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COLLECTING COINS AND MEDALS IN 18TH-CENTURY SWEDEN

“Mr. de Carstens is a doctor of medicine in Lübeck, and I recommend him to you, since he has come to see and study your remarkable and extensive collection of coins.”¹ Here, the Danish numismatist and scholar Otto Sperling (1634–1715) endorses his friend who will come and visit the Swedish poetess and salon hostess Sophia Elisabeth Brenner (1659–1730)² and her husband, the numismatist and miniature painter Elias Brenner (1647–1717), to study their collection of coins. In the 18th century, numismatics was a strategic and self-fashioning practice that demonstrated the owner’s economic means, intellectual disposition, and sense of style.³ However, what could, and what would, Mr. de Carstens expect upon his arrival in Stockholm?

This article aims to draw attention to the practice of collecting coins and medals in 18th-century Sweden.⁴ The study is built on the cases of medallist Arvid Karlsteen (1647–1718), politician Carl Didrik Ehrenpreus (1692–1760), scholars Carl Reinhold Berch (1706–1777) and Evald Ziervogel (1728–1765), and Sperling and Sophia Elisabeth Brenner. Based on letters, inventories, auction catalogues, newspaper announcements, and numismatic publications, the following question will be asked: How were these collections put together,

¹ E. Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady: Sophia Elisabeth Brenner’s correspondence, with an edition of her letters to and from Otto Sperling the Younger*, Stockholm 2006, p. 205, Letter XV, Sperling to Brenner 30 March 1705.

² For further reading on S.E. Brenner, see: V. Lindgärde, A. Jönsson, W. Haas & B. Andersson, eds., *Sophia Elisabeth Brenner (1659–1730) Eine gelehrte und berühmte Schwedin*, Hildesheim 2021.

³ On numismatics as showing strategy, see e.g. A. Flaten, “Identity and the display of medaglie in Renaissance and Baroque Europe”, *Word & Image* 2003, 19, January 1, pp. 59–79.

⁴ In addition to new sources, the following article is based on chapter 4 of my doctoral thesis: Y. Haidenthaler, *The Medal in Early Modern Sweden: Significances and Practices*, Lund 2021.

displayed, handled, and studied? The material will shed light on how collections were bought, sold, and organised, as well as how collectors interacted and communicated about coins and medals. Finally, the article will add to the understanding of the values and ideas attached to the practice of numismatics in early modern Europe.

SELLING AND BUYING COINS AND MEDALS

The first step in building a collection of coins and medals would be to obtain said collectables, and there were many avenues of doing so. A collector could buy coins and medals one at a time, in a set, privately, at an auction, in shops, from coin dealers, from markets abroad, procure a coin hoard, purchase coins directly from the mint or from a medal artist, or exchange them with friends. Especially, trading collectables among fellow numismatists was a common way of updating one's collection. Trading could be executed in person or from afar, and here Sperling's and Sophia Elisabeth Brenner's correspondence might serve as an example.

Speaking of coins, I remember that I have heard my husband say that he would like to trade the coins for which he has duplicates, namely those minted by the kings of Denmark who once reigned in Sweden, too, e.g., those minted in Stockholm and Västerås by Eric of Pomerania, those minted in Stockholm by Christian I, and those minted in Västerås and Malmö by John II, for coins of those same kings minted in Denmark or for some bracteate coins marked with the names of the kings.⁵

Sophia Elisabeth Brenner's husband, Elias, was an eager collector, and apparently asked his wife to inquire her numismatic friend about coins to trade. Sperling answered in his next letter.

On behalf of your husband, you wished to trade Danish coins for Swedish ones. I will see if I can find something to trade in my poor collection. [...] And since your husband expresses a wish to exchange some of his Swedish coins for our Danish, I have collected sixteen coins from my boxes that I can spare [...] In exchange for these I would like to have the Swedish coins of Eric of Pomerania, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and the coin from Västerås in the middle (in table 7)⁶, of Christopher I,

⁵ Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 203; Letter XIV, Brenner to Sperling 16 October 1704.

⁶ The number of tables refers to illustrations in Elias Brenner's *Thesaurus*, which will be discussed later in this article.

II and III, Karl Knutsson, the first, second, fourth and fifth one, and of Christian I, Nos. 1, 2, 3 (table 5). Copenhagen, March 30, 1705.⁷

Their reasoning for trading coins is outlined in the letters. Elias Brenner owns duplicates of Swedish coins and wants to exchange them for coins on Swedish history that he does not yet have. Sperling is willing to trade, and lists sixteen coins which he can spare, but only in return for specific editions, which he listed in detail.⁸ Trading meant exchanging items of similar value. The value was not necessarily determined by the object's material value, but by the value that the collector ascribed to each item. Sixteen coins could easily measure up to half of the number in return if those items were the ones the collector needed and wanted. A coin missing in one's collection could be priceless; at least to the collector.

Exchanging coins via letters entailed trusting the other party to be sincere and provide the requested items, not to mention accepting the risks of collectables disappearing in the post. Both Sperling and the Brenners used couriers and messengers to deliver their packages and often inquired if they had arrived.⁹ A safer way to obtain such objects was to go directly to the source. In 1709, the royal mint printed a product catalogue of items that were for sale (ill. 1). It advertised sixty-six different medal editions and seventy-nine jetons related to Swedish royalty from the 16th to the 18th century.¹⁰ The medal editions pertaining to kings from the 16th century were made with new dies mostly engraved by the court medallist Arvid Karlsteen, but based on old editions, whereas the medals pertaining to royals beginning with the reign of Queen Christina (1626–1698) were minted with the original dies.¹¹ The advertised medals were struck on demand and were not commodities that were produced in stock; a customer could go to the mint and choose the editions one wished to acquire. The product catalogue does not indicate any prices, but rather the items' weight in *lod* (1 *lod* equalled 13.16g of silver). One *lod* could be translated directly into currency or have a set price. For instance, in 1683, the medal artist Anton Meybusch (1645–1702), who worked briefly

⁷ Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 207ff, Letter XV, Sperling to Brenner 30 March 1705.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 209, Letter XV, Sperling to Brenner 30 March 1705.

⁹ E.g. Brenner mentions the messenger Mr. Grönner. Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 195, Letter X, Brenner to Sperling, 11 July 1703.

¹⁰ Uppsala University Library [UUB]: Sv. Rar. 10:311 (3) *SPECIFICATION, På de Medaillier och begärlige Skådepenningar som finnas på Kongl. Myntet i Stockholm, 1709.*

¹¹ UUB: Sv. Rar. 10:311 (3) *SPECIFICATION, 1709, Haidenthaller, The Medal in Early Modern Sweden*, p. 214ff.

SPECIFICATION,

På de Medailler och begärlige Skådepenning-
gar som finnas på Kongl. Myntet i Stockholm
Membt.

GUSTAVUS. I.

- R**önung Gustaf den Förstes Contersey å ena: och på
andra sidan en Triumph-Port / med denne öfverskrift:
Ob Patriam fidemque strenue vindicatas. 4. Lod.
En dito mindre 2. Lod.
Konung Gustafs den Förstes Contersey på ena sidan / på den andra 2
Bilder med öfverskrift:
Nunc fortunata resurges 2. Lod.

ERICUS. XIV.

- Konung Erich den Fiortondes Contersey På andra sidan ett Word /
derpå en aflagen Wäria: med denne öfverskrift:
Rigore suo dissuluit nimio 4. Lod.
En dito mindre 2. Lod.
Konung Erich den Fiortondes Contersey. På andra sidan en Pelare
med en afbruten Wäria der på liggjande / med öfverskrift:
Nimis durus minus durat. 2. Lod.

JOHANNES. III.

- Konung Johan den Tredies Contersey på ena sidan / på andra sidan
en Kongl. Crona med öfverskrift:
Injusti carceris justum prantum. 4. Lod.
Konung Johan den Tredies Contersey och Medaille / på andra sidan
en Bild med öfverskrift:
Providente Deo improvisa obtigit. 2. Lod.

SIGISMUNDUS.

- Konung Sigismundi Contersey. På andra sidan en Skildt med Pols-
niste Wapnet / och öfverskrift:
Hoc tectus nudatur avito. 4. Lod.

1. "Specification På de Medailler och begärlige Skådepenningar som finnas på Kongl. Myntet i Stockholm" printed by J.H. Werner, 1709, in Evald Ziervogel *Utkast till offentlig historiska föreläsningar öfwer Svenska Myntkunskapen*, Stockholm 1753, UUB

in Stockholm, sold his medals for five *daler* per *lod*.¹² Consequently, a medal weighing four *lod* – which was the most common weight advertised in the catalogue – could cost about twenty *daler*, equalling one month's wages for a bookkeeper.¹³ Needless to say, this was a huge amount of money.

A cheaper way to procure coins and medals was to buy them second-hand. Newspaper announcements are particularly illuminating on how numismatic objects were advertised and spread. For instance, on January 25, 1781, *Dagligt Allehanda* advertised that Lundberg's shop at Riddarhustorget, a public square in the old town of Stockholm, was selling complete sets of token money [emergency currency that was issued between 1715 and 1719, consisting of ten different editions] at sixteen *skillings* each, and one medal of Karl XI (1655–1697) in the Falu mine for one *daler*. These were announced next to listings for an assortment of books, English shoe buckles for one *daler*, brown hair five *kvarter* long (1 *kvarter* equalled 14.85 cm.) for one *daler* and eight *skillings*, and so forth.¹⁴ Another announcement advertised prunes next to portrait medals.¹⁵ Coins and medals being sold alongside other rarities and random items appears to have been a common occurrence. Medals were a commodity like any other. They could be rare and expensive or common and affordable.

Other types of notices announced small auctions, like the estate sale of the departed brewer's wife, Rosina Elisabeth Roos, where buyers could bid on "medals and old coins".¹⁶ Other auctions praised greater collections, like that of Karlsteen. The sale of his collection warranted its own printed catalogue.¹⁷ The catalogue praised Karlsteen as "an absolute *curieus* connoisseur, and therefore everything that he collected is artistic and exquisite", assured-

¹² Swedish National Archive [RA]: RBA Bankprotokoll, 21 November 1683; Stenström, *Arvid Karlsteen*, p. 63; Haidenthaler, *The Medal in Early Modern Sweden*, p. 220.

¹³ L.O. Lagerqvist & E. Nathorst-Böös, *Vad kostade det? Priser och löner från medeltid till våra dagar*, Stockholm 2002, p. 74.

¹⁴ *Dagligt Allehanda*, 25 January 1781, p. 3, available online: <<https://tidningar.kb.se/2631189/1781-01-25/edition/144030/part/1/page/3/?q=%20medaille&sort=&from=1781-01-01&to=1781-12-31>> [accessed: May 24, 2023].

¹⁵ *Dagligt Allehanda*, 18 June 1790, p. 5, available online: <<https://tidningar.kb.se/2631189/1790-06-18/edition/144030/part/2/page/1/?q=%20medaille&sort=&from=1790-01-01&to=1790-12-31>> [accessed: May 24, 2023].

¹⁶ *Posttidningar*, 26 August 1756, p. 4, available online: <<https://tidningar.kb.se/2979645/1756-08-26/edition/145134/part/1/page/1/?q=%20posttidningar&sort=&from=1756-01-01&to=1756-12-31>> [accessed: June 11, 2023].

¹⁷ UUB. Sv. Rar.: *Kort berättelse om det lotteri, som efter höga wederbörandes tilstånd uti framledne medailleurens wälb:ne Hr Arvid von Karlstens på Norremalm wid St. Claræ södra kyrckiogata belägne huus nästkommande d. 24 maj kommer at anställas på: berörde medailleurs kostbare medaille cabinet och rara konst-cammare*, 1719.

ly to convince possible bidders of the quality of the objects.¹⁸ His collection contained: "Swedish and foreign silver medals of great weight and value, as well as others made of outstanding European artists [...] beautiful miniature portraits with silver cases and real crystal-glass of which some are enamelled. Also, there are sculptured portraits, engraved mirrors made of steel, engravings, gemstones, fossils, insects in amber, corals and shells, Italian and French paintings in golden frames."¹⁹ The auction was organised as a lottery, and 2000 tickets were sold for one ducat a piece, of which 400 were wins and the others blanks.²⁰ The catalogue listed the 400 potential wins, and one lot could contain one object, like a walnut medal cabinet with 48 drawers (lot 234), or several items, like the first lot consisting of 17 medals depicting the Swedish king Karl XI.²¹ Besides advertising the collector and listing the items, the catalogue also provided the opportunity to send a proxy to the lottery in case one was indisposed and could not attend themselves. The previous owner Karlsteen, famous all over Europe as a medallist, gave each object a stellar provenance.²² In total, 200 lots contained objects of his trade, which made this lottery particularly interesting for numismatists.

Numismatic collections, although certainly cherished, frequently changed owners. For instance, the collection of Elias Brenner was also sold after his death, but in contrast to Karlsteen's belongings, Brenner's 687 coins and medals were purchased in a single lot by Walter Grainger (died 1729), an English merchant living in Stockholm.²³ After Grainger's death in 1729, they were purchased by a Russian nobleman named Demidov, and today pieces of the collection can be found in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow.²⁴ In general, the ownership of numismatic items fluctuated greatly, and auctions were a common way to dis-

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 1.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 1.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 2.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 11; 3.

²² On Karlsteen, read, for instance, A. Renqvist, *Arvid Karlsteen: En Medaljgravör och konstnär från Karlarnes tid*, Helsingfors 1931; S. Stenström, *Arvid Karlsteen: hans liv och verk*, Göteborg 1944; Svenskt biografiskt lexikon [SBL]: Arvid Karlsteen, available online: <<https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/12390>; <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:alvin:portal:record-339024>> [accessed: June 11, 2023].

²³ UUB, Uka, Cr. 5:30 (6)1; alvin-record: 206240; J. Hagander, L. O. Lagerqvist & I. Wiséhn, "Elias Brenners myntsamling finns i Moskva", *Svensk Numismatisk Tidskrift* 2002(8), pp. 172–177. J. Krasnobaeva, *Sveonum monumenta vetusta: the numismatic collection of Elias Brenner and Pavel Grigorievich Demidov*, Stockholm 2018.

²⁴ Cf. J. Krasnobaeva, *Sveonum Monumenta Vetusta*.

pense of any kind of property during this period.²⁵ Coins and medals could be sold separately if the collection's size merited individualised handling, but most often, they were sold with the rest of the previous owner's possessions.²⁶

Whereas Karlsteen's and Brenner's collections were auctioned off after their deaths, presumably at the behest of their widows, others sold their collections while they were still alive. In January 1752, Carl Didrik Ehrenpreus, a Swedish count, politician, and chancellor of Uppsala University, offered his collection to the university. The head librarian and keeper of coins, Evald Ziervogel, estimated the collection to be worth 36000 *daler* (equalling more than six years' wages for a sailor)²⁷, of which 3300 *daler* concerned the walnut cabinet.²⁸ The university (aided by Ehrenpreus himself) paid 12000 *daler*, less than half of the estimated price, and the collection became an important stepping stone in the building of the university coin cabinet.²⁹ While numismatic collectors could sell their coins and medals if they were in financial distress, Ehrenpreus gained little money from the affair. Instead, he received a reputation as a generous university chancellor, who, through this donation, promoted education and carved his name into the historical records of the university.

Institutions like Uppsala University or the Royal Coin Cabinet were frequently offered the acquisition of collections, as they strived to own both coins and medals, ideally, featuring both contemporary and ancient objects as well as a wide geographical range.³⁰ The inventories of the Royal Coin Cabinet list several additions originating from coin finds to private collections. In 1693, the Royal Coin Cabinet acquired Jacob Gyldenclou's (1636–1692) collection of ancient coins, alongside three numismatic books and two coin cases.³¹ Oth-

²⁵ An example of a catalogue: *Ansehnliches Münz- und Medaillen-Cabinet Zweiter Theil, welches den 2ten October dieses 1780sten Jahrs auf dem Eimbeckischen Hause in öffentlicher Auction verkauft werden soll durch die Mackler Peter Texier und von Horn, Hamburg, gedruckt mit Harmsens Schriften, 1780.*

²⁶ For instance, Erik Gyllengrip's collection was sold with books and manuscripts. Cf. Antikvariskt topografiska arkivet [ATA]: ARK 1_1-1, Antikvitetskollegiet och Antikvitetsarkivet 1629–1790, D 1:1 Förteckning över erbjudna böcker och handskrifter från överste Erik Gyllengrips sterbhus 1737.

²⁷ Lagerqvist & Nathorst-Böös, *Vad kostade det?*, p. 82.

²⁸ UUA: Donationsbrev av Carl Didrik Ehrenpreus; alvin-record: 80089.

²⁹ SBL: Carl Didric Ehrenpreus, available online: <<https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/16691>> [accessed: June 11, 2023].

³⁰ N.L. Rasmusson, "Det Bromelius-v. Bromellska myntkabinetet och dess bestånd av "myntskatter", *Fornvännen* 1931, pp. 377–384.

³¹ ATA: ARK 1_1-1, Antikvitetskollegiet och Antikvitetsarkivet 1629–1790, D1:3. Förteckningar och inventarielistor 1724–1766, Förteckning över J. Gyldenclous medaljsamling 16. Oktober 1693.

er acquisitions include the collection of Sten Arvidsson Sture Natt och Dag (1681–1730), which was purchased in 1730, and that of Carl Reinhold Berch, who needed to sell his belongings before travelling to Paris.³² According to Berch, he had amassed his medals for 27 years and stressed that the series is “not complete, but the best that one has seen”.³³ With acquisitions like these, the Royal Coin Cabinet expanded and elevated its status to become the most formidable numismatic collection in the country.

Although coins and medals could be purchased separately, the value and purpose of each object also ought to be understood as a part of a future collection. Paula Findlen discusses the practice of collecting, and states that “every object takes its place in a system of use and meaning in which value is constantly being negotiated.”³⁴ Thus, by acquiring a new object, a new collection, the existing relationship between the coins and medals would be rearranged, and new associations would be instigated. All these collections which joined the Royal Coin Cabinet would together create a *new* collection.

The prices and the names visible in the sources reveal information about the type of persons that primarily engaged with numismatics and numismatic society. Collectors mostly belonged to the Swedish upper class. They were attached to a social field that held both economic and cultural capital. However, the aforementioned collectors, Karlsteen, Brenner, Gyldenclou, Berch, Ehrenpreis, and Natt och Dag, are just a few of the people that occupied themselves with numismatics. About 250 numismatic collectors are known from the 17th and 18th centuries, but many remain invisible in available sources, like unknown small-town vicars who put together collections to use in their lectures, and, most of all, women.³⁵ In the list of noteworthy collectors, only Anna Johanna Grill (1720–1778) and Emerentia von Düben (1669–1743) have been noted as female collectors from this time (outside the royal family).³⁶ While Grill and von Düben could be exceptions, probate inventories or auctions like that of Rosina Elisabeth Roos demonstrated that females indeed

³² ATA: ARK 1_1–1, Antikvitetskollegiet och Antikvitetsarkivet 1629–1790, D1:3. Förteckningar och inventarielistor 1724–1766, Inventarium över “Sahl. Herr Generalns” myntkabinett 1730; Handlingar ang. C.R. Berchs medaljsamling.

³³ ATA: ARK 1_1–1, Antikvitetskollegiet och Antikvitetsarkivet 1629–1790, D1:3. Förteckningar och inventarielistor 1724–1766, Inventarium över “Sahl. Herr Generalns” myntkabinett 1730; Handlingar ang. C.R. Berchs medaljsamling.

³⁴ P. Findlen, *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500–1800*, New York 2012, p. 7.

³⁵ E. Nathorst-Böös & I. Wiséhn, *Numismatiska forskare och myntsamlare i Sverige fram till 1830-talet*, Stockholm 1987.

³⁶ Nathorst-Böös & Wiséhn, *Numismatiska forskare och myntsamlare*, p. 33, 47.

owned and collected numismatic objects, and Sophia Elisabeth Brenner actively conversed about them. Female numismatists might not be as visible in the sources as their male counterparts, but this does not mean that they were absent, even though the list of noteworthy collectors suggests that collecting coins and medals was predominately a male practice or was largely directed at a male audience. The lack of known female collectors mirrors the male-oriented norms of society.³⁷

THE WORLD IN A CABINET

While procuring objects was one aspect of collecting numismatics, the second step would concern the questions of where to put, store, and display said collectables. Here, the cabinet is a vital component. Ehrenpreus's rococo cabinet might serve as an example of how coins and medals could be stored and displayed (ill. 2).³⁸ The cabinet was made by the cabinet maker Lorentz Nordin (1708–1786) and measures almost two metres in height and over one metre in width.³⁹ The cabinet is made of walnut and consists of an upper and lower part. Ornamental brass fittings decorate the doors of the cabinet. The fittings on the upper part display seven portrait medallions in a vertical line within the brass frame of each door (ill. 3). The portrait medallions resemble Renaissance illustrations of historical figures, such as Charlemagne (742–814) or Emperor Augustus (63 BC – 14 AD), but their likenesses are fantastical and provide little resemblance to any known representation depicted on coins or statues.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the portraits allude to the insides of the cabinet, namely, that of history manifested.

The upper part of the cabinet holds three lines of forty-one drawers each, and the lower cabinet contains twelve drawers for bigger objects, like plaster medallions, and four shelves for copper plates or banknotes. The upper drawers

³⁷ J. Germann & H. Strobel, *Materializing Gender in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Ashgate 2016, p. 8. "the formation of gender – whether masculinity or femininity – was a process rather than a fixed definition; these conceptions were embraced and resisted in complex ways throughout the eighteenth century". For an overview of early modern gender research with a focus on material culture studies, read the introduction, pp. 1–13.

³⁸ The cabinet is today located at the Uppsala University Coin Cabinet; available online: <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:alvin:portal:record-104505>> [accessed: June 11, 2023].

³⁹ B. Waern, "Uppsala Universitets Myntkabinett", *Myntkontakt* 1978(3), p. 69.

⁴⁰ On historical portraits and numismatics, see e.g., F. Haskel, *History and its images*, New Haven–London 1995, pp. 26–79.



2. Cabinet of the Chancellor of Uppsala University Count Carl Didrik Ehrenpreus (1692–1760), Uppsala University Coin Cabinet [UUC], Photo: Stephen Quigley



3. Detail of the upper cabinet door, UGCC

had carved-out holes to hold coins and medals. The holes would prevent the objects from scraping against each other and rattling around while the drawer was being opened or closed. Another reason was to organise the cabinet's contents. The insides of each drawer could be arranged in whatever way suited the collector; by regents, chronological, geographical, by type of currency, or even by metal. Susan Pearce notes that objects in a collection are entwined in relationships with each other.⁴¹ Each coin or medal could be appraised individually, each had a value and physical characteristic of its own, but it also held a purpose within the collection. It was or would be part of a group. Simply put, by organising the

⁴¹ S. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, London 1995, p. 20.

content of the cabinet, one would establish relationships between the objects. According to the inventory, Ehrenpreus collected Swedish coins and medals and arranged them in chronological order, and by regent. The first upper drawer held coins associated with Olof Skötkonung (reigned 995–1122), the first Swedish king to mint coins, and the last drawer ended with Fredrik I (1676–1751).⁴² The size of the coins and medals made them convenient to accumulate and store, and the cabinet, with its thin drawers, helped to clearly structure the objects. Each ruler received their assigned drawer, and Ehrenpreus' 2699 items easily fit into this one cabinet.⁴³

Ehrenpreus's cabinet was very grand and required a designated space. Coin cabinets could also come in smaller, more convenient sizes, like the one gifted to the Duke of Oldenburg, Peter I (1719–1829), by his cousin, the



4. Georg Haupt, medal cabinet, 1780, birch, amaranth, boxwood and gilded brass, 30.5 x 28.5 x 18.5 cm, Lot. 800, 90001, Bukowskis

⁴² Uppsala University Archive [UUA]: Uppsala universitets myntkabinett, Inventarieförteckningar, F IX 1, Local-Inventarium öfver Ehrenpreußiska Cabinettet af Svenska Mynt och Medailler; alvin-record:110885.

⁴³ UUA: Kansliarkivet E I c, Donationsbrev av Carl Didrik Ehrenpreus till Uppsala universitet för hans mynt- och medaljsamling (Numophylacium Ehrenpreusianum); alvin-record:80089.

Swedish king Gustav III (1746–1792) (ill. 4).⁴⁴ It measures 30.5cm in length, 28.5cm in width, and 18.5cm in height, and is made of birch and boxwood and adorned with gilded brass. On the top, a portrait fashioned like a medal is worked into the wood veneer. Like Ehrenpreis' cabinet, the visual exterior alludes to the purpose of the box. On the sides, it has two brass circular-shaped handles. Further, it holds six drawers that could be covered by a flap and locked with a key. It was originally gifted in 1780, containing 65 gold medals depicting the Swedish royal family.⁴⁵ For its time, it was a fashionable and portable coin cabinet. The recipient, Peter I, could use it to store this specific assortment of Swedish medals, but he could also change the contents and store another collection, perhaps as a complement to a larger cabinet. Compared to Ehrenpreis' lavish cupboard, this compact cabinet presents a different material complement to collecting coins and medals. It is smaller and can contain fewer objects, but in its essence, its purpose is the same as that of its bigger counterpart. Both are designed to store a numismatic collection and allow their owners to organise and display their belongings.

STUDYING AND WRITING ABOUT COINS AND MEDALS

To foster one's collection, and buy, trade, sell, and update, a collector needed to gain knowledge of the objects he or she possessed, as well as the politics and people they depicted. For this, numismatic literature filled a vital role.⁴⁶ The most common type of numismatic publication was the catalogue. A catalogue listed all the items of a collection and would therefore aid the numismatic community, as it revealed the contents of a collection that perhaps could not be visited by everyone. Also, it benefited the status of the collection's owner, since it highlighted his or her belongings. Another important genre recorded and described coins and medals, with a focus on geographical or chronological aspects. For instance, Brenner's *Thesaurus nummorum Sveo-Gothicorum* (1691/1731) presented Swedish numismatic production from its start with Olof Skötkonung until Brenner's own time, including illustrations in true-to-life size (ill. 5). As a miniaturist painter, Brenner was

⁴⁴ B. Hemmingsson, "Haupts medaljskrin till den kungliga gåvan", *Svensk Numismatisk Tidskrift* 2010(7), pp. 149–150.

⁴⁵ Haidenthaler, *The Medal in Early Modern Sweden*, p. 299.

⁴⁶ For a comprehensive introduction to early numismatic scholarship; cf. Haskell, *History and its images*, pp. 13–25; on early modern numismatic literature, cf. F. Bassoli, *Antiquarian books on coins and medals: from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century*, London 2001.



5. Erich Reitz, Willem Swidde (?), Elias Brenner, *Thesaurus nummorum sueo-gothicorum* [...] 1731, tab X, engraving, alvin:record: 175815, UUB

well educated in drawing techniques and had prepared the images himself, which he then commissioned to be transferred onto copper plates. The book was written in Latin, and combined with the images, it provided a comprehensive introduction to Sweden's numismatic history and currency.⁴⁷

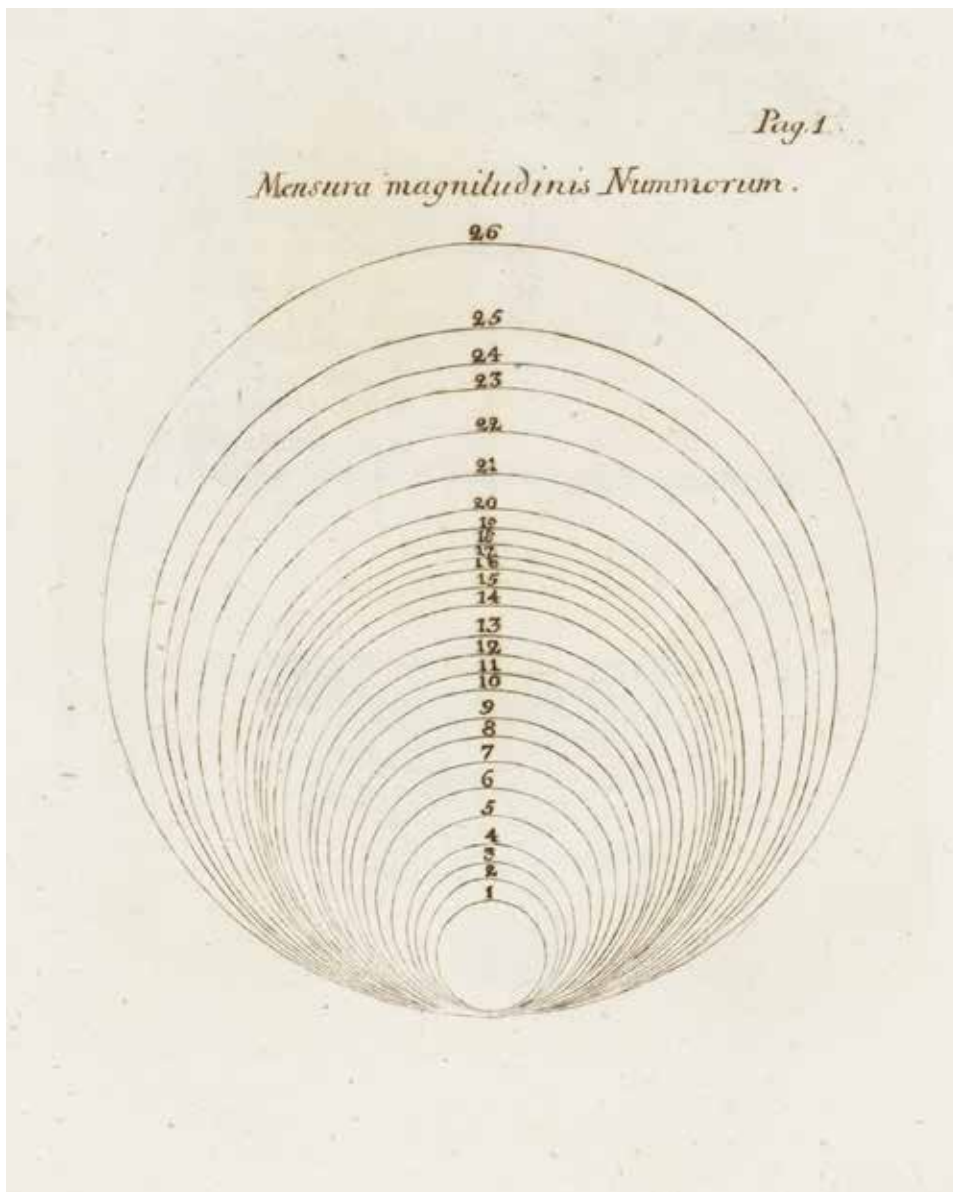
Berch followed in Brenner's footsteps and published a volume on Swedish coins and medals – *Beskrifning öfwer swenska mynt och kongl. skåde-penningar [...] (1773)*. He refrained from images but included detailed descriptions of each coin and medal edition, providing information about their visual executions, inscriptions, material, references for additional reading, and where he had seen the objects. For instance, he frequently mentioned Anna Johanna Grill's collection, where he also studied her replicas of rare items.⁴⁸ Replicas would often be used as stand-ins for medals or coins that were unique or missing in one's collection. A replica transmitted the material characteristics of the object such as size and relief, which were essential for the epistemological process of identifying a coin or medal. They were tactile and visual objects and one needed both sight and touch to properly grasp their physical characteristics. Although unillustrated, Berch's book included a scale consisting of twenty-six circular lines set within each other, which helped the reader determine the object's size (ill. 6). Reading Berch's description of a numismatic object, replica, or original, and comparing its size with the information gained from the book, would aid the collector in identifying his or her item and consequently assign it a fitting place in their cabinet. Similarly, Brenner's *Thesaurus* allowed numismatists such as Sperling, who frequently referred to the book in his letters,⁴⁹ to study Swedish coins without owning them or comparing them with the ones depicted in the book. The publications aided in understanding the object, and the coin or medal materialised the written narrative.

Next to catalogues and treatises on coins and medals, numismatic topics also drifted to the universities in Uppsala, Lund, and Åbo (Turku). The most crucial tasks of these academic writings were to create an understanding of economic circulation and to cast a light on the country's former currency and

⁴⁷ For an introduction to Brenner's book, see: e.g. T. Sundquist, "En skatt av svenska mynt. Elias Brenners Numismatiska Mästerverk", in *Vår lärda skalde-Fru: Sophia Elisabet Brenner och hennes tid*, eds. V. Lindgärde, A. Jönsson & E. Göransson, Lund 2011, pp. 374–389.

⁴⁸ C.R. Berch, *Beskrifning [...]*, Stockholm 1773, p. 175, nr. 56; p. 243, nr. 194; S.E. Bring, "Anna Johanna Grill och Numismatiken", *Lychnos Lärdomshistoriska Samfundets Årsbok 1957–1958 (1958)*, pp. 251–263, here 260.

⁴⁹ E.g. Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 207ff, Letter XV, Sperling to Brenner 30 March 1705.



6. Measurements in Carl Reinhold Berch, *Beskrifning öfwer swenska mynt och skådepenningar* [...] 1773, p. 16, alvin-record: 113152, UUB

economic history⁵⁰. The reasoning was grounded on close studies, and data collection through which one could hypothesise on combinations of dies. But mostly, scholars analysed the style and typology of coins to establish a chronology. For example, in his dissertation, *Nummis Arabicis in patria repertis* (1755), Martin Lundbeck examines the origin of a Swedish treasure find of Arabic coins from the Viking Age.⁵¹ Thereby Lundbeck and his professor, Carl Abraham Clewberg, showed that the North had been in contact with the Arabic world long before early modern times.

Another more mundane type of publication was the weekly numismatic journals. One of many of these journals was Johan Hieronymus Lochner's *Sammlung merkwürdiger Medaillen [...]*, published from 1737 to 1744.⁵² Each week it presented a coin or a medal, old or new, that addressed European politics. Next to an image, the author described the depicted object in a few sentences, outlining the motif and inscription, and sketched the circumstance that resulted in its production. Perhaps inspired by Lochner, Ehrenpreus – who subscribed to these weekly numismatic journals – urged the keeper of the Uppsala University coin cabinet, Ziervogel, to produce a similar publication.⁵³ In 1755, Ziervogel published *Trettio historiska afhandlingar om svenska mynt och medaljer* [Thirty historical treatises on Swedish coins and medals]. The publication followed a well-known standard, as it illustrated a coin or medal, described the image and inscription, and outlined the events that led to its execution (ill. 7). Like Lochner, Ziervogel's texts were also disseminated as a weekly journal and could, among others, be purchased from the printer Lorentz Grefing (died 1769) in Stockholm, as announced in *Posttidningar*, on the 27th of February in 1755: "At L.L. Grefing's from the print arrived: The second and the third paper sheet of librarian Ziervogel's Historical Weekly Journal on coins and medals; The second is about the medal on the Castle of Stockholm; the third on a rare medal on Karl X Gustav's coronation. The paper sheet costs 12 öre kopparmynt."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Cf. dissertations supervised by Kilian Stobaeus, available online: <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:alvin:portal:record-104129> ; <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:alvin:portal:record-104128>> [accessed: June 11, 2023].

⁵¹ Carl Abraham Clewberg and Martin Lundbeck, *Dissertatio Academica de Nummis Arabicis in Patria Repertis, [...]*, Turku 1755; available online: <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:alvin:portal:record-102834>> [accessed: June 11, 2023].

⁵² Another was Johan David Köhlers (1684–1755) *Historische Münz-Belustigung*, published between 1729 and 1742.

⁵³ UUB: Uka Numismatik, Tidskr. e.g. alvin-record:339020; alvin-record:339055; alvin-record:339024; alvin-record:339067.

⁵⁴ *Posttidningar* 27 februari 1755, p. 4, available online: <<https://tidningar.kb.se/2979645/1755-02-27/edition/145134/part/1/page/4/?q=%20medaille&sort=&from=1755-01-01&to=1755-12-31>> [accessed: June 11, 2023]. 12 km equalled roughly 200g of lamb meat, see: Lagerqvist & Nathorst-Böös, *Vad kostade det?*, p. 82.



7. Evald Ziervogel, *Trettio historiska afhandlingar [...] fierde arket*, printed by L.L. Grefing 1755, alvin-record: 176704, UUB

These journals were ideal literature for both amateurs and connoisseurs. The source of their popularity was the comprehensive overview of the often very complex circumstances that had inspired the medal or coin, including images, and suggestions for further reading. In comparison, numismatic catalogues or treatises seldom offered more detailed facts than the issuer, a description of the visual execution, date, and mint master or medal artist of an edition. Any other information would have to be gathered from the collector's own library. Therefore, numismatics and literature were co-dependent.

TALKING ABOUT COINS

While buying, trading, and studying coins and medals was one aspect, another concerned the display of these collections. Certainly, numismatic objects could be enjoyed by oneself, but, in its essence, a collection was not meant to remain unseen but to be visited and praised. But who would use these collections apart from the owners and how would one know where to find them? Here travel books could aid in the quest, like *Die vornehmsten Europaeischen Reisen*, which recommended noteworthy collectors, such as Brenner and Karlsteen in Stockholm and the university coin cabinet in Uppsala.⁵⁵ Tourists were welcome to visit, but guests could also be commended by fellow friends, like de Carstens, mentioned in the beginning, whom Sperling endorsed to the Brenners.

In the 18th century, collecting numismatics held an aura of learnedness and wit. This was largely due to the fact that studying and collecting coins and medals entailed an extensive amount of historical, political, literary, and artistic knowledge. To read the Latin inscriptions and perhaps identify the source as a famous ancient author – quotes from Ovid or Vergil were frequently reused on medals⁵⁶ – would inspire awe among others. Likewise, the knowledge of a ruler's politics based on one glance at a coin could earn respect from fellow collectors.

If one did not have the possibility to discuss the precious objects face-to-face, such conversations could be transferred to paper.

[...] I would also like to ask you whether Queen Christina ever had Finnish words minted with Greek letters on her coins, as some learned men told me. For I know that this Queen had the Swedish word Makelos engraved on some coin with Greek letters, MAKEΛΩΣ, which the Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, and Germans failed to

⁵⁵ Peter Ambrosius Lehmann, *Die vornehmsten Europaeischen Reisen*, Hamburg 1736, p. 453.

⁵⁶ Y. Haidenthaller, "Adapting Antiquity: References to Classical Literature on Early Modern Swedish Medals", *Afterlife of Antiquity*, IKON 2020(13), pp. 303–314.

understand and started to mock in peculiar ways and invent explanations at which Saturn himself, who never smiles, would grin. But I have not yet learned anything else about a Finnish inscription hidden under Greek letters, other than what they recently told me.⁵⁷

The peculiar medal that Sperling enquires about is one that Queen Christina had issued during her time in Rome. The obverse portrays the Queen in profile, wearing a laurel crown atop an antique-inspired helmet, with the inscription REGINA CHRISTINA (ill. 8). The reverse depicts a crowned Phoenix with outstretched wings rising from the pyre of flames. Above reads the curious inscription MAKEΛΩΣ, which invited various interpretations. It combines Latin and Greek letters and refers to the Swedish word *makelös* or *makalös*, denoting that Christina is both without flaw and without a husband. It is a clever game of words which, deprived of a proper explanation, would be impossible to decode. In his letter, Sperling now ponders whether a coin with a similar inscription hiding a Finnish word was ever minted. Thanks to the unusual inscription, Sophia Elisabeth Brenner immediately identifies which edition Sperling asks about and replies that such a coin never existed.⁵⁸



8. Alberto Hamerani, *Christina as Phoenix*, 1659, cast bronze, \varnothing 41.98 mm, 32.11 g, Hd. 103, inv. 201657, alvin-record: 76490, UUC

⁵⁷ Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 201, Letter XIII, Sperling to Brenner, 12 July 1704.

⁵⁸ Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 203, Letter XIV, Brenner to Sperling 16 October 1704; the makalos-medal was also reengraved in Sweden in the late 17th century, see: Haidenthaler, *The Medal in Early Modern Sweden*, p. 216.

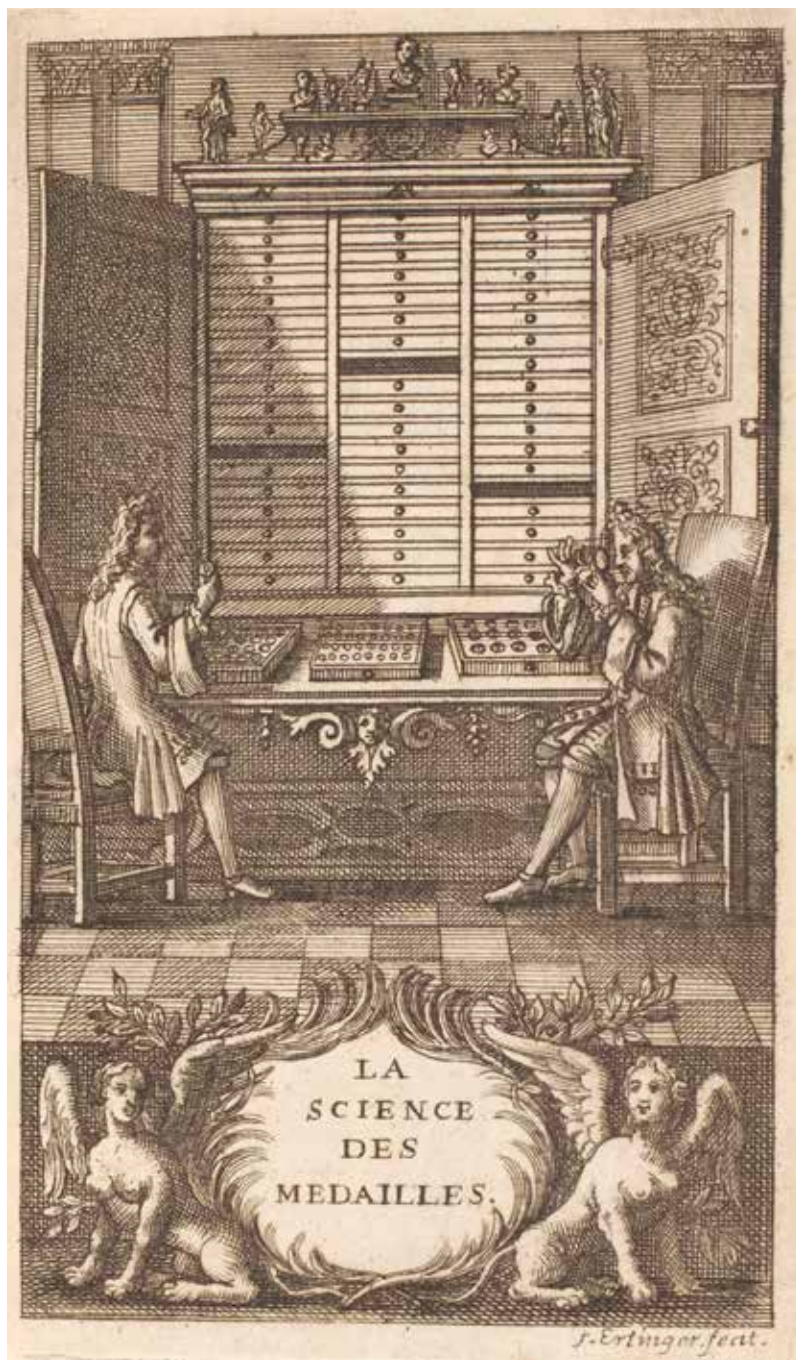
The MAKEΛΩΣ medal was only one of many discussions that the pen pals exchanged on numismatic issues. However, a collector of coins and medals would preferably appreciate them in the company of other like-minded individuals. William Stenhouse writes about the display and reception of collections in Renaissance Rome and how a collector “welcomed Boissard’s group into his collection, and happily showed them his coins and gems.”⁵⁹ Similarly, collectors like Ehrenpreus could entertain their guests by showing them a lavish cabinet that displayed coins and medals in the best possible way. It would invite visitors to admire the collection and wonder about which unknown treasures the cabinet held; much like numismatic collections had been presented since the Renaissance.

The frontispiece of Louis Jobert’s *La Science des Medailles* (1692) might help us visualise how coins and medals were handled (ill. 9). Although a generic illustration, the image provides a convincing representation of a numismatic cabinet and peoples’ interaction with the objects. It shows two gentlemen seated beside a cabinet with open doors, and three drawers are placed on the table in front of them. One gentleman lifts an object from its tray and the other holds his choice close to his face while examining it with a magnifying glass. Coins and medals were objects that required close interaction, not least due to their size. The beholder would be forced to hold the object close to his or her eye, perhaps even use a looking aid, and keep near to a source of light. One would flip the object and turn it in one’s hand to watch the light reflect on the surface and study the relief and the image engraved on each side. Furthermore, a striking feature that this illustration presents is one, the cabinet, and another, the communication between the two men. Scrutinising the coins could be a social experience.

In a similar manner, Ehrenpreus could pull out a drawer, set it on a table, take a seat, pick up an item, and present it to others. For instance, drawer nineteen in his cabinet held coins and medals pertaining to Sigismund of Vasa (1566–1632), son of the Swedish king Johan III (1537–1592) and the Polish princess Katarzyna Jagiellonka (1526–1583). The inventory lists under Sigismund one gold coin, one gilded silver medal, three silver medals, one bronze medal, ten Swedish silver coins, and six Polish silver coins, for a total of twenty-two objects.⁶⁰ The golden coin, a ducat, might gain attention. In contrast to silver, which might blacken over time and gain a patina, or copper which might turn green, a golden coin would keep its sheen. The coin

⁵⁹ W. Stenhouse, “Visitors, Display, and Reception in the Antiquity Collections of Late-Renaissance Rome”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 2005, 58(2), p. 404.

⁶⁰ UUA: Local-Inventarium öfver Ehrenpreußiska Cabinettet, p. 3; alvin-record:110885.



9. Franz Ertinger, Louis Jobert *La Science des medailles*, Paris: de Bure 1739, engraving [1710], Bayrische Staatsbibliothek, München

was minted shortly before Sigismund III, who in addition to being King of Poland, also was crowned King of Sweden. The coin measures about 22 mm in diameter, a size which would require the beholder to lay it in their palm or secure it with thumb and index finger to turn it and scrutinise its surface and identify the image stamped into the metal. The obverse depicts the king seen from the right (ill. 10).⁶¹ He wears a crown, a ruff, and a cuirass adorned with a lion's head on his shoulder. His portrait is encircled by the inscription SIGISMVND.III.D:G:REX.POL.D:PRVS. [Sigismund III, by God's grace king of Poland and Prussia]. The reverse shows the coat of arms of the city of Gdańsk, a crown above two crosses supported by two lions. Between the lions' heads, one can spot the chi rho symbol P . The legend reads MONE.NO.AVR. CIVI:GEDANENSIS93. [new gold coin minted by the city of Gdańsk]. The coin and Sigismund III, who once minted it, might spark a conversation about long-gone political affairs and fierce conflicts, and perhaps even inspire discussions about religion, as Sigismund III's Catholic confession was used as a main argument by Karl IX to undermine his nephews' suitability to rule Lutheran Sweden.⁶² It is, of course, impossible to know how Ehrenpreus handled his collection and conversed about it with his guests, but it remains without a doubt that the rich context surrounding the numismatic objects invited social interaction.



10. Sigismund III of Vasa, 1 ducat 1593, gold, 22 mm, 3,50 g, ID:2567, alvin-record: 353484, UUC

⁶¹ Uppsala University Coin cabinet, ID: 2567; alvin-record: 343484.

⁶² E. Petersson, *Karl IX Kampen om kronan*, Lund 2021.

Returning to Mr. de Carsten's visit to Stockholm, Sophia Elisabeth Brenner assured Sperling it went wonderfully. "When he stayed here, we quite often enjoyed his learned conversation that was both very useful and delightful."⁶³ She does not specify what they talked about, but since de Carstens wished to study Brenner's collection, it is safe to assume that they conversed about coins. Coins and medals were looked at, touched, talked about, handed around, and functioned as conversation starters to discuss current or foregone history and politics.

CONCLUSIONS

This article presents material components like precious objects, literature, and cabinets, and likewise immaterial aspects such as social displays and communication. The cases discussed here shed light on the versatile fortune of a numismatic collection destined to outlive its owner and how coins and medals could be sold and bought, thereby finding their place in a new setting. Examples like Ehrenpreus's cabinet highlight the material aspects of numismatics, such as the medals themselves and the cabinet used to store them, and Karlsteen's collection reveals that medals were often one of many object categories within the sphere of collecting. The abundance of publications indicates a dialogue and a formation of theories regarding the study of numismatic objects and the development of numismatic science. Publications were a means to elevate the author in the numismatic community, but they also benefited other collectors who could use these books as references while studying their coins and medals.⁶⁴ One could collect coins and medals only because it was fashionable, without a connoisseur's expertise, yet it would still elicit only limited understanding about the object in one's hand. For that reason, numismatic literature was necessary. Furthermore, the numismatic community – not least shown through Brenner and Sperling's letters and literature – exhibit international communication. The letters exchanged also reveal that the pleasure taken in coins and medals was experienced in the company of knowledgeable visitors, either in person or from afar.

Overall, the sources reveal that the collecting practices in Sweden did not differ from other northern countries but rather followed similar pat-

⁶³ Göransson, *Letters of a learned lady*, p. 213, Letter XVI, Brenner to Sperling, 7 August 1705.

⁶⁴ Similar strategies are discussed in P. Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Los Angeles and London 1994, chapter 8, "Patron, brokers and strategies".

terns. The collectors were people with economic and cultural capital, and objects were traded and exchanged from near and far. The collections could be based on a particular fondness for antiquity or a scholarly quest to highlight the country's history. The images displayed in the literature exhibited the latest visualisation techniques and aimed to entertain and educate. Lastly, just like anywhere else, the coins and medals were stored and displayed in small or big cupboards ordered to the collector's preferences. To conclude, even if this article concerns Swedish cases, it demonstrates that numismatics was a social custom that crossed borders. Collecting coins and medals was a complex practice that involved many more aspects aside from just coins and medals.

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COLLECTING COINS AND MEDALS IN 18TH-CENTURY SWEDEN

Summary

During the 18th century, collections of coins and medals were familiar sights. The collectors ranged from scholars to amateurs, men and women and the collectables tempted collectors for various reasons: they signified wealth and knowledge, they rendered historical events or current politics in material form, or they were miniature artworks and financial investments. Also, the visual and material culture that involved collecting coins and medals consisted of cabinets and numismatic publications. But how were numismatic collections amassed, and how were they used? What did it mean to own a coin and medal collection? This article discusses the practices of collecting numismatics in 18th-century Sweden through various case studies concerning private and public collections, such as the Uppsala University coin cabinet or the possessions of politician Carl Didric Ehrenpreus, numismatist Elias Brenner, medal artist Arvid Karlsteen, and merchant-wife Anna Johanna Grill. These cases illuminate the diverse motivations behind collecting, from intellectual curiosity to social status. These case

studies include immaterial facets such as witty discussions and international networks and material aspects such as coins, medals, cabinets, letters, and publications. Based on contemporary written sources, this article sheds light on how numismatic objects were bought, sold and circulated, highlighting the market dynamics of collecting. Furthermore, the examples examine how numismatic publications were used next to the objects, contributing to hermeneutic study and the collecting process. The written records provide insight into the scholarly discourse surrounding these collections, offering a glimpse into the intellectual context of the time. Finally, the article will add to the understanding of values and ideas attached to the practices of collecting coins and medals in early modern Europe. It elucidates the role of numismatics as a collecting practice, as well as how it shaped cultural perceptions, underscoring the intricate interplay between material and visual culture, society, and the production of knowledge during this period.

Keywords:

numismatic, collecting, coins, medals, Sweden, 18th century

