

# Don Clark, Postage Stamp Designer

James E. Byrne

Don Clark, a commercial artist who has done work for the retailer Target, the rock band Foo Fighters, and publishers of children's books, among a lengthy list of clients, designed two sets of se-tenant postage stamps for the United States Postal Service. They illustrate different approaches to the visual connecting of stamps thematically.

For the 2022 holiday season, Clark designed a set of four stamps depicting elves working on the assembly line preparing toys for delivery. The conveyor belt connects the four stamps into a single story. The shapes of the faces and ears of the elves give them a unified appearance while the shades of skin tone give the four diversity. The scene is moved outdoors to suggest the season and the location, the northern realm where Santa has his workshop, but moving the scene outside eliminates the necessity for drawing the clutter of a typical assembly line. The subdued colors also convey a sense of calm not typically found in a sweatshop. The simplicity of design is key to the message and the appeal of the se-tenant block of four.



In contrast, Clark's se-tenant Dragons issued in 2018 use separate images to convey the diversity of dragons and where they lived. The dragons curve around buildings of different architectural styles or a ship to suggest separate stories from different places and times unified thematically by the artistic style. The vivid colors suggest the dramatic action associated with dragons. By curling the dragons around background details, Clark was able maximize the small space available to him on a postage stamp. The use of a vertical format gave Clark the ability to suggest the huge size of the dragons in contrast to the size of the buildings and the ship. The linear design of the background elements also contrasts to the flowing bodies of the dragons.

In these two sets of stamps, Don Clark demonstrates different ways in which the concept of se-tenant postage stamps can be manipulated to produce very different effects. Through these two sets of stamps, Clark also demonstrates that the design and artistic elements are as essential to stamps thematically as the subject matter.