

**Glory of Spain, Tiepolo (1764)
By Greg Balagian**

Italian painter and printmaker Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770), was the last of the great Venetian decorators of Italian Rococo style, and arguably the greatest painter of the 18th century. He was extraordinarily prolific.

In 1761 Charles III invited Tiepolo to Spain to decorate the Royal Palace in Madrid. He arrived the next year with his sons and assistants and painted the huge ceilings in four years.

The Glory of Spain, in the ceiling fresco in the Throne Room, portrays the glorification of the Spanish nation, which in the course of the 16th and 17th centuries had developed into one of the leading European powers, politically, geographically and culturally.

The fragment of this fresco, called "America" is shown on the 2012 souvenir sheet from Burundi, commemorating the 520th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. [See page 48.]

My first reaction was that Tiepolo depicted a Spanish (or Iberian) lynx in that fragment (that also shows a pelt in the center) due to the Spanish theme. But after further investigation and analy-

Tiepolo, continued on page 57



Burundi's souvenir sheet depicts Tiepolo's "America," part of *Glory of Spain* with a wild cat on the right side.



sis, I came to the conclusion that it is a bobcat because the painting is dedicated to the New World. As there are no alligators in Spain (and there is one in the painting), I am assuming that Tiepolo was depicting fauna of the Americas. The feline's fur pattern also resembles that of a bobcat. ♣

Tracy's Tiger

By Greg Balagian

Tracy's Tiger (1951) was written by the Pulitzer Prize winning American writer of Armenian descent William Saroyan (1908-81).

The novelette is about the relationship between a man and a tiger which was at first only in his imagination. Later the tiger becomes visible and is apprehended by a police officer in New York City.

In September Slovakia issued the *Tracy's Tiger* stamp shown on page 94 and a postmark on page 100. ♣

**Central African Republic: Rubens
By Greg Balagian**

Central African Republic issued a large set in 2011 commemorating the art of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), the great Flemish baroque painter.

On the selvage of one of the souvenir sheets there is a detail of his famous painting *Allegory on the Blessings of Peace* oil on canvas (6.7 x 9.8 ft/203.5 x 298 cm), contrasting the blessings of peace with the horrors of war.

There is a leopard in this beautiful work that is on its back reaching for grapes, part of the "spiral theme accompanying the greater activity of the allegory."*

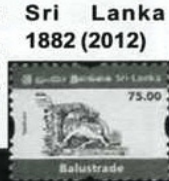
The painting, also on Paraguay 2205 (1987), is in the collection at the National Gallery in London. ♣

**Sri Lanka Yali Balustrade
By Greg Balagian**

I discovered that the 75 rupee stamp in the Moonstones set depicts the Hindu mythological creature Yali, which is a composite of parts from three animals: lion, elephant and serpent. The head, body and mane are of a lion.

Yalis are temple protectors, portrayed looking backwards. The yali is on a balustrade from Yapahuwa, Sri Lanka, dated at c. XII century. ♣

A temple guardian Yali creature--lion, elephant, serpent--is on a stamp from Sri Lanka. The Mew Listing is on page 124.



ARTY CATS, continued

**The 'Striding Lions' of Babylonia
By Greg Balagian**

Ishtar, the strong and powerful Babylonian goddess of love and war, was symbolized by the lion. During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (ca. 604-562 B.C.), the Ishtar Gate and 'Processional Way' were built in her honor near what is now Baghdad, Iraq.

The Ishtar Gate is decorated with images of sacred dragons of Marduk (having the front paws of a lion) and bulls.



A 'striding lion,' Germany DDR 875 (1966). See back cover.

Nearly a half mile long, the 'Processional Way' is a walled street with a colorful frieze or decorative band of 'striding lions' with open mouths and bared teeth, 60 on one side facing toward the gate and temple and 60 more on the opposite side facing the opposite side facing away.

Though it may look like a mosaic, the actual technique for the animal and flower designs used large baked and molded terracotta bricks to create a dimensional bas-relief effect that was covered with a polychrome glaze. As age and the elements wore down the bricks, the glaze often cracked adding to the impression of mosaics.

The magnificent intense blue color of the contrasting background was achieved by using ground lapis lazuli, a semiprecious stone that comes from the Badakhshan region in Afghanistan, often used by ancient artisans.

Pieces from the Ishtar Gate and "Processional Way" have been dispersed all over the world to various museums. The gate has been reconstructed in Berlin and is on several stamps.

The 'striding lions' were issued on a pair of stamps from Germany's Democratic Republic in 1966 (Scott 875, 876). See page 23 for a postmark from Germany and the back cover. ♣