



The 'heifer' aurei of Augustus

Hadrien Rambach, Alan Walker

► To cite this version:

Hadrien Rambach, Alan Walker. The 'heifer' aurei of Augustus. *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau*, 2012, 91, pp.41-57. hal-04345725

HAL Id: hal-04345725

<https://hal.science/hal-04345725>

Submitted on 14 Dec 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

HADRIEN RAMBACH AND ALAN WALKER

THE “HEIFER” *AUREI* OF AUGUSTUS

PLATES 5–6

This article is devoted to a rare, beautiful and intriguing series of gold coins of Augustus (27 BC – AD 14) that bear a head of the emperor and the legend CAESAR on the obverse, and a heifer with the legend AVGVSTVS on the reverse¹ The most recent listing of this coinage is in a general book on *aurei* by Calicó, but it gives no indication as to the location (and number) of examples. Six types can be identified, as summarized in the table below.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Obverse</i>	<i>Reverse</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Dies</i>	<i>Examples</i>
1	Head bare right	Heifer left	Calicó 168, 538 Cohen 26, RIC	O.1,2,3,4 / R.1,2,3,4,5	12
2	Head laureate right	Heifer left	Cal. 169, C. -, RIC 536	O.5 / R.5	1
3	Head laureate left	Heifer left	Cal. 170, C. -, RIC -	O.6 / R.6	2
4	Head laureate left	Heifer right	Cal. 171, C. 27, RIC 537	O.6 / R.7	3
5	Head bare right	Heifer right	Cal. 172, C. -, RIC -	O.7 / R.8	1
6	Head bare right	Bull right	Cal. 172a, C. -, RIC -	O.8 / R.9	3

These coins are very rare indeed, and we know of only twenty-two examples of all the types – often struck on unusually broad flans. Eight obverse dies have been identified, and nine reverse dies². It is rather unusual to have almost the same number of dies for both sides; the reverse dies were usually replaced more often, as they were more prone to breakage. However, the relative number of dies used in the *denarii* of Augustus with the young bull is similar: Sutherland (1974) listed 24 obverse dies and 26 reverse dies. The small number of dies, and their linkage, suggest that the coins were issued over a short time, for a specific event.

¹ We are grateful to Paul Belien, Sabine Bourgey, Curtis Clay, Georges Depeyrot, Arianna D'Ottone, David Fanning, Jean-Baptiste Giard, Elizabeth Hahn, Mary Hinton, Dominique Hollard, Ursula Kampmann, Ian Leins, Attilio Mastrocinque, Olga Palagia, Markus Peter, François Planet, Roberto Russo, Philip Skingley, Massimiliano Tursi, Giuseppe Ucciardello, Hans Voegtli and Klaus Vondrovec for their invaluable help in researching this coinage.

² Based on this number of dies, we can expect the total issue to have been of about 200,000–250,000 *aurei*.

<i>Dies</i>	<i>O.1</i>	<i>O.2</i>	<i>O.3</i>	<i>O.4</i>	<i>O.5</i>	<i>O.6</i>	<i>O.7</i>	<i>O.8</i>
R.1	1.1, 1.2							
R.2	1.3							
R.3	1.4, 1.5, 1.6							
R.4	1.7, 1.8	1.9, 1.12	1.10					
R.5				1.11, forgery	2.1			
R.6						3.1, 3.2, 3.3		
R.7						4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4		
R.8							5.1	
R.9								6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Although the exceptionally high artistic quality of these coins dates them to the golden age of Roman history, the exact date of issue is uncertain. The laurel wreath could “celebrate a victory” – *vitulari* in Latin, a word quite close to *vitulus* (“bullock”)³. A naval victory – perhaps Actium? – is a possibility because of the traditional association of the bull with Neptune⁴. Several dates have been suggested: 27–20 BC (MATTINGLY 1923); about 25 BC (KENT 1984); 21 BC, for the *decennalia* of Actium (LAFFRANCHI 1952); 20 BC (HILL), or even 19–15 BC (CALICÓ 2003).

The mint is also uncertain⁵. The portrait style is of Greek workmanship rather than Roman, prompting two principal hypotheses. These coins may have been issued in the east, probably in Asia Minor, and perhaps at Pergamum, or Apamea, or Ephesus, or Laodicea ad Mare. Mattingly (1923) suggested Samos, where Augustus was in residence during 21–20 BC. Gabrici (1902) attributed these coins

³ See M. GRANT, *Complex symbolism and new mints c. 14 BC*, NC.9, 1949, p. 28; also *Id.*, *The Six Main Aes Coinages of Augustus* (Edinburgh 1953), pp. 112 sqq.

⁴ The god was nicknamed *taureos* because bulls were sacrificed to him and because the seashore provided good pasture.

⁵ The few examples known are all in Western collections (apparently none in Greek and Turkish museums). Until a group is found in an archaeological context, the absence of find-spots prevents any mint-identification, especially considering the wide circulation of aurei within the Empire. The die axes (almost all 12 o'clock) do not add any information either.

to Athens, as Myron’s statues of oxen were in the Agora⁶. Sinope, in the Black Sea region, has also been proposed because gold was found nearby⁷. The few examples known are all in Western collections, none with a find-spot; if such coins were to be found in an archaeological context, it might finally give concrete elements as to where they were minted, rather than relying on historical hypotheses and style discussions. However, this series could have been minted in Rome, with dies engraved by an important Hellenistic artist⁸. Yet although the reverses are uniform in style, suggesting that one artist was responsible for them all, the obverse dies are the work of two different engravers, one who depicted the emperor with a large, broad head, and one who preferred a narrow bust with sharply defined features.

In this portrait of him as a laurel-wreathed victor, Augustus is depicted as a young Apollo-like emperor, of the same age but more regal than the marble *Prima Porta Augustus*. Artistically, few Roman coins can compare with this portrait, the equal of any masterpiece of the Hellenistic Age. The image matches that of marble busts of Augustus: he is depicted with a compact mouth and chin, a long nose, high cheeks and a broad forehead. The portrait has much in common with the finest *Aegypto Capta* issues struck for Augustus in the east (c. 28–27 BC). Furthermore, both these *aurei* and the *Aegypto Capta* issues are in two distinct styles: one of high artistic quality and another more pedestrian one⁹. Interestingly, the thin, elongated neck of Augustus on this coin is reminiscent of Caesar’s latest portraits. This may possibly be a deliberate visual echo, designed to highlight the transmission of power. Also, the heifer is depicted walking, and her peaceful attitude may perhaps be intended to evoke the earliest Roman coinage: the cast *aes signatum* with a bull¹⁰. Could the choice of the heifer type thus be a way for the young Augustus to suggest an ancient Roman lineage for himself and his coinage?

The type 5 shows a heifer with a raised head, whilst type 6 – much rougher in style – shows a bull¹¹ (clearly identified by its horns and also with a raised head). The style of type 6 is much closer to that of a silver issue¹², than to the types 1–4. Those coins of types 5–6 may be a completely separate issue from types 1–4, both in date and place.

⁶ See below, and BMC p. CXXIV.

⁷ See C. H. V. SUTHERLAND, *The Emperor and the coinage* (London 1976), p. 58.

⁸ GIARD (1976) suggested the name of Augustus’s renowned gem-engraver Dioscorides, who lived with his sons in the empire’s capital city.

⁹ The *Aegypto Capta* issues have a Capricorn beneath the bust on the finer style pieces and lack it on the more normal examples.

¹⁰ See B. THURLOW / I. VECCHI, *Italian Cast Coinage* (Dorchester 1979), nos AS3 and AS 18.

¹¹ There is a series of *aurei* of Augustus (Calicó 212–214a & 220–225) that show a bull charging with its head down in the attitude of the marble bull of the Kerameikos from the tomb of Dionysios of Kollytos (345–338 BC). The bull on the *aurei* Calicó 172a is close in type to the small bronze bulls found on the Acropolis during the Greek excavations of 1885–1890, which were supposedly similar to the votive bull of the Council of the Areopagus (which stood in the northeast corner of the court west of the Parthenon: G. P. STEVENS, *The Setting of the Periclean Parthenon*, *Hesperia* Suppl. 3, 1940, fig. 17). This bull has also been linked to Caesar, and to the *Legio IV Macedonica* (the bull was its symbol), which he founded in 48 BC for the war with Pompey (on bulls as legionary emblems: S. WEINSTOCK, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971), pp. 119–121). And for the silver coinage with the bull, Adrien Blanchet has suggested that it may be a reuse of the ancient coinage of Thurium, in honour of Augustus’s family’s origins (Le taureau des monnaies d’Auguste, *Macon* 1947, p. 5).

¹² Perhaps struck in Samos, see SUTHERLAND 1974.

The high quality and distinctive style of engraving of the heifer issues undoubtedly indicate that they had a special significance, and that this heifer has a particular meaning. It may perhaps represent one of four (supposedly identical) bronze statues of heifers cast by the sculptor Myron that are supposed to have been commissioned after the peace-treaty of Nicias with Sparta, in March 421 BC, and to have been dedicated on the Athenian acropolis around 420–417¹³. The artist had taken part in the 90th Olympiad, together with Polycleitus, Pythagoras and Scopas. These heifers were his most celebrated work, and according to Ovid, *“those cattle, true to life, are a masterpiece by Myron”*¹⁴. Pliny explained indeed the specificity of the artist’s work: *“Myron was born at Eleutherae and likewise a pupil of Hagelades. He was most renowned for his statue of a cow, praised in some famous poems – for many people owe their reputation not to their own talent but to someone else’s . . . He was apparently the first to extend the representation of reality, and a more talented artist than Polycleitus – paying more precise attention to a system of proportional parts”*¹⁵.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote: *“About 400 BC, a Greek sculptor named Myron made a bronze cast of a cow. Cicero claims to have seen the statue in Athens, and in the seventh century Procopius saw it in Rome. Thus, for over a thousand years the work had attracted attention. Although considerable information concerning this statue has come down to us, none of it is much help in forming a clear image of the original”*¹⁶. Indeed, very many ancient epigrams were written about those sculptures, and they remain rather vague as to their appearance. Although there were at least four bronze sculptures, which one assumes were identical, the poems tend to refer to as single ‘ox’. Smith mistakenly concluded that the cow and the four oxen of Augustus were different works¹⁷: it is in fact a simple case of poetic license, in which the writers refer to the model sculpted by Myron, rather than the actual objects, the bronze casts. These ancient texts relate many anecdotes that insist on the bronzes’ striking realism (see below, and also LISSARRAGUE / FRONTISI-DUCROUX): a calf tries to suck the heifer and starves, a bull tries to mount her, a lion is tempted to bite her, a thief tries to steal her, shepherds were confused, and so on. It was said that the artist himself – having lost the sculpture in a herd – had to chase the living cows away in order to identify his creation, or that the bronze was not in fact a statue, but an actual cow with bronze-like aged skin. The humour of these epigrams justifies them all being quoted in their entirety (here in annex).

¹³ Because these sculptures were in Athens (and later in Rome), the cow horn (diam. 11 cm) and ear (23 cm long) that were excavated in Olympia can obviously not be Myron’s (P. BOL, *Grossplastik aus Bronze in Olympia* (Berlin 1978), p. 112, pls 24–25, no. 134).

¹⁴ Ovid, *De Ponto*, iv.1.34.

¹⁵ Pliny, *Nat. hist.* XXXIV.57–58.

¹⁶ J.W. von Goethe, “On Myron’s Cow”, *Über Kunst und Altertum*, 1818, vol. II, pp. 9–10: *“Myron, ein griechischer Bildner, verfertigte ungefähr vierhundert Jahre vor unserer Zeitrechnung eine Kuh von Erz, welche Cicero zu Athen, Procopius im siebenten Jahrhundert zu Rom sah, also dass über tausend Jahre dieses Kunstwerk die Aufmerksamkeit der Menschen auf sich gezogen. Es sind uns von demselben mancherlei Nachrichten übriggeblieben; allein wir können uns doch daraus keine deutliche Vorstellung des eigentlichen Gebildes machen...”*

¹⁷ W. SMITH, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (Boston 1870), p. 1131.

These statues were still in Athens in the time of Cicero¹⁸. Despite Corso’s hypothesis that they were taken to Rome by Nero (who stayed in Greece in 66–68)¹⁹, it seems certain that they were shipped to the city after Octavian’s victory at Actium (on September 31 BC), to adorn an altar in his Temple of Apollo on the Palatine (dedicated in 28 BC), next to the *Forum Boarium*²⁰. There, according to Sextus Propertius, “round the altar, stood four of Myron’s cattle, carved statues of oxen, true to life”²¹. These cows were later used by Vespasian to decorate his Temple of Pax in AD 74, when he celebrated his victory against the “Great Revolt” (or First Jewish War, 66–73), and they are depicted on *aurei* of Vespasian and of his son²². Procopius attests that they were still in the Forum of Peace in Rome in 537–538²³, soon before the sack of Rome by Totila in 546. They were carried to the appropriately named *Forum Tauri* in Constantinople at a later, unknown date, where Julian, Praetorian Prefect of Egypt in 530–531 AD, saw them (they were then still a novelty). Constantine Manasses saw them in Constantinople in 1150²⁴, and John Tzetzes between 1144 and 1170²⁵, but they seem to have disappeared after the fall of the city to the Crusaders in 1204; it is most likely that they – like so many other bronze statues in Constantinople – were melted down to make coins.

Historians and classicists usually state that there is no visual evidence for the appearance of Myron’s heifer. The hypothesis that it is depicted on these coins has been rejected on the basis of the varied postures of the heifer on the reverses²⁶. It is true that the heifer on type 5, and even more so the bull on type 6, raises its head. But type 4 (heifer right) is a direct inversion of types 1–3 (heifer left), and the posture of the animal on these dies is identical, with a raised rear, face down (but not bent), walking, the tail between the legs, and so on. There are of course variations in the proportions – compare, for example, coins 1.10 and 1.11 – but this is a result not of different models but of the dies being by different engravers. Moreover, the coinage of Vespasian, although poorly engraved, shows the heifer in a comparable position. These coins of Augustus most likely depict this celebrated ancient sculpture.

¹⁸ Cicero, *Verrine orations*, IV.60.135.

¹⁹ See CORSO 1994, p. 78.

²⁰ The *Forum Boarium* was the cattle market, see MILLER 2009, p. 189.

²¹ Sextus Propertius, *The Love Elegies*, II.31.

²² See O.P. WENGER, Die Kuh des Myron auf einem Aureus des Titus, *Helvetische Münzenzeitung*, vol. 12.2, Feb. 1977, p. 85. See CALICÓ nos 617–618, 621–623, 733–736.

²³ Procopius, *De Bello Gothico* VIII.21.14.

²⁴ Constantine Manasses, *Beiblatt* col. 75. Quoted from: Constantine Manasses, *Ekphrasis*, ed. by L. STERNBACH, *Jhb. Oest. arch.* (1902).

²⁵ John Tzetzes, *Chiliades* VIII, *hist.* 194, vv. 363–365.

²⁶ See CORSO 1994, pp. 69–70.

Abstract

This essay is devoted to the study of a series of Roman gold coins, struck under Augustus, with the type of a heifer on the reverse. The authors aimed at making a corpus of the few surviving examples, which allows to identify various types, and a number of different dies. Those suggest that the emission was of importance, despite the great rarity of the coins nowadays (only 21 examples listed for all 5 varieties). The authors also tried to summarise the different hypotheses made as to the date and place of emission. The type is believed to depict the bronze sculptures by Myron, and ancient epigrams relating to it are quoted.

Zusammenfassung

Eine besondere Serie von *aurei* des Kaisers Augustus zeigt auf dem Revers eine Färse. Die Autoren präsentieren ein Corpus der bekannten Exemplare und der verwendeten Stempel, mit denen die unterschiedlichen Typen geprägt wurden. Die Zahl der Stempel legt den Schluss nahe, dass die Prägung ein beachtliches Ausmass hatte, obschon diese Münzen heute sehr selten sind (von den 5 Varianten sind insgesamt nur 21 Exemplare bekannt). Die unterschiedlichen Hypothesen zur Datierung und Lokalisierung dieser Emission werden ebenso diskutiert wie die These, dass auf der Rückseite die berühmte Bronzestatue des Myron dargestellt ist. In einem Anhang sind die antiken Quellen zusammengestellt, welche diese Skulptur erwähnen.

Hadrien J. Rambach
34 Campden Hill Towers
London W11 3QW
England
coinadvisor@yahoo.co.uk

Alan S. Walker
Nomos AG
Zähringerstrasse 27
Postfach 2664
CH-8022 Zürich
awalker@nomosag.com

Collectors

- AILLY, Pierre-Philippe Bourlier d' (1794–1877): 1.9
BEAUFILS: 6.2
BENZ, Leo (1906–1996): 6.1
BIAGGI de Blasys, Leo (1906–1979): 3.3 & 4.3 & 5.1 & 6.1
BLACAS d'Aulps, Louis Charles Pierre Casimir de (1815–1868, son of P.-L. J. C. de Blacas): 1.11
BLACAS d'Aulps, Pierre-Louis Jean Casimir de (1771–1839): 1.11
CAMPANA, Giovanni Pietro (1808–1880): 6.4
CASTRO MAYA, Raymundo Ottoni de (1894–1968): 6.2
ELBERLING, Dr Charles-Gustave (1797–1873): 6.2
ENGEL-GROS, Frédéric (1843–1918): 6.2
E.S.R. = Erich von Schulthess-Rechberg: 1.6
FEIRSTEIN, Barry (1952–): 3.3
FONTANA, Carlo d'Ottavio (1774–1832): 6.2
HALL, Henry Platt (1863–1949): 6.1
JAMESON, Frédéric Robert (1861–1942): 4.3
LESOUËF, Auguste (1826–1906): 1.3
MAGNAGUTI, Alessandro (1887–1966): 3.3
MORETTI, Dr. h.c. Athos D. (1907–1993): 1.6 & 2.1 & 5.1
PONTON d'AMECOURT, Gustave (1825–1888): 1.8
PRIDEAUX, Richard (1948–): 6.2
ROTHSCHILD, Adelheid (1853–1935, wife of E. de Rothschild): 3.2
ROTHSCHILD, Edmond de (1845–1934): 3.2
SMITH-LESOUËF = Anne-Léontine Lesouëf, wife of Jules Smith and sister of A. Lesouëf: 1.3
WARREN, Edward Perry (1860–1928): 4.1
WIGAN, Edward (1823–1871): 4.2

*Catalogue**Type 1*

	Specimens											
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.10	1.11	forgeries 1.12
Diameter	?	20.6	?	20	20	22	21	?	20.4	20.5	20.8	? 20–21
Weight	7.95	7.92	7.95	7.89	7.62	7.98	7.91	?	?	7.88	7.98	8.02 7.92
Axis	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	?	?	12	1	6 12

- Specimen: 1.1
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 137.1; GIARD 1008; LAFFRANCHI (1916) pl. IX-3/4
 Provenance: From the "anciens fonds" (Royal collections).
 Location: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles (BnF), GIARD 1008.
- Specimen: 1.2
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 137.5; B&S 16-2; GIARD pl. XLI.a
 Provenance: unknown
 Location: Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, in the collection since before 1875.
- Specimen: 1.3
 Bibliography: GIARD 1009
 Provenance: From the collection of A. Lesouëf; given to the museum in 1913 by A.-L. Smith-Lesouëf (ms. cat. no. 121).
 Location: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles (BnF), GIARD 1009.
- Specimen: 1.4
 Bibliography: GIARD note; PLANET no. 5; MM p. 38
 Provenance: unknown
 Location: Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. Mo.Av.34.
- Specimen: 1.5
 Bibliography: –
 Provenance: Bought from the inventory of Albert Riechmann (Halle), c. 1925. Sold Numismatik Lanz 135, 21 May 2007, lot 474.
 Location: Unknown collection.
- Specimen: 1.6
 Bibliography: B&S 16-1; CALICÒ 168; GIARD note
 Provenance: From the E.S.R. collection, Hess-Leu XVII, 23 March 1961, lot 33, sold to Mario Ratto for Moretti. From the Moretti collection, Numismatica Ars Classica 38, 21 March 2007, lot 2, sold to Numismatica Genevensis.
 Location: Swiss private collection.

- Specimen: 1.7
 Bibliography: GIARD note
 Provenance: Purchased in 1929 from Ernest John Seltman (Cambridge).
 Location: The Hague, Royal Coin cabinet – now Utrecht, Geldmuseum, inv. 1929–077.
- Specimen: 1.8
 Bibliography: BOURGEY-DEPEYROT p.18; GIARD note
 Provenance: From the Ponton d'Amécourt collection, Rollin & Feuardent, 25 April 1887, lot 74. Later: Emile Bourgey, 25 May 1950, lot 102.
 Location: Unknown collection.
- Specimen: 1.9
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 137.3; GIARD 1010
 Provenance: Bequeathed by P-Ph. B. d'Ailly (ms. cat. no. 10951).
 Location: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles (BnF), Giard 1010.
- Specimen: 1.10
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 137.6; BMC 660; B&S 16; GIARD note; LAFFRANCHI (1952) pl. II–21
 Provenance: From the collection of King George III, given in 1825.
 Location: London, British Museum, BMC 660.
- Specimen: F
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 137.2; BMC 659; B&S 17; GABRICI fig. 20; GIARD note
 Provenance: Purchased in 1867 from L. C. P. C. de Blacas, possibly from the collection of P.-L. J. C. de Blacas.
 Location: London, British Museum, BMC 659.
- Specimen: – (recent forgery, based on the specimen 1.11, by transfer dies)
 Bibliography: –
 Provenance: Triton auction VIII, 11 January 2005, lot 1088. Subsequently determined by Classical Numismatic Group to be a forgery: the sale was rescinded, and it was returned to the consignor. Another example, of the same dies, is said to exist.
 Location: Unknown collection.
- Specimen: 1.12
 Bibliography: FIORELLI 3696; GABRICI fig. 12
 Provenance: From the « historic » collection of the museum, provenance lost
 Location: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 42024.

Type 2

	Specimens
	2.1
Diameter	?
Weight	7.97
Axis	12.00

Specimen: 2.1
 Bibliography: CALICÒ 169; KENT / HIRMER 127 (p. 277 & pl. 36); RCV 1577
 Provenance: From the "U.N." collection (Milan), before 1978. Later: Moretti collection, Numismatic Fine Arts XXII, 1 June 1989, lot 28. Later: Bank Leu 57, 25 May 1993, lot 210, sold to Spink for a client.
 Location: G. H. collection.

Type 3

	Specimens		
	3.1	3.2	3.3
Diameter	21	20.6	?
Weight	7.94	7.94	7.90
Axis	6.00	1.00	?

Specimen: 3.1
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 139.2; GIARD pl. XL.c
 Provenance: unknown
 Location: St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, *inv. OH-A-A₃ 1684*. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum, photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

Specimen: 3.2
 Bibliography: GIARD 1007
 Provenance: From the collection of E. de Rothschild, given by A. Rothschild in 1934 (ms. cat. no. 25).
 Location: Paris, Cabinet des Médailles (BnF), GIARD 1007.

Specimen: 3.3
 Bibliography: Biaggi photo plate no. 86 ; B&S 18; CALICÒ 170; GIARD note
 Provenance: From the Magnaguti collection, Santamaria, 14 October 1949, lot 375. Biaggi collection, Numismatica Ars Classica 15, 18 May 1999, lot 240, sold to Harlan Berk for Feirstein. Feirstein collection, Numismatica Ars Classica 45, 2 April 2008, lot 61, sold to Silvia Hurter for a client.
 Location: Swiss private collection.

Type 4

	Specimens			
	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4
Diameter	19	19.7	?	20.5
Weight	8.02	7.91	7.89	7.93
Axis	12.00	12.00	?	12.00

Specimen: 4.1
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 139.1; GIARD pl. XL.a
 Provenance: Purchased in March 1900 from E. P. Warren.
 Location: Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 00.283.

Specimen: 4.2
 Bibliography: BAHRFELDT 139.3; BMC 661; B&S 19; Gabrici fig. 13; GIARD pl. XL.b; LAFFRANCHI (1916) pl. IX-1/2; LAFFRANCHI (1952) pl. II-22
 Provenance: Given in 1864 by E. Wigan.
 Location: London, British Museum, BMC 661.

Specimen: 4.3
 Bibliography: Biaggi photo plate no. 85; CALICÒ 171; Jameson no. 491
 Provenance: Ex Biaggi and Jameson collections
 Location: Unknown collection.

Specimen: 4.4
 Bibliography: B&S 20 note
 Provenance: From the Campana collection, purchased in 1873.
 Location: Rome, Capitoline Museums, *inv. MC 3093* (erroneously believed by Dr Molinari to be a forgery). Photograph © Roma Capitale – Sovrintendenza ai Beni Culturali – Musei Capitolini. Photo by Antonio Idini.

Type 5

	Specimens
	5.1
Diameter	?
Weight	7.88
Axis	1.00

Specimen: 5.1
 Bibliography: Biaggi photo plate no. 88; CALICÒ 172
 Provenance: Ex Münzen & Medaillen XIII, 17–19 June 1954, lot 614, sold to Hess for Biaggi. Biaggi collection, Leu 22, 8-9 May 1979, lot 188, sold to Roberto Russo for Moretti. Moretti collection, Numismatic Fine Arts XXII, 1 June 1989, lot 29, sold to Bank Leu for the Arcana collection.

Later: Arcana collection, Sotheby's, 8 July 1996, lot 84, sold to Oslo Mynthandel for a "European Nobleman". "European Nobleman" collection, Numismatica Ars Classica 41, 20 November 2007, lot 37.

Location: Swiss private collection.

Type 6

	Specimens		
	6.1	6.2	6.3
Diameter	19.5	?	?
Weight	7.90	8.04	8.02
Axis	12.00	12.00	12.00

Specimen: 6.1

Bibliography: Biaggi photo plate no. 87; B&S 20; CALICÒ 172a

Provenance: From the Hall collection, Glendining, 19–21 July 1950, lot 774, sold to Santamaria for Biaggi. Ex Biaggi collection. Privately purchased by Benz from Bank Leu on 16 October 1978. Benz collection, Numismatik Lanz 94, 22 November 1999, lot 1. Later: Numismatik Lanz 102, 28 May 2001, lot 455. Later: Austrian private collection, Numismatica Ars Classica 51, 5 March 2009, lot 144.

The Glendining catalogue stated: "Bahrfeldt quotes the Elberling specimen, which went to Engel Gros, 1921, pl. IV, 72 from which H. P. Hall purchased it"; which is erroneous, as the two coins are distinct (specimens 6.1 and 6.2).

Location: Swiss private collection.

Specimen: 6.2

Bibliography: Bulletin de la Soc. Hist. de Luxembourg vol. XIX 1863 p. 117; BAHRFELDT 138; BMC 662 note; BOURGEY / DEPEYROT p. 18; B&S 20

Provenance: From the Fontana collection, Henri Hoffmann, 25 June 1860 sqq., lot 721. Later: Elberling collection, purchased by Rollin & Feuadent. Later: Engel-Gros collection, Feuadent, 19–20 December 1921, lot 72, sold to "Chavier". Later: Castro Maya collection, Emile Bourgey, 18 November 1957, lot 269, sold to "Beaufils". Later: Prideaux collection, Triton XI, 8 January 2008, lot 670. Later: Numismatica Ars Classica 59, 4 April 2011, lot 876, sold to Hadrien Rambach for a client.

Location: Private collection.

Specimen: 6.3

Bibliography: –

Provenance: From the collection of a deceased nobleman, acquired prior to WW1, Sotheby's, Zurich, 28 November 1986, lot 8.

Location: Unknown collection.

Bibliography

- M. VON BAHRFELDT Die Römische Goldmünzenprägung während der Republik und unter Augustus (Halle 1923)
- B&S A. BANTI / L. SIMONETTI, *Corpus Nummorum Romanorum*, vol. IV (Florence 1974)
- S. BOURGEY / G. DEPEYROT L'Empire romain, vol. I (Paris 1994)
- E. X. CALICÒ The Roman Aurei Catalogue (Barcelona 2003)
- A. CORSO La vacca di Mirone, *NACQT* 23, 1994, pp. 49–91
- G. FIORELLI Catalogo del Museo nazionale di Napoli vol. 2 (Naples 1870)
- P. R. FRANKE / M. HIRMER Römische Kaiserporträts im Münzbild (Munich 1968²)
- E. GABRICI La numismatica di Augusto, *Studi e materiali di archeologia e numismatica*, vol. II (1902), pp. 148–171
- J.-B. GIARD Bibliothèque nationale de France. Catalogue des monnaies de l'Empire romain, vol. I (Paris 1976)
- J. KENT / M. HIRMER / A. HIRMER Roman coins (London 1978)
- Collection R. Jameson Suite des Monnaies Grecques antiques et Impériales Romaines, vol. IV, Paris 1932
- L. LAFFRANCHI La monetazione di Augusto, *RIN* 1916, pp. 209–222
- L. LAFFRANCHI C.A. (Certamen Actiacum), *RIN* vol. LIV–LV (1952–53), pp. 3–11
- F. LISSARRAGUE / F. FRONTISI-DUCROUX La vache et le discobole, *Itaca. Quaderns Catalans de Cultura Clàssica*, vol. 21 (2005), pp. 19–30
- J. MILLER Apollo, Augustus, and the poets (Cambridge 2009)
- MM Monnaies Magazine, 100 monnaies de légende: hors série n°1, August 2002
- F. PLANET Bonaparte à Lyon: dans les pas du Princeps, in: R. ZINS (ed.), *Lyon et Napoléon. Catalogue d'exposition* (Dijon 2005), pp. 90–95
- RCV D. R. SEAR, *Roman Coins and their Values*, (London 2000)
- C. H. V. SUTHERLAND L'attribution des deniers augusteens au type du "temple", de la "couronne", et du "jeune taureau", *RN* 16, 1974, pp. 49–67

Annex: Ancient epigrams on Myron's cow

Posidippus of Pella²⁷, c. 310–240 BC

- *[To the oxherd] the cow seemed worthy to pull the plough
[...] and very profitable
[But when he stretched] his hand, he unexpectedly saw a cunning trick
[that it was not a real cow] but Myron's own artefact.*
(Papiri Milano Vogliano VIII 309 col. X 34–37)

Leonidas of Tarentum²⁸, 3rd century BC

- *Myron did not mould me; he lied; but driving me from the herd where I was feeding, he
fixed me to a stone base.*
(G.A. 9.719, the heifer addressing a passer-by)

Dioscorides, last quarter of the 3rd-century BC

- *In vain, bull, thou rushest up to this heifer, for it is lifeless. The sculptor of cows, Myron,
deceived thee.*
(G.A. 9.734, the poet addressing a bull)

Antipater of Sidon, mid-2nd century BC

- *If Myron had not fixed my feet to this stone I would have gone to pasture with the other
cows.*
(G.A. 9.720, the heifer addressing a passer-by)
- *Calf, why dost thou approach my flanks, and why dost thou low? The artist put no milk
in my udder.*
(G.A. 9.721, the heifer addressing a calf)²⁹
- *The cow has just returned from ploughing, and owing to that is lazy and will not
advance.*
(G.A. 9.721A, supposed authorship)
- *Pass by the heifer, cowherd, and whistle not to her from afar. She is expecting her calf to
suckle it.*
(G.A. 9.722, the poet addressing the herdsman)

²⁷ This (fragmentary) epigram was recently discovered in the “Milan Papyrus”, a roll from Alexandria of the late 3rd or early 2nd century BC (with 112 epigrams in over 600 lines), which was discovered in the wrappings of a mummy (dated c. 180 B.C.), and purchased in 1992 by the University of Milan. Quoted from G. BASTIANINI, C. AUSTIN, *Posidippi Pellaei Quae Supersunt Omnia* (Milan 2002) (a less convincing translation is given in M. SQUIRE, Making Myron's Cow Moo?: Ecphrastic Epigram and the Poetics of Simulation, *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 131.4, Winter 2010, pp. 589–634).

²⁸ *The Greek Anthology* (here “GA”), from which comes the majority of the epigrams on Myron's heifer, is quoted from the Loeb edition: W. R. Paton transl., vol. III, London 1917, book 9, epigrams 713–742 & 793–798, pp. 392–403 & 428–431). The epigrams from the *Epigrammata Bobiensia* are simple translations from poems from the *Greek Anthology*: EB 10 is GA 9.715, EB 11 is GA 9.724, EB 12 is GA 9.721, and EB 13 is GA 9.717 (*Epigrammata Bobiensia*, ed. by W. SPEYER, Leipzig 1963).

²⁹ This is the same epigram as: *Anecdota Graeca e codd. manuscritis. Bibliothecae Regiae Parisiensis*, ed. by J. A. CRAMER (Oxford 1841), vol. IV, p. 373.

- *The lead and stone hold me fast, but, otherwise, thanks to thee, sculptor Myron, I would be nibbling lotus and rushes.*
(G.A. 9.723, the heifer addressing the sculptor)
- *I think the heifer will low. Of a truth it is not Prometheus alone who moulds living creatures, but thou too, Myron.*
(G.A. 9.724, the poet addressing the sculptor)
- *The heifer, I think, will low, and if it delays it is the fault of the senseless bronze, not Myron's.*
(G.A. 9.728)

Perhaps Anacreon 582–485 BC, more likely Hellenistic

- *Herdsmen, pasture thy herd far from here, lest taking Myron's heifer to be alive thou drive it off with the rest.*
(G.A. 9.715, the poet addressing the herdsman)
- *Myron pretended this heifer to be the work of his hands, but it was never formed in the mould, but turned into bronze owing to old age.*
(G.A. 9.716)

Evenus³⁰

- *Either a complete hide of bronze clothes here a real cow, or the bronze has a soul inside it.*
(G.A. 9.717)
- *Perhaps Myron himself will say this: "I did not mould this heifer, but its image."*
(G.A. 9.718)

Anonymous and undated

- *I am Myron's little heifer, set up on a base. Goad me, herdsman, and drive me off to the herd.*
(G.A. 9.713, the heifer addressing the herdsman)
- *Why, Myron, didst thou set me here by the altars? Wilt thou not lead me into the house?*
(G.A. 9.714, the heifer addressing the sculptor)
- *Myron was looking for his own cow among the others, and found it with difficulty by driving the rest away.*
(G.A. 9.725)
- *The cow, its mother, moulded this heifer giving birth to it, but the hand of Myron did not mould it, but gave birth to it.*
(G.A. 9.726)
- *The horned cow would have spoken, though made of bronze, if Myron had worked entrails inside it.*
(G.A. 9.727)
- *Let someone attach me to the solid plough and put a yoke on my neck, for as far as depends on thy art, Myron, I will plough.*
(G.A. 9.729, the heifer addressing the sculptor)
- *Myron placed me, the heifer, here, but the herdsman throw stones at me thinking I have strayed.*
(G.A. 9.731, the heifer addressing a passer-by)
- *Stranger, it was Myron who moulded this cow, on which this calf fawns as if it were alive, taking it for its mother.*
(G.A. 9.733, the poet addressing a passer-by)

³⁰ Either Evenus of Ascalon, or Evenus of Athens/Paros, or Evenus Grammaticus of Sicily.

- *A calf died beside thy heifer, Myron, deceived into thinking that the bronze had milk inside.*
(G.A. 9.735, the poet addressing the sculptor)
- *Alack! Myron, thou didst not have time to complete thy casting, but the bronze hardened before thou couldst put life into it.*
(G.A. 9.736, the poet addressing the sculptor)
- *Thou strikest the bronze heifer. Art deceived thee much, herdsman: Myron did not add life.*
(G.A. 9.737, the poet addressing the herdsman)
- *Thou wast bronze, deceptive heifer, and the husbandman came up to thee dragging a plough and carrying a yoke. He far excels all other artists, Myron, who by his labour made thee alive, just like a labouring cow.*
(G.A. 9.741, the poet addressing the heifer)

Demetrius of Bithynia, date uncertain

- *If a calf sees me, it will low; a bull will mount me, and the herdsman drive me to the herd.*
(G.A. 9.730)

Marcus Argentarius, first half of the 1st-century AD

- *Stranger, if thou seest my herdsman, give him this message, that the sculptor Myron tied me up here.*
(G.A. 9.732, the heifer addressing a passer-by)

Geminus, possibly first half of the 1st-century AD

- *It is the base to which it is attached that keeps back the heifer, and if freed from this it will run off to the herd. For the bronze lows. See how much alive the artist made it. If you yoke a fellow to it, perhaps it will plough.*
(G.A. 9.740)

Philippus of Thessalonica, middle of the 1st-century AD

- *Take off from my neck, husbandman, the collar, and free me from the iron furrow-cutter; for Myron did not make my bronze into flesh, but his art gave me the aspect of being alive, so that often I even wished to low. He did not, however, let me go to work, but tied me to a base.*
(G.A. 9.742, the heifer addressing the herdsman)

Ausonius³¹, c. AD 310–395

- *I am a heifer, wrought in bronze by the chisel of Myron my creator: nay, I think I was not wrought but born, so does the bull make for me, so does the heifer by my side low, so the calf athirst seeks my udders. Doest wonder that the herd mistakes me? The master of the herd himself oft reckons me with his grazing beast.*
(Aus. 68)
- *Why thrustest thou at the cold udders of a brazen dam, O calf, and seekest milky liquid from bronze? That also would I supply had Heaven made me within as Myron without.*
(Aus. 69)

³¹ The poems by the fourth-century Roman poet Ausonius are quoted from the Loeb edition: *Ausonius*, H. G. White transl., vol. II (London 1921), epigrams 68–75, pp. 194–199. Another translation, with commentary, can be found in: Ausonius, *Epigrams*, ed. by N.M. Kay (London 2001), pp. 198–209, epigrams 63–71.

- *Dædalus, why wastest thou pains in idle craft? Rather expose me with Pasiphaë enclosed within. If thou wouldst offer the allurements of a real cow, Myron's shall be for thee a living image.*
(Aus. 70, to Dædalus)
- *Myron's brazen heifer could low aloud, but fears to spoil the artist's craftsmanship. For to make me seem alive is more than to make me live; and not the works of God are wondrous, but the artist's.*
(Aus. 71)
- *I had stood here a brazen heifer; a cow was slaughtered to Minerva; but the goddess transferred to me the life breathed forth. And now I am two-fold: part is brazen, part alive. This is ascribed to the artist's skill, that to the goddess.*
(Aus. 72)
- *Why seekest thou to make for me, lord of the herd, beguiled by appearance? I am no contrivance of Pasiphaë, Minos' wife.*
(Aus. 73, to a bull)
- *Ere the sinking sun was set, evening now drawing on, the neatherd, while he drove his heifers home, left one of his own and chid me as though one of his.*
(Aus. 74)
- *A neatherd chanced to have lost a single heifer, and, bidden to deliver up the tale, complained that I was missing because I would not follow the others home.*
(Aus. 75)

Julian, Praetorian Prefect of Egypt in 530–531 AD

- *Nature and Queen Art strove in the matter of this cow, and Myron gave to each a prize of equal value. When one looks at it Art robs nature of her superiority, but when one touches it Nature is nature.*
(G.A. 9.738)
- *Myron deceived thee too, gadfly, that thou plungest thy sting into the hard flanks of the bronze cow. But the gadfly is excusable. What wonder! when Myron deceived even the eyes of the herdsmen.*
(G.A. 9.739)
- *Looking on this heifer of Myron's you are like to cry out: "Either Nature is lifeless, or Art is alive."*
(G.A. 9.793)
- *Neat-herd, whither dost thou force me to advance? Stop from goading me. Art did not bestow motion on me too.*
(G.A. 9.794)
- *Skilled Myron either made the bronze alive or drove a live heifer from the herd and made it into bronze.*
(G.A. 9.795)
- *Sculptor Myron, a traveller came to drive off thy heifer, and feeling the bronze turned out to be a futile thief.*
(G.A. 9.796)
- *A lion when he sees me opens his mouth wide, the husbandman picks up his yoke and the herd his staff.*
(G.A. 9.797)
- *Bear with it, Myron: Art is too strong for thee: the work is lifeless. Art is the child of Nature, for Art did not invent Nature.*
(G.A. 9.798)



Hadrien Rambach and Alan Walker
The "Heifer" aurei of Augustus



3.2



3.3



4.1



4.2



4.3



4.4



5.1



6.1



6.2



6.3



Hadrien Rambach and Alan Walker
The "Heifer" aurei of Augustus

