

Under a previous Title 75 I described my fascination for medals depicting a scientific subject, how I collected them, and how I have lectured and written about them. After my Discourse at the Royal Institution in February 1984 [Title 332], I wrote a definitive article for *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*. Here I shall repeat the introductory summary and give a few details of the illustrations I used in my article, published in December 1985.

“During the last four centuries medals have been struck which commemorate individual scientists and technological masterpieces. In recent years a third category has been added, the abstract art medal of science. These three classes are reviewed and it is concluded that the medal is the only art form in which science and technology have found a rich and varied representation. It is the permanence of the medal over centuries which distinguishes it from all other scientific records, and thus, if information is to be transmitted over very many years, the artist has the responsibility of interpreting science on the medal in the clearest possible manner. Some medals are criticised and the absence of a catalogue of scientific medals is regretted. As a Bridge between the two Cultures, the study of scientific medals is recommended to the historians of science and art historians.”

My article was illustrated with 17 typical examples, all from my own collection, about 1100 medals, which is now in the Library of the Deutsche Museum, Munich. The oldest medal was that of a comet, perhaps Tycho Brahe's Great Comet, struck in 1578, copper, 30 mm, which I once found in an Amsterdam coin shop. Its inscription read: ASTRUM OFFENSI NVMINIS [The Star hurts nobody]. Next to it, I was able to reproduce an exact copy of this medal, struck in 1881. I do not know who issued these two medals, but their intention is clear, namely to counteract the superstitious fear of comets.

I was proud to reproduce a rare medallion, 150 mm diameter, of Mary Somerville by David d'Angers privately cast in bronze, and a Wedgwood medallion in blue Jasper of Sir Isaac Newton, first produced before 1780, 107 x 79 mm. Other noteworthy medals were the first Sputnik, 1957, and of the first footprints of Man on the Moon, 1969.

I considered a medal honouring C.F Gauss PRINCEPS MATHEMATICORUM as an example of abstract art, because it showed in the centre a three-dimensional representation of the Gaussian Distribution Curve; it was struck in 1981 by the Paris Mint. The Curve was repeated on the reverse by eight similar curves in miniature surrounding the centre, 70 mm diameter, nickel, edition 150.

This large Collection of many scientific disciplines is unique, but as far as I know, it has not been continued.