

# Commentary on an e-Bay Lot

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Ed. Note: In the Auction Watch of this Bulletin was an eBay lot spotted by Stephen. Below are observations he made about this unusual item.

This is the *carmine* 1fr.50 airmail stamp with the perfin 'E.I.P.A.30. For the Exposition Internationale de la Poste Aérienne there was a special printing in ultramarine of the 1fr.50 airmail stamp which had been issued earlier in 1930 in both carmine and blue. The perfin was placed into some, but not all, of the special printing in ultramarine. After consulting Scott, Yvert & Tellier, and Sanabria, I sent an inquiry to the seller, "What does the number 6d refer to? Yvert & Telier assigns 6c to the ultramarine E.I.P.A.30 perfin. It does not list the carmine stamp with perfin. Scott and Sanabria likewise do not list the carmine with perfin." The seller's response was, "It refers to the Yvert & Tellier catalogue for airmail stamps: For the perfins, 6c = outremer (= Blue), 6d = carmin (= Red) Greetings." (Actually, "outremer" is "ultramarine", not blue.)

I do not have a copy of the Y&T airmail catalogue, but poking around on the Worldwide Web located multiple references to the carmine perfin. A particularly interesting item found on the Web was on the site of the ASPPI (ASsociation de Protection des Philatélistes et collectionneurs contre les fraudes et arnaques sur le Internet [Association for the Protection of Philatelists and collectors against frauds and swindles on the Internet]) which states, "Certaines personnes astucieuses ont réussi a faire perforer le timbre de couleur carmin et ce a l'insu des organisateurs ou les ont mis devant le fait accompli. Tout le monde est d'accord de dire que 5 feuilles de 25 timbres ont ainsi été perforés, soit 125 timbres. Or ce timbre est souvent proposé à la vente, authentique, dans des ventes aux enchères et ailleurs. Bien plus que le nombre de 125 timbres ayant officiellement existés. Certains catalogues ont simplement arrêté de mentionner celui-ci. Ce timbre n'est pas collectionnable à mon avis." The original French itself is not flawless. The following is the translation produced with the help of my wife, a

quondam French teacher: Certain astute persons succeeded in causing the carmine-colored stamp to be perforated; and this [was done] without the knowledge of the organizers, or they were presented with a fait accompli. Everyone agrees that 5 sheets of 25 stamps were thus punched, i.e., 125 stamps. But this stamp is often offered for sale, "authentic", in auctions and other sales. Many more than the 125 stamps which have officially existed. Certain catalogues have simply stopped mentioning this [stamp]. My advice is that the stamp is not [properly] collectible."

What we are dealing with, then, is an item which was created without authorization in the first place and of which there are many more copies floating about than were actually produced! Flashing right in the listing are the blazing red lights "...NOT EXPERTISED..." and "...sold 'AS IS..". (The seller is located in Belgium.) Nevertheless, 24 bids were entered by four distinct bidders to drive the item from the opening bid of 1¢ to the final price of \$363.88.

The carmine 1fr50 with perfin shows up on various sites with offers such as €2,190 (Comptoire Philatelique de Monaco, certified by A. Brun), £1,000 (opening bid, Harmer's of London, perfin reversed and inverted in the margin, signed Calves), £800 (estimate, Cambridgeshire Philatelic Auctions, signed Calves), \$3,500 (perfin reversed, Sismondo Stamps, Dreyfus Certificate), €1,250 (Stamp Circuit Club [Van Looy & Van Looy, Netherlands], with photo certificate).

The scan of the eBay offering shows a rather faint postmark with the upper part of a rectangular frame with rounded corners enclosing three lines of text in all caps. The text can be only partially deciphered, but it does not seem to be related to the exposition for which the perfin was created. My own guess [sic] is that the perfin is fake, punched into a used copy of the carmine stamp.