

CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE

Project leader: Eurydice Georganteli

Project start: 2007

End date: 2015

Internal Partners:

Education Department, College of Arts and Law (Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, Art History Department, School of History and Cultures), Department of Music

External Partners:

The British Museum, The Birmingham Museums & Art Galleries, The Science Museum, The Cadbury Collections, The Institute for Balkan Studies (Thessaloniki, Greece)

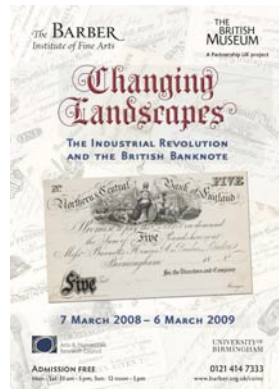
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Description:

The research theme **City and Countryside** explores aspects of the aesthetics, economy and identity of European cities from antiquity to the 21st century. Coins, seals, medals, banknotes, prints and drawings, paintings, sculpture, architectural remains, archaeological finds and travelogues trace the transformation of cities and their surrounding countryside, and address issues of citizenship and diversity.

There are four exhibition-led projects and a forthcoming monograph related to the theme.



Exhibitions:

CHANGING LANDSCAPES: THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION & THE BRITISH BANKNOTE, March 2007-April 2008

The exhibition *CHANGING LANDSCAPES*, a partnership between the Barber Institute and the British Museum celebrates the rapidly changing face of Britain in the 19th century following the country's intense industrialisation and urbanisation, advances in agriculture, and developments in maritime trade and the London Stock Exchange. The exhibition, generously funded by AHRC, features over 80 splendid objects, drawn from the collections of the British Museum, the Science Museum, the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, and the Cadbury Collections. Banknotes, tokens and medals, prints and paintings, model engines and ships, silverware, pottery and chocolate boxes displayed in the exhibition provide an invaluable insight into the economy and society of 19th-century Britain.



MATTHEW BOULTON *and the Art of Making Money*

8 May 2009 – 16 May 2010

The exhibition (principal curator: Dr Richard Clay, Art History Department) explores the historical significance of Matthew Boulton's minting activities in Birmingham between 1787 and 1809. The exhibition explains how and why, in quantitative terms, Birmingham briefly became the 'art capital of world', the place where over 500 million high quality coins, medals, and tokens were manufactured before being distributed around the world (Europe, the Americas, Africa, Australasia, and the Indian subcontinent).

CITYSCAPES: PANORAMIC VIEWS ON EUROPEAN COINS AND MEDALS, March 2012-September 2013



The issuing of money is nowadays regarded as the prerogative of territorial states. Yet, from the Ancient World to modern times many cities have had or claimed free and sovereign status, and, with this, the right to issue their own coins. This exhibition focuses on early modern Europe, the 16th to 18th centuries, when city coinages attained arguably their greatest level of artistic achievement. The leaders of these cities, mostly in what are now Germany, Switzerland and Eastern Europe, used their coinages to reflect their distinctive character and position, in a world where they were surrounded by dynastic states, with authority vested in princes and kings. The subject of the exhibition is the city view on coins and medals: wonderfully intricate images of cities in extreme miniature, with their churches, civic buildings, citadels, fortifications, harbours and suburbs, laid out with exquisite skill by engravers working without modern inventions like the reducing machine. The townscape, the city view or prospect, was already well established before it was used on coins: as a genre it was created by about 1500, when individual cities had begun to be realistically depicted, instead of through the generic style previously used. It became a popular form, on the borders between cartography and fine art.

Only a few cities made a consistent use of the cityscape on coinage. Some never used it at all, while others employed it only amidst a range of designs, on perhaps the larger

denominations. Most used it only occasionally, sometimes for a ceremonial event. The use of the cityscape began to wane in the later 18th century, as coin designs became simpler and less varied, but the main cause of its disappearance was political. The abolition of the Holy Roman Empire and the reorganisation of Europe after the Napoleonic wars ended the independence of most of the Free Cities, and with this went their coinages. These now survive as witnesses to a lost world of civic independence, power and pride, and to the beauty of the early modern cities themselves.

VISUALISING THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL CITY, November 2013- June 2015



Although the idea of city and urban planning greatly developed throughout classical antiquity, ancient Greek cities chose not to include images of urban landscape on their coins. Visual references to the city were rather indirect, through the display on coins of symbols of cities, such as patron deities, or flora and fauna connected to the cities' real or symbolic landscape.

Outside mainland Greece, in Italy, Sicily and on the Black Sea coast, Greek colonies illustrated the story of the foundation of their new cities in a series of beautifully struck coins with religious imagery, ships, dolphins, cereals and sea nymphs. Imagery of cities, either as *Tyche* (*Fortuna*), wearing turreted diadem, or as actual landscapes, appear first on Hellenistic and later on Roman coins. The latter offer truly impressive views of monuments in Rome and the provinces, as symbols of Imperial patronage, control and benevolence. And there is of course another kind of landscape on coins, the symbolic space in which the emperor is shown fighting the enemy, distributing money to the citizens of Rome, entering in triumph the city of Rome or receiving honours from personifications of Peace, the Republic, Virtue and Victory.

In Byzantium cityscapes disappear from the iconographical agenda as early as the fifth century. The attention is now drawn to symbols of Imperial power and Christian theology. It is in the later Byzantine period that images of city walls reappear, as a reminder of the earthly and divine protection of the Empire. Rulers and saints appear side by side, holding between them models of the city of Thessaloniki, while Virgin Mary is shown orans within the city walls of Constantinople. This sudden influx of representations of cities in Byzantine iconography follows a period of Crusader states in the east and the circulation of western coins, some of which display castles, churches, cityscapes and patron saints.

In Western Europe, the eleventh and twelfth centuries represent an important period in the formation of urban social geography and the assumption of a new role by western European cities. Minting authorities display this development, by introducing images of fortified cities

and buildings with elaborate patterns of towers, walls and arcades on *bracteates* and *pennies*. Crusader states affirm their rule in the east through images of the Holy Sepulchre or the Tower of David in Jerusalem, and of schematised . This is a period of feudal warfare, in which fortifications still play an important role in the defence of cities. It is after the introduction of gunpowder in warfare that cityscapes on Renaissance coins and medals acquire a different, decorative function. They now display the beauty of civic art and architecture.