

Hands on Stamps: Hands From Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*

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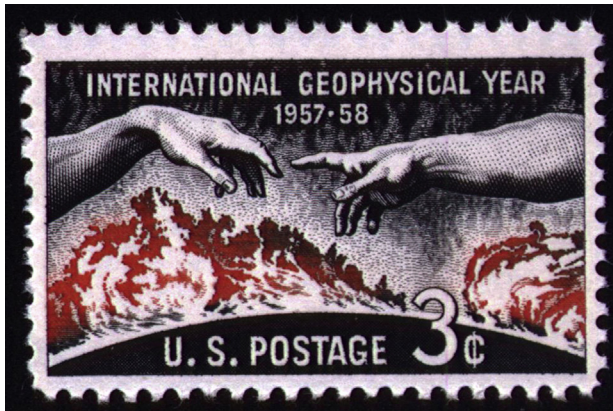


FIGURE 1: The hands from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* and solar disk. Country: United States. Occasion: International Geophysical Year. Day of issue: May 31, 1958. Value: 3 cents.



FIGURE 2: The hands from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, saving life and blood donation. Country: Luxembourg. Occasion: Blood donation. Day of issue: March 14, 2006. Value: 50 cents.

Hands from Michelangelo's famous fresco *Creation of Adam*, located on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, has been an inspiration for many works of art including several stamps.^{1,2}

In 1958, the United States issued a stamp on the occasion of International Geophysical Year (Fig. 1). During the 18 months' project of International Geophysical Year, Sputnik I and Explorer I satellites were launched, and the project coincided with a period of tremendous solar activity. The stamp demonstrates hands from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* and the solar disk. Ervine Metz, the stamp

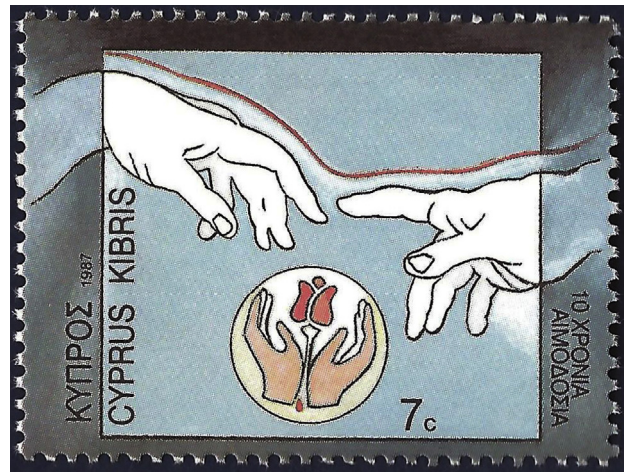


FIGURE 3: The hands from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* and blood donation. Country: Cyprus. Occasion: Blood donation. Day of issue: 1987. Value: 7 cents.

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designer, attempted to “picture man's wonder at the unknown, together with his determination to understand it and his spiritual inspiration to further his knowledge.”³

Luxembourg in 2006 and Cyprus in 1987 issued stamps to commemorate blood donation with the theme of hands from Michelangelo's painting. On the Luxembourg stamp, the red index finger tips of Adam and God are nearly touching (Fig. 2). On the Cyprus stamp, a continuous red line is drawn along the hands of Adam and God (Fig. 3). The theme of the stamps implies that a powerful hand is inspiring a weak hand by giving blood. The stamps'

blue sky backgrounds evoke the spiritual act of blood donation.

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Hand of Buddha

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FIGURE 1: Hand of Buddha in “Abhaya Mudra.” Country: India; day of issue: November 3, 1972. Value: 1.45 Indian Rupees.



FIGURE 2: Statue of Lord Buddha depicting “Abhaya Mudra.”

In 1972, India organized the Third Asian International trade fair in New Delhi. To commemorate the event, the government of India issued a postal stamp on November 3, 1972, depicting the hand of Buddha in “Abhaya Mudra” (Fig. 1).¹

Abhaya is translated from Sanskrit as *fearlessness*, and *mudra* are a series of arm and hand positions expressing an attitude or action of the deity. *Abhaya Mudra* symbolizes protection, peace, and the dispelling of fear. It is made with the right hand raised to shoulder height, the arm crooked, the palm of the hand facing outward, and the fingers upright and joined. The

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