

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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## NATIONAL GALLERY ACQUIRES GERMAN PORTRAIT MEDAL

Washington, D.C. -- A fine Renaissance portrait medal Johannes Pistorius (1543) by Friedrich Hagenauer, one of Germany's leading medalists, has been acquired by the National Gallery of Art, director Earl A. Powell III announced today. Hagenauer's only depiction of Pistorius (1504-1583), a distinguished German theologian and Protestant reformer, is the gift of Stephen K. Scher and Janie Woo Scher, in gratitude to the staff of the National Gallery of Art. It is on view as part of the exhibition The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance at the National Gallery from January 23 through May 1, 1994.

"This rare, elegant medal is a significant addition to our portrait medal collection," said Powell. "Our outstanding Samuel H. Kress collection, which includes 737 medals, is strongest in Italian examples. This fine gift strengthens the German representation."

Johannes Pistorius is among Hagenauer's most important series of medals, portraying predominantly scholars and leading figures in the Lutheran Reformation. Typical of his work, it is characterized by precision and nobility of style. The subtle modeling of the face, shown in profile, strong nose, and firm mouth convey the quiet strength of the sitter, known as an ardent and zealous defender of the faith.



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An inscription identifies the sitter and his age of thirty-nine. On the reverse, a verse from Psalms 51:17 expresses the ideal of humility: "a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

While the dates of the artist's birth and death are not known, his activity between 1525 and 1546 is documented. Probably trained as a sculptor, like many Italian and German medalists, he was itinerant, traveling in search of commissions to Munich, Augsburg, Strassberg, and Cologne. Hagenauer created 250 medals, almost all using wood models. In part because of the technique, his works display a crisp, linear clarity.

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