

Struck Medals Created by Slovak Artists during International Symposia of Art Medals in Kremnica in 1988 – 2021

In its historical context, medal art was a guide and servant of the power elites for centuries. It was used for glorification of the church, of independent states and their representation. During the 19th and 20th centuries, it also expanded its scope to commemorate and promote important individuals who contributed to the progress of civilisation, including key figures of art and science.

With the arrival of modern art, medal makers exercised their right to interpret their personal feelings and draw attention to unnoticed aspects of everyday reality. After World War II, this process was distorted by unilateral ideological pressure in the countries of totalitarian regimes. In medal making, it had an impact on unrealistic demands for glorification of the Stalin's cult of personality. In the second half of the 1950s, the pressure gradually decreased, but the boom of medals dedicated to political anniversaries, working-class achievements and many others lasted. At the same time, however, opportunities were arising for artists to produce works based on their own creativity and personal motivation. It is only natural that this type of creative work used casting as a means for visual art reproduction.

Facing the prospects of political conditions that prevailed in Czechoslovakia after the end of World War II, it was not easy to identify the creation of struck medals with the requirements of artistic freedom for artists. Therefore, after the establishment of two international symposium centres were formed simultaneously in the late 1980s (both in 1988) on the territory of the future Czech Republic in the town of Uherské Hradiště and on the territory of the future independent Slovak Republic in Central Slovakia in the town of Kremnica. Artists – medallists welcomed the opportunity to make medals, allowing them to have a voluntary short-term break from their creative work together with five participants and the technological background, including arts and crafts assistants.

The symposium activities associated with the local museum as a specialised centre for coinage and medal documentation, have benefited from the recognition of the International Professional Art Medal Federation organised on the basis of the F.I.D.E.M. Artists and art theorists who, at the 13th Congress of F.I.D.E.M. in Prague in September 1969, during a post-congress excursion, visited the historic town of coin makers and medallists, and it remained in their memory. When Kremnica was chosen as the site of the symposium on medals, the local traditions proved to be a key consideration.

The Mint brings considerable benefits to Kremnica, a town with 6.000 inhabitants. It has been operating continuously since the 14th century as a place, where coins and cast medals had first been made in the Kingdom of Hungary and then the historic territory of Central and Eastern Europe underwent a number of political changes and was eventually transformed into the present independent Slovak Republic (since 1993). The Museum of Coins and Medals, established in Kremnica in 1976 after the transformation of the original Municipal Museum founded in 1890, preserves artefacts from the past used in mining precious metals – gold and silver – as well as ancient artefacts. Since 1994, the Museum of Coins and Medals

has been administered by the National Bank of Slovakia, which has ensured its fundamental modernisation with emphasis on displays of money and a permanent collection of medals. New pieces from international medal symposia have been added to this collection, produced during the medal symposia held since 1988. The 15th International Symposium of Medals has taken place in 2021. The symposia are held every two to three years, but the pandemic disrupted this regularity and therefore the 15th symposium is being held in autumn 2021. The number of participants has been fixed to five artists. One regular participant, sculptor – medallist comes from Slovakia and another one from the Czech Republic. Other participants are invited from close or distant European countries and from overseas. The symposium lasts one month (approximately from mid-September) and ends with a joint exhibition of medals and plaques in the museum. The number of cast medals is limited to five pieces produced in the process of casting on lost wax, always in two sets – one for the collection of the Museum of Coins and Medals and another for the archive of the participating artist.

The artistic design for a double-sided medal struck in copper is 60 mm in diameter and obligatory for the participants. The Kremnica Mint ensures its production in the limited time. The museum announces one or two compulsory themes for each International Symposium on Medals. The themes reflect interesting milestones in local history, and present global challenges representing the international impact.

The medal also contains a text with the names of participating artists, the edition and year of the symposium, or the name and location of the organising institution – the Museum of Coins and Medals in Kremnica. Struck medals from one edition are adjusted in a medal display case meeting the requirements of a representative collector's artefact.

The requirement to create design of the struck medal gives the artists with a lack of this kind of experience the opportunity to get acquainted with this process: the size of the modelling plate is precisely 180 mm, the height of the relief is also strictly limited. Further production process of minting takes place according to the technological rules used in the mint.

Our reflection on the international symposia on medals in the Slovak Republic, organised by the Museum of Coins and Medals since 1988, focuses on thirteen Slovak sculptors – medallists who designed fourteen struck medals during the symposia held in fifteen years. All foreign artists also took part in the creation of struck medals, but, due to the time limit, we did not include their work in this presentation.

The work of the Slovak participants reflects the poetic atmosphere of the “golden town” of Kremnica. Thanks to the mining of precious metals, hidden in the depths of the earth, the town has written its local history since the Middle Ages by mirroring world history, evidenced by struck coins and art medals. The medieval town fortifications and the castle with the Gothic Church of St. Catherine and the bell tower, the town gate decorated with a relief featuring symbols of the sun and the moon (gold and silver), the steep slope of the main square with a dominant sculpture group in memory of the plague epidemic in the Baroque style of the 18th century, the historical complex of authentic mint premises, original patrician houses on the square with the collections of the Museum of Coins and Medals all this creates a congenial atmosphere of the town surrounded by steep hills covered with forests. All its beauties are illuminated by the night sky with twinkling stars.

Artists work in a renovated late 18th century house. Originally, it was a pottery workshop, later the Angyals, father and son, lived there. The house is located in the garden with a flowing stream and a small old summerhouse below a steep slope.

In addition to clouds, invisible fluid apparitions of beautiful female beings hover above the heads of the sculptors in the Kremnica sky, lizards crawl out of the ground, mask wearers make grimaces and stick out their tongues. This is tolerated in Kremnica. Every year, crowds of visitors come to the town to see alternative humorous theatrical productions, the well-known Kremnica Gags. Portrait masks of the best Slovak humourists are implanted in the form of relief fragments into fortifications by local sculptors.

Let the medallists talk about the secrets and charms of the mining town of Kremnica. Let's be imaginary participants in their symposia in the maelstrom of creative ideas, in the craze of day and night hours they have devoted to realising their dreams and concepts in miniature reliefs of the medal obverse and reverse.

Four weeks of concentrated work in Kremnica provided the artists with energy to explore themes such as the 25-year anniversary of the National Bank of Slovakia, but majorly the important themes of the present – environmental challenges, enduring legacies of the previous millennium, human relationship to space, or to the past in relation to the future.

All participants of the International Symposia of Art Medals in Kremnica 1988 - 2021:

1988 - Sándor Tóth (hu), Milada Othová (cz), Teodosi Antonov (bg), Viačeslav Puganov (ru), Marián Polonský (sk); **1990** - Ladislav Kolár (cz), Erika Ligeti (hu), Hannu Konttinen (fi), Ivanka Minčeva (bg), Vít Bojňanský (sk); **1992** - Heidi Wagner Kekhof (de), Jiří Věneček (cz), Veronika Fúz (hu), Ron Dutton (en), Drahomír Zobek (sk); **1994** - Jitka Jelínková (cz), Vija Mikáne (lot), Paul Huybrechts (b), Pieter van Niewenhuizen (nl), Mikuláš Palko (sk); **1996** - Anna Beata Wątróbska-Wdowiarska (pl), Mirosła Kovářík (cz), Uga Drava (can), Jacek Dworski (pl), Vladimír Durbák (sk); **2000** - Ewa Ross-Baczińska (pl), Joana Troikowicz (sw), Judit Zsin (hu), Timo Bengtsson (fi), Gabriela Gáspárová-Illéšová (sk); **2002** - Jane McAdam Freud (en), Josef Šafařík (cz), Péter Szanyi (hu), Bogomil Nikolov (bul), Mária Klastová (sk); **2005** - Milena Blašková (cz), Mateusz Dworski (pl), Rembrandt Jordan (b), Aranka E. Lakatos (hu), Juraj Sapara (sk); **2007** - Emil Bachiyski (bg), Monika Molenda (pl), Paweł Łeski (pl), György Szabó (hu), Eva Harmadyová (sk); **2009** - Teodora Draganova (bg), Ligita Franckeviča (lv), Wiesław Jelonek (pl), Marie Šeborová (cz), Ivan Řehák (sk); **2011** - Valeria Koshkina (ru), Sebastian Mikołajczak (pl), Natasha Ratcliffe (gb), Mirena Zlateva (bg), Alojz Drahoš (sk); **2013** - George Cuhaj (us), Miroslav Kovářík (cz), Hugo Maciel (pt), László Zagya (hu), Vladimír Durbák (sk); **2015** - João Duarte (pt), Kate Ive (uk), Pavel Károly (sk), Krzysztof Nitsch (pl), Nadia Rozeva Green (bg); **2017** - Amanullah Haiderzad (usa), Majid Jammoul (pl), Mihaela Kamenova (bg), Jānis Strupulis (lv), Peter Durbák (sk); **2021** - Daniela Kartáková (cz), Krzysztof Krzysztof (pl), Ventsislav Yanchev Shishkov (bg), Ulrika Margareta Kjeldsen (fi).

Supported using public funding by Slovak Arts Council

PICTURES FOR THE LECTURE OF ĽUBA BELOHRADSKÁ

The medals are part of the museum collection of the Museum of Coins and Medals in Kremnica



1st International Symposium of Medals – 1988

Theme: 100th anniversary of the museum in Kremnica

Author: **Marian Polonský** (sculptor, medallist, ceramicist)

100 Years of the Kremnica Museum Double-sided, struck.



2nd International Symposium of Medals – 1990

Theme: Testimonies and references of the 20th century

Author: **Vít Bojňanský** (sculptor, medallist)

Kremnica 90 Double-sided, struck.



3rd International Symposium of Medals – 1992

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Theme: Testimonies and references of the 20th century

Author: **Drahomír Zobek** (coin designer and medallist)

Attention the ground, attention the water, attention the air! Double-sided, struck.



4th International Symposium of Medals – 1994

Theme: Testimonies and references of the 20th century

Author: **Mikuláš Palko** (sculptor, medallist)

Kremnica Gags Double-sided, struck.

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5th International Symposium of Medals – 1996

Theme: Testimonies and references of the 20th century

Author: **Vladimír Durbák** (sculptor, medallist, draftsman, painter, ceramicist, pedagogue at the Pedagogical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava)

Free Royal Town of Kremnica Double-sided, struck.



6th International Symposium of Medals – 2000

Theme: Millennium, Kremnica

Author: **Gabriela Gáspárová – Illéšová** (sculptor, medalist, associate professor at the Institute of Fine Arts and Design of the Faculty of Architecture and Design of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava)

Kremnica MM Double-sided, struck.



7th International Symposium of Medals – 2002

Theme: New millennium; Opening of a new historical-numismatic exposition of the Kremnica Museum

Author: **Mária Klastová** (painter, pedagogue of planar and plastic engraving of metals, School of Applied Arts Kremnica)

St. Catherine, Gothic sculpture from the Church of St. Catherine Double-sided, struck.



8th International Symposium of Medals – 2005

Theme: The new millennium - hopes and anxieties; 115 years of founding the museum in Kremnica

Author: **Juraj Sapara** (sculptor, medallist, graphic artist, associate professor at the Department of Sculpture at the Art Academy in Banská Bystrica)

Reminiscences Double-sided, struck.



9th International Symposium of Medals – 2007

Theme: 680 years of the town of Kremnica - Kremnica over gold; One world

Author: **Eva Harmadyová** (medallist, art jeweller, sculptor, pedagogue at the Primary Art School in Nové Mesto nad Váhom)

Kremnica over gold Double-sided, struck.



10th International Symposium of Medals – 2009

Theme: What is a medal? Universe and the human

Author: **Ivan Řehák** (medallist, coin designer, pedagogue at the Faculty of Architecture and Design of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava)

Kremnica 2009 Double-sided, struck.



11th International Symposium of Medals – 2011

Theme: 121st anniversary of the Kremnica Museum; Microcosm

Author: **Alojz Drahoš** (sculptor, medallist, associate professor at the Department of Visual Arts of the Pedagogical faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava).

Kremnica meeting Double-sided, struck.



12th International Symposium of Medals – 2013

125th anniversary of the Kremnica Museum; Landscape image

Author: **Vladimír Durbák** (sculptor, medallist, draftsman, painter, ceramicist, pedagogue at the Pedagogical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava)

12th International Symposium on Medals / Everything Flies with Wings Double-sided, struck.

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13th International Symposium of Medals –2015

Theme: Museum - home of muses; Past versus future

Author: **Pavel Károly** (coin designer, medallist, metal engraver, pedagogue at the School of Applied Arts in Kremnica)

NBS Museum of Coins and Medals Kremnica Double-sided, struck.



14th International Symposium of Medals –2017

Theme: 25 years of the National Bank of Slovakia (1993 - 2018)

Author: **Peter Durbák** (pedagogue at the School of Applied Arts in Kremnica, technical assistant of the symposium – plasterer)

25 Years of the National Bank of Slovakia Double-sided, struck.

The 15th International Symposium of Medals has been held without the participation of a Slovak medallist. We consider it to be a consequence of the pandemic, which disrupted creative activities of visual artists.

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