

Bonini, Giovanni Battista

fl. Rome 1557 – 1585

Portrait medal of the engineer Camillo Agrippa

Rome circa 1585

BRONZE, fine contemporary cast with dark brown patina. 45.5 mm diameter. Pierced at 12:00.

Obverse Bust to right, a portrait of Camillo Agrippa, bearded, wearing a doublet and a mantle. Around, CAMILLVS. AGRIPPA . ANT. F. (Camillo Agrippa, son of Antonio); signed on the truncation, IO. BA. BO. F. Beaded border.

Reverse An armed warrior pursuing Fortune and seizing her by the hair, a temple in the background. Around, VELIS [quatrefoil] NOLI SVE (Whether you wish it or not, taken from Seneca). Beaded border. The reverse is placed on the medal in an inverted position.

PROVENANCE Arthur Löbbecke (1850–1932), Braunschweig — sale by Jacques Schulman, 'Catalogue des collections... Arthur Löbbecke... et feu M.L.A. Beels van Heemstede. Médailles et plaquettes artistiques des XV–XVIIe siècles', Amsterdam, 17 June 1929, lot 87 — anonymous consignor, Sotheby's, 'Italian Renaissance medals, ancient, English and foreign coins, banknotes and bonds', London, 23 May 1988, lot 51



Ø 45.5 mm

A **PORTRAIT MEDAL** of Camillo Agrippa (*circa* 1520–1600), engineer of the Acqua Vergine on the Pincio, celebrated for his participation in discussions about resiting the obelisks in Rome. He published on that subject a *Trattato di trasportar la guglia in su la piazza di San Pietro* (Rome 1583), and previously, a work on fencing, *Trattato di scientia d'arme con un dialogo di filosofia* (Rome 1553), as well as books on astronomy and navigation.¹

The medal bears a profile portrait of Agrippa on obverse and on the reverse an emblem depicting a warrior with lance and shield seizing the forelock of Fortuna, naked and vulnerable; the motto, or lemma, reads 'Velis nolisve'. The humanist poet Annibale Caro (1507–1566), who acts as interlocutor in Agrippa's fencing treatise,

¹ An analysis of Agrippa's seven publications, together with a discussion of projects known only from archival records, is provided by Evelyn Lincoln, *Brilliant discourse: pictures and readers in early modern Rome* (New Haven 2014), pp.61–113 (chapter 3, 'Camillo Agrippa's Cosmology of Knowledge').

possibly devised the *impresa*.² The medal featured in Aby Warburg's metaphoric encyclopaedia ('Mnemosyne Atlas', panel 48; [image](#)) and is cited in his publications.³

The initials IO. BA. BO. F. beneath the portrait were identified by M.G. Milanese with Giovanni Battista Bonini, active in Rome between 1557 and 1585, elected in 1576 *Console* and in 1579 *Camerlengo* of the Roman goldsmiths' guild.⁴

Examples known to the writer include

- Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett (45.3/45.7 mm)⁵
- Brescia, Musei civici d'arte e storia, Gabinetto Numismatico⁶
- Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello ('Qualità scadente', 43.4 mm)⁷
- Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional (45 mm)⁸
- Milan, Civiche Raccolte Numismatiche (two examples, both 44 mm)⁹
- Naples, Museo e gallerie nazionali di Capodimonte, Inv. 134492 (44 mm)¹⁰
- New York, American Numismatic Society, 1940.100.940 (45.2 mm; [image](#))
- United Kingdom (five examples, 43–45 mm, of

which three are aftercasts)¹¹ • Venice, Museo Correr (45 mm)¹² • Weimar, Goethe-Nationalmuseum (44 mm, 45.91 g)¹³

Copies seen in the market include

- Artemide Aste s.r.l., Asta XXIV, Dogana, Italy, 28–29 March 2009, lot 511 (€850)
- Morton & Eden, 'Auction 42: Ancient, Islamic, British and World Coins, Renaissance Medals and Plaquettes', London, 20 May 2010, lot 389 ('a fine and early cast', £200)
- Baldwin's, 'Auction 64: The Michael Hall Collection Medallion Portraits from the Renaissance to the Nineteenth Century (Part One)', London, 4 May 2010, lot 586 (aftercast)

REFERENCES Pietro Antonio Gaetani, *Museum Mazzuchellianum* (Venice 1761), I, p.382, Tabula LXXXV, no. 7; Alfred Armand, *Les Médailleurs italiens des XVe et XVIe siècles* (Paris 1883–1887), I, p.282, III, p.133; Robert J. Eidlitz, *Medals and Medallions relating to Architects* (New York 1927), p.2 no. 7 (reproduced plate 3); Giuseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel, *Le Medaglie italiane del XVI secolo* (Florence 2000), II, p.751 no. 2350

² Lincoln, *op. cit.*, pp.106–108.

³ A. Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance* (Leipzig 1932), p.365. Cf. Alfred Doren, 'Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance' in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 2 (1922–1923); Warburg's correspondence with Doren and Friz Saxl, in Warburg Institute Archives, GC/12740, GC/14586 ([transcriptions](#)); Davide Stimilli, in *Aut aut* 321–322 (2004), pp.16–17; Marilena Caciorgna, 'Minerva e la Fortuna. Virtus e Voluptas. Fonti, modelli e tradizione classica da Seneca a Pio II ad Aby Warburg' in *Pio II Piccolomini: il papa del Rinascimento a Siena: atti del convegno internazionale di studi, 5–7 maggio 2005*, edited by Fabrizio Nevola (Siena 2009), pp.197–226 (example in Museo Nazionale del Bargello reproduced, p.198).

⁴ Armand, *op. cit.*, III, p.133; Costantino Bulgari, *Argentieri, gemmari e orafi d'Italia. Parte prima* (Rome 1958), I, pp.188–189.

⁵ Lore Börner, *Die italienischen Medaillen der Renaissance und des Barock (1450 bis 1750)*, Bestandskataloge des Münzkabinetts Berlin (Berlin 1997), p.116 no. 464.

⁶ Prospero Rizzini, *Illustrazione dei civici musei di Brescia. Medaglie* (Brescia 1892), p.60 no. 395.

⁷ J. Graham Pollard, *Italian Renaissance Medals in the Museo Nazionale of Bargello* (Florence 1985), III, p.1371 no. 799 (medallist's initials not observed); Fiorenza Vannel and Giuseppe Toderi, *Medaglie italiane del Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Volume II: Secolo XVII* (Florence 2005), pp.139–140 no. 1288 (medallist's initials recorded).

⁸ Francisco Alvarez-Ossorio, *Catálogo de las medallas de los siglos XV y XVI conservadas en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional* (Madrid 1950), p.89 no. 306.

⁹ Cesare Johnson and Rodolfo Martini, *Catálogo delle Medaglie, II: Secolo XVI* [in Civiche Raccolte Numismatiche, Milan] (Rome 1988), pp.92–93 nos. 899–900.

¹⁰ Michele Pannuti, 'L'arte e la ritrattistica nelle medaglie della Collezione Farnese' in *La Collezione Farnese: Le arti decorative* (Naples 1996), p.297 no. 8.141.

¹¹ Philip Attwood, *Italian Medals c.1530–1600 in British public collections* (London 2003), p.394 no. 964. The original casts are in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (45 mm, 47.61 g), and British Museum (45 mm, 48.76 g); for the latter, see C.F. Keary, *A guide to the exhibition of Italian medals* [in the British Museum] (second edition, London 1893), p.64 no. 214; Warburg Iconographic database ([image](#)).

¹² *Catálogo delle monete, medaglie, tessere, bolle e placchette esposte nel Museo Civico Correr* (Venice 1898), p.52 no. 269 (as 1580).

¹³ Jochen Klauß, *Die Medaillensammlung Goethes* (Berlin 2000), p.57 no. 133.