

Special exhibit

Attractive and secure – banknotes from around the world 2005-2009

A banknote *can* be attractive, but it *must* be secure. That is why designing banknotes is one of the most difficult tasks a graphic designer can encounter. An unusually large number of predefined graphic elements have to be arranged neatly on a relatively small surface. Technical requirements concerning the security, manufacture, use and processing of modern banknotes drastically constrain the designer's scope for creativity. The designer must take all of these needs into account and the finished product must meet the highest standards of security whilst having a classic, timeless design which unites simplicity and clarity – unity in diversity is the order of the day.

Technical improvements to the security features of banknotes do not automatically require them to be completely redesigned. For example, the Eurosystem is currently working on new security features for euro banknotes; these will be incorporated into the design of the banknotes but, in the interests of continuity, the main design features and the colour scheme will remain unchanged. Occasionally, however, the modernisation of security features is used as an opportunity to update the appearance of the national currency. The visual design must reflect the fact that a banknote is essentially a form of publication – with the largest imaginable readership. As legal tender, it is used by people from all walks of life on a day-to-day basis; as an advertising vehicle, it should reflect the values that it represents, such as stability, continuity and resilience to crises. The design of the banknotes must reflect a commitment to tradition whilst representing a modern, cosmopolitan society that looks to the future and is committed to innovation. Renowned authors, scientists and artists are often depicted on banknotes as a way of reflecting national cultural and scientific achievements; images of typical architecture or local flora and fauna also forge a link between the banknote and its country. That is why banknotes are often called the “calling card” of a country.

Every year since 2005, the International Bank Note Society has chosen a “banknote of the year” in recognition of the newly created banknotes that, in its view, strike the most successful balance between design and security considerations. The winners from 2006 to 2010 are listed below.



The Faroe Islands, 1000 krónur, 2005

These banknotes, which feature watercolour images, are very popular among banknote collectors. Designed by the Faroese painter Zacharias Heinesen, each banknote in this series depicts a different species of animal native to the Faroes – on this note it is the purple sandpiper.



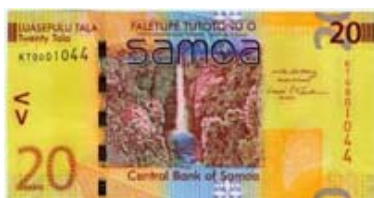
Comoros, 1000 francs, 2006

Issued by the Comoros Islands, which are located between Mozambique and Madagascar, this banknote depicts a coelacanth – a prehistoric fish that was originally thought to have become extinct at the same time as the dinosaurs. After its rediscovery in 1938 near the coast of South Africa, a second find was reported 15 years later in Comorian waters.



Scotland, 50 pounds sterling, 2007

Three Scottish banks issue banknotes, which share the status of legal tender with those distributed by the Bank of England. Like all of the other denominations in this banknote series, the Bank of Scotland's £50 note, with its state of the art security features, bears a portrait of the Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), who, in 1826, successfully campaigned against the abolition of the £1 note. Scottish banks are still entitled to print £1 notes and they are still issued to this day by the Royal Bank of Scotland.



Samoa, 20 talas, 2008

This banknote, issued by the South Pacific island nation of Samoa, is made out of plastic. Plastic is increasingly being used in the manufacture of banknotes because it is durable and its physical properties also enhance the quality of embedded and superimposed security features.



Bermuda, 2 dollars, 2009

Designs in portrait format are still in the minority today, but are becoming increasingly common. The main design feature of this banknote is the Eastern Bluebird; the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II – typical for banknotes issued by the countries of the Commonwealth – is smaller than usual and located in the bottom left-hand corner.