

Alchemical Coins and Medals

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The Art of Forgeries

Practical alchemists were experts in metallurgy, making alloys, but sometimes also forgeries. It is no wonder that many of them were also involved in making coins. Since ancient times, it was known, and written down in books, how to give metals the appearance of silver and gold. Imitation silver coins was known in Roman times both by plating and by alloying. Alchemists certainly were using these methods to produce counterfeit silver and gold. The properties of gold (inertness, density, color, malleability) are unusual and hard to imitate, so alchemists far more often successfully imitated silver. Imitation silver of one kind or another was widespread throughout the centuries.

If alchemists were indeed able to transmute metals into true silver or gold, then they could certainly make them into coins and bring them into circulation. Thomas of Aquino (13th century), showed us that alchemists were doing just that. He wrote that:

If however real gold were to be produced by alchemy, it would not be unlawful to sell it for the genuine article, for nothing prevents art from employing certain natural causes for the production of natural and true effects. (Thomas Aquinas, FEDP. [from Corpus Thomisticum](#), [42240] II^a-II^{ae} q. 77 a. 2 ad 1)

The production of silver and gold coins by alchemists, being the true metal or forgeries, was not a rarity. It was both allowed and condemned, depending on what monarch was ruling. We don't know if the coins were indeed true silver and gold, as ordinary people, who were often suspicious of it being forgeries, had no means of verifying the true nature of the metals. Only goldsmiths could tell, but there were very few occasions in which the purported alchemical silver or gold were tested.

Forgeries are obviously a problem. The influx of false alchemical gold into the first century Roman economy was so devastating that the Emperor Diocletian issued a decree in 290 that all books on "kimia" were to be destroyed.

In 1403 the English King Henry IV banned the practice of alchemy:

"It is ordained and established, that none from henceforth shall use to multiplie gold or silver, nor use the craft multiplication, and if any the same doe, that he incurre the paine of felonie in this case."

However it was possible to buy a license to attempt to make gold

alchemically, and a number were granted by Henry VI and Edward IV.

Monarchs were always interested in wealth. Some of them favored the work of alchemists, while others also engaged in alchemical practices themselves. Most of the time the practice of alchemy was legal, especially in times when the amount of coins in circulation was scarce. If alchemists were able to produce noble metal coins, then this was welcome.

However, illegal production of counterfeit coins made by alchemists was at times plentiful. In France, Bernard Palissy wrote in his [*Discours admirables de la nature des eaux et fontaines*](#) (1580) about the alchemists:

I'm sure that if their objects of money and golden sacred objects were put into a crucible, there would be nothing good left except what would have been natural, and the rest of what would have been added there would be known to be false. I know that all the other sophisticated practices they know how to do, have caused a thousand fake coins. Because they cannot spend their goods unless they make coins out of it, because if they sell it in ingots the falsity would be found in the casting. But they get rid of their coins by spending it around. This is why when they have worked well and cannot recover from their losses, they are forced to throw themselves to make fake money. A counterfeiter (Bearnois) in the diocese of Xaintonge, was discovered to have four hundred tokens which were ready to be struck into coins; if this had happened, nobody would have found out that they were counterfeit. Because they would pass the tests, the cast and the color tone, they would be indistinguishable to the good coins. But when they were put in the crucible, the falsehood was discovered. At that time, there was a provost at Xaintes, named Grimaut, who assured me that by suing a counterfeiter, he gave the names and surnames of a hundred and sixty men who had the same profession, and also their age, qualifications their residences and other clear information. And when I asked the provost why he did not make arrest the fraudulent men, he replied that he did not dare because among them were several judges and magistrates, both from Bordeaux, Périgord, and of Limosin: and that if he had undertaken to initiate an action against them, that they would find a way to kill him. (page 99)

Corruption knows no bound, and is found in all levels of society. The local population didn't know the difference between counterfeit or real gold coins, and some people-in-power were allowing the crime or were even engaged in it.

Alchemical coins and medals can't always be considered fraudulent. It depends how they were made and for what purpose. There are imitation of monetary coins, which are of course fraudulent. There are also coins made from real silver or gold allegedly made by alchemists. Both coins and medals were made from various metals to commemorate alchemical events. It is often impossible to verify the stories attached to certain coins and medals (and sometimes the stories are wrong), and some coins and medals have been lost in time.

What follows here are examples of some interesting coins and medals with an interesting alchemical connotation. A coin or medal is a work of art by skilled designers and craftsmanship, and even more so if they bear some alchemical symbolism.

The Coins and Medals of Christian Wilhelm Baron von Krohnemann

It is an art by itself to be able to make a metal composition look like pure silver or gold by a chemical or metallurgic method, and make them pass the tests, known at that time period. However, there were also clear imposters who were so skilled in pretending to be true alchemists that even monarch were duped. Some monarchs were intolerant for the failure of their hired alchemists and executed them, others were extremely gullible. A good example is the illustrious figure of Christian Wilhelm Krohnemann in Germany.

In May 1677, he was on the payroll as alchemist for Prince Bishop Peter Philipp von Dernbach, but only for a short time. Then he joined Margrave Christian Ernst of Brandenburg-Kulmbach-Bayreuth as a military officer in 1677. He must have made a great impression on the margrave, who in a few years made him mining director, secret council, then "chief president", chamberlain and mint director in Bayreuth. Finally, the prince appointed him in command of the Plassenburg fortress.

Krohnemann made the margrave believe that he could "extract" silver from base metals. He pretended to be able to "fix" mercury, that is, to convert it into a solid and to change it into gold. He claimed to have a secret tincture and powder to perform the transmutations, but also needed expensive components.

He always needed more and more capital for his experiments. This came primarily from the margrave's silver crockery and in the form of a credit from the court preacher and privy councilor Caspar von Lilien, who also hoped for

an increase in his wealth. He lived in Bayreuth on a large scale, with a body servant, cook, stable master, servants and maids.

He was then accused of fraud several times. He escaped legal proceedings and punishment by claiming to cure diseases with another tincture and treated several members of the margravian court society. In addition, the lavish and lavish Margravine Sophie Luise von Brandenburg-Kulmbach-Bayreuth held her protective hand over him for a long time.

To re-establish trust in his alchemical work, Krohneman, in the presence of the Prince, heated mercury with salt, vinegar and verdigris in an iron dish, and at the end of the operation gold remained. Silver was made in like manner. Krohneman had rightly reckoned on the effect of his deceptive performance, and the Prince gave him the title of Baron, together with many favors. He had his alchemical coins, made from his transmuted metals, minted in a provisionally set up mint in Bayreuth Castle.

He continued to pursue his crafty ways, duping many persons in authority, fleecing General Kaspar von Lilien to the extent of 10,000 gulden, and living in extravagant style on his ill-gotten gains. At different times during the ten years in which he flourished, seven other coins and medals were struck to memorialize the operations conducted by Krohneman, or to impose upon his patrons. Four of these bear the date 1679, one the year 1678, one the year 1681, and one has no date.

When he could not win any new donors for his experiments while working in the Plassenburg laboratory that the margrave had given him, he fled with a rope over the fortress walls and made his way towards Kupferberg in the neighboring bishopric of Bamberg. He changed to the Catholic faith and wanted to enter the Marienweiher monastery, but was arrested after an extradition request from the Margrave of Bamberg's military. A court sentenced him to death. Krohnemann was hanged in his red uniform on April 27, 1686, on the Galgenberg near Kulmbach, allegedly only hours before the margravian pardon reached him.

The 'alchemical' coins produced by Krohnemann enjoyed great popularity as early as the 18th century and were included in large collections. Their success was probably due to the refined craftsmanship of the designer, the copperplate engraver Johann Sebastian Leitner. The two silver coins (actually a coin and a medal) below, now in the Germanischen National Museum in Nuremberg, Germany, were both tested in an [isotropic analysis](#), that revealed that the silver is entirely natural, that is from a silver mine.



The coin has the museum reference GNM# Mü 8882, and dates from 1679.
 Click on image to enlarge.

This is a silver thaler struck on the birthday of the Crown Prince George William, November 16th, 1679.

Obverse side: An armed hand resting on part of a globe and holding upright a scepter. The arm projects from clouds and supports a branch of laurel. Above the scepter, the sun with long rays, surmounted by the words: a deo et parente. (From God and his father.) On the outer edge the inscription: IN HONOREM ET DIEM NATAL, [em] 16. NOV. [EMBRIS] 1679. SER[ENISSIMI] princ.[ipis] d.[ucis] d[omini] georg. [ii] w [ilhelmi] . (In honor of, and for the birthday, November 16, 1679, of the most illustrious Prince and Duke, Lord George William.)

Reverse. A square table on which rests a cushion bearing a sword and a scepter crossed and passing through a crown; above this an eye in clouds (the eye of God) from which rays project. On a scroll or ribbon the words:



This medal has the museum reference GNM# Mü 5941, and dates from 1679.
Click on image to enlarge.

Obverse side: A Doric column crowned and encircled by a vine bearing grapes; on one side Cupid shooting an arrow, on the other a sunflower with its blossom turned towards the sun, which is above and to the side of the central column. Beneath the latter a pair of doves, in the background Bayreuth. Inscriptions: auf libes gluth. (In the glow of love.) der durchl[au]chtigsten und unvergleichlichen prinzessin, zu ehren f.[rauen] (To the honor of the most noble and incomparable lady Princess.)

Reverse side: A palm tree in fruit, above, the rays of the sun; on either side a heart connected by a chain to the tree and surmounted by a crown.

Inscription (continued from the obverse): sophia louysa marg.[raevin] zu br. [andexburg] g.[eboren] h.[erzogin] z[u] w.[urtemberg] u[xd] t[eck] aufgerichtet v[on] c.[hristian] w.[ilhelm] b.[aron] v. [on] k.[rohxe man] 1679. (Struck in honor of Sophia Louisa, Margravine of Brandenburg, by birth Duchess of Wurtemberg and Teck, by Christian Wilhelm, Baron Krohneman.) In a half circle within the outer one: folgt seegexs guth; above one heart, die starckt; and above the other, der muth. On one heart, the letters c.[hristian] e.[rnst] ; on the other, s.[ophia] l.[ouysa]. (Heaven's blessing follows strength and courage.)

Monetary Coins

Coins have a certain allure to them. Besides their monetary value, they are made of durable metal, and they are a piece of artwork. They can bear the image of a ruler, symbols, ornaments and text with certain meanings. Since ancient times, there were many rumors and real stories of monarchs who hired or forced alchemists to produce gold, in order to mint coins. Some alchemists were executed when they failed in to deliver transmutations. However there are legends that some monarchs succeeded in producing transmuted gold that was then minted in coins for circulation.

Henry Carrington Bolton, in his [*Contributions of alchemy to numismatics*](#), 1890, detailed many stories and descriptions of alchemical coins that were mentioned in various texts of the preceding centuries. It shows that interest in alchemical transmutation was flourishing in the 16th to 18th century. The belief that it was possible to convert lead into silver or gold was widespread at that time. Transmutation efforts were performed by people of all classes.

We don't know if certain coins were really from alchemical gold or from natural gold, or maybe even fake gold. Usually, they were not tested for their silver or gold content at the time, and only a few of the alleged transmuted

coins remain today.

The following are a few interesting examples of alchemical involvement in coins, in the sense that they bear alchemical symbols. Whether they were produced by alchemical transmutation we don't know for sure, although it is sometimes claimed to be so. It can also be that the person who minted them, or the monarch who ordered the minting, must have been an alchemist or at least interested in alchemy, and that they put alchemical symbols on the coins for other reasons.

The Alchemical Thaler of Frederick I of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg

On March 8, 2019, a 1687 gold coin, only one single specimen of which is known to exist, was returned to the Klassik Stiftung Weimar, one of the largest and most significant cultural institutions in Germany. After the Second World War, the coin was stolen from Weimar in 1945, with a total of 200 other numismatic items. Most of them were probably sold by the auction in New York in 1950. Since then, it had been part of a private collection. In 2017 it was consigned through the auction house Künker in 2017. It was then discovered that the coin was actually stolen, and could not be auctioned. It was then decided to donate to the Klassik Stiftung Weimar. ([article in Coins Weekly](#))

What makes this coin even more interesting is that it was referred to as *the Alchemistentaler* of Frederick I of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg from 1687.

Frederick I of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg had the piece minted at the Gotha mint in 1687. He owned an alchemical laboratory at the Friedenstein Castle. He spent a lot of money on alchemists and their formulas in order to find a way to cover public expenses with alchemical gold. The notes Frederick took of his alchemical experiments have been preserved at the state archives of Thüringen in Gotha.

Obverse side: text: FRIDERIC D G DVX SAX I C ET MONT. It shows a laurel-crowned head. Below it is a signature: I G W.

Reverse side: text A NUMINE LUMEN SUSCIPIO ET REDDO (= from God I received the light and I return it).

At the bottom in smaller letters: Got[tha] 1687. The image shows a bank of

clouds, between the sun (gold) and the moon (silver), with a hexagram (the unification of all elements and the philosopher's stone) in between, which redirects its bundled rays onto an crowned eagle (the process of vaporization). The eagle holds an ouroboros (eternity and the symbol of Materia prima). It encloses the alchemical symbols for salt, sulfur and mercury.





The Erfurt Silver Thaler

Alchemy inspired coins were produced by Gustavus Adolphus II, King of Sweden, and minted during 1604-1635. These coins were produced in gold, silver and copper. An extensive number were struck in his name in gold ducats (in multiples up to five). The city Erfurt in Germany, issued these coins, when under Swedish occupation (1611 to 1632). Most of the alchemical inscriptions and symbols were limited to single and double gold ducats, and thalers. Many of these coins were struck at numerous mints in Germany, such as Augsburg, Wurtzburg and Frankfurt-Am-Main.

Here is a 1617 silver Thaler minted in the city of Erfurt, Germany.

The obverse side portrays a wild man and a wild woman, with the text mon[eta] argentea civitatis erfford ordensis (New silver coinage of the city of Erfurt).

On the reverse side of this coin we have the arms of the city of Erfurt, at which sides we see the two symbols of Mercury (to the left) and Sulfur (to the right). The text on this side reads: date ceasaris ceasari quae dei deo (Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and God what belongs to God).

The coins could be the products of Philip Ziegler and Johan Scheider Weismantel, who were two alchemists who worked at Erfurt at the time.



The Erfurt Golden Ducat

Golden ducat minted in the city of Erfurt, Germany, 1634. Issued posthumous, to commemorate the death of Gustavus Adolphus in 1632.

Obverse side: Bust of Gustavus Adolphus, head in profile crowned with a wreath; around the edge the inscription: *gustav[us] adolph[us] d[ei] g[ratia] suec[orum] goth[orum] vand[alorum] r[ex]*. (Gustavus Adolphus, by the grace of God, King of the Swedes, Goths and Vandals).

Reverse side: The royal arms of Sweden, with and on either side, and the date 1634. On the edge the inscription: *pr[inceps] finl[andiae] dux ethon[le] et carel[le] dom[inus] inger [mannle]*. (Prince of Finland, Duke of Esthonia

and of Carelia, Lord of Ingria).



The Erfurt Silver 1/24 Thaler

A silver 1/24 Thaler from 1622 from the city of Erfurt.

Obverse: Helmeted wheel arms, another wheel above helmet, date in legend. Symbols of Sulfur and Mercury on both sides of the arms shield. Text in German: MON ARG CIVITA ERFFOR· 16· ZZ· (New silver coinage of the city of

Erfurt, 1622).

Reverse: Wheel arms in ornated shield, denomination above. Text in German: NACH DEN ALTEN SCHROT V. KORN (Of standard weight and fineness).



The Golden Double Ducat of Gustavus Adolphus

A golden double ducat of Gustavus Adolphus of the date 1632. This is an interesting coin in regards to alchemy.

Obverse: a human skull resting on a bone; out of the skull issue serpents, together with a grape-vine, on the branches of which hang many clusters of grapes.

Text: ezech.[iel] am. xxxvii cap.[itel] und am. vi November 1632. (Ezekiel, Chapter 37, and on November 6th, 1632). In the outer circle the words: Gustavus Adolphus D.G. suec. goth. vand. re *. (Gustavus Adolphus, by the grace of God King of the Swedes, Goths and Vandals).

Reverse: The royal arms of Sweden, with the year 1633, and the signs for

sulfur and mercury on either side.

Text: DV men[s]ch [en] kind meist auch dass di[e]se beine wid[er]leben werd[en]. (O son of man, believest thou that these bones will live again). In the outer circle: pr[inceps] fin[land]e dux ethon[ia] et carel[ia] dom[inus] inge[rmann]e. (Prince of Finland, Duke of Esthonia and Carelia, Lord of Ingria).

Chapter 37 of the Book of Ezekiel is called The Valley of the Dry Bones. It is a vision in which God makes the bones of an army of fallen soldiers alive again. This goes together with the symbol of the grapevine growing up from a skull, well-known symbols in alchemy. The skull is the symbol for the stage of Nigredo, Blackness, and of course symbolized death of the old, and the grapevine is the symbol for a new birth in spiritual wisdom.



The Silver Thalers and Golden Ducats of Landgrave Ernest Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt

The following two coins were minted in Darmstadt (Germany) in 1717 by landgrave Ernest Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt. There are presently no publicly known survivors of these coins. However their existence was witnessed.

Henry Carrington Bolton writes in his *Contributions of alchemy to*

numismatics, 1890, page 32-33:

The Landgrave Ernest Louis of Hesse Darmstadt had long been ambitious of accomplishing a projection, and had made many vain experiments, when, in 1716, he received by mail a small package sent by one who did not disclose his identity. The package was found to contain the "red" and the "white tincture," with instructions how to use them, the first for transmuting into gold and the second for silver. The prince himself tested the effect of these tinctures on lead and had great success.

With the gold he had coined, in 1717, several hundred ducats, which bore on one side his effigy and the words: ernest. [us] lud.[ovicus] d.[ei] g.[ratia] hass. [le] landg. [ravius] pr. [inceps] hers, [feldensis] (Ernest Louis, by the grace of God Landgrave of Hesse, Prince of Hersfeld); and below: nach alt. [en] reichs schrot. u. [nd] korn. (according to the old standard of the realm); and on the other the lion of Hesse and the letters E. L. (signifying Ernest Louis.)

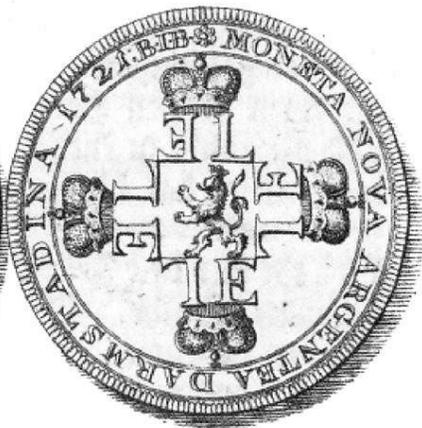
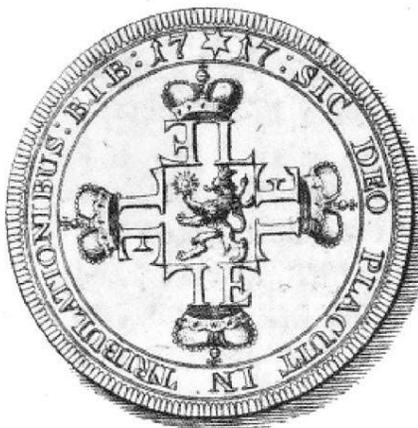
With the silver he had coined one hundred thalers similarly inscribed, but also bearing in Latin the words: sic deo placuit in tribulationibus b. 1. b. 171 7. (For thus it pleased God in our misfortunes.) (S. H. Guldenfalk's *Sammlung von mehr als hundert Transmutationsgeschichten*. Frankfurt, 1784.)

For cut see Kohler, Vol. XVI, 1, 1744. Madai, No. 1277.

The anonymous author of the queerly entitled *Edelgeborne Jungfer Alchymia* (Tubingen, 1730), declares he has seen several of the gold and silver pieces mentioned in the preceding pages, especially those of Gustavus Adolphus, dated 1631, 1633 and 1634. He also mentions a gold piece of Nurnberg bearing the words : moneta nova argentea and notwithstanding this mal-a-propos inscription for a gold coin, he considers it a piece in evidence.

S. H. Guldenfalk writes in [*Sammlung von mehr als hundert wahrhaften Transmutations-Geschichten*](#), Frankfurt, 1784, page 285-287, that he personally witnessed these coins:

Landgrave Ernst Ludwig von Hessen Darmstadt once High Princely, Your Highness, a very simple, humble, and extremely gracious gentleman, had a great inclination for all arts and sciences; But you loved alchemy above all else, and you were driven even more to this last studio by the transmutation incident that occurred to Baron von Creuz from Homburg before the Height (Num. 67), according to the Universal Medicine, or the so-called Lapide philosophorum to strive for; but, in spite of the fact that the same amount was used in the chymische trials, you were not



The image of the lion holding the sun is reminiscent of the well-known alchemical depiction of the lion eating the sun, a reference to aqua regia dissolving gold:



The Green Lion eating the Sun

Commemorative Medals

These medals were made from silver or gold alchemically transmuted, or from natural silver and gold, to honor a performed transmutation. Some were made from other metals or alloys. The production of alchemical medals was popular in the 17th and first half of the 18th century, due to the fact that this period was characterized by reports of several spectacular transmutations in front of witnesses.

Silver Medallion Transmuted by Johann Joachim Becher

This medal was made by Johann Joachim Becher in 1675, from lead into silver.

Becher is famous for his fundamental work, which he published in 1682, *A Mineral Alphabet of Twenty-Four Theses on Chemistry*, in which he described some 1,500 chemical processes included one for making a philosopher's stone, and to turn lead into gold. He was one of the most renowned chemists of 17th-century Germany. He was self-educated, but his talents gained him many positions of honor. At one time he resided in Munich, where he had an excellent laboratory; later in Vienna, and still later in Holland. He was the author of thirty-seven or more works, the most celebrated being that usually known as *Physica Subterranea* (Frankfurt, 1669). In the same year as that of the medal in question (1675) he published an Essay on the possibility of transmutation, dedicated to Emperor Leopold. At this time and for two years previously he was much occupied with alchemy.

In 1675, after almost five years as commercial advisor of Emperor Leopold I, of the House of Habsburg, at the Imperial court in Vienna, and a little more than a year before leaving Vienna permanently, Becher transmuted the lead medal (see below) into silver.

Since Maximilian II (16th century), the Habsburg rulers (Habsburg was a German dynasty, also called House of Austria) had a great interest in alchemy because of financial difficulties they faced. Anything that could help them gain financial advantages was welcome, and alchemy was popular in these times.

Description of the medal from *Contributions of alchemy to numismatics*, by Henry Carrington Bolton, 1890, page 38:

The medal has the appearance of a piece of silver hammered into shape by an unskilled hand; the marks of the hammer are clearly seen on its faces, and the edge is turned over until it projects slightly on the circumference. It measures 66 mm. in diameter. The obverse has a representation of Saturn as Chronos or Time, with a flowing beard and common garments; he holds a scythe in his right hand, the blade of which passes above and behind his head. He has, as often is portrayed, one wooden leg. In his left arm he supports a naked infant. On his left a house and a lofty tree; on his right rising ground and another tree; at his feet grass and flowers. No inscription. This design is not stamped as by a die, but is drawn on the face by some sharp-pointed instrument. The reverse has a few simple scrolls and the words in five lines in script characters: anno 1675 mense julio | ego j. j. becher doctor | hanc

Golden Medallion Transmuted by Joannes Wenceslaus Seiler of Reinburg

This medallion weighs more than 7 kilograms (15.5 pounds), and can be seen at the Münzkabinett of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria. This is the most prominent object in the Münzkabinett; at the same time, it is one of the largest medals ever.

The story of how Joannes Wenceslaus Seiler got into alchemy and performed transmutations is found in Johann Joachim Becher's *Magnalia Naturae*, 1680. It is probably based on what Wenceslaus told him when the two of them met at the palace of the emperor in Vienna. Here is a summary:

Joannes Wenceslaus Seiler of Reinburg (1648-1681) was originally an Augustinian monk in Bruna, Moravia, but he wasn't happy in the monastery. There he befriended an old friar who was a Cabalist, and a lover of Magic. One day when the church was damaged by a storm, they found a hidden box that contained papers that gave directions on how to multiply the red powder contained in four smaller boxes. They performed an experiment and cast some of the powder upon melted pewter which solidified into gold. After that first experiment, the old friar kept the boxes with powder for himself, in his own room, much to the dismay of Wenceslaus. At the death of the old friar, Wenceslaus was able to remove the boxes before the room was sealed up by the other monks, who were unaware of the strange find. After that Wenceslaus befriended another young friar and told him his secret; making some more gold and selling it outside the monastery to a goldsmith. But Wenceslaus had an appetite for women and had a woman (most likely a prostitute) in men's cloths visit him repeatedly until he got caught and locked up. His fellow monk contacted Prince Charles of Lichtenstein, who had an interest in alchemy, and his steward managed to free him from the monastery. After showing the Prince the art of transmutation, he went, with his fellow friar, to Vienna. There he found the favors of a Count Schlick, but suspecting foul play. They made their escape from his residence. Then they contacted count Parma who got the Emperor interested. In the presence of Count Parma, with Father Spies and Dr. Becher, as two witnesses, he performed a transmutation of tin. But the count extorted half the tincture from him, and after some more troubles, this half landed in the hands of the emperor. Wenceslaus obtained the emperor's protection, and he performed transmutations for the emperor. But he was leading a life of debauchery and involvement with prostitutes, and he lost all his riches. Then he started selling fake Projection Powder for a lot of money. He also made some counterfeit coins. But the emperor bailed him out and bestowed him the Title of Baron Seyler of Seylerburgh, and afterwards made him Hereditary Master of the Mint of Bohemia, sending him away from his Court to Prague.

The medallion below was made to commemorate the transmutation he performed in the presence of Emperor Leopold I on November 15th (Saint Leopold's day), 1677.

This large and heavy medallion is of oval form, measures 30 cm (11.8") by 37 cm (14.6"), and has a weight of 7.200 kilogram (15.9 pound).

One side shows a central portrait of Emperor Leopold I of Austria and his third wife, Empress Eleonore Magdalena von Pfalz-Neuburg, surrounded in three concentric circles by real and fictitious ancestors, beginning with Pharamend, King of the Franks, and ending with his father, Ferdinand III (rein 1637–1657).

The other side has a Latin text in 21 lines, which reads:

To the Holiest, mightiest and most invincible Roman Emperor Leopold I, the thorough investigator of the secrets of nature, dedicates and offers this genuine sample of real and complete metallic transmutation, as a humble memorial sign of the annual feast day accompanied by the wish of blessings of any kind, a most humble servant of His Dignity, Highness and Majesty, most loyal Joannes Wenceslaus of Reinburg in the year of Christ 1677, on Saint Leopold's day, the surname of the former pious margrave of Austria, now the most gracious patron of the highest Austrian house.

Note that the medallion was made to commemorate the event. It is not mentioned that it was made from alchemical gold. Henry Carrington Bolton remarks:

I examined it in person in August, 1888, at the Imperial Cabinet of Coins, Vienna. It is of elaborate workmanship but decidedly brassy in color, and is said to have a specific gravity of only 12.67, that of gold being 19.3 (kg/m³). Two small notches, one in the upper edge and one in the lower, show that it has been cut into for examination.
(*Contributions of alchemy to numismatics*, 1890, page 22).

The most likely process was that the medal was made of an alloy of silver and gold, which, when dipped into a nitric acid solution, would dissolve the silver content at the surface, leaving behind the gold content. The Microanalytical Institute of the Vienna Institute of Technology performed an analysis in 1930, showing a content of approximately 43.18 % silver, 47.56 % gold and 7.56% copper.



Image from Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Münzkabinett



detail from the center: central portrait of Emperor Leopold I of Austria and his third wife, Empress Eleonore Magdalena von Pfalz-Neuburg

Alchemical Golden Medal for Charles Philip, Count Palatine

This is a medal struck from alchemical gold transmuted before His Highness Charles Philip, Count Palatine, of the Rhineland, on December 31st, 1716.

Obverse side: A large figure of Saturn resting on clouds, with the head of the radiant Sun, and holding a scythe in his right hand and an hourglass in his left. On the clouds to his left is the symbol of lead □ The legend, surrounding this device and near the edge: aurea progenies plumbo prognata parente. (A golden offspring begotten of its parent lead.)

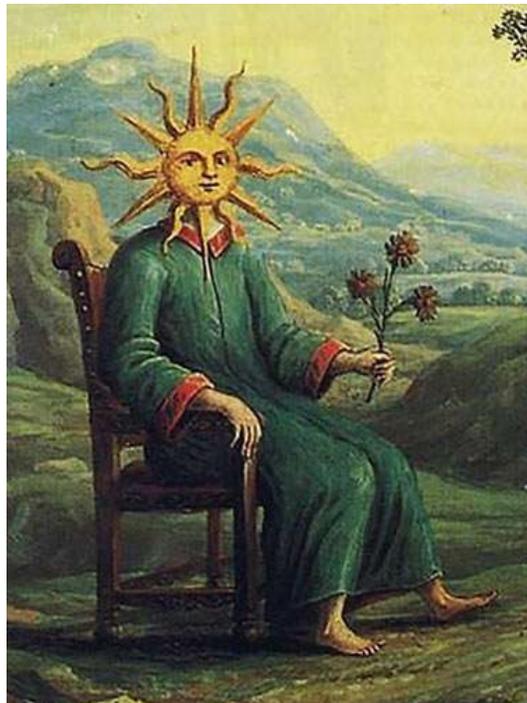
Reverse side: There are no images or illustrations, just text:

METAMORPHOSIS | CHYMICA | SATURNI IN SOLEM | ID EST, | PLUMBI | IN
AURUM, | SPECTATA TENIPONTI, | 31 DECEMBRIS MDCCXVI. | PROCURANTE :
SERENISSIMO | CAROLO PHILIPPO | COMITE PALATINO RHENI | S : [ACRI]
R : [OMANI] I : [MPERII] ARCHIDAPIFERO ET ELECTORE | BAVARIA, IULLE,
CLIVI.E I ET MONTIUM DUCE, | TYROLIS GUBERNATORE ETC., ETC., | ATQUE
IN HAC MONETA | AD PERENXEM REI MEMORIAM | ARCI AMBROS ET |
POSTERITATI DONATA. (The chemical metamorphosis of Saturn into Sol, that
is, of lead into gold, seen at Innsbruck, December 31st, 1716, at the hands of
his highness Charles Philip, Count Palatine of the Rhine, of the Holy Roman
Empire. Chamberlain and Elector of Bavaria, Duke of Julich, Cleves and Berg,
Governor of the Tyrol, etc. And a coin in this [i. e. struck in metal resulting
from this metamorphosis] is given as a perpetual souvenir of the transaction
to the Castle of Ambros and to posterity.)



picture from Alchemy - The Ancient Science, by Neil Powell 1976

This is an interesting depiction of the transformation of lead (=Saturn sitting on a cloud that bears his symbol ☿). He is holding an hourglass, representing the time it takes for the Great Work to be performed. This was often symbolically indicated by a certain number of days, months or years. The superimposition of the sun on his head then identifies him with the final result of the Great Work, as the sun is the symbol for gold. As such a person with the sun as head is symbolic for the adept who has finished the Great Work, in the spiritual or hermetic sense. Here are two examples from alchemical manuscripts:



Silver Medal from Kleinert Medal Mint

The following medal I found on the auction website [Künker](#). According to their information it is a silver medal made around 1700. The die was cut by Philipp Heinrich Müller, from the Friedrich Kleinert medal mint, and casted for one of their clients. Friedrich Kleinert was also interested in making alchemical gold, but got impoverished by it. Müller was known for his high quality die cuts, and so this medal is one of excellent quality.

The 98% silver medal weights 29.57 grams (1 ounce); 44 mm (1.7") in diameter

One side shows Luna (the moon) rising up from Mercury lying on a funeral pyre. This symbolizes the volatilization of the Prima Matera. The text: NON FUI, QVOD ERAM; NVNC SVM, DVM MORIOR (= I wasn't what I was, now I am, by dying).

The other side shows the fixation process as volatile mercury is pulled down by Jupiter (sitting on a an eagle) and probably Cupid at the bottom pulling on a rope tied around the waste of Mercury. The Latin text reads: SIC CAPIVNT TECHNIS PROIVGVM ME SANGVINE IVNCTI (so by the arts blood bonds are forged)

It is a representation of the well-known alchemical phrase: Solve et Coagula.



Medal with Praying Alchemist

This golden medal is 33 mm (1.3") in diameter and weights 13.31 grams (0.5 ounce), and dates from around 1700.

This nice looking medal portrays scenes taken from alchemical literature. It is clear reference to hermetic or spiritual alchemy. Both front and back has symbol that refer to the union of heaven and earth, the subtle and the gross, etc. Both the spiritual and the material are important and have to work together in the alchemical process. God's grace is also necessary, which the alchemist must receive in order to understand the principles of alchemical theory and practice, and to be able to realize the Great Work. The necessity of divine revelation has been associated with alchemy since its origin. The alchemist has to ask God for a favor through prayer, exactly as depicted on the medal's obverse where the revelation of divine light is complemented by the eloquent word *FIAT*, a reference to the initial words of Genesis.

The obverse side shows an alchemist in his laboratory, folding his hands, praying. Along the walls are shelves with flasks. He is looking at a cloud with the word *FIAT* (let it be), and rays of light are streaming to him. This is symbolic for divine revelation, something alchemists often found necessary. To

the left is a brick furnace with a water bath, with distilling flask, guiding the sublimated liquid to another flask on the floor. In the middle are two interlocking triangles, symbol of the unification of duality, with a six pointed star in the center thereof; the star often be the symbol for Albedo, or Whiteness.

The text: *ACQUIRITUR PRECIBUS AD DEUM MAGISTERIUM* (praying to receive the divine mystery)

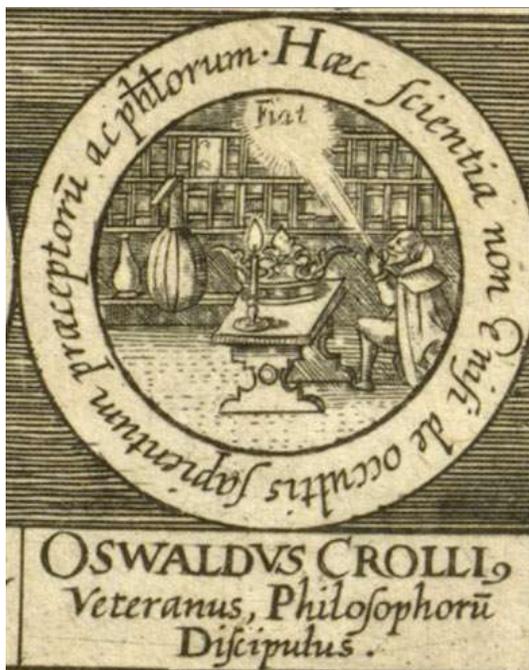
The reverse side shows two crucible with water flowing from one to the other, with a flower in the middle, and a sun and moon.

Text: *NON A ME SED EX DEI OMNIPOTENTIS GRATIA* (Not from me, but from God's almighty grace).



Image from [Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg](https://www.germanisches-nationalmuseum.de/)

The designer of the coin was familiar with alchemical literature as he took the images for both sides of the coin from the emblem plates in Johann Daniel Mylius' *Opus medico-chymicum* (1618):



The scene with the crucibles was featured in *Symbola Aurea Mensae Duodecim Nationum* (published one year earlier in 1617) by Michael Maier. The image is associated with the ancient alchemist Maria the Jewess, after which the water bath, or bain-marie (*Balneum Mariae*) was named, and which is also visible on the furnace on the obverse of the medal.



from *Symbola Aurea Mensae Duodecim Nationum* (1617) by Michael Maier

A 1609 Silver Medal

This silver medal is held in Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The picture is not the best, but the medal has various alchemical symbols combined in an unusual way. I didn't find anything about the creation of the medal.

Reverse side: two figures left and right. Left figure carries the sign of mercury, and probably a globe in his other hand; right figure carries the sign of sulfur, and a staff in his other hand (staff and globe are symbols of royalty). In the middle we have a combined sign of Antimony \square at the bottom, with an eagle inside the circle, Venus (copper) ♀ in the middle, and entwined serpents symbolizing Mercury \square . At the top of this combined symbol is a pelican feeding its young.

Above the head of these two figures (probably man and woman) is the text *ess[entia] una* (One essence). Below them: *ritrt. g. i. w.* and lower down *sic volvere fata* (Thus the fates have decided.) Below that is the year 1604. Below the year is the symbol for vitriol \square .

Around an outer circle is the text: *natur[a] un[ita] usu r[e]nata modo tot [a],* \square *fuera[m], nunc* \square *clar[issimum] exto.* (Originally one in my nature, now entirely regenerated, I was lead (\square), behold me most brilliant gold (\square).

Obverse: Rude figures of the four animals of prophecy, the lion, the calf, the man and the eagle (Rev. iv. 7) supporting in their midst a spotted fleece. Above these are three crowns; on the first rests a young man holding a sword in one hand and a cross in the other; on the second rests an old bearded man wearing a pointed helmet and holding the Reichsapfel or Imperial Globe; on the third crown rests a dove.

The text: *Tria mirabil.[ia.] Deus et homo. Trin.[us] et UN. [us.] Mater et virgo.* (Three marvels : God and man : three and one : mother and virgin.)

An interesting note is that the text on the obverse side, *TRI SVNT MIRABILIA DEVS ET HOMO MATER ET VIRGO TRINVS ET VNVS*, is the same as on the so-called Magic Door in Rome, which contains various alchemical symbols.



Image from [Alchemy Website](#) but apparently taken from a book by [Vladimir Karpenko](#)