Dr. Winter on your staff regarding a project focused on early American medals. This project resulted in the publication this Spring of Comitia Americana and Related Medals. The Kunsthistoriches had some spectacular examples of these medals (George Washington Before Boston, Horatio Gates at Saratoga, Anthony Wayne at Stony Point, etc), six of which were illustrated in our book. These medals, which were made in 1789 but which carried dates between 1776 and 1781, came to the museum one or two at a time from, apparently, different sources. Analyzing the photographs and other evidence, it became apparent to me that the medals were once part of a set, made either for Louis XVI or Marie Antoinette, probably the latter given that the medals ended up in Vienna. My wife (German speaking) and I plan to come to Vienna next year and were wondering if we could view the

medals and discuss whatever records of accession still exist.

I sent Dr. Winter a copy of the book but would happily send you another. The images were done by a new process called stochastic screening and came out quite well.

Sincerely,

John W. Adams

Coin Cabinet - Kunsthistoriches



The Numismatic Collection owes its existence to the collecting activities of the Habsburgs. With some 700,000 objects from three millennia, it includes not only coins, but also paper money, medals, orders and other items. The displays in the two exhibition rooms provide the viewer with an overview of the history and development of money and medals. A third room is used for special exhibitions on a particular theme.

Director:

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FIDEM Opening, FIDEM pres. Carlos Baptista da Silva (l), US Mint Director Edmund Moy, ANA's Ken Bressett



AMSA Pres Licaretz (l), Dr. Alan Stahl (Princeton U. ex. ANS)



James MalonoBeach (Michigan), Donald Scarinci NYNC MCA, Eugene Daub



Parallel Exhibit by FIDEM Artists 2007, ANA HQ



Fidem 2007 Presenters, ANS' Robert Hoge (l) Stephen Scher, ANS' Peter van Alfen



Czech Artists' Medals in 2007 FIDEM



David T. Alexander, Eugene Daub (r) Sculptor ANS NYNC