

Iconographic and Chemical Analysis of the Molinari Medals in the Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA)

Amber Orosco, Class of 2019

My research primarily focused on the medal Ferdinand VII (fig. 1) by Pedro JosŽ Maria Guerrero. I worked on identifying iconography of the obverse and reverse, with an emphasis on the allegorical reverse inspired by humanist ideals popularized during the Renaissance. I was able to create a catalogue raisonnŽ of Pedro JosŽ Maria de Guerrero, which compiles sixteen attributions dating 1808-1823. I was also able to write a series of short essays with topics pertaining to the artist and artist, major findings/ conclusions included: our piece's role as the peak of the artist's embodiment of the transition between the reign of Ferdinand VII and the Mexican Revolution leading to the rule of Emperor Augustin I, as well as the identification of the audience using the inscription leading to the conclusion that monastic and scholastic institutions were targeted as places suitable for propaganda (in the form of medals) in favor of Ferdinand VII. In concordance with Benjamin Wu's 2018 project on the digitization of the Molinari Medals, I was also able to contribute information on the museum's object database, EMBARK, including an updated bibliography.

As originally proposed, I was going to use the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) at the Earth and Oceanographic department at Bowdoin to chemically analyze a selection of medals with the aid of Professor Rachel Beane. The final selection of the medals resulted from a cross-comparison of artists between the Molinari Collection and the Kress Collection, which was chemically analyzed in 1993 (Glinsman et. al.). A total of five specimens from the Molinari Collection were taken to the SEM to be analyzed. After one run by the SEM it was discovered that the wax coating on the medals was too thick to get an accurate reading. It was also determined that using X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analysis would be able to bypass the wax coating. Plans for using an XRF to carry out the chemical analysis are tentative for the Fall 2017. This data may help answer questions about production practices and alloys associated with specific regions.

Looking forward we are projected to open an exhibit highlighting this summer's work in the Summer of 2018. This will be a collaboration between Benjamin Wu '18, Art History Professor Susan Wegner, BCMA co-director Anne Collins-Goodyear, and me. Ben and I hope to focus on the question "Why do we collect medals?" A projected challenge and opportunity for innovative display stems from the fact that medals were made to be handled, and the tactile nature of the object is what makes them special. We hope to use technology in order to bridge this gap between viewing and feeling a strong experience for viewers with this introduction to a now unfamiliar art form.

Fig. 1 Pedro JosŽ Maria de Guerrero, The Seminario Tridentino of Mexico to the Captive King of Spain 1809, 46mm, Gilt Bronze, struck, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick

Faculty Mentor: Susan Wegner

Funded by the Mellon Humanities Fellowship

References: Glinsman, L. A. and Hayek, L. C. (1993), A Multivariate Analysis of Renaissance Portrait Medals: An Expanded Nomenclature for Defining Alloy Composition, *Archaeometry*, 35: 49-67.