

The speakers were also unified in having been brought together by the Schiller Institute and by the policies of American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, whose proposals for a physical-economic approach to rebuilding the world's devastated economies were constantly cited.

The speakers included:

- **Prof. Taras Muranivsky** of the Ukrainian University in Moscow, who described the collapse of production in Russia. We expected help from the "invisible hand," he said, but got "a kick from the invisible foot." We have to come together around ideas, he said, and he believes LaRouche's ideas are the best.

- Human rights activist **Viktor Kuzin**, a former member of the Moscow City Council. Kuzin reported on the political destruction that has accompanied the imposition of shock therapy. There is no democracy in Russia, he emphasized, but a criminal dictatorship by Boris Yeltsin, who is very stubborn and could cause conflicts inside and outside the country, even possibly civil war. The West must urgently rethink the shock therapy approach, to deal with this danger.

- **Dr. Wolter G. Manusadjan**, a physicist and president of the International Ecological Academy, which elected Lyndon LaRouche as a corresponding member in fall 1993, who explained why LaRouche was asked to join the scientific academy.

- **Konstantin Cheremnykh**, a journalist and trained psychiatrist from St. Petersburg. Cheremnykh described how the Russian people are being driven to moral degradation by their poverty, while the law of free trade imposed by Yeltsin is leading to the elimination of whole vulnerable sections of the population.

- **Dmitri Glinsky**, from the League of Independents, a group which broke out of Democratic Russia because of disgust with the liberal reforms. Glinsky emphasized how today's reformers were a corrupt mafia, and urged the formation of a new elite which would be pro-Western without shock therapy.

Proceedings of the seminar have been issued as an EIR White Paper entitled "The Effects of I.M.F. Shock Therapy on Russia and the Newly Independent States."

EXHIBITS



Left: Portrait medal of Byzantine Emperor John VIII Paleologus, by Pisanello.



Right: Leon Battista Alberti's large-scale self-portrait (c.1438), an immediate precursor of the portrait medal.

Staatliche Museen, Münzkabinett, Berlin

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

'Currency of Fame' Brings Renaissance People to Life

Imagine a gallery of photographs of the men and women who shaped history in the period of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, known as the Golden Renaissance of Europe: the faces behind the achievements in art, philosophy, science, statecraft, and literature.

Imagine, too, that the gallery not only recorded the most famous names, but also those whose contribution to history may have been more enduring—albeit less flashy—than that of kings, dukes, and high prelates: namely, the Christian humanist scholars who transformed the intellectual life of Europe and trained its leaders: men like Erasmus of Rotterdam, Vittorino da Feltre, and Guarino da Verona.

"Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance," an exhibit inaugurated in January at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is just such a portrait gallery of many of the protagonists of the Renaissance, in a medium familiar only to specialists: the portrait medal. Among the faces you will meet

are those of bankers like Lorenzo de Medici, religious reformers like Savonarola, Melanchthon, Martin Luther, monarchs like Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I of England, Francis I of France, and Charles V of Spain, merchants, artists, chancellors and finance ministers, soldiers and sultans. Every faction in the brutal wars that racked Europe after 1500, as Venice set out to set the new nation-states against each other, is represented.

The show will travel to New York City in May, to The Frick Collection, which published the splendid catalogue edited by Stephen K. Scher with photography by John Bigelow Taylor (Abrams, \$95 hardbound, \$50 softcover).

Invention of Portrait Medal

The basic form of the Renaissance portrait medal was invented by Antonio Pisanello in 1438, as a kind of sculpture free from any connection with coinage. Such medals were part of a broader feature of the Renaissance, the sudden

blossoming of portraiture in the early 1400's throughout the urbanized parts of Europe, especially Italy and the Low Countries. Suddenly, not just sacred figures, nor even just monarchs, but middle-class burghers and upstart soldiers of fortune, with their wives and daughters, began to appear in life-size portrayals which recorded their features with greater or lesser degrees of idealization.

Renaissance portraiture is extraordinarily important as a mark of the historic watershed of 1440, when the oligarchical control of societies through empires was shaken, and the modern nation-state emerged. Theorized by Dante in his essay *De Monarchia* in the early 1300's, the nation-state was first made concrete by King Louis XI of France in the middle of the next century, in the wake of the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Out of that revolution have come the last six-hundred years of progress, which increased the human population of the globe from several millions to today's five billion souls. This was spurred by



Cecelia Gonzaga, by Pisanello (1447). Daughter of the rulers of Mantua, she mastered Greek at age seven and was a star pupil of Vittorino da Feltré.

Michael Hall Collection, New York

the development of science by one of the protagonists of the political and ecclesiastical battles of the day, Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa, in the 1440's and 1450's.

It is not accidental that the portrait medal—which plays a unique role in the midst of this flowering of portraiture because it adds texts and usually, on the reverse, a narrative or metaphor charac-

terizing the sitter—came into being at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, the watershed event of the years 1438-42. This was the great ecumenical council which reunified, briefly, the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, as well as other Christian churches in Africa and Asia, through universal acceptance of the phrase *Filioque* (“and from the Son”) recited in Nicene Creed. This emphasis on the equal role of the Son (Christ) to God the Father, had long been interpreted in the West as expressing the responsibilities of individual human beings to continue the work of divine Creation, by contributing new discoveries and inventions beneficial to all mankind.

Petrarch's Republican Ideal

The idea of individual achievement and the “good life dignified by practical activity and rendered delightful by beauty and learning appealed strongly to the upper classes of the Italian city-state,” writes curator Stephen K. Scher in the catalogue introduction.

“In the early fourteenth century one man in particular gave impetus to this development—Francesco Petrarch [1304-74] . . . Petrarch assumed that human talent, if properly used, was certain of recognition. Therefore glory, or *fama*, was inevitably the result of excellence, or *virtus*, and this *virtus* was a function of a man's entire personality . . .”

Petrarch's father was exiled with the great poet Dante Alighieri's White Guelph party in 1302. Petrarch, born in 1304, survived the cataclysm of the Black Death of 1348, took a leading role in efforts to establish a republic in Rome at mid-century, and set up intellectual-political networks all over western Europe.

An Augustinian Christian, Petrarch was the first major figure to explicitly reject the influence of Aristotle over science as it was studied in the universities, particularly in Venice. This Italian poet,



Guarino da Verona

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

who directly inspired England's Geoffrey Chaucer and the parallel projects of vernacular poetry in France, Spain, and elsewhere, was the moving force behind a European-wide project to train a younger generation in Classical Greek, recover Plato's dialogues and translate them into western languages, and more generally recover the treasures of Greek and Roman culture. The young Nicolaus of Cusa had entered the orbit of Petrarch's philosophical heirs by at least the time he matriculated at the University of Padua in 1416. This put him in the position of having been exposed, while very young, to both the northern (Brotherhood of the Common Life [SEE p. 42, this issue]) and southern (Petrarchan) branches of the Augustinian movement that surged after the Black Death—a dual heritage which helped equip him for his exceptional place among the many geniuses of his era.

First Renaissance Medals

The painter Pisanello was not only the presumed inventor of the true portrait medal, but one of the few major artists to engage in this activity, usually carried out by specialists. He was probably born in Pisa (in Tuscany, near Florence) around 1385, and moved to the north Italian city of Verona in 1404. Like Cusa later, he was involved in networks circulating manuscripts in 1416, which pinpoints him as a member of the Petrarchan movement. In 1431 he was engaged by Pope Eugenius IV in Rome. He was in Ferrara in 1438 and witnessed the arrival of the Greek emperor John VIII



Vittorino da Feltrino

University Art Museum, UCSB

Paleologus to the Council, and created the first portrait medal, with a portrait of the emperor on one side and a narrative scene on reverse, showing the Paleologus on horseback.

Pisanello ran afoul of the Venetian oligarchy, which felt mortally threatened by the Petrarchan ideals of the early Florentine Renaissance. After he sided with the Milanese army against Venice, in 1441-42 he was threatened with confiscation of all his property in Verona, and at one point condemned to have his tongue ceremonially cut out in Piazza San Marco for slanders against Venice. Ultimately, he was released from all punishment and allowed to continue his work in Ferrara, where he stayed until 1448. He fashioned more than twenty-six medals over twenty-two years.

Beloved Teachers

Among the many portrait medals by Pisanello is that of Vittorino da Feltrino (1378-1446). Both Vittorino and his fellow humanist scholar Guarino da Verona had studied in Padua with a prominent disciple of Francesco Petrarch, and they shared theories of learning and education that began with Petrarch.

Guarino da Verona (1374-1460), whose portrait medal was created by Matteo de' Pasti, was the son of a blacksmith. He spent 1403-8 in Constantinople mastering Greek, then taught Greek in Florence and Venice. He lectured in rhetoric in Verona during 1420-30, and wrote a Latin grammar manual

widely used for three centuries. At his funeral he was praised for singled-handedly turning Ferrara into a center of the new humanistic culture by the time the Council convened there in 1438 (before it moved to Florence to escape the spread of plague).

Professor Scher's entry on the medal of Vittorino da Feltrino by Pisanello, gives an inspiring picture of the character of a Christian humanist. He was born Vittorino Rambaldoni, son of a poor family in Feltrino, a town north of Venice. In 1421, "Vittorino was appointed to the chair of rhetoric at the University of Padua,

where he had studied and taught intermittently since 1396. He was a celebrated mathematician. In Padua Vittorino opened a private school for young men, both rich and poor." This information locates Vittorino in Padua precisely when Nicolaus of Cusa was a student in the university there, forging lifelong friendships with members of the Petrarchan movement.

In Mantua in 1425 Vittorino was given a building he called La Casa Giocosa to found a school. "He had frescoes painted showing children at play . . . The school was soon famous, and attracted children from Venice, Padua, Faenza, Florence, and other cities. Many of these went on to become leading figures in the Church and government, perhaps the most famous of them being Federigo da Montefeltro of Urbino, the very model of a humanist prince and condottiere," who patronized such great Renaissance artists as Piero della Francesca and the young Raphael, and made his library in Urbino a center for precious manuscripts of Classical Greek science.

"Vittorino developed a fully-rounded curriculum combined with a strict daily regimen and a schedule of physical activities. Greek and Latin literature and

grammar, music, moral philosophy, mathematics, dancing, astrology, history, and drawing alternated with exercise and games in an environment offering no frivolous distractions . . . Vittorino felt an obligation to offer an education as well to those who could not afford to enter the Casa Giocosa. These he paid for out of his own pocket."

For providing a model of education which lays bare the false pretenses of today's spurious educational "reform," Vittorino well deserved the *fama* bequeathed to him by Pisanello's medal; he embodied precisely that *virtus*—irrespective of birth or wealth—which is at the heart of any Renaissance.

—Nora Hamerman



Albrecht Dürer (c.1520)

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



Johann Scheubel, mathematics professor at the University of Tübingen (c.1540)

Staatliche Museen, Münzkabinett, Berlin