

THE FRUITS ISSUE, 25 NOVEMBER 1966.

The Austrian Post Office believed in 1969 that images of Austrian flowers and fruits had a rightful place on the country's stamps. Unfortunately their customers had a different opinion.

Nevertheless, the Post Office tried several times more in later years!



Erdbeere
(strawberry)



Weintraube
(grape)



Apfel
(apple)



Brombeere
(bramble)



Marille
(apricot)



Kirsche
(cherry)

The Post Office issued an almost-apology...

No other stamp series has given rise to so much comment as the series picturing different kinds of fruit - the "Fruit Salad Set" of 25.11.1966 which was intended to replace the Buildings Series.

The number of subjects that enter into consideration for a definitive series of postage stamps is relatively small, given that the following conditions have to be met:

It must be possible for the motive to be reproduced in miniature format without detriment to the clarity of the details so as to enable sheets of 100 stamps to be printed, thus reducing printing costs.

Around thirty different values are required.

It must be feasible to print the stamps in a single working process. The subjects are required to be typical of the country of issue, and in general appearance the stamps must appeal to the public.

In the post-war years, definitive series of stamps featuring Landscapes, Local Costumes, and Architectural Monuments have been issued by the Austrian Postal Authorities. The better-known species of Austrian

flowers have been shown on two sets of special stamps. Prominent Austrians have been honoured by portrayal on stamps, but the design requires a larger size of stamp is required, thus ruling these out as a subject for a definitive series. Eventually in 1966, representations of different kinds of fruit were chosen by the Austrian P.T.T. as subjects for a regular definitive series. The designs were executed by Professor Carlos Riefel, the well-known painter of flowers and fruit. He followed the style of artwork which the masters of the Biedermeier period, who like Daffinger had been trained at and had worked for the Vienna Porcelain Factory, employed in painting flowers and fruit. Prof. Riefel's designs were very attractive, and won acclaim at a philatelic exhibition held at Mödling in Lower Austria. The four-colour photogravure printing process with a view to which the Austrian State Printing Works had purchased a new machine, equally promised to yield excellent results.

However, even before the sketches were published the mere announcement of a "Fruit Series" led press circles to level heavy criticism against the envisaged new stamp series. One of the reasons for this reaction may have resided in the fact that other countries had issued postage stamps featuring fruit as the motif. The general opposition against this stamp series determined the Austrian P.T.T. to have only 5 million copies printed of each value. When the stamps did appear, it was evident that the derogatory nick-name "Fruit Salad" had taken hold with the public to such an extent that the series met with general disapproval. To motivate this rejection it was said amongst other things that the stamps were too small, that they had no border, and that they were hard to distinguish. Moreover, it was pointed out that the fruit was by no means typical of Austria, and so forth.

Given that, as stated above, regular issue stamps must appeal to the public, the Austrian Postal Authorities decided not to proceed further with additional values or further printings of those values already issued. However, the stamps continued to be sold at the post office counters as definitives until supplies were exhausted, whereupon they were replaced by the corresponding values of the "Buildings Series".

Öst.P.T.T.