

WINGED ARTWORKS

by Albert Pelsser

Art is an instrument which helps humanity to reap full benefit from all beauties of creation, and is one of the greatest common denominators that transcends cultural barriers and helps us to understand our neighbouring countries, their customs, aspirations and values.

As it is the case for other buildings of the United Nations, the ICAO building houses a remarkable collection of art and artifacts, donated or loaned by its Contracting States, international organizations, companies or individuals, which include ceramics, furnishings, mosaics, murals, paintings, sculptures, tapestries, etc. While the gifts of art works at the United Nations are in harmony with the environment of peace-seeking, most of the gifts to ICAO exemplify its goals for civil aviation. The decor of the new ICAO building, currently located at 999 University Street in Montreal, was an early concern and a special ad hoc group was established to promote the best placement of the art works available. The purpose of this article is to illustrate how the ICAO theme in philately has portrayed works of art exhibited at ICAO.

AIRCRAFT REPLICAS



Figure 1

Born in 1872 in Transylvania, in the then Austro-Hungarian Empire, *Traian Vuia* developed an early interest in heavier-than-air machines. In 1902, he left for Paris, the place for all European inventors concerned about flight. On the basis of a patent obtained in 1903, he developed his winged-automobile. On 18 March 1906, in Montesson, France, the *Vuia Nr. 1* flew over a distance of 12 metres at a height of 0.6 metres; it was the first air plane with variable wing angle and the first to use pneumatic, rather than solid rubber, tires on landing gear. Later, Traian Vuia improved his first aircraft and also built helicopters. The Romanian stamp Scott #C288 (see Figure 1) pays tribute to Vuia's achievement on 18 March 1906; a full-scale replica of the first aircraft flown by Vuia is exhibited in ICAO's atrium.

Like the founding principle of ICAO's work, the *Concorde* was a remarkable product of international cooper-



Figure 2

ation; it remains the only successful supersonic transport aircraft in operation. Its history goes back to 1955, when preliminary design work started in the United Kingdom for the establishment of a supersonic aircraft, while a similar process was under way in France. In November 1962, the British and French designers were merged into a single project. Despite environmental opponents, the first prototype made its maiden flight on 2 March 1969. Both Air France and British Airways started passenger operations on the Concorde simultaneously on 21 January 1976, with services from London to Bahrain and Paris to Rio de Janeiro respectively. Opposition from environmentalists delayed flights to New York until November 1977; 14 Concorde aircraft are currently in service. It is interesting to note that, without the Concorde, the cooperation for and production of the Airbus series would never have materialized. A fibreglass model of the Concorde, bearing both above-mentioned airlines' logos, is displayed in ICAO's lobby. Figure 2 shows Comoro Islands Scott #282 issued for the first flight Paris-New York of the Concorde on 22 November 1977, with UN Scott #32 and overprinting in gold with red inverted.

SCULPTURES

Often referred to as the technical arm of ICAO, the Air Navigation Commission (ANC) was created by the Convention on International Civil Aviation (also called the Chicago Convention) signed by 52 States on 7 December 1944 in Chicago, Illinois, USA. The mandate of the Commission is to recommend to the Council of ICAO the most appropriate course of action in the process of developing and amending the Standards and Recommended Practices contained in the Annexes to the above-mentioned Convention. The first meeting of the ANC was held on 7 February 1949 at the Windsor Hotel, Montreal. In 1992,



Figure 3

the Government of Mexico donated the bronze sculpture *Vuelo* designed by Leonardo Nierman; it represents the flight of birds, a picture of absolute freedom, the wind and poetry, and is located in the centre of the ANC Chamber at ICAO Headquarters. The sculpture was featured on Mexico stamp Scott #1901; the Laurel Award, created in 1998 by the ANC to pay tribute to an individual or group for an outstanding contribution of its work, consists of a reduced replica of the masterpiece *Vuelo* and was reproduced on the first day covers (see Figure 3) issued when the first Laurel Award was bestowed in 1999 to Olivier Carel of France.



Figure 4

In 1898, Alberto Santos-Dumont, a wealthy Brazilian living in Paris, became the first to successfully apply a gasoline engine to an aircraft; he began racing

motorized tricycles, then turned to ballooning and subsequently to dirigibles. He is best remembered for his famous demonstration of controlled flying in a dirigible on 19 October 1901, when he flew his airship around the Eiffel Tower in Paris. In 1906, he came up with a peculiar machine, the *14-bis*, in which he seemed to be piloting backwards and the pilot was standing up; the 14-bis was actually a tail-first box-kite powered by a 50hp Antoinette engine. On 23 October 1906, Santos-Dumont kept his 14-bis aeroplane (see Belize Scott #447, Figure 4) aloft for seven seconds and won the Archdeacon Price of 3,000 francs for the first free sustained flight of more than 25 metres. Offered by the Government of Brazil in 1989, the cedar wood carving is the first reproduction in wood of this famous performance by Santos-Dumont over the *Champs de Bagatelle* in Paris, France.

TAPESTRIES

Donated by the Government of Senegal in 1976, the *Solar Princess* tapestry, designed by the artist Saliou Diouf, is a master piece of Senegalese art immersed in a sort of mythology of which mysterious depths have been defined as the collective unconscious. The interlaced colours and curves of the tapestry are an expression of things that are born and transformed. A copy of this tapestry was offered in 1997 to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



Figure 5



Figure 6

located in Rome, Italy. Figure 5 shows the Madagascar first day cover with Scott #C183 and the Solar Princess.

Donated by the Government of Romania in 1976, the pure wool tapestry *Man in Space*, located in the Air Navigation Commission Chamber, was reproduced on postcards inserted in the first day covers issued when the first Laurel Award mentioned above was bestowed. The winged mythological figure at the centre of the tapestry represents Icarus with ICAO's logo. It is a stylised representation of one's aspiration, in a background of concentric curves suggesting the propagation of waves into space. The tapestry is a representation of a painting by the Romanian artist Ion Banulescu.

A wool wall carpet made by Gérard Serres, a former staff member of the ICAO Secretariat, depicts ICAO's second official emblem in blue (on white background), with the initials of the Organization in English, French, Spanish and Russian. This logo was in use between 1974 and 1995. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ICAO in 1994, several countries offered artwork displaying the emblem specially designed for this anniversary; among those, Mongolia offered a tapestry depicting this logo. It would be cumbersome to list here all the stamps of ICAO thematic collection that bear such logos, as most of them show in some way ICAO's emblem. A prior article in *The Canadian Connection*, issued in Volume 10, Number 3 (September 1996) provided the history of ICAO emblem. Figure 6 shows a good picture of the 50th anniversary logo; this souvenir cover was issued for an international philatelic exhibition held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to commemorate the ICAO's 50th anniversary and bears the cancellations of the participating countries.

MURALS



Figure 7

Commissioned in 1975 by the Government of Switzerland, the magnificent mural (called *Man in Flight*) by Hans Erni, an internationally known Swiss artist, displays the skills that serve the artist so well in his etchings and draws heavily on the Greek mythology to represent humanity's greatest aspiration. The central figure of the main panel is Daedalus flying towards the sun. In an effort to escape from the Labyrinth with his son Icarus, he contrived wings made of wax; the fate of the son, who soared higher into the air too close to the sun, is well known. In 1981,

the central figure of the mural was slightly modified by Hans Erni to take the form of Icarus (see Tanzania Scott #246 at Figure 7), which became one of the motifs recommended by ICAO for the issuance of stamps to commemorate the 40th anniversary of ICAO. The mural is installed in the lobby of ICAO's building.

Commissioned in 1996 by ICAO, the *Edward Warner* mural was designed by Titu Aron Dragutescu, a Romanian artist living in Montreal. The dominant blue colour suggests the idea of infinite space. The work comprised three square-shaped parts which constitute a unified whole. The left part represents an idea of flight, symbolized by the bird in full flight; the right part comprises at its base a block of buildings of downtown Montreal, the silhouette of an aircraft and a communication satellite. The central part depicts the effigy of Edward Warner, in the form of a large golden medal (with the following inscription: Edward Warner Award - ICAO - OACI), dominating a set of rectangle volumes representing ICAO Headquarters. A leading figure of civil aviation, Edward Warner became the first President of the Council of ICAO during its provisional status from 1945 to 1947, and continued as President of the ICAO Council until his retirement in 1957. A prior article in *The Canadian Connection*, issued in Volume 10, Number 1 (March 1996) provided a description of the Edward Warner Award, which consists of a solid gold medal replicating the effigy of Edward Warner found on the above artwork.

In 1997, the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) donated the mural called *Aerial Symphony* designed by the Montrealer artist Michel Guilbeault. This mural emphasizes the subtle interface between art and science in civil aviation. Throughout its forty panels of anodized aluminium, it shows a variety of aircraft types depicting the evolution of flight. Upon the panels, are silk screen depictions of eastern and western hemispheres of the earth and brilliantly iridescent hand-coloured butterfly wings. A first day cover, showing the *Aerial Symphony*, was issued in 1998 to commemorate the 32nd Session of the ICAO Assembly.

PAINTINGS



Figure 8

Painted by Air Force Colonel Carlos Raul Mercader, the watercolour painting offered by the Government

of Uruguay in 1997 depicts an Avro 504K used at the birth of the Uruguayan Civil Aviation. Founded by Alliott Verdon Roe, the UK A.V. Roe & Co. (AVRO) had already built several successful air planes when Roe designed in 1912 the Avro 504 for training and private flying purposes; it first flew in July 1913. During World War I, it became famous as bomber and fighter, and was the first British aeroplane to be brought down on 22 August 1914. The successive variants remained in production as late as 1932; over 10,000 Avro 504 were sold and a number were still flying at the outbreak of WWII. Extensively built for home and export customers, the Avro 504K was produced with an all-purpose engine mounting and was therefore perfectly

suitable for civilian use too after WWI. Figure 8 shows Botswana Scott #349 with the Avro 504.

CONCLUSION

World peace is the mission of the United Nations and its Agencies; through the art collections, communications among people are promoted, as well as understanding of other cultures and perspectives. The artworks are a window of the central role played by ICAO in helping nations of the world create and preserve friendship. They remind us about how far the dreams and hopes of human beings can go.

CHECKLIST

Anguilla	609	1984 Dec 3	Icarus
Belize	442	1979 Jul 30	Concorde
Belize	447	1979 Jul 30	Santos-Dumont and <i>14-bis</i>
Belize	449	1979 Jul 30	Concorde
Bolivia	MiBL82	1979 Mar 16	Santos-Dumont and <i>14-bis</i>
Botswana	349	1984 Oct 8	<i>Avro 504</i>
Cameroun	768	1984 Dec 20	Icarus
Cameroon	771	1984 Dec 20	Solar Princess
Comoro Islands	219	1976 Nov 25	Concorde
Comoro Islands	MiBL49	1976 Nov 25	Concorde
Comoro Islands	282-284	1977 Nov 22	Concorde
Comoro Islands	MiBL114a-c	1977 Nov 22	Concorde
Gabon	572	1984 Dec 1	Icarus
Honduras	350	1987 Feb 26	Edward Warner
Libya	1227b	1984 Dec 7	Concorde
Madagascar	C183	1984 Dec 22	Solar Princess
Maldiv Islands	2036	1994 Dec 31	Concorde
Mexico	1901	1994 Nov 3	Vuelo
Romania	C288	1994 Aug 12	Vuia Nr. 1 (18 March 1906)
Singapore	705	1994 Oct 5	Concorde
St. Vincent	2150	1994 Dec 1	Concorde
Tanzania	246	1984 Nov 15	Icarus
Tanzania	249a	1984 Nov 15	Icarus
Togo	1282	1984 Oct 15	Concorde
Togo	1283	1984 Oct 15	Icarus
Turkey	2299	1994 Dec 7	Icarus
Uruguay	MiBL38	1978 Jun 13	Concorde
Uruguay	1175	1985 Jul 5	Icarus
Uruguay	1526	1994 May 6	Icarus

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