

STAMP DESIGN

COMMENTS:

Stamp Design is a specialised form of art and not every painter or graphic artist becomes a good stamp designer. What may be excellent in a frame of wall size 100 cm x 65 cm will look very different scaled down to 3 cm x 2 cm. This is a truth that is often forgotten by Postal Administrations, Stamp Design Committees and artists.

Basically the designer of a postage stamp is a miniaturist, although possibly not with the same attention to detail as the miniaturists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What the artist has to keep in mind is that the postage stamp he is designing has to convey a certain message and must have natural spaces for the name of the country, value of the stamp and, possibly, a short title inscription. Many good artists are unable to make the crossing, if one may be permitted a pun, into the land of Lilliput.

Admittedly the task of a Stamp Advisory Committee is never an easy one. If, however, the Committee has a realisation that stamps are different from full-size paintings the end product ought to be generally attractive. Unfortunately, it is not only artists who cannot adjust to the smallness of scale, members of Stamp Design Advisory Committees seem to be equally blind.

The relevance of what has been said above may be judged from the 1982 Malta Definitive issue. We have little doubt that the full-size sketches were most attractive, but scaled down to postage-stamp size the result is less than satisfactory. Unless and until stamp designers and Stamp Design Advisory Committees wake up to the fact that a postage stamp is a work of art in miniature we shall continue to have unattractive designs over-crowded with detail and garnish in colour.