



## Artistic Wild Cats

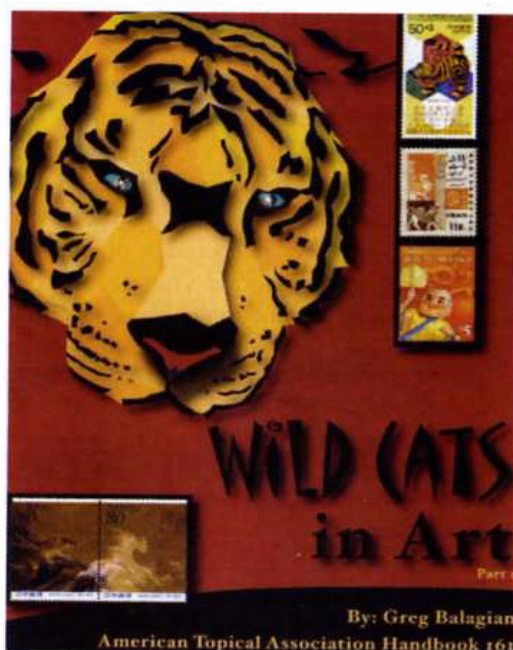
*Wild Cats in Art*, by Greg Balagian. ATA Handbook #161, \$75 (\$72 for ATA members, plus \$5 postage to United States; \$12 to Canada, \$23 elsewhere), 8-1/2" x 11" Soft cover, 2 Volumes. 357 pages, 2011.

This handbook, which I prefer to call a pictorial catalog, describes and illustrates stamps and souvenir sheets depicting wild cats in art, astrology, heraldry, mythology and religion. Hundreds of the some 2,500 full-color illustrations include accompanying vignettes that show the details of the felines in the art work on the stamps. The stamps are listed in alphabetical order by some 220 stamp issuing entities with date of issue and, when available, both Scott and Michel catalog numbers. Unlisted stamps are identified with a special designation. The unique feature of this catalog is a description of the feline image, its origin, the person or persons who created the image and the location of the original piece of art. Not included are paper types, perforations, watermarks and other specialized philatelic information.

More than 80 percent of the felines described and depicted are images of the lion, which are shown on marble and stone monuments, on doorknockers, figureheads, ceramic figurines, silver medallions, metal gates, bronze statues, wooden sculptures, as well as in heraldry and on paintings such as *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, by Rubens, shown on half-a-dozen stamps from different countries. Images of the lion can also be seen on ceramic pots, dancing costumes, embroidered blankets, jewelry boxes, children's kites, pillar boxes, porcelain vases and even in astrology.

Other felines included in far fewer numbers than the lion are the cheetah, jaguar, leopard, tiger and panther (also known as cougar or puma in North America). Images of the tiger can be seen as a Chinese toy, a mask and as a merry-go-round carousel. Images of the leopard appear on bronze vessels, medals and a Greek tomb, while images of the jaguar are pictured in Latin American art and sculptures. Images of the panther (and puma) are displayed on ceramic vessels and a jade vase. The cheetah can be found only on a single painting. Both the panther and the tiger also appear in syndicated comic strips.

There is one image of the extinct smilodon (sabre-toothed cat), but it is mythological lions



that are most intriguing. The Great Sphinx of Giza appears on many stamps, and is included, since this mythical creature consists of a lion's body with a human head. The griffin (Greek gryphos), a favorite decorative motif used by early metal workers, is a legendary creature with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. There are also images of the clinthe (half-lion and half-dragon); the Dragon of Marduk (with serpent's head, viper's horns, and paws of a lion's); the lamassu (half-lion, half-man); and the merlion (with the head of a lion and the body of a fish).

The catalog is divided into two volumes, with the first part covering countries from Aden to Israel, and the second volume for Italian Colonies to Yugoslavia. The table of contents does not identify the countries covered, but there is an index of countries at the end of the second volume. Unfortunately, this does not make it as easy as it enormous information for collectors of wild cats as well as those interested in history and especially Mythology. We recommend that you urge all philatelic libraries to add a copy to their shelves, and that you save your pennies so that you can eventually afford to add this handsome two-volume handbook to your personal library.

should be to locate a specific country. When thumbing through the two volumes, it could have been much easier if the name of the country had been published at the top of each page.

In addition to the index of countries, the second volume closes with a list of common design types, an addendum of late entries, which are not referenced in the index of countries; a most useful artist index of the persons who created many of the images; and a short list of bibliographical resources. There is also a biography of the author, who is a native of Armenia, where he served as president of the Armenian Philatelic Society before he moved to the United States in 1990.

This is the most ambitious of any handbook ever published by the ATA, and therefore it is the most attractive, but also the most expensive. However, it provides

The booklet includes an anthology of 21 articles originally published in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* from July 1953 to December 2007, plus, a specially written article on Prince William. More than 500 worldwide stamps from the Stanley Gibbons Archives are illustrated in full color.