

MEDALLIC ART

Nicolaus Copernicus was commemorated in medallic art two centuries later than in painting, sculpture and prints. He is usually depicted on medals, medallions and plaques with such attributes as the heliocentric motive, armillary sphere and other astronomic instruments like an astrolabe or a compass, panoramas of cities where he lived, and lilies of the valley that symbolize his titles in medicine and natural philosophy. The medals commemorate Copernicus' anniversaries of birth or death, jubilees of cities where he lived, erections of his monuments, openings of museums and conventions of numerous societies specializing in his fields of science.

The first medal showing the image of Nicolaus Copernicus was designed by a medallist Christian Wermuth of Gotha in the first half of the 18th century. Among the oldest medals (1818–1820) are those from the workshop of Amadée Durand in Paris. The series presents artistic images of Copernicus. The first Polish medal commemorating Copernicus comes from 1830. Designed by Władysław Oleszczyński and Józef Mainert, it shows the astronomer's monument that stands in front of the Staszic Palace in Warsaw. To commemorate the 300th anniversary of Copernicus' death, Józef Meinert designed two small medallions and manufactured them in the Münchheimer button factory in Warsaw. In 1873 in Kraków and Poznań, on the occasion of the 400th birth anniversary of Copernicus, Friedrich Wilhelm Below and Jan Nepomucen Langer designed and minted two commemorative medals. In the same year, the Poznań Society of Friends of Science sponsored another Copernicus' medal. In 1879 four Italian universities: in Bologna, Ferrara, Padua and Rome, minted a unique medal that is now in the possession of the Astronomic and Copernican Museum in the Monte Mario Observatory. The medal was designed by a Florence medallist Giovanni Vagnetti and minted by Artur Wołyński. The 400th death anniversary of Copernicus in 1943 was commemorated in London by a medal designed by Wojciech Jastrzębowski. The 500th birthday anniversary of Copernicus was honoured, besides Poland, by Great Britain, Australia, Czechoslovakia, France, Mexico, Portugal, the USA, Italy and the USSR.



Amadée Durand (design), F. Godel (realisation), Nicolaus Copernicus, obverse, iron, 1820



Władysław Oleszczyński, Unveiling of Nicolaus Copernicus monument in Warsaw in 1830, obverse, varnished plastic mass, 1830



Fryderyk Wilhelm Below, Nicolaus Copernicus, 400th birth anniversary, white metal, 1873



Franciszek Habdas, Copernican Scientific Session of the Polish Academy of Sciences on the 480th birth anniversary of Copernicus, patinated tombac, 1953



Stanisława Wątróbska-Frindt, Nicolaus Copernicus, 500th birth anniversary and 500 years of print in Poland, silver-plated tombac, oxidised, obverse, 1973



Józef Markiewicz-Nieszczy, Nicolaus Copernicus, patinated tombac, obverse, 1977



Ewa Olszewska-Borys, Nicolaus Copernicus, patinated tombac, 1985



Hanna Jelonek, 200 years of the Society of Friends of Science, silver-plated tombac, 2000



Zygfryd Gardzielewski (obverse), Stanisława Wątróbska-Frindt (reverse) (realisation), 60 years of Nicolaus Copernicus Library in Toruń, patinated tombac, 1984

