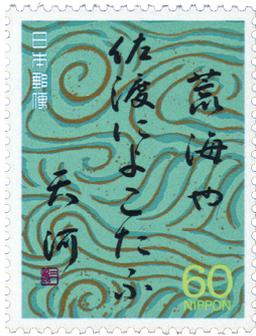


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Calligraphy in Philately: Part 2

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Calligraphy in Philately: Part 1 appeared in the January/April issue of Philately-Graphics.

EXPLORATION OF AUSTRALIA, 1642-3;
AUSTRALIA, SCOTT #949-50, 1985

In 1642-43 Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, sailing on behalf of the United East India Company, became the first European to reach Tasmania. He had circled the northwest shore of Australia, finding Tasmania and New Zealand and sighting Fiji. He circumnavigated the south shore, and then returned to Europe. The island was named Van Dieman's Land, later changed to Tasmania, in honor of Abel Tasman.

The Eendracht was a 17th century wood-hulled sailing ship launched by the Dutch East India Company in 1615. Their route took them from the Indian Ocean and headed to the southeast toward Java, or so they thought. Instead they sailed to approximately 26° south and found a group of uninhabited islands, part of the continent of Australia. Continuing northwest, they traced the west coast of Australia, mapping the coast as they went. The maps they drew during this voyage were far more accurate than previous maps with their mythical representations and were used to update older maps.



Figs. 9, Sc 949-950.

The calligraphic documents that accompany the images on Sc 949-50 (Fig. 9) are handwritten records of the explorations alongside various references to navigation: a compass, latitude, measuring instruments, pictures of ships, and maps.

BASHŌ'S HAIKU: OCEAN WAVES, VERSE AND CURRENT, 1694; JAPAN, SCOTT #1781-82, 1988

During the 17th century, Japan closed its doors to outside trade and cultural influences. The overall result of this isolation was the development of a national culture not influenced by others. One of those positive cultural developments was a unique form of poetry called haiku, a poem about nature written in three lines of five, seven and five syllables.

Matsuo Bashō, born in 1644, came from a lowly farm family. His opportunity came when he began working for the son of the local lord, where he was exposed to literature. When his patron died young, he moved to Kyoto and then Edo (now part of Tokyo) and began studying with a distinguished local poet. Around 1684, Bashō made a long *cont. on pg 22.*

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cont. from pg 17. walking journey the subject for a new type of poetry called haibun. In haibun, Bashō alternated prose with haiku to create a record of his journey, experiences and meditations about them. The trip covered 1,200 miles in five months. Bashō's best-known haibun is "The Narrow Road to the Deep North,"²¹ which he continued revising until his death on November 28, 1694. The book was published posthumously in 1702. One of his haiku may express his experience on this last journey: "Ill on a

journey / my dreams roam around / over withered fields."²²

Sc 1781-82 (Fig. 10) are part of a second set of a sizeable stamp series dedicated to Bashō, where each poetry example



Fig. 10, Sc 1781-1782.

is accompanied by a painting. Poets were not just authors; they were also calligraphers of their poetry and, oftentimes, painted the accompanying picture. There is a close relationship between calligraphy and painting in both Chinese and Japanese art. The same tools, brush and ink or watercolor, were used for both art forms, and they were regarded as principle examples of the art of those countries.

The first stamp, Sc 1781, is a painting of ocean waves rolling in to shore. The second stamp, Sc 1782, shows one of Bashō's haiku, "Birds in Flight," with a background pattern of water currents. Poetry overlaying a painting is a traditional style under Zen influence; however, the design on Sc 1782 is most likely modern.

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ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, 1888; BRAZIL,
 SCOTT #2132, 1988

Brazilian colonists first chose indigenous people as slave labor, with local slaves being captured by Jesuit bandeiras (slave hunters). In the mid-16th century, Africans began to be imported, yet the enslavement of indigenous people continued into the 18th century. It was not until 1888 that abolition was legally established by the passage of the Lei Aurea, *Golden Law*, promulgated by Princess Isabel of the Imperial family of Brazil.

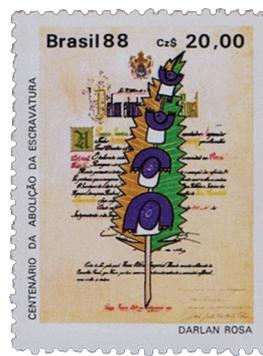


Fig. 11, Sc 2132.

Designed by Darlan Rosa, Sc 2132 (Fig. 11) commemorates the centenary of the Lei Aurea. As a young man, Rosa had been apprenticed to his father, a marble sculptor. As an adult, he moved to Brasilia where he currently lives and works. Rosa's design features the

handwritten, legal document behind a large quill pen, with small figures rising up from the bottom of the quill. Their postures rise from a bowed down position to upright, with hands raised in freedom at the top.

LI RIVER IN FINE RAIN, 1950-60; PEOPLE'S
 REPUBLIC OF CHINA, SCOTT #2230, 1989

In view of what we know about his artwork, the westernized blend of Li Keran's name (originally Li Yongshun) seems appropriate. Born in 1907 in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, China, Li began painting early, and at the age of 13 was already studying with a local painter. In 1923, Li entered Shanghai Art College where he was exposed to traditional art styles, but as part of his program also studied Western styles. From a series of lectures by Kang Youwei, who emphasized blending of traditional Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE) painting with Western Renaissance techniques, Li began to consider blending these two traditions.

Li was accepted into postgraduate studies at Hangzhou National Art College where he devoted much of his time to sketching from nature as a key to reforming Chinese painting. At the same time, his western art training began to show in the way he combined *chiaroscuro*, the strong contrast between dark to light, with ancient Chinese painting. The idea of unifying the two made him a pioneer in 20th century Chinese art.



Fig. 12, Sc 2230.

The painting of the Li River on Sc 2230 (Fig. 12) faithfully portrays a scenic river that stretches 83 kilometers from Giolin to Yangshuo. The river

is one of China's most popular tourist destinations. The painting uses a range of grays to black that are typical of traditional ink wash painting, while the mountains contrast with a variety of grays and black that give a more western dimension. The little houses on the banks of the river are drawn with western perspective. Boats run up the river toward the mountains. Across the top of the painting, Li has written a quotation.

The relationship of calligraphy and painting in Chinese art goes back to the Song Dynasty. As characters are written with the same brush the artist uses for painting, they share a common expressiveness. Chinese calligraphy can express not only a character that can be read, but also the idea and spirit of the writer. His personality and thoughts are communicated in the freedom with which he handles his brush. The quote inscribed on a painting like the one on this stamp can be a simple signature, a topic related to the painting, a short quote by the artist, or a poetic quotation.

CENTENARY OF ISRAEL'S NATIONAL ANTHEM, "HATIKVAH"; ISRAEL, SCOTT #697, 1978

Israel's national anthem, "HaTikvah" (*The Hope*) was written by Naftali Herz Imber (1856–1909). Imber grew up in Ukraine (at the time part of the Austrian Empire) and began writing poetry in his teens, winning a poetry award from Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph.



Fig. 13, Sc 697.

In 1882, Imber fulfilled a Zionist dream when he immigrated to Ottoman-controlled Palestine to serve as a government secretary. In 1886 in Jerusalem he published a book of poetry that contained a nine-stanza poem entitled, "Tikvateinu: Our Hope." This poem soon became a popular song among the Zionist movement, which adopted three of its stanzas as an anthem. Samuel Cohen adapted the music from a folk song in 1888. Once Israel's sovereignty was decided, the song became the unofficial national anthem and was adopted officially in November, 2004. Sc 697 (Fig. 13) includes the last two lines of the first verse:

*"As long as the Jewish spirit is yearning deep in the heart,
 With eyes turned toward the East,
 looking toward Zion.
 "Then our hope—the two thousand-year old hope—will not be lost:
 (To be a free people in our land,
 The Land of Zion and Jerusalem.)"*³

CHARLES DE GAULLE; FRANCE, SCOTT #1716, 1980

General Charles de Gaulle was leader of the French armored division that battled the Nazi invasion. Though they fought bravely, they were unable to expel the Germans, and the French Government signed



Fig. 14, Sc 1716.

an armistice with the enemy. Having moved his headquarters to London, de Gaulle broadcast messages to encourage his defeated people to trust the power of the allies.

"Someday these forces will crush the enemy. On that day, France...will regain her liberty and her greatness. Such is my goal, my only goal! That is why I urge all Frenchmen, wherever they may be, to unite with me in action, in sacrifice and in hope."⁴ Sc 1716 (Fig. 14) commemorates the fortieth anniversary of de Gaulle's appeal as well as the tenth anniversary of his death. The calligraphic element in this design is the freehand, brush-written name *Charles de Gaulle* across the top of the stamp. The red, white, and blue of the French flag point upward toward the name and evoke patriotism.

HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING; GREAT BRITAIN, SCOTT #1879, 1999

In 1999, Great Britain issued "The Millennium" stamp series, probably the most extensive ever published. This series is the complete output of the year 1999 by Royal Mail and is an overview of accomplishments of the past 1,000 years.

A favorite Christmas hymn, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" appears on Sc 1879 (Fig. 15). Written by Charles Wesley in 1739, this hymn was originally a poem of 10, four-line verses. Several adjustments were made to the poem: angels singing the message, changing Wesley's four-line stanzas to eight lines and adding a refrain. *cont. on pg 24.*

cont. from pg 23.

Wesley's original preference was the slow, solemn tune we associate today with "Amazing Grace." In 1840, Felix Mendelssohn composed a cantata to commemorate Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, and from this cantata the tune was taken for the hymn. Mendelssohn felt his tune was not well suited to a sacred song, yet its lively, joyful melody seemed a perfect accompaniment to the Christmas message.

Brody Neuenschwander created the calligraphy for Sc 1879 (Fig 15). Spending

time in Germany during his youth, Neuenschwander learned the language and culture, and he became fascinated



Fig. 15, Sc 1879.

with calligraphy and medieval culture. As an adult, Neuenschwander studied calligraphy at Roedhampton Institute in England, drawing heavily on Continental art and calligraphy in developing his unique style. Brody wanted his calligraphy to display its

own modern rhythm, rather than follow traditions. His work has been described as "tense, black/white relationships that suggest a new metaphysics being born."⁵

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Albert Decaris

Matt Hayes, Australia

A Founder of the ATA Study Unit, World of Engravers Philatelic Association (WEPA)

Albert Decaris, born in Sotteville-Les-Rouen, France, on May 6, 1901, was an immensely talented artist. Not only did he engrave some 600 postage stamps for France and her colonies, he was a draughtsman, wood carver, etcher, illustrator, and painter.

He studied at the School of Estienne and there discovered engraving. He then went on to the College of Fine Arts in Paris. He won the Prix de Rome for his etching "The Fall of Man" in 1919 at the age of 18. In 1935 he engraved his first stamp, a French commemorative for The Cloister of St. Trophime of Arles.

From the beginning of his stamp engraving career it became apparent that Decaris possessed a unique style. His portraits, almost caricature in nature, managed to capture the essence of the subject through the use of lively and frisky lines. An in-depth study of five of the stamps Decaris designed and engraved will illustrate his supreme skill in this genre.

In 1946 France issued a set of six stamps commemorating 15th century celebrities. Albert Decaris designed and engraved two of these stamps. Joan of Arc and Francois Villon. Both stamps are fantastic, but we will here study the latter—Francois Villon.

François Villon, born April 1431, was a French poet—with a twist. It seems that good old François was more than just a poet. He was somewhat of a rabble-rouser. Wikipedia uses the term "ne'er-do-well." It all started on June 5, 1455. François along with two others—including a priest!—were in the Rue Saint-Jacques when trouble erupted. In a scuffle, a knife was pulled on François who in turn drew his own knife. His assailant struck first, then François responded by stabbing his attacker. But he didn't stop there. To ensure his attacker would never again do him harm, François struck him with a stone, killing him. Now a murderer, François Villon fled. In his absence he was sentenced to banishment. He was later pardoned for this crime. (Fig. 1)

Taking a close look at the stamp, we can see the skill of Decaris. The look of contrition—perhaps guilt—seems to belie the true cheeky character of Villon. It is an irony that works wonderfully.