



Reduced from Ø 98mm

### Travani, Gioacchino Francesco

Rome? 1634 – 1675

#### Medal in honour of Pope Alexander VII, commemorating his role in bringing an early end to a plague threatening Rome

#### Rome 1659

BRONZE, very fine original cast with warm brown patina. 98 mm diameter.

*Obverse* Bust to left, a portrait of Fabio Chigi, Pope Alexander VII (1655–1667), wearing cap, mozzetta and stole with floral decoration, separated from inscription by a rim. Around, ALEXANDER . VII . P . M . PIVS . IVST . OPT . SENEN . PATR . GENTE . CHISIVS . MDCLIX

*Reverse* The Lion recognising Androclus in the Arena. Around, MVNIFICO . PRINCIPI . DOMINICVS . IACOBATIVS; below, on a scroll, ET . FERA . MEMOR . BENEFICII

PROVENANCE Stonyhurst College, Lancashire — sale Christie's, 'Ancient English and Foreign Coins, Banknotes, and Commemorative medals', London, 6 March 1990, lot 730 (illustrated on catalogue cover)

**T**HIS remarkable large cast medal was commissioned by the papal agent Domenico Jacobacci, designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, and executed in 1659 by the papal medallist Gioacchino Francesco Travani. On the obverse is a portrait bust of Pope Alexander VII and depicted on the reverse is the legend of Androclus and the Lion at the moment the lion suddenly cowers and spares the life of a condemned slave who once pulled a thorn from its foot. An inscription on an illusionistic scroll proclaims 'The beast, too, remembers the kindness'.

The legend of Androclus and the Lion was popularized in the second-century *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius and is recommended in Giovanni Ferro's *Teatro d'Imprese* of 1623 as an appropriate subject to signify gratitude. The cowering lion symbolizes Rome's thankful remembrance of the pope's munificence and courageous leadership during the plague of 1656–1657.

Although Bernini never assumed the title of papal medallist, he was commissioned by Alexander VII and by his successor, Clement IX, to design several *annuale* struck by Gaspare Morone Mola, and his name can be linked also to some cast medals



**Fig.1. G.B. Bonacina after Pietro da Cortona,  
engraving reduced from 605 × 410 mm  
(Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Inv. 20. B.I. 79/7)<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from *Cortes del Barroco: de Bernini y Velázquez a Luca Giordano*, catalogue of an exhibition, Palacio Real de Madrid, Palacio Real de Aranjuez, 15 October 2003–11 January 2004 (Madrid 2003), p.241 no. 5.67.

executed by Travani commemorating various events. The evidence for Bernini's authorship of the Androclus medal includes an entry in Cardinal Flavio Chigi's inventory for the lost original drawing and two prints commemorating the casting of the medal, one designed by Bernini and engraved in 1659 by G.B. Bonacina with the phrases 'numisma opus Bernini' and 'ex auro argento atque aere iam fusam' in its legend.<sup>2</sup>

The vigorous design of the austere, yet sympathetic portrait of Alexander VII on the obverse is derived from the same model as a larger uniface medallion, and both are compatible with Bernini's certified profile portraits of popes.<sup>3</sup> A variant of the portrait signed with the medallist's initials is known.<sup>4</sup>

Although Bernini was certainly involved in the over-all design of the medal, the composition of the reverse depicting Androclus and the Lion may have been entrusted to Pietro da Cortona, another artist favoured by Alexander VII, and Bernini's rival. The second of the two prints portraying the medal, an 'Allegory of the Liberation of Rome from the Plague', was engraved by Bonacina in 1660 after a drawing by Pietro da Cortona (Fig. 1).<sup>5</sup> Its legend does not indicate Bernini's authorship and the publication of the print may have had no other purpose than to draw attention to Pietro's involvement in the design.<sup>6</sup>

In its size, scale, and compositional complexity, the Androclus medal aspires to the

<sup>2</sup> The documentary evidence associating Bernini with the Androclus medal is reviewed by Marc Worsdale, in *Revue de l' Art* 61 (1983), p.71 no. 94; and by Charles Avery, *Baroque Sculpture and Medals in the Art Gallery of Ontario* (Toronto 1988), pp.75–76 no. 23. John Varriano, 'A drawing by Bernini for a print dedicated to Alexander VII' in *Master Drawings* 23–24 (1985–1986), no. 1, pp.54–55.

<sup>3</sup> See Marc Worsdale's discussion in *Vatican Splendour: Masterpieces of Baroque Art*, catalogue of an exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa 1986), pp.29, 94, 101–102.

<sup>4</sup> Below the bust appear the letters FT F (Francesco Travani fecit); the reverse shows the harbour at Civitavecchia. See Miselli (*op. cit.*), p.481.

<sup>5</sup> *Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Regista del Barocco*, catalogue of an exhibition held in Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 21 May–16 September 1999 (Rome 1999), pp.241–242 nos. 172 (drawing for Bonacina's print after Bernini), 173 (medal), 174–175 (both prints); *Alessandro VII Chigi (1599–1667): Il Papa Senese di Roma Moderna*, catalogue of an exhibition, Palazzo Pubblico and Palazzo Chigi Zondadari (Siena 2000), p.153 no. 73 (medal), pp.162–163 no. 91 (Bonacina's print after Pietro da Cortona).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Clifford, in *Effigies & ecstasies: Roman Baroque sculpture and design in the age of Bernini*, catalogue of an exhibition, National Galleries of Scotland (Edinburgh 1998), pp.188–189 no. 166 (medal; both prints reproduced fig. 158). For an alternative attribution to Gianfrancesco Romanelli, see Silvana De Caro Balbi, 'Gian Lorenzo Bernini e la medaglia barocca romana' in *Medaglia* 7 (1974), pp.9–11.

grander status of the plaquette or the small relief sculpture. It stands out in the sequence of papal medals and because of its perspectival illusionism and pictorial effect is promoted as ‘the first baroque medal’.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, it is often exhibited: in 1969 in Louisville,<sup>8</sup> and in the 1981 Vatican City, 1983 Ann Arbor, 1986 Ottawa, 1988 Toronto, 1998 Edinburgh, 1998 Ariccia, 1999 Rome, 2000 Siena, and 2003 Madrid exhibitions here cited.

The medal was cast in silver (a single example is known), bronze, and gilt bronze. Examples known to the writer include

- Ariccia, Palazzo Chigi (set in a bronze frame, diameter overall 189 mm)<sup>9</sup>
- Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett (bronze, 97 mm)<sup>10</sup>
- Brescia, Musei Civici d’Arte e Storia, Gabinetto Numismatico (bronze, 97 mm)<sup>11</sup>
- Brunswick, ME, Bowdoin College (bronze, 94 mm)<sup>12</sup>
- Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland (bronze, 95 mm)<sup>13</sup>
- Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Inv. 7251 (98 mm, 169 g)<sup>14</sup>
- Florence, Museo Bardini (bronze gilt on reverse only), 97.5 mm; another 98 mm)<sup>15</sup>
- Glasgow, Hunterian Museum (98 mm)<sup>16</sup>
- London, British Museum<sup>17</sup>
- New York, Michael Hall collection<sup>18</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Shelley Perlove, ‘Bernini’s Androcles and the Lion: a papal emblem of Alexandrine Rome’ in *Zeitschrift für Kunst-geschichte* 45 (1982), pp.287–296.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Fischer, in *Sculpture in miniature: The Andrew S. Ciechanowiecki Collection*, catalogue of an exhibition, J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville (London 1969), p.53 no. 255 (bronze, gilt only on obverse, 97 mm).

<sup>9</sup> *L’Ariccia del Bernini*, catalogue of an exhibition in the Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia, 10 October–31 December 1998 (Rome 1998), pp.102–106 no. 22A; *Bernini. Regista del Barocco (op. cit.)* p.242 no. 173

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Voss, ‘Eine Medaille Lorenzo Berninis’ in *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* 28 (1910), pp.231–235; Lore Börner, *Die italienischen Medaillen der Renaissance und des Barock (1450 bis 1750)*, Bestandskataloge des Münzkabinetts Berlin (Berlin 1997), p.253 no. 1177.

<sup>11</sup> Prospero Rizzini, *Illustrazione dei civici musei di Brescia. Medaglie* (Brescia 1893), no. 260.

<sup>12</sup> Andrea Norris and Ingrid Weber, *Medals and Plaquettes from the Molinari Collection at Bowdoin College* (Brunswick 1976), p.35 no. 96.

<sup>13</sup> *Effigies & ecstasies (op. cit.)*, pp.188–189 no. 166A.

<sup>14</sup> Giuseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel, *Medaglie italiane: Barocche e Neoclassiche* (Florence 1990), pp.130–133 no. 120; Fiorenza Vannel and Giuseppe Toderi, *Medaglie italiane del Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Volume II: Secolo XVII* (Florence 2005), p.60 no. 504.

<sup>15</sup> Fiorenza Vannel and Giuseppe Toderi, *Medaglie e placchette del Museo Bardini di Firenze* (Florence 1998), p.83 nos. 93–94.

<sup>16</sup> *Effigies & ecstasies (op. cit.)*, pp.188–189 no. 166B.

<sup>17</sup> John Varriano, ‘Alexander VII, Bernini, and the Baroque Papal Medal’ in *Studies in the History of Art, 21: Italian Medals*, edited by J. Graham Pollard (Washington, DC 1987), pp.249–260 fig. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Perlove (*op. cit.*), p.287 figs.1–2; *Roma Resurgens: Papal medals from the Age of the Baroque*, catalogue of an exhibition held at Mount Holyoke College, University of Chicago

Milan, Johnson Collection (bronze, 98 mm)<sup>19</sup> • Padua, Museo Bottacin, Inv. 16 (bronze, 97 mm)<sup>20</sup> • Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. 1394 (silver, 98 mm) • Rome, Adolfo Modesti Collection (gilt bronze, 97.5 mm, 157.8 g)<sup>21</sup> • Siena, Museo Civico (bronze gilt, 96 mm)<sup>22</sup> • Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario (99 mm)<sup>23</sup> • Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Medagliere (99 mm)<sup>24</sup> • Vicenza, Musei Civici di Vicenza, Medagliere (98 mm)<sup>25</sup> • Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Münzkabinet, Inv. 100bß<sup>26</sup> • Weimar, Goethe-Nationalmuseum (bronze, 98 mm, 173.779 g)<sup>27</sup>

In 1663 the reverse was recast with another portrait depicting Alexander VII in a papal tiara.<sup>28</sup>

REFERENCES Claude du Molinet, *Historia summorum pontificum a Martino v ad Innocentium XI per eorum numismata* (Paris 1679), pp.179 (reproduced), 185; Filippo Buonanni, *Numismata pontificum romanorum* (Rome 1699), pp.697–699 nos. XXXIX–XL; Ridolfino Venuti, *Numismata romanorum pontificum* (Rome 1744), p.264 no. XX; *Trésor de Numismatique et de Glyptique des Médailles de Choix Historique des Papes* (Paris 1839), pl. XXX no.2; Walter Miselli, *Il papato dal 1605 al 1669 attraverso le medaglie* (Pavia [2003]), pp.482–483 no. 567 and pp.617–618 (documents)

and University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI 1983), pp.98–99 no. 79. Other examples from the Hall collection were sold by Baldwin’s, ‘Auction 66: The Michael Hall Collection: Medallion portraits from the Renaissance to the Nineteenth Century (Part Two)’, London, 29 June 2010, lots 1116–1117 (gilt bronze).

<sup>19</sup> Cesare Johnson, *Collezione Johnson di medaglie, Secoli XV–XVIII* (Milan 1990), I, pp.300–301 no. 194.

<sup>20</sup> Miselli (*op. cit.*), pp.482–483 (reproduced).

<sup>21</sup> Francesco M. Calveri, *La memoria dei Papi: medaglie dalle origini al Giubileo del 2000* (Rome 1999), p.132 no. 66.

<sup>22</sup> Alessandro Angelini, *Gia Lorenzo Bernini e i Chigi tra Roma e Siena* (Siena 1998), p.117 figs.110–111; *Alessandro VII Chigi (op. cit.)*, p.153 no. 73.

<sup>23</sup> Avery (*op. cit.*), p.75 no. 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Vatican splendour (op. cit.)*, pp.101–102 no. 28; *Bernini in Vaticano*, catalogue of an exhibition in the Braccio di Carlo Magno, Città del Vaticano, May–July 1981, edited by Anna Gramiccia (Rome 1981), pp.292–293 no. 291. Another example in the same collection (gilt bronze, 97.8 mm) is illustrated by Giancarlo Alteri, *Summorum Romanorum Pontificum historia numismatibus recensitis illustrata ab saeculo XV ad saeculum XX* (Città del Vaticano 2004), pp.152–153 fig. 15.

<sup>25</sup> Armando Bernardelli and Renato Zirona, *Le medagliere dei Musei Civici di Vicenza, I. Le medaglie papali* (Vicenza 2007), pp.99 no. 525, p.232 (reproduction).

<sup>26</sup> Fritz Dworschak, ‘Der Medailleure Gianlorenzo Bernini’ in *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 55 (1934), pp.27–41, Taf. III, no. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Jochen Klauf, *Goethe als Medailensammler* (Weimar 1994), pp.124, 220 no. 66; J. Klauf, *Die Medailensammlung Goethes* (Berlin 2000), p.135 no. 437.

<sup>28</sup> De Caro Balbi (*op. cit.*), p.14 fig. 8a; Perlove (*op. cit.*), p.288 fig. 31 Miselli (*op. cit.*) p.519 no. 613 (all same example, in Rome, Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Venezia, 94 mm).