

BY CHRIS LAZAROFF

# Notos 2021 exhibition lives up to collector's expectations

THE INTERNATIONAL SHOW HELD NOV. 19-22 AT THE ZAPPEION IN ATHENS, GREECE, WAS POSTPONED FROM 2020 BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

The COVID-19 pandemic canceled numerous stamp shows for more than a year. I was looking for one to go to and started thinking outside the box. I decided the Notos 2021 philatelic exhibition held Nov. 19-22, 2021, in Athens, Greece would be the ideal choice.

Originally scheduled for 2020, the show was delayed until November 2021 because of the pandemic. The show lived up to my expectations.

This four-day event with both philatelic exhibit and literature competitions was held at the Zappeion, a conference and exhibition hall in the middle of Athens. This venue, shown in Figure 1, has hosted Olympic events and past international stamp shows. Proof of vaccination and use of masks were required to enter the building.

There were 1,400 frames of competitive exhibits. The grand prix award for the championship class was awarded



Figure 2. Hellenic Post, the postal service of Greece, was a major supporter of the Notos 2021 philatelic exhibition held Nov. 19-22, 2021, in Athens, Greece. Two sales counters were available for those wishing to purchase items.

to Vitorio Morani for his unbelievable exhibit "Tuscany 1836 to GPU."

I spent half of one day viewing the entries in the literature competition. There were tables and chairs, as is normal, for attendees to review the submitted literature. Of particular interest was a book titled *Skopje on Postal Stamps, History and Motives*. The book was printed in both English and Macedonian.

Skopje is the capital of North Macedonia, and I had just spent six days in that country tracing my grandparents' roots.

Hellenic Post, the Greek postal service, was a major participant and sponsor of the exhibition. As shown in

Figure 2, Hellenic Post had a large well-organized booth, and two sales counters were available for those wishing to purchase items.

On the opening day, Hellenic Post issued a special souvenir sheet in honor of the show. After purchasing my sheets, I serviced postcards and envelopes bearing a map cachet.

Hellenic Post had a philatelic employee on site for the entire show to cancel covers with both the first-day and show cancels. After the postcards were canceled, you had to put them in the mailbox yourself, rather than hand them to the employee for mailing.

The Greek auction house A. Karamitsos was also a



Figure 1. The Notos 2021 exhibition was held Nov. 19-22 at the Zappeion, a conference and exhibition hall in the middle of Athens. Photos by Chris Lazaroff.

major sponsor. On the second day of the show, the firm conducted an auction of Greece's Large Hermes Head stamps, the first series of stamps issued by Greece.

Although I do not collect Greek stamps, I was an active bidder on over 20 lots. I wanted to add one of these stamps to my story of this show, but the bidding was beyond what I wanted to spend. At the top end of the auction, there was a first-day cover for the 40-lepta stamp, one of only two known, which was hammered down for €32,000, about \$36,000 in mid-December 2021.

The key item in the auction was a 40-lepta rose on greenish paper. It is the only known Large Hermes Head stamp with a control number error. This stamp was on display at Notos 2021, as shown in Figure 3. It went to a floor bidder for €125,000 (\$140,700). After the auctioneer's hammer fell, the entire room erupted in applause for the floor bidder who won the item.

The opening ceremony took place during the evening of the first day of the show. Outside on the steps of the Zappeion, the president of the Hellenic Philatelic Society, the chairman of Notos 2021 and the CEO of Hellenic Post gave their welcome to the show and were pleased to be able to resume in-person philately. Because this was an international audience, the speakers made their remarks in English, not Greek.

On Sunday, Hellenic Post unveiled the Notos 2021 sheet, along with the rest of its 2021 issues. Because this presentation was not necessarily for international attendees, the remarks and slide presentation were only in Greek.

Although I did not know anybody when I arrived, I left with several new friends: Louis, Nike, Nikos and Marina. I look forward to seeing them again.

Now that I have been to an international show outside the United States, I look forward to attending more, such as Hunfi-



Figure 3. This Greek 40-lepta rose Large Hermes Head on greenish paper was on display during the Notos 2021 show. It is the only known Large Hermes Head stamp with a control number error. The auction house A. Karamitsos sold the rarity for €125,000 during the firm's auction held at the show.

ward to attending more, such as Hunfi-lex 2022 to be held March 31-April 3 in Budapest, Hungary. ■



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