

A Love Story: the medal collection put together by Prof. João Duarte donated to the Crato Museum, Portugal

Maria Rosa Figueiredo (presented with João Bernardo dos Santos)



Fig 1. The entrance to Feira da Ladra, Campo de Santa Clara, Lisboa, Portugal
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos

I am sure you all know Professor João Duarte and his medals, since he has been with us for many years and many conferences. Unfortunately, since the health of his wife has not been that good for travelling lately, he is not with us in this Congress.



Fig 2. João Duarte at Feira da Ladra, holding a copy of *Histoire de la Médaille Militaire 1852-1952*
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 3. Medal vendor at Feira da Ladra
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 4. View of João Duarte's studio
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 5. The collection and research table,
at the João Duarte's studio
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 6. Museum and Gallery logos
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos

Accordingly, I felt I had to share with you the last developments of what I call his love story with medals. You probably know that he has been a strong and knowledgeable collector of Portuguese medals for many, many years, but you might be unaware that he had put together the most complete and best-preserved collection of Portuguese medals in existence, comprised of around 2,300 specimens, from the 16th century to the present day. To sum up, he has no heirs, nobody eligible to keep collecting and showing to the world his treasures.

Since I was introduced to Professor João Duarte by Carlos Baptista da Silva, former FIDEM President, and my colleague at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, I started to share his worries related with the future of his collections. The ideal solution was to donate the collections to a museum, with the obligation of having them on show and not in the stores, open to the public to be able to enjoy them.



Fig 7. Crato Museum
Photo: João Duarte



Fig 8. João Duarte and Maria Rosa Figueiredo, at the first presentation of the collection at the Crato Museum (November 2019)
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 9. The first medals at the Crato Museum (November 2019)
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 10. Signing of the donation of the collection to the Crato Museum (December 2021)
Photo: João Bernardo dos Santos



Fig 11. First exhibit at Espaço Volte Face – Medalha
Photo: João Duarte



Figs 12. First exhibit at Espaço Volte Face – Medalha
Photo: Crato Museum

And then a miracle happens! A colleague of mine at the Gulbenkian Foundation, Professor Jorge Rodrigues, a good friend, was also in charge of the contents of a museum¹ in Alentejo, in the village of Crato, where he owned a weekend house. This museum, recently renovated, had on show not only local collections, but also important donations of collectors, perhaps in similar circumstances of my friend João Duarte. The museum, with enough space, was ready to put on show the Professor's collection, in one of its galleries, named *Espaço Volte Face – Medalha* according to the collector's wishes.

The collection was built over the years, with acquisitions from antique stores, auction houses and donations from the authors, but mostly notably through meticulous search through Lisbon's flea markets, especially *Feira da Ladra*, which traces its roots to the 13th century (figs. 1-3). Professor João Duarte has published a catalogue with the full list of medals in the collection, a sample of which can be seen at the following website: <https://espacovoltefacemedalha.com>.



Figs 13-15. First exhibit at Espaço Volte Face – Medalha
Photo: Crato Museum



You are going to see images of the Professor's studio still displaying the collection, and of the different phases of the transition to the Crato Museum, including the first show, opened to the public in the current year. The museography of the gallery is by Professor Mariano Piçarra, my ex-colleague at the Gulbenkian Foundation. As you can see, the renovated Crato Museum is partially a child of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, having shared two of its employees: Jorge Rodrigues (curator), and Mariano Piçarra (designer).

NOTES

1. Crato Museum website: <https://cm-crato.pt/loais/museu-municipal-do-crato/>.