

## Two new Publications addressing OPEN PHILATELY and PICTURE POSTCARDS



### The Mouritsen Family Collections

In today's world we often strive for synergies which simply explained means that collaboration between different activities can be of mutual advantage for all parties concerned. Perhaps this is a suitable term when describing the way Iva and Henrik Mouritsen have been so successful in building first class philatelic exhibits through collaboration and a common use of knowledge and economic resources.

Synergy is furthermore the key word when describing Special Issue no. 10 of Nordisk Filateli. It was produced with the dual purpose of serving as a handout to the audience of the couple's presentation of their collections at the Royal Philatelic Society London on 30 March 2023 and as a publication in its own right. This explains why this special issue of the Swedish magazine is in English.

Henrik Mouritsen has collected stamps since childhood. His wife Iva's interest in the hobby is of far more recent date. For years she took basically no interest at all in her husband's passion for philately but today she is the leading star of Open Philately.

The 96-page special issue opens with a most interesting essay – *“Open Philately – A Class of Countless Possibilities”* – which is perhaps the most important contribution as the authors carefully explain exactly what it is and they also show how a to build an exhibit of the highest

caliber. At this point I would like to remind readers that in Open Philately as much as 50 % of non-philatelic material can be used. Acceptable items include maps, picture postcards, documents, paper cuttings, coins and a plethora of other items which can be housed on an album page.

The stress is on the importance of the story and how to let it flow from one page to the next and without any annoying interruptions. It is obviously of paramount importance to carefully plan the storyline of this kind of exhibit.

In their essay the authors also discuss the material they have selected and this is generally an exciting mix of the very old and more modern items. Rarity and quality are important ingredients if the plan is to obtain the highest points at international exhibition level. The text is accompanied by selected pages from the authors' exhibits.

Iva then discusses the creation of her exhibit "A Royal Ménage à trois" which takes us back to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Denmark. King Christian VII ruled Denmark and Norway from 1766 until 1808. At the tender age of 17, he married the English princess Caroline Matilda. Despite her husband's disinterest, the young queen gave birth to their son Frederik in 1768. He was later to become King Frederik VI.

The king suffered mental health issues and a German doctor – Johann Friedrich Struensee – was invited to Copenhagen. He was a man who had been greatly inspired by the new ideas of enlightenment and his influence on the king was considerable. In fact, Struensee soon became the *de facto* ruler of the kingdom. The young queen was attracted to the German doctor and they became lovers resulting in a classic case of "ménage à trois". It all ended in total disaster; Struensee was executed in 1772 and the queen was sent into exile in Germany. However, Struensee's ideas of enlightenment eventually influenced development in Denmark.

It is this rather amazing story which Iva tells in her exhibit. In the booklet she explains how it was developed starting with the choice of title. She then discusses the plan and how the text was developed to tell the story in a succinct way. The selection of philatelic and non-philatelic items was made after careful consideration. When first shown at a 2018 exhibition in Denmark, the exhibit was awarded Gold (and 93 points). The collection has since been extended and on several occasions it has been awarded Large Gold.

Obviously inspired by his wife's success with her exhibit in the Open Philately class, Henrik has created a similar exhibit featuring the reign of King Frederik VI. Once again the text in the booklet explains exactly how this exhibit was put together.

Henrik Mouritsen is mainly known as the specialist in Denmark's Two-coloured 1875-1907 stamps with denominations in øre. Once again synergies enter into action. He has assembled no less than three different major collections in three different exhibition classes: traditional, postal history and postal stationery. To complete this project he has also written *Danish Postal History 1875-1907*, a massive 2.500-page handbook.

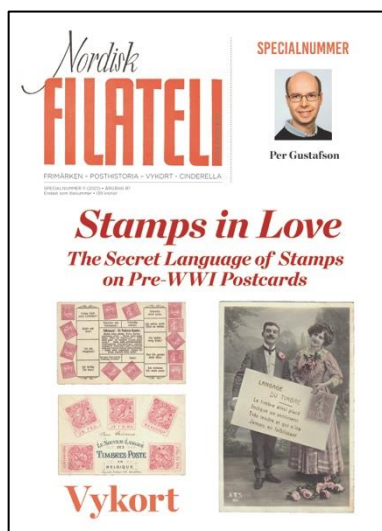
When Henrik Mouritsen starts work on a new exhibit his target is always Large Gold which of course requires careful planning and much work. In the special issue of *Nordisk Filateli* he goes to considerable lengths explaining exactly how this is being done. What I found most interesting was the fact that the same item can be used in any of the three different exhibits provided that they fit the storyline.

He needed 19 years and 13.000 working hours to complete his masterpiece, the six-volume work devoted to Danish postal history. At the Lugano 2022 exhibition, the handbook was awarded no less than 98 points which is pretty unique as far as literature is concerned.

To sum up this 96-page special issue of Nordisk Filateli, it provides a very thorough (but at the same time quite entertaining) guide on how to successfully put together philatelic exhibits with a special emphasis on the Open Class

At the recent MonacoPhil event in November 2022, one of the first Rowland Hill medals was awarded to Iva Mouritsen in recognition of her many achievements. At what must be record speed, she went from a neophyte collector to a Large Gold-winning exhibitor. What got her started was a beautiful royal cover signed by Danish King Christian IV which she spotted in one of her husband's auction catalogues.

Christer Brunström



## Stamps in Love

Using the post to court someone has a very long history and particularly so in the Anglo-Saxon world. Already towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, guides were published to help writers of Valentine cards to compose suitable poetic messages. It has been reported that in England in 1835 no less than 60.000 Valentine messages were distributed by the GPO despite the rather high postal rates at the time. The 1840 postal reforms with cheap penny postage led to a considerable increase in the amount of Valentine cards. In 1841 all of 400.000 such cards were handled by the British Post Office.

After 1840 it was possible to mail cards with amorous greetings completely anonymously which of course was a great advantage for the shy letter writers.

Starting around 1890 picture postcards became enormously popular and sending and collecting these cards soon developed into a cheap and popular activity.

It was in connection with this that Swedish philatelist and deltiologist Per Gustafson (PG) decided to make a special study of the romantic "Language of Stamps", something which

attracted many followers during the pre-World War I picture postcard craze. The results of his collecting activities form the basis of his five-frame exhibit suitably titled *Stamps in Love – The Secret Language of Stamps on Pre-WWI Postcards* which is also the name of Special Issue No. 11 of Nordisk Filateli, a major Nordic philatelic magazine.

The Language of Stamps was mainly used in connection with correspondence of a romantic nature and usually using postcards which were cheaper to mail than sealed letters.

Simply expressed it was the way the stamp was affixed to the postcard which represented the “secret” message. It was not only the angle of the stamp but also its position on the card which gave the recipient an idea of the writer’s intent.

As Per Gustafson states there were more than one version of the Language of Stamps. In order to make it work you first needed to mail a postcard explaining the finer details. It seems this card was usually mailed under cover as you didn’t want other people to understand your secret messages.

Mr. Gustafson is a most serious and knowledgeable deltiologist, a fancier word for postcard collector. Thus he has carefully noted the names of the publishers when known and also if the backs are divided or not as this gives us a clue to when the cards were printed.

The main stress of the exhibit is a detailed review of the many varieties of postcards explaining the Language of Stamps. PG has not only studied the significance of how the stamps were affixed but also the choice of stamps used to illustrate these postcard guides. He also shows a number of (mostly Swedish) postcards where the senders obviously have used the Language of Stamps to express their sentiments of eternal love or in the hope of arranging a date.

All those collectors who have been puzzled by the unorthodox way a stamp has been affixed to a postcard could very possibly find the explanation in the new Special Issue of Nordisk Filateli and especially if the addressee is referred to as Miss (or its equivalent in other languages).

Towards the end of his exhibit Mr. Gustafson also shows other secret languages which have been used on picture postcards. They are mainly based on a selection of illustrations. As he states they were probably not that useful.

The 90-page booklet doesn’t really look like a “Coffee Table Book” but the subject, the wealth of interesting illustrations and the accompanying brief comments will certainly attract all with an interest in older cultural history. My wife perused the Stamps in Love booklet with great interest and she was particularly impressed by the many attractive illustrations.

Special Issue 11 of Nordisk Filateli is entirely in English in order to promote the new Picture Postcard class. I am pretty sure that Per Gustafson’s exhibit will be an eye-opener for many deltiologists looking for inspiration for their future exhibits. Only 500 copies have been printed of this “book” which is a must for anyone with an interest in picture postcards.

Christer Brunström

The two publications are published by Nordisk Filateli (Sweden) with Jonas Hällström as the editor-in-chief. They are available at sale at **SEK 259** each, or **SEK 458** for both, including shipping worldwide.

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