



Little Pleasures ...

Most of the woodblock prints I make are fairly small-scale; they are the kind of prints you would hold in your hand, rather than hang on the wall. So when I ship them to collectors, I don't need very large and bulky packages - small and simple flat ones usually suffice. I generally use the postal service for sending them, rather than a parcel delivery company.

It used to be my habit to drop them off at the counter at the local post office, pay the postage fee, and leave it to the clerk there to put the 'Postage Paid' stamp on them. (The staff at this local office is usually helpful and willing to do this job.) On one occasion a couple of years ago, it seemed that there was something wrong with their postage meter, and the clerk ended up using actual postage stamps on the packages instead of the plain white label.

Over the next week or so, as the packages arrived at their destinations around the world, I received a number of emails from collectors. They were very happy about this 'change' in my policy - it was already a pleasure for them to receive a package from Japan, but when it was covered with colourful stamps like this, their pleasure was multiplied! I needed no further encouragement, so from that time on, made it a policy to use real stamps on all the overseas packages.

But I can't expect the postal staff to always do this job for me, so each time I arrive at the office with a stack of packages, I peruse the showcase where the stamps are on display, make a selection from the most recent ones, and then sit in the waiting area with the packages arrayed in front of me, and stick the appropriate amount of postage on each one.

Each time I do, I can't help but think back to the time in my early teens when I was an avid - a very avid! - stamp collector. I didn't have much money to spend on my collection, just the small amount I earned from an after-school newspaper delivery job, so it was usually single stamps I purchased. When I was able to obtain stamps that were connected together - a group of four in a block, for example - I carefully preserved such 'treasures', and would never have dreamed of separating them. And the 'mint' stamps I obtained - those with full gum on the back, and uncanceled from use - were treasured even more!

Here I am though at the post office, purchasing full sheets of commemorative stamps, and tearing them apart to be stuck onto my packages. That young David would be horrified!

But of course if nobody actually used postage stamps like this, then there would be nothing for people to collect, so I simply console myself by thinking of where these stamps will end up. I can easily imagine that there is a stamp-collecting nephew in the family of my customer, or perhaps one of the neighbours' children, and this boy eagerly awaits the arrival of each new package to see what colourful treasures from far-away Japan he will be adding to his collection.

And speaking of stamp collecting in this way reminds me that yes, my own collection is still around, in a couple of boxes in the storeroom upstairs. I haven't paid any attention to it since I became interested in music at about age 15, so it has been sleeping for more than 40 years now. But there is no rush, and it can continue to sleep for a while longer; my grandsons won't be ready for this sort of thing for another decade or so. If it turns out that one of them develops an interest in stamp collecting, I think we'll have a pretty good time exploring these boxes together!

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