

SET OF COMMEMORATIVE COINS WITH THE DESIGNS OF THE SLOVAK BANKNOTES

The National Bank of Slovakia is preparing to issue a set of commemorative coins with the motifs of all seven Slovak banknotes to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the origin of the National Bank of Slovakia and the Slovak currency.

On 1st January 1993, the day of the origin of the independent Slovak Republic, the National Bank of Slovakia was established and began to fulfill the roles of the central bank. One of the most urgent tasks was to prepare the new Slovak currency, the Slovak crown, in a very short time. The first banknote, of nominal value fifty crowns, was put into circulation on 30th August 1993, and the banknotes with other face values gradually followed.

All seven Slovak banknotes were designed by the academic painter Jozef Bubák. Their artistic conception is based on a combination of modern and traditional banknote design combined with a high level of technical protection of the banknotes against counterfeiting. The obverse sides bear portraits of the most important personalities, who were active in the territory of present-day Slovakia during more than a thousand years of history and substantially contributed to the formation of the Slovak nation. The reverse sides bear places and motifs connected with their lives and activities. An exception is the hundred crown note with the motif of the Madonna from the workshop of Master Paul of Levoča.

The set of commemorative coins with the motifs of banknotes is the most extensive and technically most demanding project of Slovak commemorative coins prepared by the National Bank of Slovakia up to now. The coins were struck by the Kremnica Mint. The demanding process of translating the banknote designs into plaster relief models, according to which the coins were struck, was done by Kremnica artists, employed in the studio of the Kremnica Mint. The obverse sides were designed by Štefan Novotný and the reverses by Mária Poldaufová.

The whole process of preparation of the set of coins began already at the beginning of 2001 and was divided into several stages. At the beginning it was decided that the coins would have the shape of the banknotes, but reduced in size, that they would be of proof quality and made from precious metals. They would be of silver with gold blanks on the obverse sides of the 1000 Sk and 5000 Sk, in the areas occupied by metalized foil on the banknotes.

In the next stage, the individual details were specified, and which would be mirror-like and which matt was decided. The Kremnica artists gradually created fourteen relief models of the designs of the banknotes and adapted them according to suggestions from meetings with the designer of the banknotes, representatives of the issuing department

of the bank and the mint. There was simultaneous work on preparing the technical parameters of the coins, which meant calculation of the basic dimensions of the coins, determination of the weight and fineness of the metals and agreement of the permissible production tolerances.

This work led to the stage of preparing for production in the mint, where new production technology had to be developed, since it had never before in its history struck two-sided, rectangular, proof-quality coins, so it had not verified the methods. The mint had experience only of striking one-sided medallion replicas of stamps of rectangular form with the very different technology of so-called hollow striking.

The coin with a face value of 200 Sk was chosen for verification of ideas about the appearance of the relief translations of the banknotes and the technology of striking, since it is in the centre of the size range of the whole set of coins. The basic tools, dies and samples of coins were originally produced to a size corresponding to 33% of the size of the banknotes. After general evaluation of the appearance of the samples of coins, an increased size was agreed, on the basis of which, the relief models were reduced for a target size of the coins of 37.5% or 3/8 of the size of the banknote.

After this correction, the technical parameters of the coins were again recalculated, and silver with a fineness of 925/1000 was chosen as the metal for the coins. Since it is the same fineness as in the case of the 500 Sk commemorative coins issued up to now, the coin with the design of the 500 Sk banknote was made the basis for calculating the technical parameters for the whole set of coins. Its weight of 33.63 g, representing one troy ounce of fine silver (31.1035 g) is the same as the weight of the 500 Sk coins issued up to now. The weights of the other coins in the set were derived from this base, with seven troy ounces (217.7265 g) of pure silver in the whole set of seven coins. The silver blanks for striking the coins with the first five face values had the same thickness of 1.8 mm, while blanks with a thickness of 2.2 mm were used for striking the two highest values, especially because of the need to pre-strike spaces for the gold blanks on the obverse sides. Two methods were selected for their application. In the case of the 1000 Sk coin and the sun shaped blank for the 5000 Sk coin, a technology of striking was selected and the half-moon shaped blank with application of the KINEGRAM® was stuck in after striking. These blanks are of pure gold,



their thickness is 0.75 mm and they have 1.244 g of gold (1/25 of a troy ounce). It is worth mentioning that the KINEGRAM® on the half-moon shaped blank is a slightly simplified, but faithful copy of the original applied to the metalized foil on the 5000 Sk banknote.

The actual preparation and striking of the coins at the mint confirmed the expectation that this project would be very demanding. The preparation of the basic tools and especially of the dies required enormous effort, especially in the final stage of polishing the dies, which was time-consuming and physically very demanding, as a result of the significant weight and size of the dies. During the striking process, extraordinary effort was required, since more than twice the pressure used for striking round commemorative coins was necessary to achieve sufficient quality of individual details. This had a negative effect on the life of the dies. When striking coins at the high pres-

sure of about 400 tons, two or three blows of the striking press as in the case of standard round commemorative coins was not enough. The coins of some values needed up to six blows.

The set of coins is placed in an elegant wooden case, internally designed so that it is possible to see both the obverse and reverse sides of the coins after the overturning of the case without taking out and turning over the individual coins. The case includes a certificate with information about the origin of the Slovak currency, the motifs depicted on the coins and the parameters of the coins. The National Bank of Slovakia is preparing the issue for the pre-Christmas period. Six thousand sets will be issued, and the NBS is prepared to increase this number in the event of continuing high interest.

Ing. Dagmar Flaché, Ing. Dušan Sukup
Photo: Ing. Štefan Fröhlich

