

Spinelli, Andrea

Parma 1508 – 1572 Venice

Foundation medal for the monastic church of San Francesco della Vigna, Venice

Venice circa 1534–1538

BRONZE, very fine early striking. 37.8 mm diameter. 31.01 grams.

Obverse Bust to left, a portrait of Andrea Gritti (1458–1538, doge of Venice from 1523), bearded, wearing a gown and a doge’s cap. Around, ANDREAS. GRITI. DVX. VENETIAR. MDXXXIII. (Andrea Gritti, doge of Venice, 1523). Beaded border

Reverse Perspective view of the façade and right side of the church of S. Francesco della Vigna. Around, DIVI. FRANCISCI. MDXXXIII [leaf] ([Church] of S. Francesco, 1534); in exergue, AN. SP. F. (Andreas Spinelli fecit). Inner and outer beaded borders

PROVENANCE Piero Voltolina (1930–) — Arsantiqva, ‘The Serenissima collection: history of Venice through medals. Part I (XV–XVI)’, London, 19 April 2002, lot 98

LITERATURE Piero Voltolina, ‘Medaglie relative alle chiese di Venezia e delle altre isole della Laguna (parte 1)’ in *Medaglia* 22 (1987), pp.41–44 no. 3 (this piece reproduced as fig. 32); P. Voltolina, *La storia di Venezia attraverso le medaglie* (Venice 1998), I, p.337 no. 288; Giuseppe Toderi and Fiorenza Vannel, *Le medaglie italiane del XVI secolo* (Florence 2000), p.234 no. 627 and Tav. 149 (this piece reproduced)

THIS medal was commissioned by doge Andrea Gritti to commemorate a project to reconstruct S. Francesco della Vigna, the old church of the Observant Franciscans in Venice. The reverse records the architect Jacopo Sansovino’s design for remodelling the church at the time of laying the cornerstone, on 15 August 1534. Two examples of the medal in silver were concealed beside it.¹



Ø 37.8 mm

¹ Voltolina 1987 (*op. cit.*), p.43, evaluating varying accounts in Flaminio Cornaro’s *Ecclesiae Venetae antiquis monumentis* (Venice 1749), VIII, p.20; and *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia, e di Torcello* (Venice 1758), p.80 (and pl. I fig. 2); see also Attwood (*op. cit.*), p.59. Foundation medals are unusual in Venice and the inspiration for this one is tentatively credited to Sansovino by Georg Satzinger, ‘Baumedailen: Formen, Funktionen. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts’ in *Die Renaissance-Medaille in Italien*

Building work was interrupted after criticism by the mystic monk Francesco Giorgi, Sansovino was dismissed, and the project completed by Andrea Palladio, in 1582, to a quite different design. The medal is the principal evidence of Sansovino's design.²

The date on the obverse of the medal is that on which Gritti was elected doge, and is not the date of the medal. The oddity of the portrait obverse dated 1523 and reverse dated 1534 led Pollard to conjecture that it was not a foundation medal, but a 'votive piece, following the death of the doge [28 December 1538], perhaps commissioned by those connected with the building of San Francesco'.³

The medallist Antonio Spinelli worked mainly in Venice, where he was chief engraver at the mint from 1540 until he was replaced by his son, Marcantonio, in 1572. This is the earliest of six portrait and two subject medals signed by him. Both cast and struck examples are known:

- Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett (cast bronze, 37 mm)⁴
- Brescia, Musei civici d'arte e storia, Gabinetto Numismatico⁵
- Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello (struck bronze, 36 mm)⁶
- Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional (two examples, bronze, 37 mm)⁷
- United Kingdom (three struck and six cast examples, the struck examples bronze, 37 mm)⁸
- Venice, Museo Correr (four examples)⁹
- Washington, DC,

und Deutschland, edited by Georg Satzinger (Münster 2004), pp.111, 130 fig. 16 (British Museum example).

² Manuela Morresi, *Jacopo Sansovino* (Milan 2000), pp.136–137, reproducing as figs. 4–5 the reverse (from a Museo Correr example) and a plan of the church based entirely on the medallic evidence; see also, Antonio Foscari and Manfredo Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti: la chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna nella Venezia dell'500* (Turin 1983), pp.43–47, pl. 27, and Tracy E. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice* (New Haven 2005), p.79 figs. 76a–b (medal in National Gallery of Art reproduced).

³ John Graham Pollard, *Renaissance Medals, Volume 1: Italy*, The Collections of the National Gallery of Art (New York & Oxford 2007), p.472 no. 470.

⁴ Lore Börner, *Die italienischen Medaillen der Renaissance und des Barock (1450 bis 1750)*, Bestandskataloge des Münzkabinetts Berlin (Berlin 1997), p.190 no. 829.

⁵ Prospero Rizzini, *Illustrazione dei civici musei di Brescia. Medaglie* (Brescia 1892), p.32 no. 204.

⁶ Fiorenza Vannel and Giuseppe Toderi, *Medaglie italiane del Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Volume 1: Secolo XVI* (Florence 2003), pp.62–63 no. 540.

⁷ Francisco Alvarez-Ossorio, *Catálogo de las medallas de los siglos XV y XVI conservadas en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional* (Madrid 1950), p.171 no. 144.

⁸ Philip Attwood, *Italian Medals c.1530–1600 in British public collections* (London 2003), pp.163–164 no. 206. The struck examples are in the British Museum (30.58 g), Victoria & Albert Museum (31.13 g), and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (31.82 g).

⁹ Cristina Crisafulli and Leonardo Mezzaroba, 'La scuola medagliistica veneziana nel Rinascimento attraverso le collezioni del Museo Correr' in *Bollettino dei Musei Civici*

National Gallery of Art (cast copper alloy, 36.40 mm, 25.93 g)¹⁰ • Private Collection (cast bronze, 35 mm)¹¹

REFERENCES Alfred Armand, *Les médailleurs italiens des quinzième et seizième siècles* (Paris 1883–1887), I, p.155 no. 4; Georg Habich, *Die Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance* (Stuttgart & Berlin 1923), p.120 and Tafel 76 no. 16

Veneziani, third series, 4 (2009), pp.54–55 (reproduction p.52): Cl. XXXIX, 150 (struck, 37 mm); Cl. XXXIX, 1612 (struck, 36.5 mm); Cl. XXXIX, 1613 (struck, 38 mm); Cl. XXXIX, 1604 (cast). Cf. (unidentified examples): *Catalogo delle monete, medaglie, tessere, bolle e placchette esposte nel Museo Civico Correr* (Venice 1898), pp.31–32 no. 149 (tav. III); Lionello Puppi, 'Iconografia di Andrea Gritti' in "*Renovatio urbis*". *Venezia nell'età di Andrea Gritti*, edited by Manfredo Tafuri (Rome 1984), pp.216–235 fig. 15 (obverse).

¹⁰ George F. Hill and Graham Pollard, *Renaissance Medals from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art* (London 1967), p.77 no. 413; Pollard (*op. cit.*), p.472 no. 470.

¹¹ Ulrich Middeldorf and Dagmar Stiebrl, *Renaissance Medals and Plaquettes* (Florence 1983), pl. LXIX.