

A RECURRENT PROBLEM

George T. Guzzio

One of the great dangers of ships at sea is the shifting of cargo. Such imbalance causes vessel to list. If severe and unattended to, it can result in sinkage.

It has been a matter of concern to note that some thematic exhibits in the international arena appear to rely IN GREAT MEASURE on a tour de force, the more common expression being, "loaded for bear."

There is nothing wrong with having key items and esoteric material. You have already, read about some of these in previous CCs and the philatelic press. Any knowledgeable philatelist will recognize outstanding items, rarity and difficulty of acquisition.

Still, there are those striving for the top and not making it. Each time they are disappointed at not reaching the anticipated level, their remedy is to shovel in some more bucks. "I'll wow them with the material," they say. The truth of the matter is, that, alone will carry you just so far. In theory, you can garnish 25 points in category rarity/scarcity.

Most that I've ever seen given was 23 points averaged out. Do even Large Golds have each and every key item possible? They do not and need not do so. What is needed is an EXCELLENT REPRESENTATION of the whole spectrum known and available.

Why then do some exhibits with marvelous material reach a medal plateau and even in some instances decline a level? More than one proud exhibitor has bellowed loudly in the aisles and elsewhere, "I've spent a fortune on those pages, more than any other exhibit in the entire show, jury doesn't know what they're looking at." Ah, but they do.

Inevitably high points were given in a category. Exhibitor is doing what he knows best, although wearing blinders. He is immersed in the thrill of the hunt and acquisition. Interpretation of auction descriptions come natural as well as awareness of specialized catalogs and literature regarding philately.

To find the inhibiting culprit we need recourse to the scoring sheet and to analyze the point categories. In the situation under discussion, there will be a deficiency in at least two categories.

First and foremost is DEVELOPMENT OF THEME worth 25 points. The thematic text and research needed to develop the story line is sparse at best and presented in most part by catalog descriptions of the motifs or designs shown on the material.

Consequently, there is very little depth in development of theme and what thematic information there is suffers by the IMBALANCE of being overpowered in the extreme with a philatelic approach more consistent with traditional philately. Thus, if you LOSE YOUR STORY LINE in a sea of PHILATELIC STUDIES and marvelous gems of philately, your ship is in danger of listing badly.

Adding Insult to Injury:

The dissolution by FIP of Subject and Documentary exhibits notwithstanding, some exhibits continue to contain philatelic titles and descriptions on the PLAN PAGE. Such contain references to esoteric materials such as proofs, essays, etc., chapter or sub-chapters entitled meters, fancy cancels, etc. Plan page MUST CONTAIN ONLY THEMATIC entries and descriptions.

As is common with rule changes, juries have in the past allowed for an adjustment period. Considering it has been three years since the Subject and Documentary approach has been eliminated (FINLANDIA 88), full enforcement is to be expected. Certainly this will prevail at exhibitions where a thematic is expected to be a thematic and not a hybrid.

The Remedy:

For those who have this problem, the solution is a WEDDING -- A marriage between the THEMATIC and PHILATELIC aspects ON EACH PAGE throughout the exhibit. The story presentation requires thematic research and verbiage over and above basic information. Your philatelic aspects on the other hand are mostly self-evident by the choice and discriminating selection. Amplification with text when needed should be brief and to the point. Can also be rendered effectively, in instances, by the use of headings. No need to describe the obvious.

In the song "Love and Marriage" are the words, "You can't have one without the, other." An exhibitor should naturally reflect on all point score categories. I urge you to consider especially DEVELOPMENT OF THEME and RARITY/SCARCITY. In concert, they account for the better part of point allotment. Together they can make some beautiful music. One without the other amounts to a divorce, an estrangement in the family of components needed for a highly successful opus in the exhibition arena.

Some Hallmarks of Great Exhibits:

Perceived to be the best of its genre.
Is of a subject with universal appeal, well executed.
An original presentation on an unusual subject.
Exhibit encompasses wide spectrum of thematic knowledge and philatelic disciplines.
Intent, scope and plan presented in a precise and logical manner.
A story in depth with a beginning, middle and conclusion.
Material of diverse nature predominates, text recedes.
Selection of material suggests difficulty of acquisition and serious research.
Development of theme discernible by both jury and viewing public.

The above is a checklist condensation of many articles, advice at critiques, and the remarks of knowledgeable jurors. You, the exhibitor, may wish to peruse them and ascertain how many might be applicable to your own labor of love.