

A Remarkable Thematic Site

Nos'on Philatelic Journal (Internet Column) #77

by Moshe Oholy

An American web site won a Large Vermeil medal in "Jerusalem 2006" with a score of 86 points – quite a remarkable achievement considering the quality of the entries in the exhibition's Literature class. This site was built by an American collector called Fran Adams, who is also the manager of the site of the Old World Archaeology Study Unit. The study unit is a chapter of both the ATA and the APS.

The name of the site, which this column is dedicated to, is "Bone and Stone", and its subtitle is "Echoes of the Past through Philately". The site is dedicated to Prehistoric Man as he is reflected in philately, with emphasis on the Neanderthal Man and his era. The site's address is <http://www.boneandstone.com>. From there on arrives, via an introduction and two mouse clicks, to the heart of the site, at http://www.boneandstone.com/neandertal/neandertal_frame.html.

Many thematic sites show the stamps belonging to the collected topic in chronological order of appearance or by issuing state. Adams' site brings the story of the Neanderthal and his world by exhibit pages that make up a single frame exhibit. As we all know, one frame exhibits are a "hot subject" in philately these days (see also Menachem Lador's review of the Jerusalem exhibition in page 13, which also discusses this point). This exhibit won a national Gold medal and a special prize as best one frame thematic exhibit in last April's "Ameristamp" in Toronto. In my opinion, anyone interested in exhibiting in general and in one frame exhibits in particular can learn a lot from this exhibit.

Generally speaking, viewing a thematic exhibit on the internet is much more convenient than during a show: The viewer has plenty of time to study the pages at leisure, without the time restrictions imposed by the show or the fatigue caused by being on one's feet for a long time. We can only hope that many exhibitors will present the fruit of their efforts to the general public in this manner.

Beyond the exhibit, the site is arranged in an eye pleasing manner and is organized in a logical and clear way. Below each page there are several buttons which will transfer the viewer to other pages with additional information (illustrated, at times, by philatelic elements) or to links to relevant sites.

The site gives expression to the variety of views on the origin of Man and the development of family tree of the hominids in the last twenty million years up to the appearance of Modern Man and our becoming the only species of Man existing today. It presents, within the limitations of the available philatelic material, the different researchers of this subject, the changes over time in our scientific understanding of it and even the aspects that are still "open" (the site does not show the debate between the scientific view and the creationist one).

A Remarkable Thematic Site

We as Israelis have a special interest in Prehistoric Man because of the variety of findings in Israel – those in Nahal Amud (prompting the scientific recognition of the sub-species researchers know as “the Amud Man”) and from the Prehistory Man Caves in the Valley of the Caves in the Carmel (a further “Israeli” sub-species known as “Mount Carmel Man”). There is even a whole material culture of stone tools called the “Nattufian Culture” because of the findings in the Valley of Beit Nettufa, which leads from the North East into the Valley of the Caves – in the spring a highly recommended pedestrian touring site for all lovers of our land. Unfortunately the Philatelic Service has so far failed to issue stamps or other items that show our country’s prominent place in the story of early Man.

Here and there the site includes minor errors. For example, in the section dedicated to museums that present collections of Prehistoric Man findings there is mention of the British Museum alongside a slogan postmark that shows the ornate front of the Museum. The British Museum is indeed the place where the “Piltdown Man” skull is shown – a forgery created in the first half of the twentieth Century in an attempt to place the origin of mankind in Europe rather than in Africa. But the main collection of the British Museum of Prehistoric Man is housed and shown elsewhere – in the Natural History Museum, which is shown on the cover of a British booklet. Regrettably, the Natural History Museum is not mentioned in the site at all. Just the same one should remember that such minor errors must not be help against the site in general, which is one of the finest thematic sites in existence.