

# The rediscovery of Renaissance medals and their influence on the work of modern Italian artists, 1920-1945

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In the early 1920s, several signals of a new way of looking at medals can be traced in the Italian art scene. Specifically, the critical debate of the time focused on three main themes: the techniques used by the medallists, the widespread stylistic development of their production, and, above all, their way of looking at the models from the past.<sup>1</sup>

In an article published in 1922 in the influential journal *Rassegna d'arte antica e moderna*, Corrado Ricci, one of the most prominent Italian art historians of the time, openly took a stand against the use of the pantograph: an extremely popular tool at the time, which had been used for decades in order to produce medals from larger relief models. According to Ricci, this technical simplification was totally unacceptable. In his opinion, the mechanical translation into smaller dimensions led inevitably to messy compositions, overcrowded with too much detail. 'The smaller the size of a work', the scholar wrote, 'the more concise it must become.'<sup>2</sup>

In his essay, Ricci considered the Renaissance medals as the most useful example in order to overcome the use of the pantograph. After all, most of his considerations seemed to be drawn directly from what George Francis Hill had written ten years earlier in *Portrait Medals of Italian Artists of the Renaissance* (1912), when the British scholar had stated: 'neither modelling nor design can be truly translated on to a smaller scale except by an intelligent hand. Intelligence and not a machine is required to correct the false relations of masses and planes.'<sup>3</sup>

One year later, in the summer of 1923, Roberto Papini, one of the several critics who were then advocating a return of Italian art to an ideal of classicism, published in *Emporium* (another highly influential magazine in Italy at that time) an important review about the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Monza. The text helps to understand several aspects of the critical debate of the time. Papini, indeed, drew a clear line between Italian medallists: on the one hand, there were the artists who still used the pantograph, whose medals appeared to him

as serial works, inclined towards excessively decorative and pictorial effects; on the other, there were artists such as the Florentine sculptor Romano Romanelli, whose works were praised for their 'clear and decisive surfaces', their 'extremely synthetic masses', but above all were considered by Papini as 'worthy heirs of that art which so admirably flourished during the Renaissance.'<sup>4</sup>

However, the Italian art critic who was most involved with medals during those years was certainly Ugo Ojetti, who as early as 1919 had proposed some personal reflections on the new stylistic possibilities for the contemporary medallists.<sup>5</sup> In 1923, in the same months of Papini's review, Ojetti published in his journal, *Dedalo*, an article on Romanelli's medals, presenting his works in direct connection with the technique of the 'cast medallion used by Pisanello,' and even with the 'ancient Roman *aes grave*,' which the critic described as 'cast and not minted coins.' Ojetti's main purpose was clearly to connect the Romanelli's works with a long and glorious national tradition. Meaningfully, along with the text, he also published some large photographic reproductions characterised by strong *chiaroscuro* contrasts: images which reinforced the idea of medal art that the critic defined as 'closer to sculpture than to goldsmithing.'<sup>6</sup>

In short, in the early 1920s, several influential figures seemed to push in a common and precise direction. From this perspective, a real turning point coincided with the International Exhibition of Modern Medals, organized in New York City in November 1924. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs entrusted the Italian pavilion to Ojetti, who for the occasion edited an illustrated catalogue. In his introductory text, the critic affirmed the need to reclaim the legacy of the Renaissance tradition, and specifically that of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to Ojetti, this was the only way out of a crisis that had begun during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the 'triumph of realism . . . when medals and sculpture, competing with painting, suddenly lost clarity of composition, vigour of volumes, firmness of the profiles and sharpness of *chiaroscuro*.'<sup>7</sup>



Fig 1. *Il Doge Foscari*, 1904–1910  
Oreste Licudis  
From *Commenti. Il Doge Foscari* di Oreste Licudis,  
Dedalo, no. 2, 1923–1924, p. 394

Taking Ojetti's positions into account, the group of medallists who were selected for the Italian pavilion provides some valuable insights. Firstly, there were some elderly artists, who however seemed to play even very different roles. On the one hand, for instance, the works of Egidio Boninsegna, a leading figure for the Italian medal art during the previous twenty years, were presented

as the last witnesses of a basically impressionistic and decorative style, destined to disappear soon. On the other, the medals of an artist such as Leonardo Bistolfi (who was then 65 years old) seemed to testify to a crucial change in his way of working. Meaningfully, in a letter sent to Ojetti and now kept in the archives of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (National Gallery of Modern Art) in Rome, Bistolfi spoke of one of his works exhibited in New York City (the *Medal of Arturo Toscanini*, 1921) as his 'first medal realised in its definitive size.' In this regard, the artist added: 'after this one, I won't make any more models to be reduced by pantograph.'<sup>8</sup>

A central role in the exhibition was then played by other renowned Italian artists of the time, then at the peak of their careers. Prominent among them, for example, were figures such as Libero Andreotti and Giuseppe Romagnoli. In addition, Romagnoli was already then director of the Regia Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia (Royal School of the Art of Medal): a specialist institute founded in Rome in 1907, which from that moment onwards had represented a crucial reference point for the new generations of Italian medallists who studied there, absorbing a completely new approach to this art in comparison with that of older artists.<sup>9</sup>

More generally, most of the medals on display in New York had been made in recent years, and usually by artists who seemed to fully embrace Ojetti's positions. This was the case with Oreste Licudis, who among his works exhibited a plaque cast in bronze with the portrait of the Venetian Doge Francesco Foscari (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> As Ojetti wrote, this work was 'celebrated all over the world,' because 'Dr. Wilhelm Bode had purchased a version of it for the Kaiser Friedrich Museum of Berlin, believing it to be a work by Donatello.'<sup>11</sup> Regardless of the curious anecdote, Licudis' work was openly inspired by some



Fig 2. *Centenary of Antonio Canova's death*, 1922  
Aurelio Mistruzzi  
Bronze, 85.5 mm  
Private collection (Numismatica Ranieri, lot no. 87, 2017)



Fig 3. *Giovanna degli Albizzi*, 1486, reverse  
Niccolò Fiorentino  
Bronze, 78 mm  
London, British Museum, G3,IP.3  
Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

15<sup>th</sup> century representations of Venetian doges: above all some medals by Camelio, Sperandio and Pietro di Fano. Furthermore, Licudis seemed to be well aware of the peculiar appeal of this work for the collectors of the time. It is not a coincidence that in a letter sent to Ojetti with the selling prices for his works exhibited in New York, the artist required only a few hundred Italian lire for his other medals, but as much as 10,000 lire for the Doge's plaque.<sup>12</sup>

Equally significant is the case of Aurelio Mistruzzi, who exhibited in New York a fascinating medal for the *Centenary of Antonio Canova's Death* (1922) (fig. 2).



Fig 4. *Navy aviators*, 1914, reverse  
Romano Romanelli  
Bronze  
From Ojetti, U.: *Medaglie italiane*, Dedalo, no. 2, 1924-1925, p. 520

In spite of some obvious stylistic differences, the profile portrait with the naked bust turned three-quarters on the obverse seemed to be directly inspired by some models by Giovanni Boldù, and specifically by his self-portrait medal (1458, Hill 421).<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the image of the Three Graces on the reverse was clearly connected to a peculiar numismatic fortune of this subject, as also testified by particularly renowned artworks such as the reverse of the medal of *Giovanna degli Albizzi*, by Niccolò Fiorentino (1486, Hill 1021) (fig. 3). Even more interesting, however, are Mistruzzi's reflections in some of his letters sent to Ojetti. A few months before the exhibition, for instance, the artist affirmed he was not sure about displaying some minted medals together with the cast ones: he had the impression they were 'too small in diameter to be presented in an exhibition.'<sup>14</sup> A few years later, then, Mistruzzi complained about the demands of some customers, who 'would like to see on a medal what can be frescoed on a wall,' so completely misunderstanding the technical peculiarities of the medal art.<sup>15</sup>

Similar reflections can be found in the letters sent by many artists to Ojetti during the months leading up to the New York exhibition. Publio Morbiducci, for example, clearly distinguished cast medals from minted ones, considering these latter almost as serial works, 'common objects for the free market,' and speaking of a recent turning point in his work, 'mainly as a result of a study of the artists from the past.'<sup>16</sup> Similarly, medallists such as Eugenio Baroni or Giuseppe Santagata took sides against the risk of 'pictorial' and 'impressionistic' effects,<sup>17</sup> but above all against the 'dangerous industrial facilitation provided by the pantographic reduction from large models.'<sup>18</sup>

One of the most telling consequences of this new technical and conceptual approach to medals was the choice to indicate in the catalogue some of the works on display as 'original models.'<sup>19</sup> Actually, they were large cast bronze medallions, sometimes more than 200 millimetres in diameter, that until that moment had usually been employed simply as models from which to obtain medals by pantographic reduction. Now, on the contrary, they were presented as the original works, from which smaller versions could potentially be drawn. A true paradigm shift had taken place: such an indication in the catalogue reflected a completely new way of conceiving medals and their production.

The International Exhibition of Modern Medals, however, was not an isolated episode, nor can the artists' stances be explained merely as an attempt to match with Ojetti's interests. A broader overview of the works realised during those years by the main Italian medallists clearly shows how Renaissance works concretely offered them an important stylistic, technical and compositional lesson.<sup>20</sup> With this in mind, it may be useful to consider a few particularly significant case studies.

A first case in point is obviously that of Romano Romanelli.<sup>21</sup> His medal for *Navy Aviators* (1914) (fig. 4), for instance, was clearly inspired by the winged thunderbolt



Fig 5. *Giovanni delle Bande Nere*, 1522 or c. 1570, reverse  
 Francesco da Sangallo  
 Bronze, 92 mm  
 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975.1.1315



Fig 7. *Pietro Fedele*, 1925, reverse  
 Aurelio Mistruzzi  
 Bronze, 91 mm  
 Private collection  
 (Artemide Aste s.r.l., auction XXXIII. July 2, 2011, lot no. 837)

on the reverse of the medal of *Giovanni delle Bande Nere* (1522, or c. 1570), by Francesco da Sangallo (fig. 5), and the phoenix on the reverse of medal of *Tommaso Moro*, by Giovanni Maria Pomedelli (1527, Hill 589) (fig. 6). Several other interesting episodes concern then the works of Aurelio Mistruzzi.<sup>22</sup> For example, on the reverse of his medal of *Pietro Fedele* (1925) (fig. 7), an important Italian politician of the time, Mistruzzi proposed a clear reinterpretation of the heraldic symbol of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, already employed by Pisanello (c. 1445, Hill 33) and Matteo de' Pasti (1446, Hill 165) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (figs. 8-9). Likewise, a few years later, in his medal for the *Liberation from Fascism* (1943), the lettering and the scales in the middle of the medal showed

a careful attention to the mast with the inflated sail on the reverse of one of Pisanello's medals for Leonello d'Este (1440-44, Hill 26).

Another paradigmatic artist is the Sicilian Filippo Sgarlata, one of the several Romagnoli's students at the Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia during those years.<sup>23</sup> In a medal realised for the seventh centenary of St. Francis's death (1926), for instance, the face of the saint and the rays around his head took up the solution of the profile portrait in the medal of *Giovanni Tavelli da Tossignano*, by Antonio Marescotti (1446, Hill 79). Even more significant, however, is another work made by Sgarlata on the same occasion, in which the reverse of a medal



Fig 6. *Tommaso Moro*, 1527, reverse  
 Giovanni Maria Pomedelli  
 Bronze, 51 mm  
 Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1957.14.770.b



Fig 8. *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta*, c. 1445, reverse  
 Pisanello  
 Bronze, 89.5 mm  
 Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1957.14.604.b



Fig 9. *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta*, 1446, reverse  
Matteo de' Pasti  
Bronze, 41 mm  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 25.142.40



Fig 10. *St Francis preaching to the birds*, 1926  
Filippo Sgarlata  
Bronze, 71 mm  
Termini Imerese (Palermo, Italy), Museum House Filippo Sgarlata

by Pisanello for Alfonso of Aragon (1449, Hill 41) was translated by the Sicilian artist into the episode of *St. Francis Preaching to the Birds* (figs. 10-11). Even Sgarlata's *Venator impavidus* medal (1934), exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1934, was almost a direct quotation from Pisanello's *Venator intrepidus*, on the reverse of one of his medals for the king of Naples (1449, Hill 49). And the same is true for Sgarlata's medal of the *Two Crusader Knights* (1942), where the image of the horses seen from behind and in three-quarter view was clearly inspired by Pisanello's medal of *Lorenzo Malatesta* (1445, Hill 35) and Sperandio's medal of *Carlo Grati* (1485, Hill 392).

Similar episodes were extremely frequent, even among crucial figures in the Italian art scene of the time. This is the case of Antonio Maraini, the secretary general of the Venice Biennale, who in a medal dedicated to the famous writer Giovanni Papini, in 1933, employed exactly the same image of the open book adopted by Pisanello in his medal of *Pier Candido Decembrio* (1441-47, Hill 40). It was obviously a cultivated reference, conceived to be recognised by an inner circle of friends and intellectuals. At the same time, it was also clearly a way of claiming a direct connection with the tradition of past centuries.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond the single episodes of iconographic revivals, Renaissance models represented a decisive push for an overall evolution in the compositional and stylistic choices of contemporary artists. From this perspective, some portrait medals appear as particularly eloquent. One only has to consider Mistruzzi's medal dedicated to his son Diego (1940) or Sgarlata's medal with a portrait of Benito Mussolini (1930) to understand their clear dialogue with the models from the past: the expressions of the faces shown in profile, the clothes, but above all the modelling of the volumes and their very high relief were

clearly inspired by some of the most renowned works of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (figs. 12-14).

What interested modern medallists most seemed to be the possibility of giving their works an increasingly heavy and three-dimensional appearance, often almost suggesting the effect of an all-rounded sculpture. At the same time, equally significant were the choices related to the inscriptions and the lettering within the medals: Italian artists started to use large typefaces, often in Gothic style, sometimes characterized by effects of simulated inaccuracy. From this perspective, some particularly valuable insights are provided by a review published by the art critic Renato Pacini in 1931 about the medals



Fig 11. *Alfonso V of Aragon*, 1449, reverse  
Pisanello  
Bronze, 111 mm  
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1957.14.611.a



Fig 12. *Benito Mussolini*, 1930, obverse  
Filippo Sgarlata  
Bronze, 220 mm  
Private collection  
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Fig 13. *Filippo Maria Visconti*, c. 1441, obverse  
Pisanello  
Bronze, 102 mm  
National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (1957.14.595.a)

exhibited at the Quadriennale of Rome, one of the most important Italian exhibitions of the time. On that occasion, the critic's main thesis was the need for the artists to take inspiration from Renaissance models – specifically mentioning the medal of *Lorenzo de' Medici*, by Niccolò Fiorentino (c. 1490, Hill 926) – also in order not to forget an apparently obvious but absolutely crucial lesson: the lettering was not just a secondary detail, but a 'decisive and active element of composition' in any medal.<sup>25</sup>

Partially different was the case with some industrial producers of coins and medals: in a sense, they embodied a model from which many artists were then trying to distance themselves, claiming a strong authorial value of their individual work, now completely detached from an idea of industrial and serial production. Nevertheless, even a large factory like Johnson, based in Milan, gradually tried to adapt its production to the new taste of the time.<sup>26</sup> For example, on the occasion of the great Leonardo da Vinci Exhibition in Milan (1939), Johnson produced some commercial tokens with the faces of Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este, openly inspired by Caradosso's works and other *testoni* from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 15).

But how can this new and widespread interest for Renaissance medals be concretely explained? A first point to take into account is the crucial role played by the above-mentioned Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia in Rome, founded with the explicit aim of 'reconnecting this branch of sculpture with its glorious tradition.'<sup>27</sup> As documented by Rosa Maria Villani's seminal studies, the training of the students consisted in the practice of traditional casting and coining techniques, art history lessons, but above all the constant practice of copy from ancient artworks (for example, the Scuola owned several plaster copies of Pisanello's medals). Such an approach

obviously gave the new generation of medallists the idea of a direct and necessary connection to the Renaissance tradition.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that during the same decades several important (and richly illustrated) numismatic volumes were published. Among these, it is worth mentioning the *Corpus Nummorum Italicorum*. The *Corpus* was a sort of monumental numismatic encyclopaedia of great visual impact, especially because it was promoted and edited by the King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III, soon nicknamed as the 'numismatic king.'<sup>29</sup> In addition to that, one has also to consider the wide circulation of the first illustrated auction catalogues,<sup>30</sup> as



Fig 14. *Lorenzo de' Medici*, c. 1490, obverse  
Niccolò Fiorentino  
Bronze, 90 mm  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 50.58.4



15. Token of Beatrice d'Este for the Leonardo da Vinci Exhibition, 1939, obverse  
Stabilimento Johnson, Milan  
Bronze, 28 mm  
Private collection

well as the fairly frequent use of images of Renaissance medals to illustrate historical and literary texts.<sup>31</sup> In other words, not only were the medals becoming the subject of a new considerable attention, but they were also beginning to be part of a widespread visual horizon. From this perspective, it is also worth mentioning the crucial activity of a journal such as *Médailles*, the periodical of FIDEM (Fédération Internationale des Éditeurs de Médailles), first published in 1937.<sup>32</sup> Of equal importance, was then the *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini*, closely linked to the Società Numismatica Italiana, which in the 1920s established its prestigious headquarters at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan.<sup>33</sup>

In parallel, several Renaissance medals previously stored in the warehouses gained during those years a new visibility in the Italian museums. Such is the case, for instance, of the Museum of Parma. When it was renovated, in the late 1930s, its first room was reserved for a selection of Renaissance medals, and 'specifically those of the 15<sup>th</sup> century medallists from Emilia, Lombardy and Veneto:' a display choice that obviously reflected an unprecedented interest in these works.<sup>34</sup> A short time later, in the spring of 1941, more than three hundred works were showed at the *Mostra della Medaglia del Rinascimento* (Exhibition of the Medal of the Renaissance), in the Sala delle Asse of the Castello Sforzesco. Once again, the most admired works were obviously those by Pisanello, Matteo de' Pasti, Sperandio, Bertoldo and Niccolò Fiorentino.<sup>35</sup>

Such a widespread popularity also depended on important specialist studies. As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars such as Julius Friedländer, Alfred Armand and Aloiss Heiss had shown a clear predilection for Italian Renaissance works.<sup>36</sup> In a few decades, then, an increasingly clear distinction emerged between 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century artworks. This was evident in the volumes by Cornelius von Frabiczky, Georg

Habich, and especially George Francis Hill,<sup>37</sup> who in his seminal *Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance* (1930) meaningfully made the chronological limit of the volume coincide with the production of Benvenuto Cellini, explicitly presenting the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the most relevant period for the Renaissance medal art. The British scholar openly stated: 'The period thus covered is artistically the more important ... As medallists Cellini and the engravers who followed in his steps present little artistic interest.'<sup>38</sup>

Similar positions also characterised several Italian scholars' perspective. Among them, it is worth mentioning Augusto Calabi and Gianluigi Cornaggia, who in the late 1920s dedicated two important monographs to Matteo de' Pasti and Pisanello. The two scholars had no doubts: the 15<sup>th</sup> century was the true 'golden age' for Italian medal, 'which, it cannot be repeated enough, is exclusively the cast one.' According to them, this period had 'a life as splendid as it was short ... soon degenerating into the minted medal.'<sup>39</sup> Basically, their idea was that medals were to all intents and purposes 'relief sculptures,' according to an approach which perfectly matched with that of critics such as Ogetti and Papini, as well as with that of several contemporary artists.<sup>40</sup>

In any case, such an approach was evidently biased and basically incomplete, probably overly influenced by the trends of Italian art of the time, characterised by an absolute centrality of sculptural and constructive values (this tendency, of course, can also be explained in the light of the political pressures of the time: the fascist regime supported a solid, monumental art, in dialogue with an ideal centuries-old national tradition, often read from a very biased perspective). In this sense, it is quite telling the distance from the contemporary studies of a French scholar such as Jean Babelon, who in the same years proposed a basically pictorial interpretation of Pisanello's medals.<sup>41</sup> To tell the truth, Calabi and Cornaggia, just like several coeval Italian critics, seemed to deliberately ignore a simple but crucial aspect: the protagonists of Renaissance medal art were not sculptors, but mostly painters, architects and goldsmiths. Only in 1939, after the publication of Adolfo Venturi's monograph on Pisanello, Italian scholars began to speak of a reciprocal influence between the artist's pictorial and medal production, in a more balanced perspective.<sup>42</sup>

This would have been the first step in order to overcome an overly univocal sculptural interpretation of ancient and contemporary medals. In this sense, the Second World War represented a real turning point. Nevertheless, the wave of attention for the Renaissance medals of the previous decades left some deep traces in Italian art. Still in 1970, Luciano Mercante, one of the most important medallists of the period between the two world wars, wrote about the crucial differences 'between coin and medal, between the minted medal and cast one.' But above all, thinking back to the period spent at the Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia in Rome, he recalled: 'for us, it was like identifying with the great figures of the Renaissance.'<sup>43</sup>

Summing up, Renaissance medals certainly represented a decisive reference point for several artists during those decades, both from an iconographic and stylistic perspective. On the one hand, their extraordinary quality, recognized by scholars and public, gave new prestige to the work of the modern medallists. On the other, thanks to an unexpected affinity with the artistic trends of the time, these works actively influenced the critical debate as well as the production of contemporary Italian artists.<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES

1. For a general overview on the medal art in Italy during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see: *Ars Metallica. Monete e medaglie. Arte tecnica e storie* (ed. S. Balbi de Caro, L. Cretara and R. M. Villani), Rome, 2007. A particularly useful text within this volume is Cardano, N.: *Per una storia della medaglia italiana del Novecento, temi e percorsi dall'inizio del secolo agli anni Trenta*, pp. 155-156.
2. Ricci, C.: *La R. Scuola della Medaglia, Rassegna d'arte antica e moderna*, no. 2, 1922, pp. 51-57: 56. All translation from Italian, unless otherwise noted, are the author's.
3. Hill, G. F.: *Portrait Medals of Italian Artists of the Renaissance*, London, 1912, p. 19.
4. Papini, R.: *La mostra delle arti decorative a Monza. IV. Le arti dei metalli e delle pietre, Emporium*, no. 58, 1923, pp. 80-93.
5. Ojetti, U.: *Quattro medaglie di guerra, L'Illustrazione Italiana*, no. 2, 1919, pp. 502-503.
6. Ojetti, U.: *Due medaglie di Romano Romanelli, Dedalo*, no. 4, 1923-1924, pp. 62-65.
7. *Le Medaglie italiane mandate dal Ministero degli Esteri e scelte da Ugo Ojetti. Esposizione Internazionale della Medaglia Moderna presso la Società Numismatica Americana, New York City, November 1924* (ed. U. Ojetti), Milan-Rome, 1924, p. 5.
8. L. Bistolfi, letter to U. Ojetti, August 12, 1924, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 237, Bistolfi Leonardo, scultore).
9. For an overview of the history of the Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia, see: *Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia: una storia attuale* (ed. R. M. Villani), Rome, 2018.
10. Licudis, O.: *Commenti. Il doge Foscari di Oreste Licudis, Dedalo*, no. 2, 1923-1924, pp. 393-396.
11. Ojetti, 1924, pp. 7, 15.
12. O. Licudis, letter to U. Ojetti, August 29, 1924, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 1068, Licudis Oreste, scultore).
13. From here, the indication 'Hill' followed by a number will be a reference to the catalogue of Renaissance medals in: Hill, G. F.: *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, London, 1930.
14. A. Mistruzzi, letter to U. Ojetti, August 27, 1924, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 1281, Mistruzzi Aurelio, scultore).
15. A. Mistruzzi, letter to U. Ojetti, October 22, 1936, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 1281, Mistruzzi Aurelio, scultore).
16. P. Morbiducci, letter to U. Ojetti, September 2, 1924, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 1302, Morbiducci Publio, scultore).
17. E. Baroni, letter to U. Ojetti, October 20, 1924, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome, (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 117, Baroni Eugenio, scultore).
18. A. G. Santagata, letter to U. Ojetti, December 18, 1924, La Galleria Nazionale Archives, Rome (AGNAMEC-UO, u.a. 1687, Santagata Antonio Giuseppe, pittore e scultore).
19. Ojetti, 1924.
20. For a useful visual repertoire of Italian medals from those decades, see Tabacchi, W.: *Medaglie di guerra: Italia 1919-1943*, Carpi, 1990; Casolari, G.: *25 anni di storia: medaglie e decorazioni mussoliniane 1922-1945*, Rimini, 1996; Casolari, G.: *Il fulgore dell'oro nelle medaglie italiane: da Umberto I a Vittorio Emanuele III e Benito Mussolini*,

- Bologna, 2004; Tassini, A.: *Con valore e onore. La Storia degli italiani attraverso le medaglie e le decorazioni dal 1800 al 1945*, Udine, 2011.
21. On Romano Romanelli, see Campana, R.: *Romano Romanelli. Un'espressione del classicismo nella scultura del Novecento*, Florence, 1991.
22. On Aurelio Mistruzzi, with a peculiar attention for his medals, see *Aurelio Mistruzzi: bozzetti e medaglie nel lascito della provincia di Udine* (ed. G. Bergamini and D. Nobile), Udine, 2013.
23. On Filippo Sgarlata, see Greco di Bianca, A.: *Filippo Sgarlata medaglista e scultore*, Palermo, 1981.
24. Nicodemi, G.: Medaglisti italiani moderni. Antonio Maraini, *Rivista italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini*, no. 2, 1942, pp. 107-114.
25. Pacini, R.: I medaglisti alla prima Quadriennale romana, *Dedalo*, no. 11, 1930-1931, pp. 781-790: 788.
26. Founded in 1836, the Johnson factory reached the peak of its success in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the collaboration of many leading Italian sculptors and engravers. See *Centocinquant'anni di medaglie Johnson*, Milan, 1986.
27. Royal Decree of the Kingdom of Italy, no. 486, of 14 July, 1907.
28. See Villani, R. M.: La Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia, formazione e contesto storico, in *Ars Metallica. Monete e medaglie. Arte tecnica e storie*, Rome, 2007, pp. 133-154; Villani, R. M.: La Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia, l'arte indirizzata all'industria, l'utile nel bello, in *Scuola dell'Arte della Medaglia: una storia attuale*, Rome, 2018, pp. 181-202.
29. Travaini, L.: *Storia di una passione. Vittorio Emanuele III e le monete*, Rome, 2005.
30. See, for instance, *Catalogue des Bronzes de la Renaissance, Statuettes, Plaquettes, Flammand, Allemand composant la collection de M. X.* (ed. A. Sambon), Paris, 1925; *Catalogo della collezione De Nicola. Placchette e medaglie dei secoli XIV-XIX, piccoli oggetti e bronzi vari, antichi piombi* (ed. G. De Nicola), Rome, 1929; *Catalogue of the Collection of Medals, Plaquettes and Coins, chiefly of the Renaissance* (ed. T. Whitcombe Greene), London, 1933.
31. See, for instance, Portigliotti, G.: *Donne del Rinascimento*, Milan, 1927; Rusconi, J. A.: Il Magnifico Lorenzo, *Emporium*, no. 63, 1926, pp. 230-246; Janni, E.: Giovanni Delle Bande Nere, *Emporium*, no. 64, 1926, pp. 206-229.
32. From its very first issues, *Médailles* used the reverse of the medal of *Gianfrancesco I Gonzaga* by Pisanello as its front cover image. All issues of the magazine, extremely useful for understanding the interests of the time on medals, are available online in FIDEM's website: [www.fidem-medals.org/medailles%20arc.html](http://www.fidem-medals.org/medailles%20arc.html).
33. M. Strada, Discorso del Presidente Strada all'inaugurazione della nuova Sede sociale nel Castello Sforzesco il 23 aprile 1922, *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini*, no. 1, 1924, pp. 62-63.
34. Monaco, G.: *Il R. Museo di Antichità di Parma*, Rome, 1940, p. 6.
35. Nicodemi, G.: La Mostra della Medaglia del Rinascimento al Castello Sforzesco di Milano, *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica e Scienze Affini*, no. 1, 1941, pp. 74-76.
36. On the predilections of 19<sup>th</sup> century critics and collectors, see Gasparotto, D.: «Des petits bas-reliefs où s'agit sans peine une foule ardente». Conoscitori e collezionisti di medaglie e di placchette dall'Otto al Novecento, in *La raccolta Mario Scaglia. Dipinti e sculture, medaglie e placchette da Pisanello a Ceruti* (ed. A. Di Lorenzo and F. Franci), Milan, 2007, pp. 29-37.
37. Von Fabriczy, C.: *Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance*, Leipzig, 1903; Hill, G. F.: *Pisanello*, London – New York, 1905; Habich, G.: *Die Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance*, Berlin–Stuttgart, 1922.
38. Hill, 1930.
39. Calabi, A. and Cornaggia, G.: *Matteo dei Pasti. La sua opera medagliistica distinta da quella degli anonimi riminesi del XV secolo in relazione ai medaglioni malatestiani aggiunte le falsificazioni. Studio critico e ragionato*, Milan, 1927, pp. 15-16.
40. Calabi, A. and Cornaggia, G.: *Pisanello. L'opera medagliistica paragonata a quella pittorica distinta dalla produzione di seguaci e falsificatori dei secoli XV e XVI in relazione ai medaglioni decorativi coevi. Studio critico italiano e inglese e catalogo ragionato*, Milan, 1928, pp. 20-22.
41. « Pisanello a toujours signé ses œuvres de la formule suivante : *Opus Pisani pictoris*, ceci est l'œuvre d'un peintre. Et en effet, la médaille de Pisanello, par le sentiment pittoresque du revers [...] par la composition de la scène, l'atmosphère qui la baigne, l'entente des jeux de la lumière, est bien l'œuvre d'un peintre » (Babelon, J. : *La médaille et les médailleurs*, Paris, 1927, p. 48).
42. 'Pisanello tried to achieve in his reliefs some typical pictorial effects, as if the medal was a painting where the planes took on an unexpected thickness' (Venturi, A.: *Pisanello*, Rome, 1939, p. 78).
43. *Luciano Mercante scultore e medaglista* (ed. L. Mattei, G. Mesirca, and L. Miceli), Padua, 1970, pp. 233-234.
44. For an in-depth look on some of the themes discussed in this article, see also Motisi, G.: *Opus Pisani (pictoris). Influenze quattrocentesche nella medagliistica italiana tra le due guerre*, *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, no. 12, 2020, pp. 255-280.