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Erik Bruun, Finnish master of purposeful graphic design

Graphic designer Erik Bruun's hand is familiar to all Finns. There are few who have not seen his Saimaa ringed seal or Jaffa posters. Erik Bruun says himself, that he produces purposeful graphics, good examples of which include his designs for dozens of Finnish banknotes and postage stamps. The *Ancient Castles* stamp booklet was Bruun's own initiative. The subject is familiar to him, because he lives in Suomenlinna, the famous sea fortress.

A stamp is a small security

Erik Bruun designed his first stamps in the mid-1980s, around the same time as the Finnish Markka banknote reform. Altogether, he will have designed well over 50 postage stamps once the *Ancient Castles* stamp booklet appears.

In Bruun's opinion, stamps are comparable to banknotes as small securities. "I experienced it myself in Italy once when a market seller gave stamps back instead of change."

Erik Bruun produced the original work for the *Ancient Castles* stamp booklet as A4 sized pictures, based on a rich source of photographic material sent from National Board of Antiquities. Bruun has been familiar with the proportions required for stamps for many years. "I have always stressed to young designers that a good street poster must also work as a matchbox sized label. Good posters attract the viewer's attention in a second. Just the same is true for stamps."

Inspired by Suomenlinna and nature

Ancient castles are an especially personal subject for Erik Bruun, as he has lived in Suomenlinna, the sea fortress, for 43 years. He has depicted Suomenlinna in four previous stamps, which were published between 2000 and 2006. "The cover of the stamp booklet is of Suomenlinna's stone walls and a firing embrasure, which I walk past almost every day."

Erik Bruun was born in Vyborg in 1926, so it comes as no surprise that he also designed the Vyborg Castle 700-year stamp, which was published in 1993. "I proposed joint publication to the Russian Post Office, but the idea was not accepted at the time. It was great anyway that the Vyborg Castle stamp was published and it read Suomi-Finland."

Nature has been a great source of inspiration throughout Erik Bruun's career and he has produced numerous nature-themed works ever since the 1960s. His most famous nature-themed poster is probably the Saimaa ringed seal poster, which has become a symbol for Finnish nature conservation. Stamps designed by Bruun have depicted dozens of Finnish birds.

His career started in the 1950s and Erik Bruun is still active at the age of 87. In addition to the stamps, his most recent projects include new posters designed for Hartwall, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation and Finnair.