National Postal Museum Offering a Special Showing of the World’s Rarest Stamp

British Guiana One-Cent Magenta To Be Displayed at World Stamp Show–NY 2016

The Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum announces a special showing of the world’s most famous and valuable stamp—the British Guiana One-Cent Magenta—at the World Stamp Show–NY 2016. The special showing will take place May 28–June 3, 2016, at the Javits Center in New York City. Admission is free throughout all eight days of the show.

World Stamp Show–NY 2016 carries on the rich tradition of the once-a-decade international exhibitions from the past 100 years. Held in the United States, the shows typically occur on a year ending with “6” or “7,” honoring the anniversary of America’s first postage stamps issued in 1847. More than 250,000 stamp collectors—from beginner through advanced collectors—along with families and friends are expected to attend the event with the opportunity to view the world’s most valuable stamp.

The stamp, currently on display that the National Postal Museum through November 2017, is prominently showcased in the museum’s William H. Gross Stamp Gallery. Stuart Weitzman, renowned shoe designer and philanthropist, purchased the stamp for almost $10 million, and after considering several of the world’s most prominent philatelic museums, he selected the National Postal Museum as the venue for allowing its presentation and display to the world.

No postage stamp is rarer than the sole-surviving example of the British Guiana One-Cent Magenta. In January 1856, British Guiana issued a small number of one- and four-cent stamps for provisional use while the postmaster waited on a shipment of postage from England. Multiple copies of the four-cent stamp have survived, but the one-cent stamp now on display at the museum is the only one of its kind in the world. It generates headlines and breaks records every time it sells. It is the only major rarity absent from the Royal Philatelic Collection owned by Queen Elizabeth II.

“The One-Cent Magenta is the rarest of the rare, and may very well be the single most valuable object in the world, by weight,” said Allen Kane, director of the museum. “We are very pleased to...
offer a special showing of the stamp at World Stamp Show–NY 2016, providing an opportunity for hundreds of thousands of people to see this rare object.”

More than 200 stamp dealers from around the world will sell and buy stamps, covers, collections, postcards and a wide assortment of ephemera and philatelic items and supplies at the stamp show. Fifty postal bureaus from around the world, including the U.S. Postal Service and the United Nations Postal Administration, will offer their latest issues and host first-day stamp release ceremonies. Sixty specialty philatelic organizations, covering every facet of the stamp collecting hobby, will host society tables, hold meetings and offer educational seminars. In addition to the special showing of the One-Cent Magenta, many of the world’s greatest stamp rarities will be on display along with 4,000 exhibit frames of competitive exhibits vying for medals and prizes.

“The entire philatelic community is very grateful to Mr. Stuart Weitzman and the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum for their generosity in making this stamp available to the public; it will be the first viewing at a U.S. Stamp Exhibition since 1986,” said Wade Saadi, World Stamp Show–NY 2016 president. “The stamp will be adjacent to the National Postal Museum super booth for the first seven days of the eight-day show.”

The National Postal Museum is devoted to presenting the colorful and engaging history of the nation’s mail service and showcasing one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of stamps and philatelic material in the world. It is located at 2 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C., across from Union Station. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). For more information about the Smithsonian, call (202) 633-1000 or visit the museum website at www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

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