The Growth of Lego® and its Depiction on Postage Stamps

By Rahul Das

Lego®, the plastic building-block toy company, is one of the most recognizable in the world, with retailers selling its increasingly popular products in over 130 countries. Originating in Billund, Denmark, the company was founded by the wooden toy craftsman Ole Kirk Christiansen, who would name the company after the Danish phrase ‘leg godt’, which translates to ‘play well’, eventually shortening it to ‘Lego®’. By 1958, the company patented its plastic building-block design, the product for which the brand is renowned for in modern day. Lego® has received numerous awards over the years, with the most recent being the winning of their seven nominated categories in the Toy of the Year 2022 Awards.

Given the growing popularity of the brand, its presence in the philatelic scene would be intriguing to investigate, as it would follow the company’s increased international reach over the years.

The first-ever depiction of Lego® on a postage stamp was in 11 May 1989, issued by none other than its country of origin, Denmark. The stamp features two red 2 x 4 Lego® bricks, arguably the company’s most iconic brick piece, and has a face value of 3.20 Danish Krone (Kr). Featured in the EUROPA Games and Toys series, it was issued along with a stamp of a Danish marching band with a face value of 4.40 Kr. Also included in the series were a toy robot, a toy locomotive, as well as snakes and ladders. It can thus be inferred from its appearance in this series that the company had reached nationwide popularity by this time.
The Isle of Man also issued a stamp featuring plastic building-blocks in the same year, though in comparison, there was no direct focus on the brand specifically. Under the Children’s Games series with two se-tenant stamps, the stamp with a face value of 13p depicts a young boy building a fortress from plastic blocks. Also shown in the same stamp is a girl blowing bubbles. This provides insight into plastic building blocks, and presumably Lego® products, gradually reaching markets outside Denmark.

Lego® made its subsequent appearance in philately seven years later, on 27 November 1996. Gibraltar, the British Overseas Territories, issued a set of five Lego® brick-built Christmas icons to commemorate the holidays. Stamps featured a mosaicque build design, including a Christmas pudding, a snowman, a Christmas present, Santa Claus and a Christmas candle at face values of 5p, 21p, 24p, 34p and 54p.

On 22 May 2002, Lego® made a third appearance in stamps, this time in a Singaporean series featuring popular toys. The character ‘Tahu’ appears in the 60-cent face value stamp. Tahu is from Lego®’s theme ‘Bionicle’, one of their most popular at the time, which featured characters built from numerous larger building-blocks. Also featured in the stamp series are the popular toys of cowboys and soldiers, sticker dress-up dolls and Formula One cars. Most notably, however, is the inclusion of a Barbie doll, which stands alongside Lego® as a top toy brand even in modern day. Another point of interest is the ‘local address only’ stamp, which illustrates a plastic brick-built house. While this is not explicitly shown to be a Lego® product, it demonstrates the influence of Lego® building-blocks on the international toy industry. The presence of the Lego® brand in this 2002 series significantly marks its international growth, as it is depicted as popular in not just a different country, but in another continent.
In 2015, Lego® stamps made another appearance in Denmark, under the EUROPA theme of old toys. Two stamps were issued to celebrate Lego®, each featuring a design with buildable figure made from four pieces, called a 'minifigure', as well as numerous brick pieces of different dimensions and colours. The minifigures illustrated represent, through the use of a shorter leg piece, a young boy with a cap and girl with a bob hairstyle. The stamps were issued with a face value of 10.00 and 14.50 Kr, respectively.
Figure 7. Malaysia 2017. Legoland®. First Day Cover.

Figure 8. Malaysia 2017. LEGOLAND®. Information Sheet for First Day Cover.
Malaysia is the next country to issue Lego® stamps, releasing a set of six on 4 December 2017. This release coincided with the 5th anniversary of LEGOLAND® Malaysia, a Lego®-themed amusement park. Each stamp design was issued with a face value of 60 sen. Visitors are depicted visiting numerous attractions present in the theme park, including a rollercoaster ride, a water park, as well as a playground. Numerous minifigures from themes, such as Ninjago® and the Collectable Minifigure Series®, are also depicted with the inclusion of the character Kai and a surfer, respectively. Six designs were released in their own sheets of 10 and were later issued in a single se-tenant sheet showing all designs.

Last year was the first, following Lego®’s philatelic debut, to have two countries releasing Lego®-themed stamps. The year 2022 was monumental for the company, as it celebrated its 90th anniversary. The first country to celebrate this was Austria, with a release on 16 September 2022 that also highlighted the 125th anniversary of the Viennese Giant Ferris Wheel, the Wiener Riesenrad. As such, the stamp featured a brick-built version of the Ferris wheel, trees and a postman minifigure, with a face value of €1.20. It was released in sheets of 10, and a black print (in monochrome) was also issued.
Austria’s celebration of a tourist attraction as popular as the Wiener Riesenrad in collaboration with the Lego® company shows substantial significance in comparison to previous appearances of Lego® on stamps, as it displays a partnership celebrating the anniversaries of two separate nations simultaneously and as a result, a more direct form of acknowledgement from abroad.

*Figure 12. Austria 2022. Lego®. Stamp sheetlet.*

*Figure 13. Austria 2022. Lego®. First Day Cover, showing the first Lego® cancellation.*
The latest country to issue Lego® stamps is Switzerland, which released two designs on 11 November 2022. These featured a brick-built cow next to a brick-built flag of Switzerland and a brick-built chalet. Both have a background featuring brick-built clouds and trees, coloured in green and white, respectively. The cow design has a face value of CHF 0.90. The Swiss Post stated that their aim with these more rural themes was to create a sense of home for local people. Each design was released in a sheet of 10, which featured a relevant background of either a grassy field with even more cows for the cow design, or a snowy plain for the chalet design. The process through which this design came to be displays even more recognition of the company, as the Swiss Post made a request to the Lego® group for a partnership. This, along with the partnership with Austria, shows an ever-increasing desirability for international collaborations with the brand.

Lego®’s presence in the philatelic scene is thus shown to be growing, most notably from the 2010s onwards, with more directly-related stamp designs being issued and collaborations being requested over this period compared to the previous 20 years. With the additional consideration of the increasing popularity of Lego® products, marked by increased sales and retail outlets, it seems that we will be seeing a lot more Lego® on stamps in the future.