

# MINT NEWS QUARTERLY™

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## Finnish Coin Series Removed by Order of Ministry



The Finnish National Day is 6 December, when the entire country celebrates its independence. During the 1917 October Revolution, the Finnish Senate declared its independence from Russia, which was approved by the Soviet Russian government a few weeks later. Since 1919, Independence Day has been solemnised every year in both private and public life. This day is an important Finnish public holiday, which will receive special attention in 2017, as it marks the 100th anniversary.

Within the framework of the festivities planned for this occasion, Mint of Finland had planned to issue a series of commemorative coins entitled 'The Decades of Independence'. This series was intended to consist of five coins with a face value of €5, to recall five periods that shaped Finnish history.

With 4,000 specimens in proof quality and another 15,000 in uncirculated, the mintage was comparatively low. Of the popular 'Presidents of Finland' series, also with a face value of €5, currently 6,000 proof pieces and 30,000 uncirculated pieces are being issued.

The initial coin was scheduled to be released on 4 May 2017. The other four coins were planned to become available between 2017 and 2019.

### The designer

In a tender competition, arranged by the separately-appointed collector coin committee, the internationally-renowned and multiple award-winning architect and designer Ilkka Suppanen was chosen as designer. Among his customers are Nokia and Saab.

His works of art already form part of the permanent exhibition of various museums of modern or applied arts, such as the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Museum of Applied Arts in Cologne. The New York MoMA has devoted an exhibition to him.

Suppanen's idea was to look at Finnish history from two different angles. He did not want to merely call the glorious past to mind, but rather use one side of the coin to emphasise the achievements, as well as – on the other side – the challenges and difficulties of the relevant era.

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## Social Media in a Crisis

Social media is considered a great way to get as close to the customers as possible. The problem is that not all customers are nice people. The opposite is true.

Many a whinger is only happy when he can vent his anger. Raising his voice and attracting attention, he is thus taken more serious than somebody who uses balanced words to express a well-founded opinion.

While a private company can decide for itself how to deal with criticism on the internet, mints always have to consider a third party: politics. Although, in theory, the mint operates as an independent company, its products are associated with the state. And so some politicians become nervous when they feel attacked indirectly through the mint.

This is precisely what happened to Mint of Finland. When it published the commemorative coin series 'Decades of Independence' on Instagram on 24 April 2017, many Finns posted their responses. Not all of these were negative.

And yet these comments prompted the Finnish Minister of Finance – within three hours and on his own authority – to initiate the process necessary to repeal the decree on the production of the collector coin series. This was a political decision, not an economic one.

So all the careful work and thoughts specialists invested in this coin series fell prey to a handful of whingers and the gut instincts of a politician. That's kind of demotivating, isn't it?

Ursula Kampmann, Editor

# Detecting Fake Collectors' Coins

**Well-known numismatic journalist Beth Deisher has been elected President of the US-based ICTA's Anti-Counterfeiting Task Force, which will work on solutions to fake collectors' coins. She will supervise eight different work groups focusing as follows:**

- Law enforcement liaison: identify areas of cooperation and develop working relationships with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies;
- Expert networks: identify and develop teams of experts in various areas of the US who can identify counterfeits for law enforcement agencies and act as expert witnesses to testify in court proceedings;
- Education: develop curriculum, workshops, and seminars to assist in educating law enforcement professionals about counterfeit coins and paper money in the marketplace;
- Research: assist law enforcement by identifying methods of entry and distribution networks of counterfeit coins and paper money in the US;
- Packaging security: develop direct channels of communication for law enforcement to be able to identify counterfeit third-party coin and paper money holders, fake certificates, and product packaging of various federal and private mints;
- Transport and storage security: identify and develop best practice standards to prevent the infiltration of counterfeit coin and bullion products into commercial transport and storage facilities;
- Laws and regulations: review and identify changes needed in current local, state, and federal laws and regulations regarding the manufacture, possession, and buying and selling of counterfeit coins and paper money. Also, review and identify changes needed to prohibit the use of fake certificates and packaging and the marketing of such items, including advertising practices in print and online offerings;
- Finance and fundraising: develop annual task force budget. Develop and implement fund-raising campaign to generate sufficient funding to support the work of the task force.

## Finnish Coin Series *(Continued)*

Focusing on 1917-1939, the planned first release therefore features a death squad, as had occurred in the Civil War in the aftermath of the Declaration of Independence.

The design is based on a contemporary photo. The other side depicts an important achievement in the era's architecture, the Helsinki Olympic Stadium, completed in 1938.

According to Mint of Finland's press release of 25 April 2017, Suppanen elaborated on this motif: 'the collector coin is not a celebration of the civil war, but highlights the fact that Finland pulled through this difficult period. I chose the civil war as the motif for the obverse side of the first coin in the series because it tells about the most significant challenge during the period 1917-1939, and how the country recovered from that challenge. The collector coin is based on a photograph in the Labour Archives, which I think tells most clearly about the nature of the civil war.'

### The Finnish Civil War

The Finnish Civil War, which took place from 27 January-5 May 1918, left a society that was deeply divided. The conservative forces, backed by the Germans, had triumphed over the labour movement militarised by the events in Russia. As a result, the social democratic politicians remained excluded from the government for almost two decades, until 1937.

During the war, acts of violence were carried out, known today as Red and White Terror: 7,370 members of the labour movement were executed, 11,652 died of famine and pestilence in internment camps, and 1,767 are still officially posted as missing. Among the conservatives, 1,424 people fell victim to the cleansings.

Considering that in 1910 Finland had a population of less than 3 million, more than 1% of the entire population lost their life in less than a year. This constitutes a trauma that seems to be still latently present in the society.

### A mirror of our time?

Another motif that caused a stir among the public featured on the last planned coin, with which Ilkka Suppanen aimed at capturing our times. Suppanen used as his inspiration a photograph taken by Nilüfer Kandirmis Demir, which shows the dead body of Alan Kurdi. The drowned three-year-old boy had been swept to the shore near Bodrum in September 2015.

His photo had sparked global discussions about what press photographs may do to jolt the public, and what not.

### Chronology of an outrage

On 24 April 2017, Mint of Finland published two photos on Instagram: one showed all five coins of the series, with the shooting

scene and the scene with the dead boy in a prominent position. Another one showed the coin side with the firing squad in detail.

Around noon of 25 April 2017, a discussion about the coin imagery started on social media. Not all expressions were negative. The new coin motif also received 'likes' as well.

The comments, on the other hand, were rather negative. They ranged from 'shocking shit' to 'shot their own people? A dead refugee child stranded on the beach? 100 years Finland, a great party!', to relatively balanced contributions such as 'the brutalities of the civil war seem to be one aspect of the difficulties of this era. The purpose is probably good, but the execution is very problematic.'

The indignation quickly spread to other media, and reader comments flooded the online magazines. In the social networks, alternative coin motifs circulated which further increased and caricatured what people had considered to be tasteless.

In the afternoon, Minister of Finance, Petteri Orpo apologised to the public and said that he hoped that the coins would not be issued. The only detailed English publication on this comes from the internet version of rt news, which quoted the minister as follows: 'to my astonishment I discovered that the Mint of Finland had designed commemorative coins, on which there is what I see as a very tasteless picture. I don't understand how it matches the spirit of Finland's 100th anniversary- in any way at all. I actually hope that this coin will be withdrawn.'

At 16.08, Petteri Orpo announced that he had initiated a process to repeal the Decree on the Decades of Independence Collector Coin Series, which means that the planned coins cannot be issued.

Following the media furore, it had taken the Ministry of Finance about three hours to take action. According to the Finnish media, when making the decision all by himself the Minister had not even contacted the president of the committee responsible for choosing this design.

On the same day, 25 April 2017, Mint of Finland published on its website a press release on the ministerial decision with the headline 'Mint of Finland regrets the bad feeling caused by images on its collector coins series.' Two weeks later, the Mint had deleted the relevant Instagram posting. Images of the planned series are no longer available for publication.

### Minister of Finance, Petteri Orpo

Petteri Orpo has been Finland's Minister of Finance since June 2016. Since 2007, he has been a member of the Parliament of Finland and has already served as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry as well as Minister of the Interior. As Minister of

Finance, he took over from his predecessor, Alexander Stubb, after the coup vote, with which he asserted himself against Stubb as the new leader of the National Coalition Party (Kok).

The National Coalition Party was founded by monarchists in 1918 and is thus one of the victors in the Finnish Civil War. Today, it propagates liberal ideas, for instance the free market economy and the European Union.

### The approval process for commemorative coins

It is surprising that Orpo expressed surprise at the coin motifs. After all, the Decree on the release of these coins bears his signature. In a press release, he provides an explanation: 'I did not pay enough attention to the visual design of the regulation, but I was confident about the commemorative board proposal. I apologise for the incident. This regulation is repealed and the whole is reconsidered.'

In fact, extensive measures have been taken in Finland to ensure that the coin motifs meets the highest artistic standards and the will of the Ministry of Finance. Actually, the Ministry of Finance could have intervened in several steps in the coin

designing process, long before the launch of the coin series took place.

Although Mint of Finland operates as an independent company, it is closely linked to the Finnish government. First, all shares are state-owned. Second, Mint of Finland has a legal monopoly on the minting of all commemorative and circulating coins.

To realise the commemorative coins marking the 100th anniversary of Finnish independence, a committee was established, its members having been appointed by the Ministry of Finance. They include representatives from the Ministry along with the Bank of Finland, Mint of Finland, the 'Finland 100 project' team, as well as from Aalto University and the Ateneum Art Museum.

The committee jointly draws up the proposals, without having any decision-making authority. It had organised a tender for the design of the commemorative coin which Ilkka Suppanen won. The committee proposed Ilkka Suppanen's designs to the Ministry of Finance. It was only after the Ministry of Finance's approval that the preparations for the coinage were realised. Though not a single coin was minted.

### Interpretations

By now, the rapid intervention of Minister Petteri Orpo is considered censorship by liberal media. Helsingin Sanomat, Finland's most influential newspaper, published a detailed comment on 27 April 2017: 'It is time to put an end to the stoning of Ilkka Suppanen, the designer of the Finnish 100th anniversary coins. He is a victim and not a culprit. Minister of Finance Petteri Orpo's (Kok) decision to ban the commemorative coin series and to withdraw it from sale infringes the designer's artistic expression. He has been subjected to state censorship. Sounds like a sanction, which is usually used only in dictatorial states. The censorship of Ilkka Suppanen is another visible blow to Finland's reputation as a model of freedom of expression.'

With this article, the focus of the question has shifted: did the coin images constitute the scandal, or was it the fact that the Minister of Finance, without consultation, revoked his approval in just three hours?

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# Instagram – Image Platform for Mints

By Björn Schöpe

**The opposition to the planned Finnish commemorative coin series began when Instagram users started to post negative comments on the two coin designs Mint of Finland had published. For all those who are not constantly surfing the web, here is a summary of what this platform offers and who uses it.**



Instagram is a social media platform for sharing photos and videos, with nearly 700 million active users in April 2017. Because of its great reach and ease of use, Instagram is not only interesting for private people, but also for companies.

### How to start

Instagram is used through a free app for smartphones. After the installation, you create a profile. Then you can upload photos or videos from your smartphone to your profile right away. There are sophisticated filters which also enable non-expert photographers to give their images a professional look.

### How to search and be found

To allow other users to find your photos or videos, you can add a comment to your pictures, a short text that includes hashtags (keywords). Everybody searching through a hashtag will get all the images linked to it in a chronological sequence. Thus, it is very important to upload new content on a regular basis.

You can order your photos in your profile by theme in so-called 'collections'.

As in other social media platforms, viewers can 'like' photos and videos, comment on and share these. If you do not want to lose sight of a profile, you can subscribe to it, 'follow' it.

### Mints become present

Many mints have already discovered Instagram: the British Royal Mint, Royal Canadian Mint, The Perth Mint, US Mint, Berlin State Mint, and Mint of Finland, to name just a few.

To find a company, you have to search for it. Therefore, the name of the profile should be clearly identifiable as being an official profile of a mint.

### Attract with extras

If you do not want to get lost in Instagram's flood of pictures, you will need not just well-chosen hashtags, but also meaningful images. On Instagram, mints present their new coins in front of thematically related subjects in the city, for instance.

As extras that are not available anywhere else, users may be shown previous designs or images from the production process. Photos of events, exhibitions, new production facilities or employees can also attract attention on Instagram.

Since July 2016, Instagram has offered business accounts with professional marketing opportunities. Commercial users can view specific statistics and create advertisements in the app.



# Communication in the Midst of a Crisis



Well-founded reflections over a period of months, which constitute the basis of every coin design, have been shelved in the case of the Finnish commemorative coin

as a result of a wave of public emotional outburst. What happens when a firestorm is forming? And what can you do about it? We asked an expert – Tobias R Keller, who has a doctorate in communication sciences from the University of Zurich's IPMZ and who teaches and researches, with a focus on social media.

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**Q:** Can you give us a brief summary of what happens during a typical firestorm?

**A:** In a very short time, a lot of negative comments, valuations or other responses to a particular topic or person are being published – usually on their social media page, for example on a Facebook page or an Instagram account. The criticism is often unspecific to the effect that varying problems are denounced in a firestorm.

**Q:** Why does it happen so fast on social media?

**A:** While in a bar such negative comments don't reach very far, on the internet and, above all, in social media a lot of people are writing at the same time, with large networks of friends. These negative messages spread to all their contacts who in turn react to these news – often also in a negative manner. Recent research has shown that very emotional postings cause a great many reactions.

**Q:** If you compare this with what happened in Finland, has Mint of Finland experienced a firestorm?

**A:** Since I've learned about this only after the incident took place and hence don't know the exact negative comments and the subsequent reporting, it's difficult to pin it down with certainty.

On the other hand, the subject is so charged with emotions, a lot of criticism was expressed rather quickly. This is typical of a firestorm. Whether or not it was simply

an ordinary amount of criticism, I can't say. Plus, if the negative comments were only focusing on the coin's motifs, the element of non-specific criticism would be missing.

**Q:** If the Minister hadn't pronounced his decision so rapidly, what could have been the best way for Mint of Finland to deal with its critics?

**A:** Social media users expect authenticity and transparency. On these platforms they feel as if they are 'among friends'. So, any community manager should also have a feeling for the language and the users of a platform – and, ideally, guess which messages might cause turmoil. The idea of showing both sides of 100 years of history on the coins did not meet the expectations of all the people on Instagram and has therefore offended.

However, there could have been a dialogue on the subjects on social media – between the users, the committee and the artist, at best. Although the critics may have raised their voices after all, it could have been possible to present to pros and cons in an orderly framework.

**Q:** What measures would you recommend to better involve politics?

**A:** On social media, communication takes place in the public eye most of the time. Thus, possible conflicts between the different public actors should be taken into account in advance.

## New Director for French Mint



**The French mint, La Monnaie de Paris, has a new Director General, Aurélien Rousseau. His predecessor, Christophe Beaux, stepped down from his position at the**

**end of March after two terms. Rousseau previously acted as Provisional Director.**

Aurélien Rousseau was born in 1976 and completed the elite university ENA with a doctorate. He then taught history and also held various functions in administration and politics. From 2001-2006, he worked in the city administration of the French capital. In 2009, he joined the Conseil d'État, France's supreme administrative court and, at the same time, a consultative body of the government. He also taught at Sciences Po and Université Paris 1.

In 2012, he became a member of the cabinet of the mayor of Paris, Bertrand

Delanoë, coordinating relations with the various arrondissements and supervising the staff department. He was also involved in school reforms and, as Secrétaire Général Adjoint de la Ville de Paris, supervised the completion of a large-scale project in 2014, when Paris grouped together with 130 communes to form the administrative structure 'Métropole du Grand Paris'.

In October 2015, Rousseau joined Prime Minister Manuel Valls' cabinet, advising on social policy, among others. Apart from labour law issues, he coordinated cooperation between various sectors including health, culture, education, integration, and agriculture. He was kept on in that role by Valls' successor, Bernard Cazeneuve, in December 2016.

Aurélien Rousseau has also written two plays and a novel, is a Chevalier des Palmes Académiques, has been awarded the Mérite Agricole and is an Officier des Arts et des Lettres.