

POSTAGE STAMPS  
of the  
UNITED STATES



MALCOLM C. DIZER, 320 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK 17

# MALCOLM C. DIZER

320 EAST 42nd STREET  
NEW YORK 17, NEW YORK

## AMERICA'S CHRISTMAS STAMP - 1968

Issued at Washington, D.C., November 1st

The design is taken from the fifteenth century painting, "The Annunciation", by Jan van Eyck, which hangs in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (The Andrew Mellon Collection.) It is in six colours, and, in size, is 1/10th of an inch longer than any previous U.S. Commemorative Stamp.

This stamp is the first to be printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, on the giant, new Huck Press, which was built to Bureau Specifications, by the Huck Co., of Paramus, N. J., at a cost of \$3,000,000! It is practically a stamp factory in itself - ninety feet long. It takes in a roll of plain paper, at the rate of 220 ft. per minute, and, in a continuous operation prints (up to nine colours), tags (where desired), gums, perforates, cuts, counts and stacks, turning out 1,700,000 of these lovely Christmas Stamps every hour. It can double that quantity of the regular size.

The anticipated total printing of the Christmas Stamp is two billion.

Each pane of fifty Christmas Stamps has multiple Plate Numbers, all on one side only - either seven or eight numbers, and either the left or the right side, along with the slogan "Mail Early." This slogan appears twice, where there are eight numbers; three times, where there are only seven. Three sides of every pane are cut through the perforations - there's no selvage.

Shown here is something quite difficult to obtain - the block of ten stamps, from each side of the sheet, bearing identical numbers. Ninety plates will be used, each with its own number!

"HISTORY IN PHILATELY"

by Malcolm C. Dizer

UNITED STATES



MAIL EARLY 30176	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	30176 MAIL EARLY
	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	
29987 30271	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	30271 29987
	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	
MAIL EARLY 30177	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	30177 MAIL EARLY
	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	
29895 30272	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	30272 29895
	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	
MAIL EARLY 30178	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	CHRISTMAS 6c	30178 MAIL EARLY
	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	UNITED STATES	

SEVEN NUMBERS

WASHINGTON  
NOV.  
1  
1968  
DC

30173

MAIL EARLY

30275

30022

30157

MAIL EARLY

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30023

30247

MAIL EARLY

CHRISTMAS 6c CHRISTMAS 6c



UNITED STATES POSTAGE

CHRISTMAS 6c CHRISTMAS 6c



UNITED STATES POSTAGE

CHRISTMAS 6c CHRISTMAS 6c



UNITED STATES POSTAGE

CHRISTMAS 6c CHRISTMAS 6c



UNITED STATES POSTAGE

CHRISTMAS 6c CHRISTMAS 6c



UNITED STATES POSTAGE



39. JAN VAN EYCK (1380/1400-1441) THE ANNUNCIATION  
(Andrew Mellon Collection)

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

UNITED STATES



30022 29907	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	29907 30022
MAIL EARLY 30080	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	30080 MAIL EARLY
30023 29905	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	29905 30023
MAIL EARLY 30099	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	30099 MAIL EARLY
30024 29991	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	CHRISTMAS 6c VAN EYCK NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART UNITED STATES	29991 30024

EIGHT NUMBERS

AMERICA'S CHRISTMAS STAMP, 1968.  
ISSUED AT WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 1st.

## VAN EYCK'S "ANNUNCIATION" SPEAKS TO 1968 AT CHRISTMAS

The 1968 6¢ U.S. Christmas postage stamp takes us back 5-1/2 centuries to Jan van Eyck and his attempt to cope with a period of rapid change as threatening -- and as promising -- as our own. His "Annunciation" -- reproduced in part on the Christmas stamp, and shown in full on the accompanying reproduction -- reflects his approach to an era of transition: Keep the best of the old. Grasp the best of the new. And blend the two into one meaningful whole.

His background architecture embodies this thinking. Its (then) "new-fangled" pointed arches support the "old-fashioned" classical upper structure. This was, of course, the opposite of historic building practice! It's van Eyck's quietly dramatic way of stating that the radically new acquires value when it upholds the time-tested; and conversely, the ancient has perpetual worth only when connected relevantly to earth by the new. This dual concept pervades the entire painting.

It was an old idea that past, present and future are all part of a single, continuing divine purpose. Medieval artists expressed this by depicting successive events simultaneously in one frame. Van Eyck kept that old idea, but he modernized his way of conveying it. The floor -- which he paints with a fresh grasp of the newly discovered scientific principles of perspective -- tells of the past. In its tiles, hard to distinguish in this tiny reproduction, are (nearest) David delivering his people by destroying the powerful Goliath, and (behind) Samson pulling down the pagan temple at the cost of his own life. Both are foreshadowings of the event which Gabriel is shown promising Mary: the coming of Christ, the heir of David, to deliver mankind from the power of sin, and to lay down His life that others might have Life more abundant. And the future culmination of that purpose is forecast in the high stained-glass window of the triumphant Christ with the globe beneath His feet.

To infuse meaning into the "modern" realism of his technique, van Eyck used the ancient symbolisms of color and number: Mary is true-blue. Her prayer cushion is the crimson of sacrificial love. The lily's living whiteness attests her purity. Since seven traditionally stands for wholeness and holiness, that number of arches proclaims the sanctity of the scene and, to some, suggests the New Testament upholding the Old. And, since three is "God's number," the windows behind Mary speak of the eternal light of the One God shining into our lives through His self-revelations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . .

The artist also makes use of other age-old symbols: The crown and brocade of the angelic bearer of good news, the gentle dove overshadowing Mary, the heavenly zodiac in the floor beneath, and the lily sprung to life from its dead-seeming bulb. Each, van Eyck is telling us by his "modernized" renderings, is worth pondering for its present meaning -- as is, above all, the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-33) of the Birth we hail at Christmas.

JEAN & HUMPHREY WALZ