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Stamps – miniature works of art that bring great pleasure

Stamps are miniature works of art, admired for their loving design and execution and never failing to surprise with ever new subjects. Swiss stamps are held in high regard around the globe.

"I see stamps as fragments of history, as an entry in the almanac of human experience, as the representation of an ideal that comes straight from the human heart. The image they bear shows what a nation wants to be at any given point in time." Dennis Altman



Just three years after the first-ever stamp appeared in Great Britain in 1840, the first two Swiss stamps, bearing the inscription "Zürich 4" and "Zürich 6", began circulating. These days, Swiss Post issues around 40 new stamps each year, on four separate issue dates. The diverse range of valuable images produced to the highest technical standards and featuring the name "HELVETIA" and the value in Swiss francs is not only a source of great joy to collectors everywhere – franking customers likewise find it hugely appealing.



Continuity, diversity and innovation are the dominant features of Swiss Post's issuing policy. Thus, for example, an embroidered stamp will appear one year and a stamp that smells of chocolate the next. The following year, the innovative stamp is printed on a wafer-thin layer of Swiss varnished wood only 0.7 mm thick. Or a worldwide MMS competition is launched, with the best entries serving as the basis for further unique stamp designs. And, of course, events that are special or topical are honoured with their very own designs. For example, the sensational victory of the "Alinghi" in the America's Cup in 2003 or the creation of the United Nations Human Rights Council, based in Geneva, in 2006.



2006 – a mixed bouquet of new stamps

One of the innovations in 2006 is the new stamp series "Switzerland as seen by foreign artists" launched in May with designs by French cartoonist and illustrator Patrice Killoffer. His humorous pictures show a cow – an animal often associated in the public mind with Switzerland – for each season. Other topics this year include the centenary of PostBus Switzerland, the opening of the Simplon Tunnel and the reintroduction of the ibex. But historical parks and gardens, cultural integration and the Alpine panorama of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau also feature.



The next range of new stamps is due for release on 7 September. They will include themes as varied as "Traditional Swiss products", "Old varieties of fruit", "Dimitri" the clown, the colourful book of stamps showing "children cooking with Cocolino" and the naba miniature sheet featuring the tower in the old town of Baden.



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