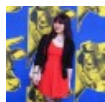


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ARTS

Gary Taxali brings joy and style to the Royal Canadian Mint's 2012 celebratory coin series



MELODY LAU | Jan 23, 2012 3:00 PM ET | Last Updated: Jan 23, 2012 3:01 PM ET

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Gary Taxali's wedding-themed quarter represents gender-neutral marriage.

Royal Canadian Mint

Beavers, moose and maple leaves — these are the markers on our national currency that we've come to know and associate with our country's identity. Gary Taxali will change that. The internationally renowned artist has teamed up with The Royal Canadian Mint for a series of six 2012 celebratory coins that promises to bring ice cream cones, tooth fairies and smiley faces to our quarters. When was the last time a moose on a quarter smiled at you?

The Toronto-based artist, whose resume spans from *The New York Times* and *Rolling Stone* to Converse and Levi's, as well as a teaching position at OCAD, was contracted by the Royal Mint to design six coins, each reflecting a specific theme. Given complete artistic freedom, Taxali brought life to the themes of birthday, new baby, wedding, tooth fairy, O Canada and holiday.

"Creative freedom is kind of an understatement," says Taxali. "It was easy, fluid, balanced and it was fun and collaborative. It was so much creative freedom that it got to the point where I was waiting for some higher-up to be like, 'Oh, this is crazy, we

can't do that!'

"I'm sure it was hard for them to say 'yeah' because it's a bit of a leap on their part since the themes in the past tended to be a bit on the conservative side, in terms of imagery. Mine are little whacky characters with their tongues sticking out. I didn't feel once that I compromised myself, artistically."

Beyond that, the Royal Mint allowed a few firsts: Taxali was allowed to imprint his initials on each coin and was also allowed to use his own font style called 'Chumpy'. In short, he got the "entire real estate."

"It's a dream job and every time I talk about it, the only word I can really describe is honour," says Taxali. "It's a huge, huge honour to be bestowed this kind of privilege and we came up with a really good representation of my work."

The coin that Taxali is most proud of is the wedding-themed coin, featuring two intertwining rings that represent a gender-neutral marriage.

"I live in a country where gender is irrelevant and the coin has to represent that," says Taxali. "I thought it would be a nice thing to represent that and to show two rings; is one a man and one a woman? Two men? Two women? It doesn't matter what they are, they represent the union of two people.

"The Royal Mint really liked that idea because it represents the spirit of our nation and also, I think that it's empowering to somebody and hopefully this calling will send a powerful message that we're all the same and a wedding is a wedding. I think this is probably the first piece of currency in the world, paid by a federal government that is pro-wedding regardless of gender and that makes me really happy."

The significance behind this, as Taxali explains, is not only commendable, on our country's part, but also indicative of our identities outside of the conservative images of the wildlife and maple leaves.

"I think it says that our country is young and open-minded; I think that it says we're cool!" says Taxali. "We've got something to say and maybe this is a bit of a benchmark, it says that we are our money and our stamps are a reflection of the citizens."

In Taxali's reflective modesty, he muses that this project could've been handed to many other artists and that he just lucked out as the first. He hopes that this will spark more future collaborations, though, as Canada's booming with a bevy of talent.

"There are so many artists that would do so many amazing coins," explains Taxali. "The stuff that we use is currency and the stuff that we use to represent Canadian symbols should be made by people who have different points of views and ideals because that's what the country is comprised of."

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Discussion

Community



Rock Strongo • 8 months ago

Only Canada would commemorate "gender neutral marriage" on Her Majesty's currency.

Note to Liberals: Canada is more than your radical social agenda.

18 ^ | v • Share ›



SouthernFriend • 8 months ago • parent

We've only just met, but I don't think I like you.

4 ^ | v • Share ›



Rock Strongo • 8 months ago • parent

Well, that would be your loss then.

0 ^ | v • Share ›



Seb Romu • 8 months ago


In the interest of halting dis-information. The animal depicted on our 25 cent piece is in fact a caribou, and not a moose.

17 ^ | v • Share ›



DonnyB_ • 8 months ago

What an excellent article. I appreciate the author's ability to bring attention to the issue of the 25 cent piece. The "Note to Liberals" is also a great addition.

 what an excellent way to encourage charitable giving. I certainly know if I get any of those crappy coins in change, I'm likely to immediately discard them into the charity boxes next to the cash register.

12 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **DaBilk** • 8 months ago

How much did this cost the taxpayer...hmmm? What a waste.

11 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **SouthernFriend** • 8 months ago

To all who are bothering to spend the time writing negative comments about this collection, I can say only this: why? The mint is guaranteed to make money on this endeavor since they're currently selling a single quarter for \$20, so you have no solid economic objection. The marriage coin is gender-neutral, so you only see it as a pro-homosexual message if you choose to, then once you've made that choice, you can only object if your heart is full of hate – manufactured hate for gender-free cartoon representations of circles (making you a kind of ridiculous person). If the art isn't to your taste, who cares? Have you so loved the endless parade of ducks and royals that preceded this collection? Can't an everyday object be whimsical and fun? If not, why not? Gary Taxali is an internationally famous Canadian treasure who clearly has a huge heart and a generous spirit – qualities that I tend to attach to Canadians as a people. I'm from Detroit and have always felt a great kinship to you, my northern next-door neighbors and my fondest hope is that one day the US will have the vision to allow similar contemporary artists to add to our culture at such a basic and widespread level. Go Canada!

8 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **Mike from Saskatoon** • 8 months ago

eh. The rings are fine, but the overall feel is extremely childish. I wish they would have incorporated the design into a traditional coin.

Of course, maybe the RCM will be truly progressive and allow the next special edition to be designed by the conservative crowd. Perhaps a symbol of one of our cathedrals, our armed forces, or something else celebrating our traditional Canadian values and cultural heritage.

8 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **Rock Strongo** • 8 months ago • parent

Thanks for the chuckle Mike. ;)

1 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **charly63** • 8 months ago

How very sad Canada has come to this. I sincerely hope the Canadian mint comes to regret their decision. Unfortunately I don't think they will, which is another sad statement on Canadianism 2012.

7 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **TOJack** • 8 months ago

An outstanding decision by the Mint! I love Taxali's work. How refreshing!

4 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **Moara** • 8 months ago

Blerg. I hate these new coins. While the artwork is not to my taste, and the themes are rather lame, the part that really offends me is the artists signature on the face. Our currency is something I think all Canadians should be able to take pride of ownership in, and I think the signature interferes with that.

1 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **Bif_Armstrong** • 8 months ago

Good Grief People. The animal on the quarter is not a moose or a caribou. Its an ELK!

1 ^ | | v • Share ›

 **Bird River Loon** • 8 months ago • parent

Don't you remember the song?

"Oh a quarter has a caribou on it, on it. A quarter has a caribou, that's me!"

0 ^ | v • Share ›



Thecoffeedrinker • 8 months ago • parent

It is most decidedly a caribou. Pull one out (a quarter that is) and observe the antlers. Then compare to both elk and caribou.

0 ^ | v • Share ›



Consider this.. • 8 months ago • parent

Correct, it is a caribou, perhaps some of the experts here could take a peek at the Royal Canadian Mint website for guidance.

0 ^ | v • Share ›



WhitmanCoinBooks • 8 months ago

Very interesting designs. The artwork is very recognizable across the globe. It will be interesting to see if the coins are collected outside of Canada.

0 ^ | v • Share ›

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