Mary of Hungary's Small Portraits The Difficult Quest for Female Patronage

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Abstract
This article attempts to account for Mary of Hungary's attitude toward the medals depicting her. Some of these medals may not have originated at her initiative, raising questions about their use, dating, and the responsibility for their issuance. Reconsidering these objects sheds light on cultural practices and gendered representations beyond the prevailing scholarly focus on patronage and self-representation schemes. It also shows the extent to which Mary's features could have been depicted on medals without her commission, authorization, or cooperation. From this perspective, the case studies presented illustrate how her figure was interpreted and appropriated over time and across space.

Keywords: Mary of Habsburg, Louis II Jagiellon, Ferdinand I of Habsburg, Erasmus from Rotterdam, Christoph Füssl, Cigales, Vienna, Kremnica, Augsburg, medals, game pieces

The position and visibility of Mary of Habsburg (1505 – 1558)—as sister of Charles V, queen of Hungary (until the death of her husband Louis II Jagiellon in 1526), regent of this kingdom (until 1527), and finally governor of the Low Countries (1531 – 1555)—have sparked a wave of recent studies examining her profile as a female ruler and art patron.[1] Her post-mortem inventory of 1558 records a considerable number of items now classified as art—a fact that has led scholars to see her not only as a patron but also as a collector.[2] In particular, Mary was the family member who owned the most "medallas" (circular portraits) of contemporary figures, especially relatives, at the time of her death in Cigales (in the Kingdom of Castile). Made from gold, lead, wax, and paper, they depicted Charles V, Philip II, her sister-in-law, Isabella of Portugal, her nieces Mary and Johanna, her nephew Maximilian II, her grandfather Maximilian I, her brother-in-law Francis I of Valois, and his son Henry II, stored

[1] DOYLE, D. R.: The Sinews of Habsburg Governance in the Sixteenth Century: Mary of Hungary and Political Patronage. In: *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 31, 2000, pp. 349 – 360; *Mary of Hungary: The Queen and her Court* 1521 – 1531. Exh. cat., Budapest – Bratislava, 2005 – 2006. Ed.: RÉTHELYI, O. Budapest 2005; *Art, Power and Gender: Mary of Hungary and the Patronage of Art in Renaissance Europe*. Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. Turnhout 2020; *Marie de Hongrie: art et pouvoir à la Renaissance.* Exh. cat., Morlanwelz, 2025. Eds.: CAUCHIES, J.-M. – DOCQUIER, G. Morlanwelz 2025; PÉREZ DE TUDELA, A.: Marie de Hongrie et les arts: une approche de sa collection et de son mécénat. In: Ibidem, pp. 265 – 267.

[2] ESTELLA, M.: Las cuentas del tesorero Roger Patié y otros documentos. Esculturas y antigüedades de María de Hungría y los Jardines de Aranjuez. In: *Archivo Español de Arte*, Vol. 74, 2001, pp. 239 – 256, https://doi.org/10.3989/aearte.2001.v74.i295.377 (with previous literature); CANO CUESTA, M.: *Catálogo de medallas españolas.* Madrid 2005, pp. 27 – 29; *Los inventarios de Carlo V y la familia imperial.* Ed.: CHECA CREMADES, F. Madrid 2010, Vol. 3, pp. 2841 – 2960; JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: A Discerning Agent with a Vision: Queen Mary of Hungary. In: *Women, the Art of Power: Three Women from the House of Habsburg.* Exh. cat., Innsbruck, 2018. Eds.: HAAG, S. – EICHBERGER, D. – JORDAN GSCHWEND, A. Vienna 2018, pp. 37 – 49.

in a precious "cofre de Yndias colorado, pintado de oro" (a polychromed and possibly lacquered chest from "India," painted in gold).[3] Additionally, allegedly older medals ("antiguas")—all kept with Arabic and ancient Roman coins in bags, boxes, small sacks, paper wrappers, and a book-shaped display case—were recorded in the inventory alongside painted portraits, illuminated genealogies, and materials relevant to family history. The queen paid for some specimens of contemporary medals and may have commissioned them.[4] These initiatives can be regarded as part of her agency in collecting and managing objects of dynastic significance—a role often played by widowed women in the history of the Habsburg family.[5]

No small portrait of Mary in metal, gemstone, or less precious materials can be identified in this inventory. Indeed, the document does not always mention the subject of the listed medals. Moreover, we know that Mary left some of her belongings in the Low Countries when she moved to Spain in 1556, and these items were not recorded in the 1558 inventory. Nevertheless, we have no evidence to suggest Mary owned portable portraits of herself in such mediums and formats in 1558.

In fact, if we address the medal types depicting her likeness (at least twelve),[6] we face scenarios far less certain and straightforward than one might expect as a basis for considering female patronage and political agendas. For most of these, traditional attributions are quite tentative; the place of emission cannot be identified, and dating is often approximate, sometimes entirely uncertain, or posthumous (as we will argue). Even when an inscription provides a date, it is often based on the likeness that served as a model for the medal, rather than on the moment the medal was made. In most cases, we cannot assume that Mary of Hungary authorized or requested all of her small portraits in metal or stone, nor can we trace them back to a definitive patron (if any). All these circumstances raise substantial doubts about the possibilities of discussing her "agency" as a significant patron of these artifacts, and challenge the assumption that they all served as "media for self-representation"—two main topoi in the narrative about female art patrons, and Mary in particular.[7] If she commissioned some portable portraits of herself in circumstances that cannot be reconstructed, it can be argued that a few others may have originated far from her court and been conceived independently of her understanding of her social and historical role.

Regarding medals, all attempts to interpret Mary's potentially marginalized or subordinated status as a woman—or conversely, her female power, patronage, and self-awareness—are also impeded by the fact that the surviving portraits are poorly documented, lack provenance records from the first decades of their history, and were frequently replicated with significant modifications over time.

When dealing with these materials, we need to reconsider the iconology-based approach to likenesses, still prevalent in some gender studies, and the often

[3] CHECA CREMADES (see in note 2), pp. 2846 – 2847; GONZALO SÁNCHEZ-MOLERO, J. L.: *«Regia bibliotheca»: el libro en la corte española de Carlos V*. Mérida 2005, Vol. I, pp. 344 – 357; CUPPERI, W.: *Culture di scambio: medaglie e medaglisti italiani tra Milano e Bruxelles*. Pisa 2020, pp. 52 – 56.

[4] PÉREZ DE TUDELA, A.: Algunas precisiones sobre la imagen de Felipe II en las medallas. In: *Madrid*, Vol. 1, 1998, pp. 241 – 271, 269; CUPPERI 2020 (see in note 3), pp. 15, 53 – 54.

[5] A rich and well-balanced survey of scholarship on Habsburg women is provided in: EICHBERGER, D. – JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Collections and Connoisseurship: Habsburg Women as Patrons of the Arts. In: *Women* (see note 2), pp. 11 – 23, 18 – 20; see also *Marie de Hongrie: politique et culture sous la Renaissance aux Pays-Bas*. Proceedings of the symposium, Morlanwelz, 2005. Eds.: FEDERINOV, B. – DOCQUIER, G. Morlanwelz 2008.

[6] A census of Mary's small portraits is provided by WYNANTS, B.: Maria van Hongarije in medailles. In: *Jaarboek van het Europees Genootschap voor munt-en penningkunde*, 1997, pp. 173 – 221. See also ESER, T.: *Hans Daucher: Augsburger Kleinplastik der Renaissance*. Munich 1996, p. 339, Nos. 16 – 18.

[7] GARCÍA PÉREZ, N.: María de Hungría y las medallas conmemorativas de su nombramiento como gobernadora de los Países Bajos: arte y poder al servicio de la Casa de Austria. In: *Mujeres, promoción artística e imagen del poder en los siglos XV al XIX*. Eds.: VÉLEZ CHAURRI, J. J. – ERKIZIAÉ MARTIKORENA, A. Bilbao 2022, pp. 69 – 100; GARCÍA PÉREZ, N.: Estrategias políticas y representaciones artísticas: María de Hungría y la construcción de la imagen post-mortem de Luis II Jagellón. In: *Culture & History Digital Journal*, Vol. 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2023.009.

anachronistic assumptions about personal control over the image that underlie it. Moreover, seeking Mary's depictions "as a woman" may be perceived as an approach that is not fully intersectional, as her position inextricably depended on her lineage, vast knowledge, and social skills, too, rather than merely on binary-conceptualized gender. Instead, her medals can reveal something about the cultural practices that involved them and the scholarly challenges they pose.

Rather than offering a new survey of Mary's small portraits, this study focuses on six examples (Figs. 1 – 6) whose renewed consideration can challenge biased assumptions about the emission and circulation of her medals—the term "medals" is used here based on format, layout, and medium, without implying a specific purpose. Furthermore, the appropriation of the queen's figure in metal reveals less-explored gendered perspectives.

Mary as a "Popular" Figure

A small medal type, known from silver and lead examples (Fig. 1), offers an intriguing image of Mary of Hungary but also illustrates the risks of projecting preconceived expectations about her patronage onto her less-documented depictions.[8] Here, the queen of Hungary is portrayed on the obverse as a smiling widow. The motto on the reverse quotes a passage from the Gospel of Luke (21, 19) evoking the victims of persecutions against Christians and wars between kingdoms and between "nations." Those who bear testimony to Christ, however, will receive indisputable "words and wisdom" and will affirm their spiritual superiority through "patience." A few lines earlier, the Gospel emphasizes that faith involves disdain for worldly possessions through the example of a widow who donates her humble resources to the temple.

This focus on widows through scriptural references (overlooked in the existing literature) is further developed on the reverse of the medal: here, a bare-chested woman with long, curly hair and head uncovered, sitting on grass, interacts with an apparition of the Cross and points to something on the ground. The identification of this figure as Mary the penitent—suggested by her pose, attributes, and solitary setting[9]—can be reinforced by further argument. Magdalene's association with widows is attested to in Erasmus's *De vidua Christiana* (Basel 1529), a treatise dedicated to Mary of Hungary, in which this saint demonstrates that female "sexum" was not "indocilem" to divine wisdom.[10] In the medal, MARIA · REGINA · VNG[ariae] · VIDVA, equated to Mary Magdalene, her namesake saint, and to the victims of wars between kingdoms in the Gospel of Luke, embodies gender-, status- and time-specific Christian virtues, possibly referring to her personal suffering caused by the war with the Ottomans, in which she had lost her husband.

Nevertheless, the question of who issued this ambitious medal raises problems. Its highly disputed authorship does not point to its having been made in Pressburg, now Bratislava (where the dowager queen retired after 1526), or in the Low Countries (where she lived since 1531), but to the area between the High Danube and the Ore Mountains.[11] A possible, thus

[8] HABICH, G.: *Die deutschen Schaumünzen des XVI. Jahrhunderts.* Munich 1929 – 1934, Vol. I.2, p. 196, No. 1407. Examples in Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Münzkabinett, Inv. No. 2646bβ, 32.5 mm, silver, cast); Munich (Fig. 1); and once in the Lanna collection – *R. LEPKE'S KUNST-AUCTIONS-HAUS, Sammlung des Freiherrn Adalbert von Lanna, Prag 3, 16. – 19. Mai 1911*. Berlin 1911, p. 54, No. 664, 32 mm, golden silver, struck.

[9] SCHMIDT, S., in: *Wettstreit in Erz: Porträtmedaillen der Deutschen Renaissance.* Exh. cat., Munich – Vienna – Dresden, 2013–2015. Eds: CUPPERI, W. – HIRSCH, M. – KRANZ, A.– PFISTERER, U. Munich 2013, p. 287, No. 202. Habich's proposal to read the figure as *Patience* (HABICH 1929 – 1934 [see in note 8], loc. cit.) compares unfavourably with the other depictions of this personification.

[10] DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, *De vidua Christiana*, 265 (*Opera Omnia.* Vol. 36. Ed.: CYTOWSKAT, M. Amsterdam 2008, p. 272).

[11] The mention of her brother Ferdinand I in the legend and the reuse of the reverse die for one of his medals in 1549 (reproduced in *R. LEPKE'S KUNST-AUCTIONS-HAUS* 1911 [see in note 8], p. 55, No. 674) could be a non-conclusive clue that Mary's portrait was made in Vienna or during an Imperial diet. The authorship of the dies also remains questioned. – KATZ, V.: Prvních sto let české portrétní medaile. In: *Numismatický časopis československý*, Vol. 5, 1929, pp. 103 – 138, 112, attributed them to Hieronymus Dittrich from Kraslice; PROBSZT, G.: *Ludwig Neufahrer: ein Linzer Medailleur des 16. Jahrhunderts.* Wien 1960, p. 98, No. 100, to Ludwig Neufahrer, chiefly active between Linz and Vienna, while HABICH 1929



Fig. 1a-b: Unidentified artist (traditionally attributed to Ludwig Neufahrer), obv. + MARIA · REGINA · VNG · VIDVA · CAROLI · CESA: ET · FERDI · REG: SOR, rev. + IN PACIENCIA · POSSIDEBITIS · ANIMAS · VESTRAS · LVCE XXI, medal, between 1529 and 1549, lead, cast (from a struck specimen), diam. 33.8 – 34 mm, thickness 2.3 mm. Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich, Inv. No. 11/694. Photo: Staatliche Münzsammlung, A. Birkenholz

far unexplored solution to this puzzle is that the portrait was made during Mary's stay in Vienna, in 1528 or 1530; another is that its dies were engraved after paintings (a solution that opens the possibility of its later dating).[12] Even if it was based on a model made from life during a sitting, however, the medal would not necessarily have been commissioned by her. In most well-preserved examples, the small size and the die-striking technique used to make them indicate that they were relatively inexpensive and non-exclusive items, unlikely to be used in exchange between Mary and her peers as a means of their reciprocal recognition. To properly understand their emission, one should always consider that it could even take place without the sitter's authorization. In this extreme case, they might simply serve a widespread interest in "fœminae illustres" or in key figures of the Habsburg dynasty, and make the queen's image available for different forms of use, rather than fulfilling her direct needs, gift strategies, and political goals.

The conception of this medal—which undoubtedly benefited from the advice of a good humanist or theologian—may therefore have little to do with Mary's patronage and her personal views: its reverse incorporated flattering biblical motifs that had not necessarily been suggested directly by her entourage, as they had been linked to her widowed status in a printed book. However, Erasmus's *De vidua Christiana* (which Mary highly valued, according to her court priest Johannes Henckel in 1530)[13] promoted a more

– 1934 (see in note 8), table CLV, Fig. 8, preferred to classify them as in the "Art des Ludwig Neufahrer." The medal can be dated between 1526 (when Mary became a widow) and 1549 (when the obverse die was reused). – SCHÜTZ, K., in: *Kaiser Karl V. (1500 – 1558): Macht und Ohnmacht Europas.* Exh. cat., Vienna, 2000. Ed.: SEIPEL, W. Milan 2000, p. 140, No. 50.

[12] Mary's features and outfit may be related to a portrait type documented by a painting in Budapest (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Inv. No. 6961 – Van den BOOGERT, B., in: *Maria van Hongarije. Koningin tussen keizers en kunstenaars.* Exh. cat., Utrecht – s'-Hertogenbosch, 1993. Eds. Van den BOOGERT, B. – KERKHOFF, J. Zwolle 1993, p. 324, No. 222) – albeit the medal adapts a pose in profile, instead than three quarters.

[13] RÉTHELYI, O.: *Mary of Hungary in Court Context (1521 – 31).* PhD Thesis, European University, Budapest. Budapest 2010, pp. 120, 166 and 190.

provocative, humanistic view of widowhood and gender roles: Christ and the Apostles, the author noted, had permitted "colloquium" and "intimam familiaritatem" with women, and the Church fathers had discussed with them "de divinarum litterarum enarratione," while the biblical model of Martha and Mary of Bethany was there to demonstrate that "otium et solitudo" could coexist positively with "vita activa" in an unmarried woman.[14] In contrast, the medal's emphasis on Mary Magdalene's contemplative attitude seems far less original and personal (and probably did not need to be so, if the medal was intended to honor a figure not involved in its conception through prudent iconographic and textual choices).

Another small portrait of Mary provides hitherto unnoticed evidence that this medal circulated in 1535 ca. and also served unexpected purposes. A game piece now in Munich (Fig. 2)—suitable for playing mill, checkers, or backgammon—shows her head based on the medal in Fig. 1, which must therefore have been available in the Augsburg workshop responsible for its making, either as a specimen or a mold.[15] The other fourteen surviving pieces of the game represent her brothers Charles V and Ferdinand I, William IV of Wittelsbach, and wealthy citizens from Augsburg or surrounding towns. Among the women depicted are Eleanor of France (Mary's sister) and the wives of prominent Swabian figures. The design of these board games often transformed them into a competition between factions by decorating each piece with the face of a jet-set figure, identified, in most cases, by an inscription. This iconography enabled discursive allusions to recent history and contemporary high society in conversation among the players during the game. The relatively broad range of women depicted on such pieces depended on the availability of their likenesses, their recognizability, and their connection to well-known events and groups. This explains why such game sets featured portraits of personalities with diverse origins and political affiliations. As table games also served as entertainment for women, these sets often show



Fig. 2: Unidentified artist (Augsburg?), obv. MARIA · REGINA, blank reverse, game piece, ca. 1535, stucco (cast in a mold and painted) on maple wood (turned and inscribed), diam. 45 mm, thickness 10 mm. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, Inv. No. R433. Photo: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, K.-M. Vetters

a balanced gender representation in the figures depicted. Variety was also important. For example, in a game piece preserved in Munich, but from a different set, an identical likeness of Mary is paired with that of an unidentified CAESSARI[s] MAXIMILIONI CANTATRIX (an elegant female singer linked to her grandfather Maximilian I).[16] In fact, the dowager queen of Hungary is frequently represented on game pieces, which could be replicated by mold casting with an unspecified stucco compound (also deployed for the Munich piece).[17] Possibly, the inscription MARIA · REGINA (also taken from the medal, but shortened, see Figs. 1 and 2) made possible spontaneous discursive connections with other Habsburgs depicted on pieces on the board, their conflicts with France and Lutherans, as well as comparisons with the lives of female patricians from Augsburg. The various associations emerging from the queen's por-

[14] ERASMUS (see in note 10), 941 (p. 324).

[15] HIMMELHEBER, G.: *Spiele*. Munich 1972, p. 66, No. 89.

[16] Ibidem, p. 71, No. 120.

[17] See also WYNANTS 1997 (see in note 6), pp. 198 – 199, Nos. 13 – 14.



Fig. 3a-b: Christoph Füssl the Elder, obv. MARIE · HVNGAR: BOHEM · / EQVÆ · REGINÆ · IAM · / PRO · CESARAE · CAROL · / V·°· IN · FLANDRIS / EFFIGIES, rev. "LVDO: HVNG: BOEM: [et]C · REX / ANV: AGENS · XX · IN · TVRCAS / APVD · MOHAZ · CVM · PAR/VA · SVORVM · MANV · PV/GNAS · HONESTE / OBYT·M·D·XXVI, medal, gilt silver, cast (after a struck specimen), diam. 42.3 – 42.5 mm, thickness 2.5 mm. Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich, Inv. No. 11/868. Photo: Staatliche Münzsammlung, A. Birkenholz

trait fully uncover the potential of her personality in intersectional terms. It may have been this kind of appeal, rather than personal art patronage or political "propaganda," that contributed to the success of some of Mary's small portraits.

Portraits on Someone Else's Initiative?

Two types of struck medals depict Mary of Hungary with the 1526 Battle of Mohács on the reverse. The first one (Fig. 3) shows the queen alone, while the second (Fig. 4) shows her facing her husband, Louis II, who drowned fighting the Ottomans in that battle. Viktor Katz demonstrated the close similarity of these two types to other highly consistent medals whose dies (recognizable by their distinctive form) were stored at the mint in Kremnica (present-day Slovakia) in 1753. According to his reconstruction, these dies must have been engraved there from 1530 onward. This enabled Katz to assign the emission of Mary and Louis's medals to this mint and to attribute them to Christoph Füssl (or Füszl) the Elder, who was solely responsible for die engraving at this institution from 1537 to his death in 1561.

The obverse inscriptions on both medals refer to Mary's move from Hungary to the Netherlands on behalf of Charles V in 1531.[18] In particular, the type with her individual likeness indicates this event as quite recent (IAM · / PRO · CESARAE [scil. Caesare] · CAROL[O] · / V·°· IN · FLANDRIS, Fig. 3), while the other omits this temporal specification (AC · PROCES' / IN · FLAN, Fig. 4)—a possible clue that it was made later.[19] The rare ability to date and locate the emission of these medals makes it possible to discuss who might have been responsible for making them.

[18] WINTER, H., in: *Kaiser Ferdinand I., das Werden der Habsburgermonarchie*. Exh. cat., Vienna, 2003. Ed.: SEIPEL, W. Milan 2003, p. 404, No. V.5.

[19] CUPPERI, W., in: *The Scher Collection of Commemorative Medals*. Eds.: SCHER, S. K. – NG, A. New York – London 2019, pp. 185 – 186, Nos. 296 – 297.



Fig. 4a-b: Christoph Füssl the Elder, obv. LVDO: VNGAR: BOHE:QVE / REGIS · ET · MARIÆ · RE/GINÆ · DVLCISS · Co[n]IV/GIS·AC · PROCES' / IN · FLAN[dris], rev. LVDO: HVNG: BOEM: [et]C · REX / ANV: AGENS · XX · IN · TVRCAS / APVD · MOHAZ · CVM · PAR/VA · SVORVM · MANV · PV/GNAS · HONESTE / OBYT·M·D·XXVI, medal, gilt silver, cast (after a struck specimen), diam. 43.6 – 43.8 mm, thickness 2.3 mm. Munich, Staatliche Münzsammlung, Inv. No. 11/871. Photo: Staatliche Münzsammlung, A. Birkenholz

According to one recent interpretation, these medals were intended to celebrate Mary's appointment in 1531 as governor of the Low Countries and were requested by the queen herself.[20] However, the available evidence does not support such a definitive conclusion. Notably, after Louis II's death, the kingdom of Hungary was divided into three states and its crown was contested between Ferdinand I of Austria and John I Szapolyai (1487 – 1540). Subsequently, medals depicting the death of the last Jagiellon king of Hungary and the likeness of the first Habsburg regent of Hungary—his widow, Mary—implied this historical context, especially if struck in Kremnica (that is, in territories under Habsburg control). If they were meant to celebrate Mary's appointment in the Low Countries, why would they omit any reference to it and mention the seventeen provinces so informally and imprecisely (respectively, IAM · / PRO · CESARAE · CAROL[O] · / V·°· IN · FLANDRIS in Fig. 3, and PRO CES[are] / IN · FLAN[dris] or PROCES[sa] / IN · FLAN[drias] in Fig. 4)?

In fact, the dowager queen of Hungary accepted the appointment as governor of the Low Countries on January 29, 1531; before that, it would have been unthinkable to have her appointment celebrated on a medal. At that time, however, she had already left Hungary for Austria, in November 1530;[21] why would she have commissioned medals in 1531 from a distant mint, still potentially threatened by John I's troops, when she was in Vienna (where medalists could be found) or on her way to Brussels?

Füssl's authorship of these medals suggests at least two stronger possibilities. First, the issuance of both medals might have been the initiative of the Habsburg administration in Pressburg or one of its members (starting with the Palatine of Hungary, who formally represented King Ferdinand I during his absences). After all, Mary's individual likeness was flanked by the coats of arms of Hungary and Bohemia (Fig. 3), and the dies for these types were engraved in a state mint. Since Mary embodied institutional continuity in this part of the king-

[20] GARCÍA PÉREZ 2022 (see in note 7), pp. 72 and 79.

[21] RÉTHELYI 2010 (see in note 13), pp. 129 – 131.



Fig. 5a-b: Unidentified artist (traditionally attributed to Peter Flötner), obv. CAROL · V / · ET · · FER · I · FR[atr]ES · / RO · IMP · ET · RE · RE · HISP · VT/RI[us]Q · SICI · VNG · BOE · ET^{C} · ARC/HID · AVST · D : BVRG : · 1·5·32 ; in the field: · K · Q∘ and · REX / · F : I :, rev. Mary of Hungary, medal, silver, cast and cold chiseled, diam. 74 mm. Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich, Inv. No. 11/405. Photo: Staatliche Münzsammlung, A. Birkenholz

dom, these medals may have circulated during the critical period when the dowager queen had left the capital city, and Ferdinand was chiefly in other territories. In this case, the Kremnica mint would have been the closest facility suitable for striking portraits of the former rulers. Second, a few medals with different subjects but similar layouts, struck as pest talers, have been attributed to Füssl. These objects, interpreted as protective amulets against calamities, may not have originated from a commission, although their making required approval from the mint's warden to use the machinery.[22] Was this also the case with the medals depicting Mary and Louis II? As Füssl declared in a quarrel with another mint officer in 1557, striking medals from his dies had enabled his officers to earn additional income over the previous decades.[23] One might wonder to what extent the production of portrait medals was driven by the initiative of the mint's authorities or officers—a supposition for which little evidence exists at this early date. The two medal types discussed here thematize the fading of Hungary's former rulers and the reasons behind it: if they were based on nostalgia and mainly targeted Habsburg supporters, they could have been struck more out of consideration of their potential impact and success rather than by direct order from a ruler. Since it remains uncertain whether these medals were sold by their makers or distributed on behalf of the authorities, several possibilities should be considered before they are interpreted within a Habsburg patronage scheme.

In both hypotheses presented here, Mary's past role would have inspired depictions that conferred

[22] KATZ, V.: *Die erzgebirgische Prägemedaille des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Prague 1932, p. 39, with reference to the pest talers issued in the Ore Mountains.

[23] KATZ, V.: Kremničtí řezači želez a medailéři Kryštof Füssl, Lukáš Richter a Abraham Eysker. In: *Numismatický časopis československý*, Vol. 5, 1929, pp. 139 – 180; KATZ, V.: Die Kremnitzer Medaillenreihen 1530 bis 1600. In: *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 23, 1930, pp. 109 – 116.

additional connotations on her royal and marital image, without the medals necessarily being requested or devised by herself. Such images could be embedded in a broad range of cultural practices unrelated to the sitter's court.

Portraits to Fill a Gap

From the mid-sixteenth century onward, large medal types became increasingly favored for royal and high-ranking sitters. A new portrait in this format could be paired with pre-existing ones of similar size and was often regarded by its owner as more prestigious. Nevertheless, such detailed, bust-length portraits of Mary of Hungary appear to have been scarce during her lifetime.[24] Indeed, a cast medal with likenesses of the queen on the reverse and of her husband, Louis II Jagiellon, on the obverse (the latter inscribed with the date MDXXIIII) may represent an initial attempt to supply the Habsburg family and diplomatic networks with this kind of large, desirable portrait.[25] However, the extreme rarity of this cast medal (known from only one silver example and another, poor lead specimen, both currently in unknown collections or lost) indicates that it was not widely replicated after its making.[26]

This lack of large, detailed medallic portraits of Mary seems to have led to creative compensatory solutions, possibly starting from the second quarter of the sixteenth century. For instance, the problematic portrait shown in Fig. 5, dated 1532 on the obverse, may be seen as an independent response to this gap.[27] Remarkably, the obverse (with the inscription K[arolus] · Q[vintvs] and · REX / F[erdinand]: I) and the reverse (depicting Mary of Hungary before her widowhood) diverge fundamentally in terms of layout, framing, ornaments, inscriptions, and the dating of the likenesses, across all known examples. Additionally, the initials of the two jugate male busts, modeled in relief across the field, partly reiterate the information in the upper legend, while the letters referring to Mary's name, M[aria] R[egina] K[aroli?] V, were simply engraved, and appear only in some versions. Furthermore, all the surviving versions vary considerably from one another.[28] Georg Habich has questioned whether the obverse was designed to be paired with this reverse. Indeed, the profiled border and flat decoration of the reverse could have served to prevent relief abrasion when the medal was laid on that face, but, if that was the case, why not give the obverse the same border? As a matter of fact, the portraits of Charles and Ferdinand seem to

[24] CUPPERI 2020 (see in note 3), p. 17.

[25] HABICH 1929 – 1934 (see in note 8), Vol. I.1, p. 16, No. 66 (once in Lviv, Ossolinski Library, silver, 73 mm, but not included in the current collections of the Muzeum Książąt Lubomirskich, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, as kindly verified by curator Teresa Sokół, and to be considered dispersed); SCHULMAN, J.: *Collections Arthur Löbbecke, L. M. Beels van Heemstede, e.a. Vente le 17 juin 1929*. Amsterdam 1929, p. 22, No. 215 (lead, cast, 73 mm). The likenesses were possibly copied in other types. – HABICH 1929 – 1934 (see in note 8), Vol. II.1, p. 273, No. 1897.

[26] Habich's classification as a work stylistically close to Hans Daucher, but not from his hand (HABICH, G.: *Die deutschen Medailleure des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Halle a. d. Saale 1916, p. 19), leaves the attribution and localization of the making of the medal open.

[27] BERNHART, M.: *Die Bildnismedaillen Karls des Fünften*. Munich 1919, p. 52, No. 73; HABICH 1929 – 1934 (see in note 8), Vol. I.2, p. 258, No. 1823 (questioning his previous attribution to P. Flötner).

[28] The Munich version (Staatliche Münzsammlung, Inv. No. 11/405, silver, 74 mm) has an engraved line framing the obverse and no inscription in the reverse; the Vienna version (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Münzkabinett, Inv. No. 733bβ, silver, 74 mm) has no engraved line, but depicts a shield above Mary's head; the Budapest specimen (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Inv. No. 97/1970-146, silver, 75 mm) has a different background decoration, but no shield, and bears the inscription "M[aria] R[egina] K[aroli?] V" in a spared line across the field. The specimen in London (Victoria & Albert Museum, Inv. No. A.385-1910, silver, 69 mm)—an aftercast—combines an obverse similar to the Munich one, cut along the margins, with a reverse like the Budapest one, but with a different border and no background ornaments. The version once in Innsbruck (Enzenberg Collection, silver, 70.5 mm)—also an aftercast—has the engraved border line in the obverse and the engraved inscription and a double border line in the reverse, but no shield and background decoration. Its obverse bears the date "1531." A fifth version, similar to the latter, was described in HAMBURGER, L.: *Sammlung Geheimrat Hermann Vogel, Chemnitz 1, Versteigerung […] am 4. November 1924*. Frankfurt a. M. 1924, p. 15, No. 84 (silver, 70 mm).

have circulated early without the reverse depicting their sister.[29] Speculations about Mary's association with her brothers and her representation as a young lady would therefore be imprudent, as the combination of the two faces could be later than 1532 and attributable to a goldsmith rather than a patron (if any). What matters here, however, is that this combination does not demonstrate the assistance of a learned adviser. If the legend of the reverse is correctly interpreted as M[aria] R[egina] K[aroli?] V, the nomenclature of her titles was quite imprecise compared with others, and Quintus was abbreviated as Q° on the obverse and as V on the reverse. The upper legend accompanying Charles and Ferdinand's busts also confusingly mixes their titles, and the variant preserved in Vienna associates Mary with an unrelated heraldic image, a rampant Pegasus inscribed in a shield and engraved in the field above her head: such epigraphic and iconographic inconsistencies could hardly be accepted in networks close to the sitters or interested in their family history,[30] but make sense if one considers the sixteenth-century scarcity of large medals of Mary and the possibility that some aimed to fill this gap with an object notable in other respects: the versions in Vienna and Munich display extensive, labor-intensive cold chiseling, consistent with the purpose of delivering a luxury item, featuring rich decoration and a thick silver plate.

A clear example of late intervention in Mary's iconography is a medal that combines her likeness as a bride on the reverse (dated MDXXI in its inscription) with that of Charles V on the obverse (molded from Leone Leoni's medal of 1549).[31] Since Leoni worked for the queen from 1549 to 1556, the questionable attribution of this hybrid type to him led some scholars to suggest that she had commissioned this object.[32] In fact, Mary's portrait in this type is a posthumous pastiche based on earlier medals, both in her features and in her hat and dress (which the copyist even enriched with additions).[33] The date on the reverse refers to the sitting, not to the creation of the hybrid, which cannot be earlier than 1549. The similarity of the reverse to Leoni's medal of Charles V (despite significant epigraphic differences) should be seen as a deliberate imitation intended to fill a gap in Leoni's series of ca. 72 mm Habsburg portrait medals. This intervention, which may be much later than the sixteenth century (as indicated by the careful imitation of the format, layout, and lettering), may have been a response to a quest for reliable likenesses of Mary and medals that fit within a prestigious dynastic series. Such a misleading object records the practice of visualizing genealogies through uniform medals and highlights the queen's afterlife as a key figure in her family, but not her patterns of patronage.

Conclusion

Mary of Hungary's small and medium-size struck medals are not rare and date to her lifetime. Nevertheless, in at least two cases (Figs. 1, 3 – 4), there are reasons to doubt her direct involvement in their emission.[34] The struck medal in Fig. 1 is also

[29] A brass specimen interpreted as a baptismal medal bears the inscription "CRISTOF AROTHSCHICZ ANNO DOMINI MDXXXV" and an engraved coat of arms in the reverse, instead of the portrait (TRUSTED, M.: *German Renaissance Medals: A Catalogue of the Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London 1990, p. 38, No. 28). Moreover, HABICH 1929 – 1934 (see in note 8), loc. cit., conjecturally connected the obverse with Charles and Ferdinand with their squared clay portrait recorded in the Imperial collection (HERRGOTT, M.: *Nummotheca principum Austriae*. Friburgi Brisgoviae 1752, p. 95, No. LXI, wrongly describing the heads as looking left).

[30] WEBER, I. S., in: *The Currency of Fame*. Exh. cat., Washington – New York, 1994. Ed.: SCHER, S. K. New York 1994, pp. 283 – 284, No. 124, also remarked that this medal "cannot have been commissioned by the court," but came to a different conclusion: "all of the examples are but trials or sketches for a medal that was ultimately never executed."

[31] CUPPERI 2020 (see in note 3), p. 15.

[32] For the attribution to Leoni, see KERKHOFF, J., in: *Maria van Hongarije* 1993 (see in note 12), p. 73, No. 51.11; GARCÍA PÉREZ 2022 (see in note 7), p. 74.

[33] For profile and hat, see HABICH 1929 – 1934 (see in note 8), Vol. I.1, p. 16, No. 66; for dress and necklace, see WYNANTS 1997 (see in note 6), p. 183, No. 10 (a medal whose problematic dating deserves further research).

[34] A third struck type, attributed to Hieronymus Magdeburger (HABICH 1929 – 1934 [see in note 8], Vol. II.1, p. 273, No. 1897), deserves to be further studied in relation to this phenomenon.

the only clearly contemporary one depicting her as a widow—a state in which women were not usually portrayed in medals.[35]

On the contrary, her large cast medals appear to be extremely rare and were probably equally so in her time: this divergence is significant because large cast medals were the customary medium for exchange among Mary's peers. The dowager queen presumably believed that the portraits modeled or carved during her youth and married life were adequate, had reached the intended recipients, and provided suitable models for further images. She accepted the presence of outdated likenesses of some of her relatives in her own collection of family medals, and it is likely that she was comfortable with the circulation of older medallic portraits of herself. The memory of her features in the most prestigious large-scale formats evidently focused on her years as a bride, a potential mother, and a tie between the Habsburg and Jagiellonian dynasties.

Several new medals featuring her likeness were created far from her in space or in time, probably to compensate for the limitation of large medals with detailed portraits. At least one surviving medal type (formerly attributed to Leoni and possibly posthumous), along with another (traditionally ascribed to Peter Flötner, Fig. 4), may have originated from an artist's initiative rather than a patron's. In general, the individuals who initiated the creation of medals featuring Mary's face are difficult to identify; therefore, we cannot assume that all of them were commissioned, controlled by the sitter, or intended to disseminate a centrally planned political image. The possibility of reconstructing the impact of such images is extremely intriguing for reception and later replication, but highly problematic if focused on agency and intentions. Highly refined methodologies are required to address topics such as gender issues in proper historical terms for sixteenth-century medals, and we are only starting to refine our approaches and test them on complex, de-contextualized objects.

[35] Another medal (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Münzkabinett, Inv. No. 2647bβ, silver, cast, 37.5 mm) copies her three-quarters features from Titian's lost portrait on canvas of 1548 or 1550 – 1551 (WETHEY, H.: *The Paintings of Titian*. Vol. 3. London 1971, p. 202, No. L-24; TAGLIAFERRO, G. – AIKEMA, B. a. o.: *Le botteghe di Tiziano*. Florence 2003, p. 137), either directly or indirectly, and has therefore a quite uncertain dating.

Mary of Hungary's Small Portraits
The Difficult Quest for Female Patronage

Summary

This article challenges the scholarly assumption that Mary of Hungary's medallic portraits were primarily fruits of her own patronage or instruments of political self-representation. Instead, it argues that many of these objects possibly originated independently of her control and sometimes served purposes beyond her court.

All attempts to interpret Mary's potentially subordinated status as a woman, or conversely, her female power, patronage and self-awareness, are complicated by the fact that the surviving medals are poorly documented and have often been replicated with significant modifications over time. For the surviving medal types depicting Mary—of which there are at least twelve—there is no evidence that she commissioned or authorized them. The article focuses on six cases where fresh reconsideration can challenge biased pre-assumptions about the emission and circulation of her medals, and it uncovers less-explored gendered perspectives.

One struck medal, the reverse of which depicts the Cross appearing to a woman sitting on the grass, is here linked to Erasmus's *De vidua Christiana* (1529), dedicated to Mary. In this type, the dowager queen—equated to her namesake saint, Mary Magdalene, and the victims of wars commiserated in Luke's Gospel (21, 19)—embodies gender-specific virtues, possibly referring to the personal suffering caused to her by the loss of her husband, Louis II Jagiellon, in the battle of Mohács (1526).

A game piece for playing mill, checkers, or backgammon features Mary's head based on this medal. In the sixteenth century, the design of these board games often transformed them into a competition between factions by decorating each piece with the face of a jet-set figure. This iconography enabled discursive allusions to recent history and contemporary high society during the gameplay. The logical associations that could be established between Mary's portrait and those in the other pieces of the same game set reveal the potential of her personality in intersectional terms. As table games also served as entertainment for women, these sets often propose a balanced gender representation in the figures depicted.

The dies for two other medal types were engraved at the mint in Kremnica (present-day Slovakia) after Mary left the Kingdom of Hungary for Vienna (1530) and eventually for the Low Countries (1531). These types represent a good case for medals that were possibly issued on someone else's initiative: Mary's past role as queen and regent of Hungary could have inspired depictions that conferred her royal and marital image with additional connotations connected with the fading of the former king, Louis II, rather than with her governorship of the Low Countries.

Mary's large cast medals seem to have remained scarce during her lifetime—a gap later filled by others in response to an interest in such portraits. For instance, a likeness of Mary dated "MDXXI" is here recognized as a posthumous pastiche, combined with a 1549 portrait of Charles V by Leone Leoni in a hybrid medal.

The article advocates moving beyond the patronage paradigms, still prevalent in some gender studies, toward an intersectional analysis that considers Mary's lineage, knowledge and social skills, and highlights the appropriations of her image over time. Finally, it emphasizes the need for provenance and technical analysis before assuming the agency of such figures as significant medal patrons.

Malé portréty Márie Uhorskej
Zložité hľadanie ženského mecenátu

Resumé

Štúdia spochybňuje vedecký predpoklad, že medailové portréty Márie Uhorskej sú primárne výsledkom jej objednávok alebo nástrojmi jej politickej seba-prezentácie. Miesto toho tvrdí, že mnohé z týchto objektov pravdepodobne vznikli nezávisle od jej kontroly a niekedy slúžili aj účelom nesúvisiacemu s dvorom. Všetky pokusy o interpretáciu potenciálne podriadeného postavenia Márie ako ženy alebo naopak jej ženskej sily, patrónstva a sebauvedomenia komplikuje skutočnosť, že zachované medaily sú nedostatočne zdokumentované a v priebehu času boli často replikované s výraznými úpravami. Pre žiadny zo zachovaných typov medailí zobrazujúcich Máriu, prinajmenšom dvanásť, neexistuje dôkaz, že by si ich objednala, alebo schválila. Štúdia sa zameriava na šesť príkladov, kde nové prehodnotenie môže spochybniť doterajšie predpoklady o emisii a obehu jej medailí a zároveň odhaliť menej preskúmané rodové perspektívy. Razená medaila, ktorej rub zobrazuje kríž zjavujúci sa žene sediacej na tráve, je tu spojená s Erasmovým dielom *De vidua Christiana* (1929), venovanému Márii. Na zadnej strane je vyobrazená kráľovná vdova, stotožnená so svojou menovkyňou Máriou Magdalénou a obeťami vojen, ktorým sa v Lukášovom evanjeliu (21, 19) vyjadruje ľútosť, stelesňujúca cnosti špecifické pre pohlavie, čas a rodinný stav, pravdepodobne odkazujúc na osobné utrpenie, ktoré jej spôsobila strata manžela Ľudovíta II. Jagelovského v bitke pri Moháči (1526). Herná figúrka viažuca sa k stolovej hre dámy, alebo „backgammonu" vyobrazuje Máriu podľa tejto medaily. V šestnástom storočí dizajn stolových hier často súvisel so súťažou medzi frakciami tým, že každá figúrka bola vyzdobená tvárou reálnych dvorských postáv. Táto ikonografia umožňovala počas hry diskurzívne narážky na nedávnu históriu a súčasné elity. Logické asociácie, ktoré sa dali vytvoriť medzi portrétom Márie a portrétmi na ostatných figúrkach tej istej hernej sady, odhaľujú potenciál jej osobnosti v intersekcionálnom zmysle. Keďže stolové hry slúžili aj ako zábava pre ženy, tieto sady často navrhujú vyvážené rodové zastúpenie v zobrazených figúrkach.

Razidlá pre dva ďalšie typy medailí boli vyryté v mincovni v Kremnici (dnešné Slovensko) potom, čo Mária odišla z Uhorského kráľovstva do Viedne (1530) a nakoniec do Nizozemska (1531). Sú dobrým argumentom pre tie medaily, ktoré vznikli z iniciatívy niekoho iného: Máriina minulá úloha kráľovnej a regentky Uhorska mohla inšpirovať zobrazenia, ktoré jej kráľovskému a manželskému obrazu pripisovali ďalšie konotácie, spojené s bývalým kráľom Ľudovítom II., a nie s jej postavením v Nizozemsku. Zdá sa, že Máriine veľké odlievané medaily zostali počas jej života vzácne – medzeru neskôr zaplnili iní v reakcii na záujem o takéto portréty. Napríklad podobizeň Márie datovaná „1521" – a kombinovaná s portrétom Karola V. z roku 1549 od Leone Leoniho v hybridnej medaile – je tu rozpoznaná ako posmrtná napodobenina určená na doplnenie jednotnej dynastickej série. Článok sa zasadzuje za odklon od paradigmy patronátu, ktorý je v niektorých rodových štúdiách stále rozšírený, smerom k intersekcionálnej analýze, ktorá zohľadňuje Máriin pôvod, vedomosti, ako aj sociálne zručnosti a zdôrazňuje privlastnenie si jej obrazu v priebehu času. V neposlednom rade tiež zdôrazňuje nevyhnutnosť poznania pôvodu medaily, ako aj jej technických aspektov skôr, než sa vysloví predpoklad, že osobnosti ako Mária Uhorská boli významnými patrónkami medailí.

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