

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHACÓN MADONNA & CHILD WITH BIRD **COMMEMORATED ON NEW U.S. POSTAL STAMPS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The new 2006 Holiday stamp *Madonna and Child with Bird*, was issued today at the Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO.

As host to the event, Denver holds the unique distinction of being the only city in the nation where the stamps are available today. The stamps will be available nationwide Oct. 18.

The 2006 Christmas stamp features an oil-on-canvas painting entitled *Madonna and Child with Bird*. Dating to around 1765, the painting is attributed to Ignacio Chacón — an artist active from about 1745 to 1775 in Cuzco, Peru. The painting is currently on view at the Denver Art Museum.

“Chacón has created a mesmerizing image that captures the solemnity and peace of the holiday season in the tranquil faces of the mother and child set against a beautiful backdrop of flowers and sparkling gold,” said Katherine Tobin, member of the presidentially-appointed Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service, who dedicated the stamp.

“We are honored that the Denver Art Museum’s *Madonna and Child with Bird* painting was chosen for the 2006 Traditional Christmas stamp,” said Dr. Lewis Sharp, Director of the Frederick and Jan Mayer Denver Art Museum. “We have a long-standing relationship with the U.S. Postal Service, and we are pleased with their selection of this work of art. It is very appropriate that this fine work from the Denver Art Museum introduce our collections to the nation at the same time that we celebrate the opening of our internationally renowned Daniel Libeskind-designed expansion building.”

Joining Tobin at the ceremony were Vicki Aybar-Sterling, Assistant Director of the Denver Art Museum, and Dr. Donna Pierce, Curator of Spanish Colonial Art of the Frederick and Jan Mayer Denver Art Museum.

The theme of each traditional U.S. Christmas stamp issued since 1978 has been the Madonna and Child, and these holiday stamps have attracted a devoted following over the years. Ignacio Chacón’s *Madonna and Child with Bird* underscores the appreciation of this timeless genre. The painting is a striking reminder of the diversity inherent in the spread of Christianity to the New World.

Spanish colonial art flourished in the New World between the mid-16th and early-19th centuries, especially in Mexico and Peru, where native artists developed distinctive regional styles by combining



native subjects with European artistic traditions. Peru's colonial art tradition began in Cuzco, the former capital of the Inca empire, and that city soon became the main art center in the Andes highlands. The mestizo-baroque style that emerged there in the mid-17th century came to be called the Cuzco School. Characterized by elements such as floral borders, vivid coloring and *brocateado de oro* (gold-leaf overlay), the mestizo-baroque style became more elaborate over time and flourished during the late 17th and 18th centuries.

Ignacio Chacón was a student and friend of Marcos Zapata, a master painter of the Cuzco School, who was active from 1748 to 1764. Zapata's students continued his personal interpretation of the mestizo-baroque style — a red, white, and blue color scheme embellished with brocateado de oro, which is readily apparent in Chacón's *Madonna and Child with Bird*.

Rendered in exquisite detail against a dark background, both figures are brightly clothed in red and white and cloaked in the Virgin's sumptuous, gold-patterned blue mantle. Their halos, which are also enhanced with gold leaf overlay, radiate luminously behind their heads. A painted border of red, white, and blue flowers frames the composition. A small red, white and blue bird in flight is tethered within the floral border by a red ribbon that the Christ Child grasps with his right hand. In his left hand he holds a tiny bouquet of red and white flowers.

A famous painting by Spanish artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo entitled *La Sagrada Familia del Pajarito* (*The Holy Family of the Little Bird*) probably served as an indirect prototype for Chacón's *Madonna and Child with Bird*. The importance of birds in Inca culture would have made the topic of Murillo's painting particularly resonant in Peru. Birds were sacred to the Inca, partially because of their ability to fly and move closer to Inti, the sun god. In Cuzco, colonial artists often incorporated birds or feathers into images of the Virgin and Christ to indicate their divine status.

In designing the stamp, Michael Osborne slightly cropped the painting's floral frame and surrounded the composition with a gold border that echoes Chacón's use of gold-leaf embellishments.

Philatelic Products

There is one philatelic product available for this stamp issue.

- Item # 674986 - Christmas: Chacon Madonna & Child with Bird Framed Art with Stamp - \$35.

How to Order First Day Covers

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly USA Philatelic catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 1-800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

Information Fulfillment
Dept. 6270
U.S. Postal Service
P.O. Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at the Postal Store Website at www.usps.com/shop, by telephone at 1-800-STAMP-24, or at their local Post Office. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes – to themselves or others – and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Madonna and Child with Bird Stamps
Philatelic Office

Downtown Station
951 20th Street
Denver, CO 80202-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by Nov. 16, 2006.

For more information on the *Madonna and Child with Bird* stamp, visit the [2006 Commemorative Stamp Program](#). For information on the Denver Art Museum, visit denverartmuseum.org.

Four additional holiday stamp subjects are available. *Holiday Snowflakes*, the 2006 contemporary holiday stamp; *Kwanzaa*, the celebration of family, community and culture; *Hanukkah*, the Jewish Festival of Lights; and *EID*, the Muslim Holiday.

Since 1775, the United States Postal Service and its predecessor, the Post Office Department, have connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency that visits more than 144 million homes and businesses every day, the Postal Service is the only service provider delivering to every address in the nation. It receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of \$70 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume — some 212 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves ten million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.

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