

## SYNOPSIS OF EXHIBIT

### THE 1988 – 2002 MASTERPIECES OF CANADIAN ART STAMPS

**PURPOSE OF EXHIBIT:** This **Postal History** exhibit highlights the 1988 – 2002 Masterpieces of Canadian Art stamp series issued by Canada Post. Examples of various rates and destinations are presented showing usages of these stamps.

**IMPORTANCE:** This was a challenging time for Canada Post as it was still trying to re-invent itself as a crown corporation and be profitable. Canada Post was also trying to deal with a growing drop in mail usage due to the introduction of the home computer (i.e. e-mail) and tried to overcome this loss of sales with the introduction of new services.

The period covered by this issue of stamps was noted in one stamp book as “the time of (nearly) yearly stamp hikes”. Example - during this 15-year period, the first-class domestic letter rate changed 10 times, the first-class letter rate to the United States changed 11 times, and the international air mail rate changed 11 times. By extension, speciality “add on” rates such as registered and special delivery changed each time one of the basic postal rates changed. (During this time period, rates for Registration and Special Delivery were also changed on their own). This caused confusion and a lot of postal material was mailed at the wrong rate, even mail processed by postal clerks. This exhibit includes some of these wrong rates to highlight the collecting challenge of this issue. Also included are some covers with “convenience rates”, where consumers overpaid the mailing rate not knowing the correct rate or having the time to purchase the correct stamp value required.

#### **CHALLENGE FACTOR:**

- The first five stamps were for a value of 50 cents and were to assist in making up larger postal rates – they met no rate on their own. The value of the stamp limited its usage as higher valued stamps could make up large rates such as registration.
- The large size of the stamp made using multiples hard due to size limitations of envelopes and postcards -e.g. the application of one \$2.00 stamp was preferable to applying four of these large 50 cent stamps.
- Starting in 1993, the value on the last 10 stamps of this issue was changed to the **International first-class letter rate** for mail at time of issue. Thus, most of the later issue was used to international destinations outside of North America (the United States had its own preferred rate).
- As part of Canada Post’s attempt to be profitable, a lot of new services were added, and a lot of the old service were dropped or rebranded. Example - during this period, the old registration (with the black “R”) was replaced by a “green barcode label” registration, a “white barcode label” registration, a “burgundy barcode label” registration, and a “contract” registration - all with different indemnities, and mailing requirements.
- This issue was not popular with consumers and good quality items are hard to find correctly used in period. As an example, in the past year, this exhibitor has found only two covers on e-bay (excluding first day covers) showing a proper rate in period.
- The release dates of this issue were not to a set schedule. Thus, these stamps were released from 9 months to 19 months apart, complicating efforts to find valid rates in period.
- No set release date meant that some stamps were issued close to rate changes – some stamps are a challenge to find used solo prior to rate changes where extra stamps had to added to meet new rates.

- This modern issue has little information available and has not been studied. Personal research was required in many areas to determine proper rates and mailings of covers and documents.
- The foil on these stamps does not hold ink and cancels can be hard to read.
- Meters were the convenient way to mail (especially for large volume mailings) and as with most modern covers, use of stamps on mailings are becoming hard to find. Number issued of each of these stamps went from a high of 10,763,850 in 1989 to 4,000,000 in 2000, 2001, and 2002.

These factors make collecting and studying this issue very difficult, but also makes it an important issue of stamps for postal historians. This exhibit has been in the making for over 15 years.

**WHAT IS PRESENTED:** Shown are examples of the stamps with rates used in period. Various covers, post cards and documents are shown used within Canada and to over forty other countries.

The exhibit plan follows the order of issue of each of the fifteen stamps, with examples of usages of each at different rates. Examples within each issue will be shown in this order –

- **Domestic rates**
- **United States rates**
- **International rates – Europe**
- **International rates – Rest of World**

Each of these sub titles will be divided by rates. Within a stamp issue, some rates changed, and examples of rate changes will be shown in chronological order – e.g. registration rates of 1990 will be shown before registration rates of 1991.

A different variety of rates will be shown under each stamp issue and is not meant to be complete – e.g. not every stamp will show domestic registered rates. Where a service is first shown, a brief description of that service is shown below the rate in black – e.g. white barcode label registration, insurance, etc.

A matrix of issues, rates, usages, and re-branding are shown by an extensive number of covers and documents to highlight why customers and postal workers were confused.

**MATERIAL HIGHLIGHT:**

- Covers are shown from hard to find countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Latvia, Seychelles Islands, Tonga, Ecuador, and Macedonia.
- Unusual and hard to find rates are shown.
- Scarce Canada Post Manifest sheets.
- Scarce reversible cards for mailing of Educational Films.
- Guyana letter assessed for being deficient of postage.
- Start and end dates of rates are shown to highlight the numerous rate changes of this issue.

**This exhibit may appear “unbalanced” as early issues meeting no set rate are harder to find postally used. When the stamp value changed to the international first-class letter rate, more postal usages can be found.**

**INFORMATION SOURCES:**

**Postal Rates and Fees of the Elizabethan Era in Canada (Vol. 1 - part 1, Vol 1 – part 2, and Vol. 2)** by Andrew Chung, Harry Machum, and Roger Narbonne. Published by the Elizabethan Study Group of BNAPS.

\*Note: Several different sources for rates were consulted in this study, with several having different rates or start / end dates. The above referenced book was used for this exhibit as it proved the most accurate.