

The 1967 Disarmament Stamps of the United Nations: Exhibit Synopsis

Purpose and Scope: This is a traditional exhibit of the two 1967 Disarmament Stamps of the United Nations.

Treatment: The exhibit begins with an extensive array of pre-production material. An overview of the issued stamps then follows. Next are first day covers, including both officially produced covers and those issued by private FDC producers. The exhibit concludes with in-period usages of the stamps.

Highlights: The exhibit contains multiple pre-production items that are either unique or that exist in extremely limited numbers. Included are numerous trial color proofs from the Fournier archives. The Scott Specialized Catalogue lists no trial color proofs for the 6¢ stamp and only three different trial color proofs for the 13¢ stamp; the exhibit contains more than a dozen proofs showing color combinations previously unknown to collectors. Exhibit highlights include:

- Original artwork by the stamps' designer, Ole Hamann. The artwork shows the originally intended denominations of 5¢ and 11¢. Unique.
- Die proofs of the unissued 5¢ stamp. (Die proofs of the unissued 11¢ stamp are not known to exist.)
- Die proofs and trial color proofs of the 6¢ and 13¢ stamps in a variety of previously unreported color combinations.
- Se-tenant trial color proofs of the 6¢ and 13¢ stamps.
- A die proof of the 13¢ stamp bearing the approval signature of Robert W. Maxwell, Chief of the United Nations Postal Administration. Unique.
- Progressive proofs of the 13¢ stamp.

Background: The Disarmament stamps were issued on October 24, 1967, for use in the United Nations Post Office in New York. The 6¢ value was intended to pay for the first class domestic letter rate that was effective January 7, 1968, while the 13¢ value paid the international surface mail rate that had become effective May 1, 1967. The original artwork and die proofs demonstrate that the stamps were originally intended to bear 5¢ and 11¢ denominations.

The stamps were designed by Ole Hamann and were printed in panes of 50 stamps by Heraclio Fournier S.A. of Spain.

The stamps commemorated the 1966 resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly that called for UN member nations to suspend the development and testing of nuclear weapons as a first step towards eventual disarmament. The stamps feature, in English on the 6¢ stamp and in French on the 13¢ stamp, a quotation from chapter 2 of Isaiah, a book of both the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament. Isaiah, a Jewish prophet writing in the 8th century BCE, wrote: "*The LORD shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many people, and they shall beat*

their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” In 1948 the quotation was inscribed on a large, curved stone wall in a municipal park on First Avenue and 42nd Street in New York, directly opposite the UN Secretariat Building. The stamps feature a stylized version of the wall and the quotation.

These stamps are of political and historic interest for several reasons. Thematically, they were intended to further the bedrock aim of the United Nations Charter, which is “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” The designs’ reliance on a quote from the Bible is particularly noteworthy. Isaiah is honored as a prophet by the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although the United Nations is a non-religious institution, these stamps relied on religious language to advance the United Nations’ political aims. The starkness of their message is highlighted by the fact that the stamps’ designs are comprised solely of text, containing no decorative elements apart from the UN seal. No other UN stamps before or since have displayed such an overtly religious theme.

Exhibit History:

This exhibit was first shown as a single frame in 2018 at SPRINGPEX, where it received a Large Vermeil medal. At BALPEX 2018 it received a Gold medal.

The exhibit was subsequently expanded to three frames, incorporating newly acquired die proofs, color proofs, and covers showing in-period usages. At Philatelic Show 2022 it received a Large Vermeil medal. It will be shown at BALPEX 2023.

References:

- David Feldman SA, ed. (2003). *United Nations Art & Archives: The Reference Catalogue*. Geneva: David Feldman SA.
- Gaines, Arleigh, ed. (1980) *United Nations Philately*. New York: R. & D. Publications.
- Lidman, David. (1967, Sept. 10). Disarmament. *New York Times*, p. D42.
- Lindner Falzlos-Gesellschaft, ed. (6th ed. 1976). *United Nations Philatelic and Numismatic Catalog and Handbook*. Schomberg, West Germany: Lindner Publications.
- *Scott's 2023 Specialized Catalogue of United Nations Stamps*. (1st ed., 2022). Sidney, OH: Scott's Publishing Co.