

Plaques, medals and tokens of Art Nouveau

The revival of the medal art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did not escape contemporary critics and theorists.¹ Artists looked back to Antiquity² and the Italian Renaissance³ for inspiration: the aesthetic quality of medals im-

viewed as individual, expres-

contemporary subject lit-

medal art, like cast-

of the steel die⁵,

and appreciated; it

er process of the

The English Arts

ment, started by

John Ruskin, and

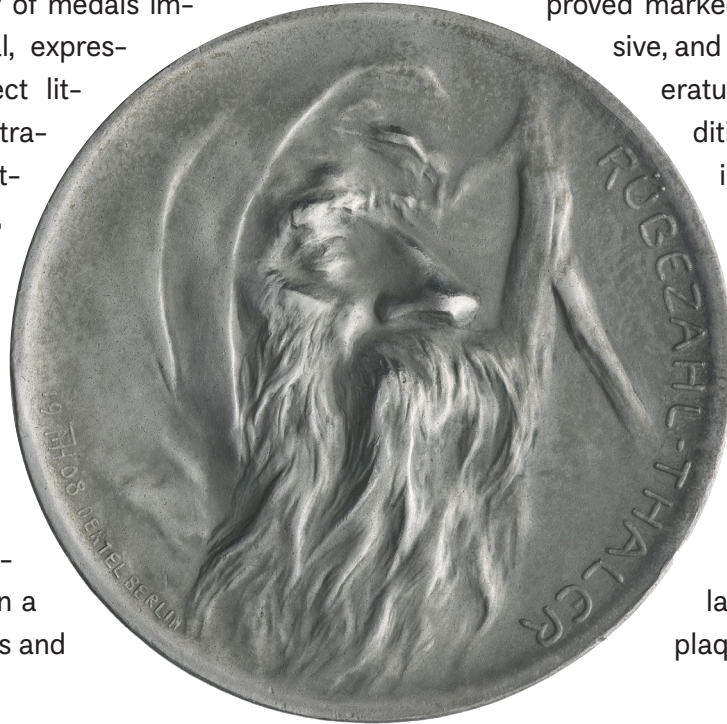
Gottfried Sem-

inspiring this reviv-

popularity of the re-

ployed to scale down a

connection of medals and



proved markedly as they were again

sive, and personal statements. In

erature, particularly in Ger-

ditional techniques of the

ing⁴ or hand-engraving

was both advocated

was part of a broad-

handicrafts revival.

and Crafts Move-

William Morris and

the ideas of German

per⁶ were seminal in

al despite the marked

ducing machine⁷ em-

larger model. "The stylistic

plaques to other art disci-

1 A. Lichtwark, *Die Wiederweckung der Medaille*, Dresden 1897; R. Marx, „The renaissance of the medal in France”, *The Studio*, XV (MDCCCXCIX); W. Radenberg, *Moderne plastik*, Düsseldorf-Leipzig 1912, p. VII; M. Bernhart, *Medaillen and Plaketten*, Braunschweig 1966; J. Datow, *Die Erneuerung der Medaille in der Zeit des Jugendstils*, Speyer 1988; W. Steguweit, *Europäische Medaillenkunst von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 1995.

2 W. Radenberg, *op. cit.*, p. VII; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

3 G. Habich, „Über Deutsche Medaillen und Plaketten”, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 1898 (1), p. 135; W. Radenberg, *op. cit.*, p. VII; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 136; W. Steguweit, *Zum Geleit*, in: M. Heidemann, *Medaillenkunst in Deutschland von 1895 bis 1914*, Berlin 1998, p. 7.

4 G. Habich, *op. cit.*, p. 135; W. Radenberg, *op. cit.*, p. VIII; M. Bernhart, *op. cit.*, p. 130; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 137; W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 127; M. Heidemann, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

5 G. Hitl, „Wit wird die moderne Niedaille geschafte?”, *Mitteilungen der osterreichischen Gesellschaft für Münz- und Medaillen in Wien*, 1908 (XIX), 4, p. 80; A. Lichtenberg, *Deutsche Medaillen- und Plakettenkunst*, (exhibition catalogue), Breslau 1911, p. IV; M. Bernhart, *op. cit.*, p. 130; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

6 M. Heidemann, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

7 R. Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 17; W. Radenberg, *op. cit.*, p. VII; A. Lichtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. IV; W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 128; M. Heidemann, *op. cit.*, p. 27. In Germany, the reducing machine was used from 1896 at the Royal Prussian Mint and from 1898 at the Glaser & Sohn Plant in Dresden. In France it had already been popular by the mid-19 century, see.: M. Heidemann, *op. cit.*, p. 28. According to G. Hitl, the contemporary medal is not a work of art but a mechanical reproduction of a larger model, see: G. Hitl, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

plines”⁸ was likewise emphasized. At the same time, the medal art ceased to be the exclusive domain of engravers and began to attract those exploring the decorative arts as well as sculptors and painters.⁹ Medals and plaques were also featured by influential art magazines promoting the new style, like *The Studio* (London, from 1893), *Art et Décoration* (Paris, from 1897), *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* (Darmstadt, 1897-1932), *Die Kunst* (Munich, 1899/1900 – 1939/1940).

Medals, plaques, and tokens from this period are not stylistically uniform but the majority display – to a varying degree – the influence of changes that had emerged in the medal art in the later 1860s in France, first of all in the works of Francois Joseph Hubert Ponscarne.¹⁰ These changes consisted in softened modeling and painterly effects obtained by making the represented image more flat rather than executed in relief and the mat treatment of the ground, the disappearance of the pronounced rim, and freeing of the inscription from the constraints of the surround and thus making it an integral part of the image¹¹, occasionally playing also a decorative role.¹²

The aforementioned tendencies spread in the medal art in France in the late 19th-early 20th century which resulted in the establishment of the so-called Paris School under the leadership of Jules Clement Chaplain and Louis Oscar Roty.¹³ Its characteristic painterly approach, „individually processed”, informs the works of Louis Alexandre Bottee, Jean-Baptiste Emil Dropsy, Alphee Dubois, Jean-Baptiste Daniel-Dupuis, Georges Henri Lemaire, Victor Peter, Francois Joseph Hubert Ponscarne, Felix Rasumny, Adolphe Rivet. Within the Paris School, several stylistic idioms coexisted. The oeuvre of Jules Clemente Chaplain is underlain by Classicism and idealism while works of Alexandre Marie Charpentier tend towards Expressionism or Impressionism. The plaque by Georges Dupre combines Impressionism with mysticism, the plaque and medal by Louis Oscar Roty captivate with romantic lyricism while the medals and plaques by Henri Auguste Jules Patey are distinguished by the very precise, detailed rendering of relief. The influence of the French „revival” first became apparent in

8 R. Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

9 *Ibidem*, s. 80.

10 Some authors list Joseph Naudet’s medal from 1867 as the „first”, see: J. Babelon, *La medaille en France*, Paris 1948, p. 109; R. Marx, *Les médailles françois depuis 1789*, Paris 1897, p. 16-18; W. Radenberg, *Moderne Plastik*, Düsseldorf-Leipzig 1912, p. VII; M. Heidemann, *op. cit.*, p. 12. On the other hand, J. Datow points to Alphonse’ Lavallée’s medal from 1874, see: J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 15. W. Steguweit points to the oval plaque (date unknown) featuring the bust of Louis Buffet, see: *Europäische...*, p. 127. About Ponscarne’s innovative approach, see also: M. Bernhart, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

11 R. Marx, *Les médailles...*, p. 16-18; M. Bernhart, *Medaillen...*, p. 123; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 15-16; W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 127.

12 E.B.S., „Oscar Roty and the Art of the Medallist”, *The Studio*, 1896, 7, p. 160.

13 G. Habich, „Über deutsche Medaillen und Plaketten”, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 1898 (1), p. 130; R. Marx, *The renaissance...*, p. 20; J. Babelon, *op. cit.*, p. 112; M. Heidemann, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

the works of the „Viennese School”¹⁴ headed by Anton Scharff.¹⁵ Of the Austrian artists featured in this catalogue, this influence also informs the work of Peter Breithut, Ludwig Hujer, Heinrich Kautsch, Franz Kounitzky, Rudolf Marschall, Franz Xaver Pawlik, Richard Placht, Josef Prinz, Hans Schaeffer, Stephan Schwartz, the later medals by Joseph Tautenheyn Sr. and Johann Josef Tautenhayn Jr., Franz Vock, and Carl Waschmann. The new style also influences medal artists in other European countries, particularly: Lajos Beran, Jules Lağae, Hippolyte Leroy, Werner Beğas, Jeremias Christensen, Paul Diiffcke, Johann von Lang, Ernst Moritz Geyğer, Friedrich Wilhelm Hornlein, Eduard Kaempffer, Otto Schulz, Bruno Kruse, Rudolf Mayer, Paul Sturm, Emil Torff, August Vogel, Albert Moritz Wolfff, Konstanty Laszczka, Stanislaw Roman Lewandowski, Czeslaw Makowski, Jan Raszka, Wacław Szymanowski, Wincenty Trojanowski, and Sven Kulle. It is worthy of note that German artists reach for the fashionable Art Nouveau motifs rather sporadically and their works are distinguished by restraint, simplicity and occasionally the geometrical treatment of forms.

Some medals and plaques, particularly by French artists, display not only painterly effects but also other characteristic features of the new style, first of all the wavy, undulating line. It renders the drapery on the medals by Louis Alexandre Bottee or Jules Clemente Chaplain, Emil Dropsy’s *carnet de bal*, and medals by Jean-Baptiste Daniel-Dupuis, Georges Henri Lemaire, and Henri Auguste Patey; it animates the hair of Marianna on the medals by François Joseph Hubert Ponscarne and Felix Rasmunny and the robes of the woman featuring on the obverse of the plaque by Louis Oscar Roty and Adolphe Rivet. The undulating line has been used to depict the water lilies surrounding the inscribed tablet on the plaque by Franz Xaver Pawlik commemorating Carl Springer’s baptism, the ivy twig on the medal by Rudolf Ferdinand Marschall honouring Ludwig Lobmeyer, the monogram and ornament adorning the dress of a female bust on the medal by Carl Waschmann. Indigenous plant species are another motif characteristic of Art Nouveau: roses, carnations, and lilacs appear on Jules Clement Chaplain’s medal commemorating the visit of the imperial couple to France, chrysanthemums grace the Fountain of Youth plaque by Jean-Baptiste Emile Dropsy, thistles feature on Georges Dupre’s Greeting the Sun plaque, edelweiss flowers on the Alpine Society’s jubilee plaque by Ludwig Hujer, lilies and roses set into oval frames on the medal commemorating the consecration of Berlin Cathedral by Emil Torff.

By 1905, German medalists begin to depart from the painterly style towards a more sculptural approach.¹⁶ In 1908, the critic, collector and publisher Georg Hitl¹⁷ declares that „the painterly approach”

14 J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 18; W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 135. K. Schultz interprets the Viennese renaissance of the medal as rooted in Historicism, see.: K. Schultz, „Wiener Secession und die Medaille”, *The Medal*, 1997, no. 31, p. 67.

15 A. Lichtwark, *Die Wiedererweckung der Medaille*, Dresden 1897, p. 37; M. Bernhart, *Medaillen...*, p. 131; W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 137; G. Habich also regards Joseph Tautenhayn Sr. as the school’s co-founder, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

16 L. Dövy, *Medaillen und Plaketten des Jugendstils aus dem Roemer-Pelizaeus Musseum in Hildesheim*, Hildesheim 1978, p. 27.

17 G. Hitl, *op. cit.*, s. 80.

to the medal „obliterates its character to an almost fatal effect” since „stone and metal call for a sculpture and not a painting”.¹⁸

This turn towards the sculptural approach, for a time being without rejecting the painterly effects, informs, among others, medals by Austrian artists: Heinrich Kautsch, Rudolf Ferdinand Marschall or Carl Waschmann, and their German colleagues: Joseph Breikopf-Cosel from 1913, Max Kawaczynski, Rudolf Mayer from 1916, Georges Morin and Ernst Säger from 1911, and Albert Moritz Wolff from 1905 and 1908. The fully-fledged sculptural idiom is exemplified by the works of Johannes Boese, F. Eue and G. Pünthal, Max Lange, Rudolf Otto, Peter Poppelmann, Walther Schott and Ottmar Obermeier. Inspired by the sculptural inclination of German Art Nouveau, Austrian medalists begin to explore it around 1910.¹⁹ The new approach informs the works of Anton Gerhart, Anton Grath, Arnold Hartig, Alexandr Leisek, Rudolf Ferdinand Marschall, Friedrich Orth, Hans Schwathe, Helene Scholz-Zelezny, Stephen Schwarz, Carl Maria Schwerdtner, and Oscar Thiede.

Alongside the aforementioned tendencies, two other trends may be distinguished in the German medal art of the late 19th – early 20th century, represented by two groups of artists. The form had connections with the Colony in Darmstadt, founded on the initiative of Ernst Ludwig, Grand Duke of Hesse, who had invited seven artists in the summer of 1899: Hans Christiansen, Rudolf Bosselt, Paul Bürck, Patriz Hubert, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Peter Behrens, and Ludwig Habich. They agreed to stay in Hesse for three years.²⁰ They wanted to „return” art to the people through beautiful functional objects and to create harmony between man and his surroundings. They sought inspiration in nature and pursued harmony, rhythm, and the beauty of individual objects. Art as well as human environment were to reflect the „spirit of the times”.²¹ The group’s first programmatic *Document of German Art* exhibition in 1900 showcased these ideas. They also inform Rudolf Bosselt’s plaques and medals. The two objects in our collection are distinguished by clarity of composition and the geometric treatment of nature-inspired elements²² combined with the painterly mood reminiscent of the French and Austrian influence.²³

The other group was referred to as the School of Munich and among the artists connected with it one has to mention: Alois Börsch, Maximilian Dasio, Karl Goetz, Hermann Hahn, Hugo Kaufmann, Ottmar Obermeier, Georg Roemer, Balthasar Schmitt, Hans Schweigerle, and Wrba. Its establishment coincided with the publication in 1893 of Adolph von Hildebrandt’s *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* in which the influential sculptor and theorist advocated Classical clarity, deliberation and

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 80.

¹⁹ L. Dövy suggests the year 1905 as the turning point in the evolution towards the sculptural style, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁰ R. Ulmer, *Darmstadzka Kolonia Artystów*, w: *Secesja z Darmstadt* (exhibition catalogue), Darmstadt 1991, p. 6.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² V. Losse, *Rudolf Bosselt und seine Bedeutung für die Erneuerung der deutschen Medaillen-Kunst seit der Jahrhundertwende*, in: *Medaillenkunst in Deutschland von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart. Themen, Projekte, Forschungsergebnisse*, Dresden 1997, p. 126, 134.

²³ R. Bosselt, „Aufgaben und Ziele der Künstler-Kolonie in Darmstadt”, *Dekorative Kunst*, 8, 1901, p. 432–445.

restraint.²⁴ The School of Munich also owed much to the research and writings of Georg Habich, director of the Department of Numismatics in Munich in 1907–1932²⁵, on Italian and German medals of the Renaissance period.²⁶ These, along with ancient Greek coins²⁷, became direct sources of inspiration for the work of the group's members not only in terms of style but also technique, especially hand-engraving of steel dies and casting.²⁸ Classically-inspired simplicity and clarity, approaching a kind of primitivism, inform the medals by Oscar and Hugo Kaufmann, while the Renaissance influence is apparent in the medals by Balthasar Schmitt, Kurt Klein, and Theodor von Gosen. Among those connected with the School of Munich was also Polish artist Jan Wysocki.²⁹ He had first become acquainted with the group as a student of painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich in 1893–1896. He would then return there after a period spent in Paris and continued to create medals and plaques there, with brief intervals, until 1919.³⁰ His works are characterized by subtlety, clarity of composition, fluid forms, and Classically-inspired motifs that seem taken straight from Greek coins, for example the figure of Pallas Athena on the obverse of the medal issued to commemorate the opening of state institutions of higher education in Warsaw following Poland's regaining of independence or the figures of smith and warrior on the reverse of the medal of the Polish Legions.

Generally, however, the majority of medals dating to the late 19th–early 20th century are quite traditional and rely on time-tested formulas: the obverse and reverse feature motifs rendered in relief, clearly set against the often polished ground, the figures are sculptural, precisely defined, separate and articulated; individual elements do not interpenetrate and inscriptions are limited to the medal's rim or surround. Occasionally, individual motifs betraying the Art Nouveau influence appear, for example the curved and even undulating line (female robes on the medals by Godefroid Devreese and Pierre Theunis, border on the medal by Fernand Dubuis).

The motifs rendered on several medals refer to the Gothic Revival: Balmberger's work commemorating the renovation of the church in Eger, the Johann Gutenberg Medal by Rudolf Bosselt, medals honouring the completion of the Kaiser-Wilhelm I-Gedächtniss Kirche by the engraving studio of Gottfried Loos in Berlin and the Chapel of St Roch in Bingen. Some medals recall mediaeval seals, for example Wilhelm Pittner's medal in honour of the recapturing of Waldhofen, the reverse of Jukes Baetes's medal for the International Antwerp Festival, the medal of the City of Antwerp, Jan Raszka's medal commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald and the reverse of Wincent

24 M. Bernhart, *Die Münchener Medaillenkunst der Gegenwart*, München und Berlin 1917; J. Strzałkowski, *Monachijskie sukcesy Jana Wysockiego*, „Medalierstwo i Falerystyka”, 1984, no. 11–12, p. 6.

25 W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 140.

26 M. Bernhart, *Die Münchener...*, p. 12; J. Datow, *Die Erneuerung...*, p. 101; W. Steguweit, *Europäische...*, p. 140; J. Strzałkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

27 M. Bernhart, *Die Münchener...*, p. 12; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

28 M. Bernhart, *Medaillen...*, p. 130; J. Datow, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

29 T. Eckhard, *Jan Wysocki. Jego rzeźby i medale*, Poznań 1939, p. 14; J. Strzałkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 6–9; A. Więcek, *Dzieje sztuki medalierskiej w Polsce*, Kraków 1989, p. 188.

30 T. Strzałkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Wysocki stayed in Munich in 1901–1904, in 1908 and then again in 1910–1919.

Trojanowski's medal to mark the 500th anniversary of the reopening of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

Forms, materials and techniques

Alongside traditional round medals, other shapes were explored in the late 19th–early 20th century. Particularly popular were plaques shaped into an upright rectangle, often with rounded or truncated corners, sometimes extremely elongated (the-so called Hochformat) in tune with Art Nouveau's vertical emphasis³¹. Occasionally, an upright rectangle might be topped by a flattened arch, a motif often employed in Art Nouveau buildings. Some plaques have the form of a lying rectangle, with or without rounded corners, possibly with a flattened arched upper section, or a square, sometimes with truncated corners. Other shapes included the diamond, hexagon, octagon, irregular octagon, Maltese cross, upright oval, lying oval, and the ovoid with an elongated upper section. More unusual shapes can also be found: the upright rectangle topped by an undulating ribbon, square set into a quatrefoil, circle topped by a crown supported on volutes, bell surrounded by a linear ornament, irregular oval with an undulating contour, upright rectangle with truncated upper corners flanked by two branches, shield, two conjoined tablets and a demi-sun, waving banner or book. Some objects feature (or used to have) a ring or a hole drilled in the upper section for hanging, one is fitted with a pin, another one could be propped up and yet another was once the cover of a *carnet de bal*.

The majority of plaques, medals and tokens featured in the catalogue are made of bronze, occasionally oxidized, silvered, gilt, copper-plated or chiseled. Some are made of silver, occasionally gilt, or pewter, which also may be gilt, silvered or oxidized, zinc (sometimes gilt or silvered), brass, silvered brass (sometimes also chased), gilt also be silvered, gilt o brass, copper (which may oxidized), iron (sometimes blackened), aluminum (may also be painted), white alloy (occasionally silvered), base metal, cast iron, and new silver (argentums), occasionally silvered (the so-called Chinese silver). Most objects have been struck and 118 have been cast.

[Małdalena Karnicka]

31 J. Datow regards the Hochformat and square as characteristic for the Vienna Sezession, see.: J. Datow, *Die Erneuerung der Medaille in der Zeit des Jugendstils*, Speyer 1988, p. 31.