Medallion

Place of origin: Etruria (made)
Date: ca. 1787 (made)
Artist/Maker: Hackwood, William (modeller)
Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (maker)
Materials and Techniques: White Jasper with a black relief and mounted in gilt-metal
Credit Line: Given by Lady Charlotte Schreiber
Museum number: 414:1304-1885
Gallery location: British Galleries, Room 118; The Wolfson Gallery, case 3

Public access description

Object Type These medallions were made for distribution to advocates for the abolition of slavery. Both men and women used or wore them to publicise the campaign and signal their support for the abolitionist cause. Wedgwood is popularly credited as the originator of the motto on the medallion: ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’. He had extensive trading links with Liverpool, the foremost slave port of the day. However, there is evidence to suggest that the phrase was first employed in 1778 by Rev Dr Peter Peckard, Chancellor of Magdalene College, Cambridge, who used it as the title of an abolitionist pamphlet supplied to the National Legislator. Trading The medallions were not sold commercially, and were never listed in the Wedgwood catalogues. Instead, Wedgwood probably bore the cost of their production and distribution. Others of similar size sold at 3 guineas each (œ3 3s), which gives an indication of the considerable sums involved. They were probably distributed through the Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Certainly, Wedgwood is known to have sent consignments to both the American statesman Benjamin Franklin, who was then President of the Philadelphia Society for the Abolition of Slavery, and Thomas Clarkson, a leading abolitionist and author of A Summary View of the Slave Trade.

Descriptive line
Oval medallion of white jasper with a black relief of a chained black male slave in a half-kneeling posture facing right, modelled by William Hackwood, made by Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd., Etruria, ca. 1787.

Physical description
Oval medallion of white jasper with a black relief of a chained black male slave in a half-kneeling posture facing right. Set in a gilt metal hoop. Inscribed at the edge with ‘AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?’.

Dimensions
Height: 3 cm, Width: 2.7 cm

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Object history note
Made for the Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Known as the Emancipation Badge.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O79580/medallion-hackwood-william/