

Pasti, Matteo di Andrea de'

1420 – 1467/68

Foundation medal for the Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini

Rimini 1450 (but circa 1454)

BRONZE, a very fine early cast (pierced at 12:00, traces of verdigris). 40 mm diameter.

Obverse Bust to left, a portrait of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, signore di Rimini, Fano e Senigallia (1417–1468), in armour, wearing a laurel wreath. Around, SIGISMVNDVS PANDVLFVS . MALATESTA . PAN[ULFI] . F[ILIVS] . (Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, son of Pandolfo [di Galeotto] Malatesta)

Reverse Front view of the Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini, according to Alberti's proposed reconstruction. Around, PRAECL[ARUM] A RIMINI . TEMPLUM . AN[NO] . GRATIAE . V[IVENS or VICTOR or VOTUM] . F[ECIT] . M.CCCC.L

PROVENANCE Sotheby's, 'Coins and medals', London, 5 July 1994, lot 1

THIS ATTRACTIVE MEDAL was cast to commemorate the remodelling of the exterior shell and façade of the 13th-century church of San Francesco in Rimini. Examples were placed in the foundation, others distributed as favours and as publicity, and six were later concealed in Sigismondo's tomb, arranged in the shape of a cross beneath his body.

Although medals with architectural reverses are known from antiquity, there is no evidence that they were ever placed in the foundations of new buildings before the early Renaissance. Matteo de' Pasti's medal of the Tempio Malatestiano is the earliest known foundation medal produced anywhere, and evidently also the first to represent literally rather than figuratively the design intended to be carried out.

The medallist Matteo di Andrea de' Pasti was artist and counsellor to the Malatesta court at Rimini and superintendent of architectural works in the Malatesta lands. He worked closely with Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) in the modification of San Francesco into a combination of religious edifice and mausoleum for the Malatesta family, and this medal is supposed to have been cast following 'directions or suggestions' provided by Alberti himself.¹

¹ Pier Giorgio Pasini, 'Matteo de' Pasti: problems of style and chronology' in *Studies in the*



Ø 40 mm

The version of the façade depicted on the reverse of our medal features the great dome and other aspects of Alberti's project that were never carried out, for which reason 'Questa medaglia costituisce un documenta fondamentale per la ricostruzione dell' originale progetto albertiano del Tempio e in quanto tale è stata riprodotta e commentata da quasi tutti gli studiosi che si sono occupati del monumento'.²

The reverse is known in two versions, with minor variations which document modifications to the original project: 'nella prima il portale centrale è una semplice apertura grezza, sovrastata da un'apertura minore; nella seconda invece il portale è completo del timpano e dei festoni laterali, con traccia del parlamento in marmi policromi [as the specimen here offered]'.³

The date 1450 on the reverse is commemorative and records the decision to transform the church. It is generally agreed that the medal was produced in 1453 or 1454, an argument in favour of the latter date being the correspondence of the obverse portrait of Sigismondo wearing a wreath (a feature not to be found in any of his other medals) with portraits in the Nave and Chapel of Sibyls executed in 1454.

REFERENCES George F. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini* (London 1930), 183; George F. Hill and Graham Pollard, *Renaissance Medals from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art* (London 1967), no. 66; Joanna Woods-Marsden, 'How Quattrocento princes used art: Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini and *cose militari*' in *Renaissance Studies* 3 (1980), especially pp.399–401; Cesare Johnson, *Collezione Johnson di Medaglie. vol. 1: secc. XV–XVI–XVII* (Milan 1990), pp.30–31; Stefano Casu, in *Il potere, le arti, la guerra, lo splendore dei Malatesta*, catalogue of an exhibition, Castel Sismondo, Rimini (Milan 2001), pp.286–287; Daniele Diotallevi, *Volti fra Rinascimento e Barocco. Montefeltro, Malatesta, Sforza, Della Rovere. Dal Medagliere della Biblioteca e Musei Olivierani di Pesaro*, catalogue of an exhibition, Palazzo Foschieri-Veterani, Urbino (Urbino 2002), pp.84–85

History of Art, 21: Italian Medals, edited by J. Graham Pollard (Washington DC 1987), p.149.

² *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta e il suo tempio*, catalogue of an exhibition, Palazzo dell' Arenga (Rimini 1970), p.139. The fragmentary evidence of Alberti's unrealised intentions for the Tempio Malatestiano, including our medal, is scrutinized by Charles Hope, 'The early history of the Tempio Malatestiano' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), pp.51–54 (medal reproduced plate IX); and in *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi to Michelangelo: the representation of architecture*, exhibition catalogue edited by H.A. Millon and V. Magnago Lampugnani (London 1994), p.458 no. 49 (medal reproduced).

³ Bruna Restani, 'Le Medaglie di Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta' in *Studi Romagnoli* 48 (1997), pp.353–354, reproducing the second version as fig. 16; see also Giannino Giovannoni, in *Leon Battista Alberti*, catalogue of an exhibition, Palazzo Te, Mantua, edited by Joseph Rykwerc and Anne Engel (Milan 1994), pp.484–485, reproducing both versions as nos. 88a–b (specimens from Musei Civici, Rimini; and British Museum).