Landesmuseum Hannover

the rise of the Welf dynasty and its reflection in the medals

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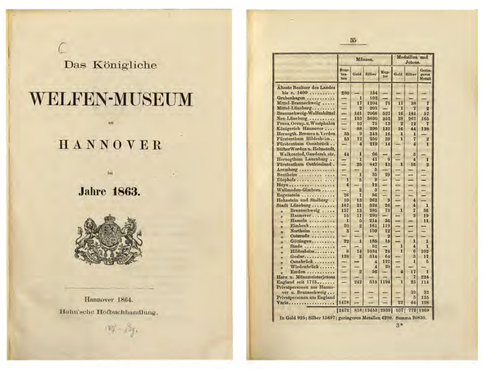
The Department of Coins and Medals and the new exhibition concept of the Landesmuseum Hannover

The department of Coins and Medals of the Landesmuseum Hannover, the museum of Lower Saxony is home to 44.000 numismatic objects from the 10th to the 21th century and provincial Roman coins. 21.000 coins and medals, almost half of the current inventory, were already in the Royal Münzkabinett of the Royal Welfenmuseum 1863 (Fig.1).

Inspired by its history and architecture, the Landesmuseum Hannover is been pursuing a new exhibition concept since 2013 - the concept of a „WorldMuseum“. On the second floor, after some structural redesigns, numismatics is going to be associated with the paintings in the State Gallery. The premises of this “ArtWorld” will be opened successively from 2022. Within this new concept the challenge is the thematic linkage between these two different types of objects. In this poster the concept of one showcase, the medals of the Welfs from the Brunswick-Lüneburg line, will be presented.

Fig. 3: Oval golden 'Gnadenpfennig' (penny of mercy), minted in Lüneburg. Obverse: Portrait of Christian, duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg and bishop of Minden (1566-1633). Reverse: Christian's coat of arms with the blazon of the prince bishopric of Minden (crossed Petrus keys) in its centre. AU, 42 x 31 mm, 23,3 g, 12 h Landesmuseum Hannover 01:127:101



Das Königliche
WELFEN-MUSEUM
HANNOVER
Jahre 1863.

Hannover 1864.
Hahn'sche Hofbuchhandlung.

Fig.1: Book „Das Königliche Welfen-Museum zu Hannover im Jahre 1863“ published in 1864; cover and page with a list of numismatic objects.

Fig.2: Coloured copperplate engraving of the Electorate of Hannover (Brunswick-Lüneburg) by Hermann Moll, 1722. Museum Schloss Herrenhausen, Hanover.

The concept of the showcase: medals and the rise of the Welfs from the Brunswick-Lüneburg line

The evidence for the House of Welf dates back to the 8th century. They are one of the oldest still existing high noble families in Europe. The dynasty reached its first peak of power in the High Middle Ages in the Holy Roman Empire when it provided dukes of Bavaria and Saxony as well as an emperor to rival the Staufer. In modem times, the Welfs were again at their zenith. The Electorate of Brunswick-Lüneburg was from 1692 the ninth electorate of the Holy Roman Empire (Fig.2) and the monarchs became Kings of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1714 George I succeeded Queen Anne and established a personal union between the British crown and the Electorate of Hannover. The personal union ended with the death of William IV in 1837. The showcase will present some medals of this Lüneburg-Hannover line from the 17th to the 19th century (Fig.3-5). The focus is on making images and legends which state the claim to power understandable to a contemporary audience. The reverse of the silver medal of George I (Fig.5) e. g. celebrates his arrival in Great Britain. The medal issued by the sea power Great Britain acclaims the king a RECTOR MARIVM and depicts him in the guise of the ancient sea god Neptune.

Fig.4: Medal of George I 1714. Obverse: portrait of George I; Reverse: monarch as Neptune with trident in a chariot drawn by four sea horses and accompanied by Nereids. AR, 68 mm, 109,17 g, 12 h Landesmuseum Hannover 06:003:004

The medals of the Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel line as well as the coins as means of payments will be shown each in a separate showcase. This helps the visitors to differentiate the topics and to understand much easier their complex meaning. These coins and medals associated to the paintings of the 18th century, which also show portraits of the monarchs, (Fig.6) bring visitors to the exhibition closer to the worldof thought of this century.

Fig.5
Medal by Karl Friedrich Voigt 1821 commemorating king George IV's three-week visit to Hannover. Obverse: George IV's portrait; Reverse: monarch on horseback, preceded by a female figure with Mercury's staff and cornucopia. AR, 39,5 mm, 26,04 g, 12 h Landesmuseum Hannover 03:101:040

Fig. 6
Painting by Johann Leonhard Hirschmann (1704-1706) George II as prince of Wales Landesmuseum Hannover Inv. Nr. KM 90

The goals of the new exhibition concept:

- to bring characteristics and messages of medals issued by the Lüneburg-Hannover line closer to the visitors
- to show the strategies the monarchs used to communicate their messages
- to draw attention to the different messages of coins, medals, and paintings

J. Black, The Hanoverians. The history of a dynasty (London 2007)
G. Brockmann, Die Medaillen der Welfen 2. Linie Lüneburg/Hannover (Köln 1987)
H. Grape-Albers u. a. (Hrsg.), Das Niedersächsische Landesmuseum Hannover (Hannover 2002)
K. Lembke u. a. (Hrsg.), Hannovers Herrscher auf Englands Thron 1714 – 1837 (Dresden 2014)
W. Leschhorn, Zur Geschichte der ehemals Königlichen Münzsammlung zu Hannover, in: G. Bungarten u. a. (Hrsg.), Welfenschätze. Gesammelt, verkauft, durch Museen bewahrt (Braunschweig 2007) 80–95
M. Miller, Die Medaillen der Welfen 2021 (academia.edu)
S. Smith, The coinage of the Anglo-Hannoverian personal union 1714 – 1837 (Osnabrück 2009)