



Fig. 01: Plaster cast of the  
*Dictator Julius Caesar* from  
 Tommaso Cades' *Daktyliothek*  
 (No. 242), published in 1829

## THE DICTATOR JULIUS CAESAR

Anonymous, after a Renaissance or Baroque gem

Northern Italy; 16th/17th century

Bronze; 38.5 x 47.3 mm

### *Provenance:*

Richard (Rick) B. Witschonke (CNG auction, 2 Dec 2015, Lot 330)

Jan Lis (dealer, UK)

Johan Willem Frederiks (Morton & Eden auction, 18 April 2002, Lot 534)

Contemporary cast. Chocolate brown patina with an applied black lacquer almost entirely lost. Thick cast, rubbed along the high points. A casting flaw below the chin of Caesar, resulting in a small pit. Pierced at the top. An integrally cast legend: IVLIVS CAESAR DICTATOR. Reverse features a collection number painted in white.

The present plaquette represents a portrait bust of Caesar probably derived from an intaglio gem inspired by classical prototypes. Jeremy Warren notes its correspondence with a two-sided plaquette featuring a portrait bust of *Alexander the Great* at the Ashmolean (Inv. WA 2008.22), citing their similar “conception and costume” (see Warren [2014], discussed with entry No. 386, p. 925). However, minor differences in the character of the busts as well as the atypical thickness and slightly incuse obverse of the *Caesar* plaquettes differentiate them from examples of the *Alexander* reliefs.

Wax and plaster casts of the *Caesar* gem are known, such as one reproduced in Tommaso Cades’ (1829) *Daktyliothek* (No. 242), lacking its inscription and indicating it was added to the mold used for the plaquette casts (Fig. 01).

Other gems sharing close affinities with the present plaquette include a carnelian intaglio formerly in the Blacas Collection, documented in *Trésor de Numismatique*, vol. 4 (1843, p. 3, plate 2, fig. 11) and an agate intaglio at the Palazzo Pitti, judged 17th century (see Riccardo Gennaioli [1990]: *Le gemme dei Medici al Museo degli Argenti: Cammei e Intagli nelle collezione di Palazzo Pitti*. Florence; No. 652, p. 421).

Examples of the present plaquette are uncommon with Doug Lewis citing only three examples, Warren citing two examples, and the present author counting a total of eight, inclusive of the present cast.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rosenheim collection (Sothebys auction, 4 May 1923, Lot 627-C); Cabinet des Médailles, Paris; Moltheim collection (Helbing auction, 17 May 1926, Lot 10); Museo Nazionale del Bargello (not included in the Toderi’s 1996 catalog); Avery collection (Morton & Eden auction, 11-12 June 2008, Lot 368; Berlin Museums; Museo Lazaro Galdiano; and the present cast.

Special thanks to Charles Avery for his feedback on the example formerly in his collection.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Doug Lewis (2006, National Gallery of Art); No. 39 (the present type cited as “Subtype I,” and the present example cited in footnote 56).