

# ***ATHENA LEADING THE WAY***

## ***The History of Her Medalllic Iconography***



## Medal Collectors of America

New York International Numismatic Convention  
Waldorf Astoria Hotel  
Saturday, January 7, 2012

*John Sallay*

# Today's Discussion

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- Background
- Athena and Minerva on Ancient Coins
- Renaissance and Golden Age Medals
- Athena in the Enlightenment and Beyond
- Britannia and Liberty Seated Coinage
- Modern Numismatic Usage and Variations

Why Iconography? *Because a picture is worth a thousand words...if you know what it means*



*Chauncy Hall School, Boston, 1835*



*Thorp Arch Seminary, Yorkshire, 1811*

# Some Definitions

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## Iconography

- Description and classification of images based on their meaning rather than their form; the imagery or symbolism of a work of art or body of art
- The traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject, especially a religious or legendary subject

*From the Greek icon meaning “picture” and graphia meaning “writing” or “description” – literally “picture writing” or “description of pictures”*

## Allegory

- The expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence
- An instance (as in a story or painting) of such expression

# Athena in Greek Mythology



*Nashville recreation of the Athena Parthenos originally in the Parthenon (42 ft. tall, with 8 lbs. of gold leaf)*

- One of the primary Olympian gods, also known as “Athena Parthenos” or “Pallas Athena”
- Subject of an extensive and varied mythology
- Characterized by her wisdom and strength
- Patron of craftsmen and artisans
- Key attributes include:
  - Fully dressed, with helmet, spear, shield and aegis with the Gorgoneion
  - Unsmiling, intense gaze
  - Often accompanied by her sacred Owl and/or snake
  - Sometimes holds Nike (Victory) and/or a wreath
  - Occasionally takes the form of Mentor

# Minerva in Roman Mythology



*The Minerva Bowl, 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD,  
from the Hildesheim Treasure now in the  
Antikensammlung Berlin (Altes Museum)*

- Roman goddess equated with the Greek goddess Athena
- Key attributes very similar to Athena, including:
  - Fully dressed, with helmet, spear, shield and aegis with the Gorgoneion
  - Unsmiling, intense gaze
  - Often accompanied by her Owl

# Comparing Athena and Minerva – Two Medals by William Key, c. 1875

Athena – Greek Helmet



Minerva – Roman Helmet



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# Athena on Ancient Greek Coins



## Athens, Tetradrachm, 450-420 BC

- Athena, wearing a wreath
- Owl, olive twig, legend: ΑΘΕ



## Corinth, Stater, 375-300 BC

- Athena, wearing a Corinthian helmet; E and rose behind
- Pegasus flying left; koppa below

# Athena on Ancient Greek Coins (2)



## Macedon, Distater, 336-323 BC

- Alexander as Athena
- Nike holding wreath and scepter; thunderbolt to the left



## Thrace, Lysimachos, Stater, 323-281 BC

- Alexander, wearing a diadem and horn of Ammon
- Athena holding Nike in her outstretched right hand



## Pergamon, Eumenes I, Tetradrachm, 250-241 BC

- Laureate head of Philetairos
- Athena crowning dynastic name with wreath

# Minerva on Ancient Roman Coins



## Republic, C. Veibius Vaarus, Denarius, 42 BC

- Hercules bearded, wearing laureate diadem
- Minerva standing, holding Victory and spear/shield



## Domitian, Aureus, 90-91 AD

- Domitian laureate, DOMITIANVS AVGVSTVS
- Minerva holding thunderbolt and spear; shield at side; GERMANICVS COS XV



## Domitian, Aureus, 92-94 AD

- Domitian laureate, DOMITIANVS AVGVSTVS
- Minerva standing on prow, brandishing javelin in one hand and holding a shield; owl at her feet

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# Renaissance Included Classical Iconography

## *Iconologia* of Cesare Ripa (1593, Hertel edition 1758-60)

### Perspicacity



### Protection

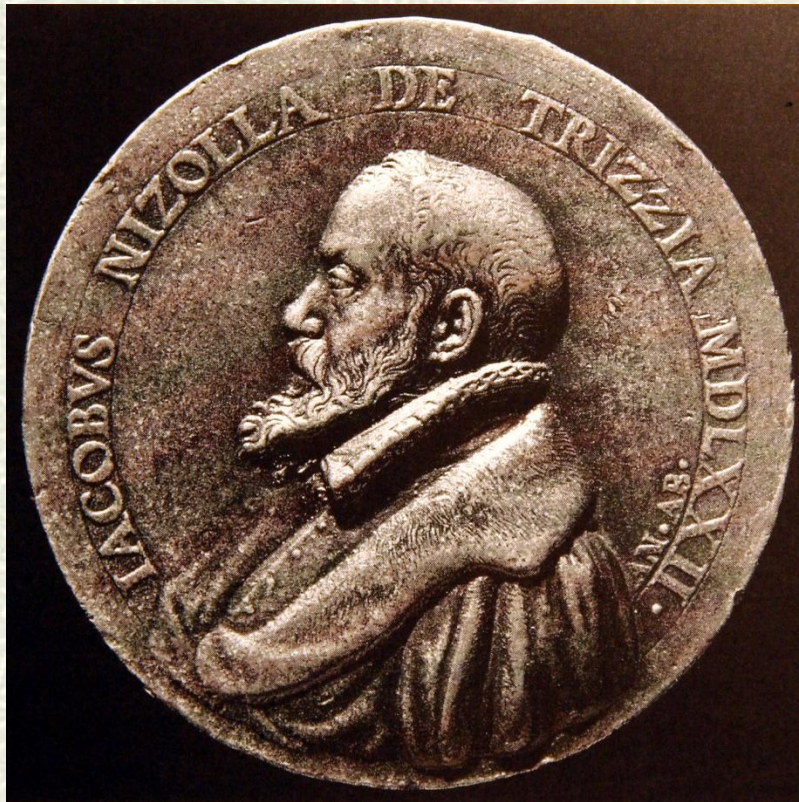


# Bronze Medal – Helen of Troy and The Judgment of Paris (Italy, 16th century)



ΕΛΕΝΗ ΑΗΛΑΙΑ ΣΓΑΡΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑ – “Helen Queen of Sparta”  
ΑΚΑΘΑΡΙΟΣ ΓΑΡΙΔΟΣ ΚΡΙΣΙΣ – “Foul Paris’s Judgment”

# Tribute to Jacopo Nizzola da Trezzo, by Antonio Abondio (1572)



ARTIBVS QVAESITA GLORIA – “Fame acquired through art”

# Henry IV and Marie de Medici, The Birth of the Dauphin, by Guillaume Dupre (1603)



PROPAGO IMPERI – “Royal Blood Line”



# William III Elected Stadholder at Age Four, by Pieter van Abeele (1654)



TIME DEVM – “Fear God”

# Charles II and the Peace of Breda with Holland, by J. Roettier (1667)



FAVENTE DEO – “God being propitious”

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# Coronation of William and Mary, by J. Smeltzing (1689)



M. BRIT. EXP. NAV. BAT. LIB. REST. ASSERTA –

“Great Britain delivered, restored, and supported by the naval expedition of the Dutch”

# Frederick III, Founding of the University of Halle, Brandenburg-Prussia, by Faltz (1694)



FELICITATI TEMPORVM – “Happiness of the times”

# Coronation of Queen Anne, by J. Croker (1702)



VICEM GERIT. ILLA. TONANTI – “She is the Vice-Regent of the Thunderer”

# Expulsion of the French from Germany, House of Habsburg (1704)



DEXTERA DOMINI FECIT VIRTUTEM –  
“The right and the power of the Lord hath wrought”

# Queen Anne, Union of England and Scotland, by J. Croker (1707)



NOVAE PALLADIUM TROIAE – “The Palladium of the new Troy”



# Death of Peter the Great, by Jean Dassier, 1725 (mid-18th century)



EX UTROQUE MAGNUS – “Great on both land and sea”

# Commemorative of the Education of the Young King Louis XV, 1717 (c. 1770)



ACCIPE QUAE PERAGENDA PRIUS – “Learn what is necessary to reach there”

# Stolp Prize, University of Leiden, by J.G. Holtzhey, after Frans van Mieris (1756)



MONSTRAT ITER TVTVMQVE FACIT – “She shows the way and makes it safe”  
AVCTOREM MANIFESTAT OPVS – “The work reveals its author, i.e., God”

# Royal Academy of Arts, by T. Pingo after G. Battista Cipriani & Edward Penny (1768)



HAVD FACILEM ESSE VIAM VOLVIT— “She did not desire the way to be easy”

# Bern Academy, Athena as Mentor Guiding a Student (c. 1800)



FELICIBUS INGENIIS APERITUR ITER – “The path to fortune is open to genius”

# Halloran Medal, Sydney, Australia, by Samuel Clayton (1824)



ARDUA PRIMA VIA EST; SED FIT LABOR IPSE VOLUPTAS –  
“At first the way is hard; but labor itself becomes a pleasure”

# Royal Naval Academy, Marquis of Granby Medal, by T. Pingo (1765)



PRAEMIA LAUDI – “Rewards of glory”

# Literary Prize of King's College, New York, by Elisha Gallaudet (1768)



EXIMIO JUVENI PROPTER INSIGNES IN ARTIBUS PROGRESSUS –  
“To an Exceptional Youth on Account of Noteworthy Progress in the Arts”



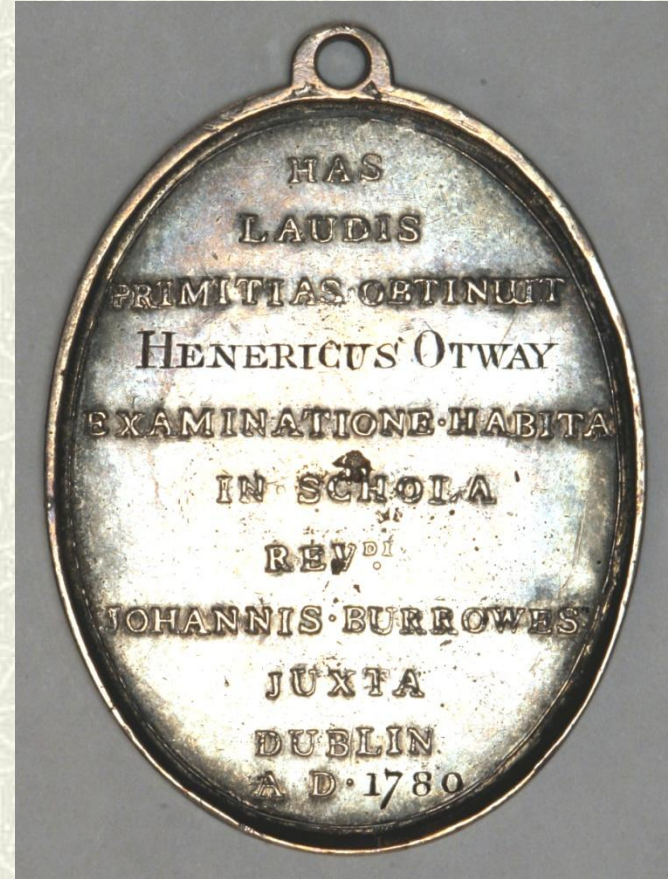
# Blundell School, Keats Medal, by T. Pingo (1778)



DETURI DIGNIORI – “Let it be given to the more worthy”

IN PATRIAM POPULUMQ FLUXIT – “It flowed onto the nation and the people”

# Burrow's School, Dublin, by Thomas Mossop (1780)



SUME SUPERBIAM QVAESITAM MERITIS –  
“Crown my head with a garland of Delphic laurel”

# Libertas Americana, by Augustin Dupre (1783)



NON SINE DIIS ANIMOSUS INFANS – “The infant is not bold without divine aid”

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# The Origin of Britannia on Coins



## Hadrian, As, 117-138 AD

- Laureate bust of Hadrian, IMP CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG
- Britannia, seated with her right foot on a rock, PONT MAX TR POT COS III, S C in field, BRITANNIA in exergue



## Antoninus Pius, Sestertius, 140-144 AD

- Laureate bust of Antoninus Pius, ANTONINVS AVG PIVS P P TR P COS III
- Britannia seated on rock, holding a standard, with left elbow on a shield set on helmet, BRITANNIA around



## Charles I, Farthing pattern, 1665

- CAROLVS A CAROLO 1665
- Britannia facing left, QVATVOR MARIA VINDICO

# Evolution of Britannia on Minor British Coinage



## George II, Halfpenny, 1749

- GEORGIUS III REX
- Britannia seated, holding olive branch with spear and shield



## George III, Two Pence, 1797

- GEORGIUS III. D:G. REX.
- Britannia seated on rock, resting on her shield, holding an olive branch and trident



## Edward VII, Penny, 1902

- EDWARDVS VII DEI GRA: BRITT: OMN: REX FID: DEF: IND: IMP:
- Britannia wearing helmet, holding her shield and trident

# University College London, Award for Medical Jurisprudence (1887)



CUNCTI ADSINT MERITAEQUE EXPECTENT PRAEMIA PALMAE –  
“Let all come who by merit deserve the most reward”

# Liberty Seated Coinage Designs (1835)



*William Kneass*



Titian Peale's  
Seated Liberty

*Titian Peale*



*Thomas Sully*



*Christian Gobrecht*



# Gobrecht Dollar Pattern (1836)



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# Brooklyn Institute, New York, Award for Geography, by Moritz Furst (1845)



# Rathmines School, Dublin by I. C. Parkes, (1873)



# Danvers, Massachusetts Peabody Medal, by Francis N. Mitchell (1862)



# Columbia College Award for Excellence and Diligence, By William Kneass (1838)



CVRAT. COLL. COL. NOV. EB. – “Columbia College New York”

# United States Congressional Medal of Honor

Army Version



Navy Version



# Panama Pacific Exposition Commemorative Gold \$50, by Robert I. Aitken (1915)





# Detroit News Spelling Bee, District Champion (1940)



# France's Marianne as Athena



*Marianne by Edouard Fraise*



*Marianne by C. Bonnefond*

# Argentina Jesuit Award Medal (20<sup>th</sup> Century)



# Austrian 10 Euro Commemorative, 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Second Republic (2005)



# Summary of Today's Discussion

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- Iconography overview
- Athena in the ancient world
- Medallion Athena in the Renaissance onward
- Prototypes for Britannia and Liberty Seated
- Modern use of Athena

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