

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 servicers. 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:

- Original artwork by the stamps' designer, Ole Hamann. The artwork shows the originally intended denominations of 5¢ and 11¢. Unique.
- A series of die proofs documenting the evolution of the stamps' designs. These include die proofs of the unissued 5¢ and 11¢ values.
- Trial color proofs of both stamps the 13¢ stamp in the color scheme ultimately used for the 6¢ stamp.
- 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.
- Setenant color proofs of the 6¢ and 13¢ stamps.

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, one of the books of the Old Testament of the Bible. Isaiah, a Jewish prophet writing in the 8th century BCE, wrote that "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 at BALPEX in 2018 where it received a Gold medal. This two-frame version includes newly acquired die proofs, color proofs, and covers showing in-period usages.

References:

- David Feldman SA, ed. (2003). *United Nations Art & Archives: The Reference Catalogue*. Geneva: David Feldman SA.
- 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.