



Sweden's progressive designs push envelope

Most United States and world coins continue to feature conservative, representational designs.

But a few notable examples illustrate that some national mints are willing to push the envelope. Imaginative modernistic designs by Annie Winblad Jakubowski have appeared on commemorative euro coins issued by Sweden, like the innovative coins issued in 2006 commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Swedish Railway.

Jakubowski, a graphic designer and illustrator from Stockholm, has had her work shown in Swedish National Travelling Exhibitions, the Swedish National Theatre and the Nordiska Museet. Evidence of her diverse artistic interests include works from her recent project, "Gravestones at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm." An exhibition of new symbolic designs – adapted from traditional motifs used in Eastern Europe and combined with recent technological innovations – has contributed to the creation of a modern Jewish headstone aesthetic.

Other modernistic coins by Jakubowski are featured on the Central Bank of Sweden's site www.riksbank.com with pieces depicted at the site including 2007 silver and gold coins commemorating Carl von Linné's 300th anniversary, the 150th anniversary of Sweden's first postage stamp, 2005 silver and gold coins commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the dis-

solution of the Swedish-Norwegian union, and Jakubowski's first designs (from 2004) on silver and gold coins commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

The 200-krona Swedish Railway commemorative coin in silver depicts a stylized carriage wheel on the obverse; the spokes carry the text JÄRNVÄGEN 150 ÅR ("Railway 150 Years"). To the left of 150 ÅR is the Mint mark E, for AB Myntverket in Eskilstuna, and on the right are the letters SR, the initials of the Riksbank governor, Stefan Ingves. Near the edge of the coin, SVERIGE (Sweden) appears.

On the reverse of the 200-krona coin, seven railway tracks intersect, but on different levels while traversing the coin's mirrored fields within a wide, raised border. Far up in the coin's left field, yet still between the tracks, a single spruce tree is depicted. In the coin's right field is the denomination, 250, with the letters KR (for kronor) underneath. The years 1856 and 2006 appear on one of the lower railway tracks. Mintage for the commemorative 250-krona coin, each weighing 27.03 grams total of .925 fine silver, was 50,000.

The obverse of the gold railway commemorative coin is identical to that on the silver piece. But the gold's reverse is significantly different in

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Sections of railroad track intersect, but on different levels, to give Sweden's 2006 200-krona silver commemorative for the 150th anniversary of Swedish railways a unique look.

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The reverse of Sweden's 2005 50-krona coin honoring the 150th anniversary of postal service features a whimsical creation of a letter in flight.



In 2001, Sweden's commemorative 200-krona coin honored the Nobel prizes. Within a few years, Sweden would issue a series of commemorative coins with highly innovative designs.



design. On the reverse appears a picture of a train-carriage wheel meeting a railway track – a symbol of the junction between the curved wheel and the straight track. The year 1856 appears to the left of the wheel; 2006 is to the right. Centered under the railway track is the denomination 200, with the lettered legend KR inscribed beneath. The metal content of each coin is composed of 12 grams of .900 fine gold alloy. Five thousand coins were issued.

Sweden's continued use of the kronur while a member of the European Union (Sweden joined the union on Jan. 1, 1995, along with Austria and Finland), and resistance to convert to the euro currency system has brought threats from the EU. On Oct. 24, 2006, EU monetary affairs commissioner Joaquin Almunia stated that the European Union could theoretically take Sweden to court for not issuing the euro despite meeting all the economic criteria, but that such an action likely would be neither necessary nor desirable at the time. A poll taken among Swedes concerning the replacement of the kronor with the euro (conducted by Statistics Sweden in December 2007) resulted in 50.8 percent of Swedish citizens voting against replacing the kronur with the euro, with 35 percent of respondents in favor of replacement.

That's why modern Swedish commemoratives are denominated in kronur and not euros.

The Swedes seem to be deliberate in the way they adopt new technologies. In 1856, railways built for steam-powered locomotives were inaugurated in Sweden.

The first railways connected Örebro and Nora, Göteborg and Jönköping, and Malmö and Lund. The first six steam locomotives were purchased from England. During the 1860s

Swedish companies began building locomotives in Sweden. Eventually, during the years of operation of steam-powered trains, about 10 Swedish companies built steam engines for the nation's railway system.

Initially, Sweden lagged behind other countries in steam-power railway development, which was launched in the early 1830s in the United States by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and others. The chief reason for Sweden's late start was the relatively poor economy in Sweden at the beginning of the 19th century.

By 1860, Sweden's first railway station was finished in Stockholm. But not all 600 kilometers of rail line was connected at first, and half of the total track still was privately owned. Yet by 1870, the Swedish railway network had 2,000 kilometers of track, of which 1,100 kilometers were state owned, a significant indicator the country's economy was booming. By 1880, the national railway network had grown to 6,000 kilometers, with 2,000 kilometers owned by the state. At the turn of the century the rail network had grown to 11,000 kilometers track of which 7,500 were privately owned. In 1938, the Swedish railways were at their peak, with a total length of 16,900 kilometers of track in a country slightly larger than the state of California.

In 1939, the Swedish Parliament nationalized all private railways, a process that took about three decades to complete. The last steam engine in regular service was retired in 1972.

In 1988, the Swedish Railway monopoly was divided into several government-owned "private" companies that were expected to make a profit. Today, the government-owned company has a monopoly on lines that they define as profitable, and the rest of the long lines have been sold to private companies.

Like the railways, the Swedish Mint was also sold to private interests. In late 2001, the following announcement was released by the Riksbank (the world's oldest central bank, established in 1668): "The Riksbank is now divesting itself of its ownership in banknote and coin manufacture and will concentrate its operations on its core objectives; safeguarding price stability and promoting financial stability."

All of Sweden's minting responsibilities were transferred to the Finnish state-owned mint, Rahapaja Oy, which has maintained the former Swedish Mint facility in Eskilstuna. The Riksbank also sold its bank note manufacturing operations at Tumba to the U.S. firm Crane & Co.