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Personalized (or customized) Stamps

A new collecting area?

Spain

In recent years, during the global wave of privatizations, a lot of alternative companies for postal delivery have been established for regional and/or city-deliveries of the post. Some of such companies have also been authorized to issue their own stamps, which are valid for postage within "their" delivery-area, but not elsewhere. Such stamps are defined as "private stamps", or sometimes as "city post". Alternative companies' minimum rate for delivery of standard letters of the first domestic weight-class are often lower than the postal entities' rate for the same service.

Personalized stamps are different. In order to compete with the private companies, they are issued by the postal entities upon request from an individual. Stamp designs may depict for instance still living celebrities of one's own choice, like the Beatles, Arnold Schwarzenegger, "The Three Tenors", family celebrations like a new-born baby, your favourite holiday photograph, your pet animal etc., the only limitation being that the customized stamp must follow the general layout regulations of the issuing postal entity (background-colour, self-adhesives or normal, perforation, postage value etc.)

When first appearing on the market, ordering personalized stamps was reserved for a small in-crowd of some stamp dealers and stamp magazine publishers, but the option is now open to anyone on condition that the customer purchases a minimum number of stamps (such as determined by the postal entity), because they are printed in panes of 10, or sheets of 25 stamps at a time. This new collecting area has now seen its first personalized stamp, directly related to Czeslaw Slania.



- Spain 2007. Close up of a Spanish personalized stamp. The stamp is clearly marked "Tu Sello", literally meaning "your stamp", "Correos" and the character "A" to denominate that it is an NVI-stamp (no value indicated). The stamp is self-adhesive. The portrait of Slania is identical with the one decorating the first day cover, issued by the [United Nations on 4 February 2005](#).

I have been informed that there exist two varieties of this stamp -- one issued by an individual, and one issued by the Slania Philatelic Club in Valencia, both designed by Vicente G. López (Spain), and both very similar to each other, but yet with some easily visible differences, which are:

1. **The individual issue** (left) is printed in a pale green and dark blue colour, and is a little smaller than the club issue. Also

the engraved portrait is relatively smaller than on the club issue. The inscription reads "Czeslaw Slania (followed by his normal signature) Maestro Grabador, 1921-2005". Designed by Mr. José Angel Arbizu (Spain).

2. **The club-issue** (right) is printed in grey-scale and dark blue colours, and shows the engraver's full name, Czeslaw Slania (in handwriting), immediately above "Slania Club Filatélico". Designed by Vicente G. Lopez (Spain).



- Spain 2007. (left). Sheet of 25 personalized Slania-stamps, issued by the Slania Philatelic Club, Valencia. [Click here to see enlargement.](#)
- Spain 2007 (above). First Day Cover, issued by the Slania Philatelic Club in Valencia. The owner's name has been digitally removed by the webmaster.

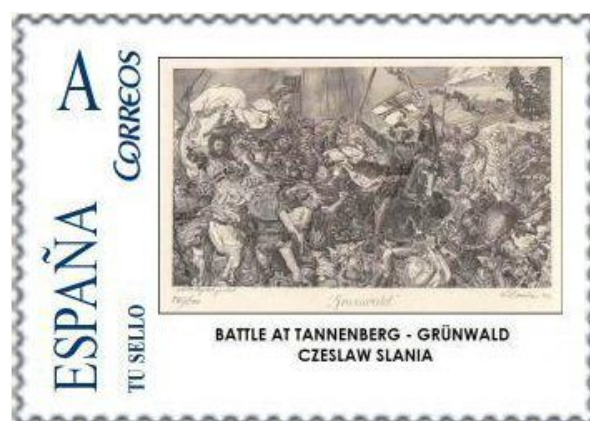
Mr. Vicente G. López (Spain) has informed me that the stamp was issued the Slania Philatelic Club in Valencia, in honour of the club's first Slania-exhibition to be held 25th August - 3rd September 2007. Mr. López has also informed me that a number of different designs were submitted to the club, but finally the one shown on this page was adopted.

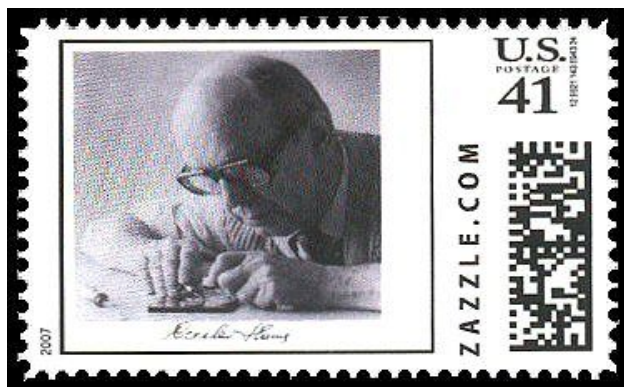
All [proposals submitted](#) can be viewed on the club's homepage. All images on this page are by courtesy of Mr. José Angel Arbizu (Spain).

A very nice personalized stamp issued by Mr. José Angel Arbizu (Spain), for postal use, and showing a miniature of Slania's famous work "The Battle at Grünwald. The [original engraving](#) is shown on this site.

The original engraving has been used for stamps at several occasions, but none of these were engraved by Slania.

- Poland 1945 (Scott # 368),
- Poland 1960 (Scott # 924), issued at the occasion of the 550th anniversary of the battle, and
- Poland 1978 (Scott # 2282), a souvenir sheet at the occasion of the Philatelic Exhibition Praga '78.





USA

The latest offspring in this collecting area is the below issue, released and designed by Mr. Roman Harmel (USA) on 5th November 2007, based on a scan of an autographed photo of the engraver that is in Mr. Harmel's possession, and produced by the company [Zazzle](#) in a quantity of 5 sheets of 20 (100 stamps in total). The stamp is valid only for postage in the US. The stamp is self-adhesive. I have been informed that Mr. Harmel is working on further similar issues.

- USA 2007. Roman Harmel's personalized Slania-stamp.



Although the national postal entities set up the rules as to the overall design (frames, background-colour, postage value, perforations, self-adhesives or normal lick-and-stick stamps), such stamps are kept out of the regular year issuing program and are thus not listed in official catalogues or websites. They are sometimes referred to as "backdoor stamps" (not to be confused with back-of-book stamps).

Personalized stamps may in many respects be compared with home-designed first day covers, submitted to the postal authorities by dealers and individuals for being cancelled on the first day of issue of the stamp used for franking.

Personalized stamps not being listed in official catalogues, there is naturally very little (if any at all) literature about this collecting area, but collectors and philatelic journalists are currently working on private websites about this subject, intended to offer some future guidelines for their categorization and systematization.

Sources and links:

- [Philatelic Market Place in Spain](#)

Many thanks to Mr. José Angel Arbizu (Spain), Mr. Vicente G. López (Spain), and Mr. R.C. Bakhuizen v.d. Brink (The Netherlands), for all help and inspiration with setting up this page.

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