

Why Exhibit?

And the Development of a Title Page

Eileen Meier

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If you have read this far and your answer is "Yes, I would like to do an exhibit" then let me give you a page by page description on how I improved my one frame exhibit, "The Twelve Labors of Hercules", from a local show Honorable Mention to a National Level Gold award over the time span 1989 to 1998.

This thematic exhibit was shown twice in competition and one time noncompetitive as husband, Harry, was asked to judge a local show at the last minute.

The title page is the first page which the viewer or the judge sees but it is the last page that one types. That will become clear as we proceed. You have an idea and a description of your exhibit when you decide to apply to a show. The show announcement in the philatelic press will give the name and address of the exhibits chairperson who will send you the exhibit prospectus and entry form.

Read the prospectus carefully as it gives the rules and regulations governing exhibits. By signing the official entry form the exhibitor states that the exhibit is their bona-fide property and its preparation represents the owner's efforts. The exhibitor accepts the stated rules and regulations of the show. The entry form must include the exhibitor's name. A nom de plume may be used in the show program. I chose the nom de plume of Athena. My SPCA special house cat is named Athena after Hercules' patron goddess. Athena sits on the desk and oversees the preparation of my exhibit pages.

Also included is the exhibit title and a brief description of the exhibit for the official program, a photocopy of the title and plan page, the class one chooses to compete in and the number of frames needed. One also includes the appropriate frame fee and indicates how the exhibit will get to and from the show.

Applications are usually considered on a first come, first served basis. Failure to exhibit after an exhibit has been accepted usually means forfeiting the entry fee.

The NTSS being an all thematic show means that all the entries in the one frame class will be in the thematic class, while the one frame class at most shows is open to all types of exhibits including thematics.

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Before you send your application in you will layout your 16 pages following a Plan which outlines your development of theme. When you have your rough draft, you will see if you have accomplished your goal - an entry which has indeed lived up to its title and description. If not you can either change your title and description or you can do a second draft in keeping with your original description. The application is sent to the show before the deadline in their prospectus. The show will notify you if your application has been accepted. An entry may be rejected if the number of frames has been filled before your application was received. Therefore, it is advisable to write for an application as soon as you see the show's notice of who the chairperson is. Also send the completed application back to the exhibits chairperson as soon as possible.

My first title page (see Page 11): "The Greek Hero Heracles (Hercules)" and the description: "Hercules is best known for his performance of the twelve labors and by his Roman name Hercules". I chose Syria's 1947 souvenir sheet (Scott C141 a) for the title page. At that time, the title page wasn't judged and you could use a philatelic inspired item. The souvenir sheet was sold to the collector with the hope that it would not be used as postage. Its price was above the face value and money raised benefited the First Arab Archaeological Congress which was held at Damascus, Syria. Under the souvenir sheet I noted that the 12.50p value shows Heracles and the Nemean Lion.

I received a written critique which pointed out that there were two 12.50p stamps in the sheet so the 12.50p vertical stamp looked like Heracles rather than the 12.50p horizontal stamp. I also used thematic and philatelic write-up in the same sentence. Usually the thematic information is placed above the item, while the philatelic information is placed under the item.

My title wasn't clear in its scope and the description did not indicate if I was giving a life story from birth to the death of Heracles or covering only the twelve labors. My next page did not give a plan but told the story of Heracles' birth. In this first exhibit I attempted to tell Heracles' entire life story - too much to cover in 16 pages!

The second Title Page (see Page 12) was much improved. Now the judges were including the title page in their evaluation of an exhibit. I used an Indian meter and an Austrian pictorial cancel to show philatelic knowledge of material other than stamps which fit into my theme. This made the point that countries geographically far apart knew of the Greek hero and his exploits. My Plan gave the road map of my story, that is Hercules' performance of the Twelve Labors. The footnote explained that today many figures from Greek mythology are known by

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their Roman names.

The third and most recent title page (see Page 13) has a more clear, concise thematic write-up plus philatelic items showing the Eleventh Labor that will get the judge's attention. All judges like to see interesting philatelic items in an exhibit that are hard to acquire like the meter from India and the early 20th century Greek trial color proof and the stamp issued in 1906 (Scott 189) depicting Atlas and Heracles. The Eleventh Labor will not appear again until the last row of my exhibit. Remember your title page may be compared to a book's cover. Its purpose is to get the viewer to want to read the entire book (exhibit) and it sets the philatelic tone of what is to come. The judges should be discreetly told to pay attention, look at me - you are going to see a terrific exhibit. My most recent title is "The Twelve Labors of Hercules". My current description for the show program reads, "Mythological Greek hero Hercules' performance of his major labors including appropriate star tales."

Due to space limitations in a one frame exhibit, the title and plan pages are combined.

Your plan should act as a blueprint to your development of the theme, that is it acts like the table of contents page of a book. Coverage and development of theme account for 20 points maximum so your title and plan contribute greatly to this judging category. A good first impression (first page) will go a long way in earning the necessary points to a high award while a bad first impression is hard to overcome.

My next article will explain thematic judging criteria and the scoring system and the use of philatelic elements appropriate to your chosen theme. I will provide you with ideas on how to do pages 2 to 16.