

Andreas Vesalius

in

Philately

by

Omer Steeno

and

Maurits Biesbrouck



2016

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Introduction

It may look rather strange that M.H. Spielmann, the first and until now the only searcher who published in a more systematic way on Vesalius iconographic items, did not include a chapter on Vesalius and Philately. The main raison is that in 1925, the year he made the publication of his *Iconography of Andreas Vesalius* for the *Wellcome Historical Medical Museum* in London, virtually no stamps were issued commemorating the great anatomist or his works.

As we will see, the very first postage stamp devoted to Vesalius only appeared in 1942.

At the occasion of the solemn commemoration of the 500th anniversary in 2014 of the birth of our illustrious compatriot Andreas Vesalius, he has been honoured in different ways as it was in the past. Every one knows indeed of examples of etchings, paintings, statues or statuettes, and medals with his portrait, honouring him and his works. Several publications on these subjects appeared in recent years. But few people are very well conversant with the different representations of our anatomist or his work on postage stamps. Therefore we present here a complete overview of 'his' stamps, which are less known, except by those specialized in medical philately. (Demarbaix 1996, Deruyttere 2009, Marquez 2014, Schmeink 1965, Steeno 2007, Aronis 2015)

Stamps between brackets [] are illegal.

List of the artists

Here follows the list with the engravers or artists involved. In total there are 12 stamps with 12 artists involved until now. Most stamps were issued in Belgium, and most appeared in the commemorating year 2014.

Engravers / artists

Year	Country	Name
1942	Belgium	Maurice Poortman and Emiel Renard
1958	Tunisia	not retrieved
1964	Belgium	Jean de Bast
1985	Transkei	John Meyer
1989	Hungary	Tibor Szántó
1993	Belgium	Rob Buytaert
[2006	*** falsely attributed to Djibouti by <i>espacelollini</i> ***]	
2007	Latvia	Arta Ozola-Jaunaraja
2012	Marshall Islands	Ivan Sushchenko
2014	Belgium	Guillaume Broux; lay-out by Kris Maes
2014	Czech Republic	Zdenek Ziegler
2014	Portugal	Guillaume Broux; lay-out by Kris Maes

Belgium, 1942



Engraver: Maurice Poortman and Emiel Renard

Face value: 35 cent + 5 cent

Color: green

Description: Detail of bust of Vesalius from the right after his portrait in the *Fabrica*, but looking somewhat more severe.

Legends: VESALIUS (left side), 1514-1564 (right side), 'België Belgique' between two Lorraine crosses, as the symbol for the struggle against tuberculosis (below).

Print: heliogravure

Perforation, gauge: comb, 14

Variants: not known

Stamps per sheet: 150 (10 x 15)

Number of copies: 942.174

Out of use: 1st October 1943

Note(s): Issued by the *Belgische Posterijen* on May 15th, 1942 as second stamp in a set of eight stamps in the series *Vlaamse geleerden* (Flemish Scholars), with the portraits of Flemish scholars from the 16th and 17th centuries: among Andreas Vesalius himself also Joannes Bollandus (1596-1665), Simon Stevin (1548-1620), Jan Baptist van Helmont (1577-1644), Rembert Dodoens (1517-1585), Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594), Abraham Ortelius (1527- 1598), and Justus Lipsius (1547-1606). On July 1st 1942 a stamp on Christoffel Plantijn (1514-1598) was added.

One purpose for issuing this series of stamps was to raise funds for the *Tuberculosebestrijding* (struggle against tuberculosis) with the additional charge.

Tunisia, 1958



Engraver: not retrieved

Face value: 30 F (francs français)

Color: black on yellow ochre

Description: Left: Head of Vesalius in $\frac{3}{4}$ from the right, being somewhat recognisable by his hair and his beard. Right: Head in front of Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammed ibn Khald(o)un (1332-1406). Both heads are in black and are separated by a chalice surrounded by two snakes.

Legends: 'André Vésale / 1514 1564, also in Arabic' (left side), and 'Muhammed ibn Khaldoun / 1332-1406, also in Arabic (right side). On top 'Postes République Tunésienne' (left in French, right in Arabic).

Print: heliogravure

Perforation, gauge: comb, 13

Note(s): Issued by the *Postes de la République Tunisienne* in 1958, two years after their independence from France and at the occasion of the *Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles* at that year.

Ibn Khald(o)un was born in Tunis on May 17th 1332. He settled in Sevilla after that city was conquered by the Moslems. He was an Arabic historian, a philosopher and a statesman, and is regarded as one of the most creative thinkers of the Middle Ages thanks to his *Muqaddima*, a historical

treatise based on a general sociological theory on the course of history. He went back to Tunis shortly before the Christians took over Sevilla again, but he remained attached to the Spanish Moslem tradition.



Belgium, 1964



Engraver: Jean de Bast

Face value: 50 cent

Color: gray and light green

Description: Bust of Vesalius from the right after his portrait in the *Fabrica*.
Legends: 'A. VESALIUS 1514-1564' (right side), 'België / Belgique' (below).

Print: heliogravure

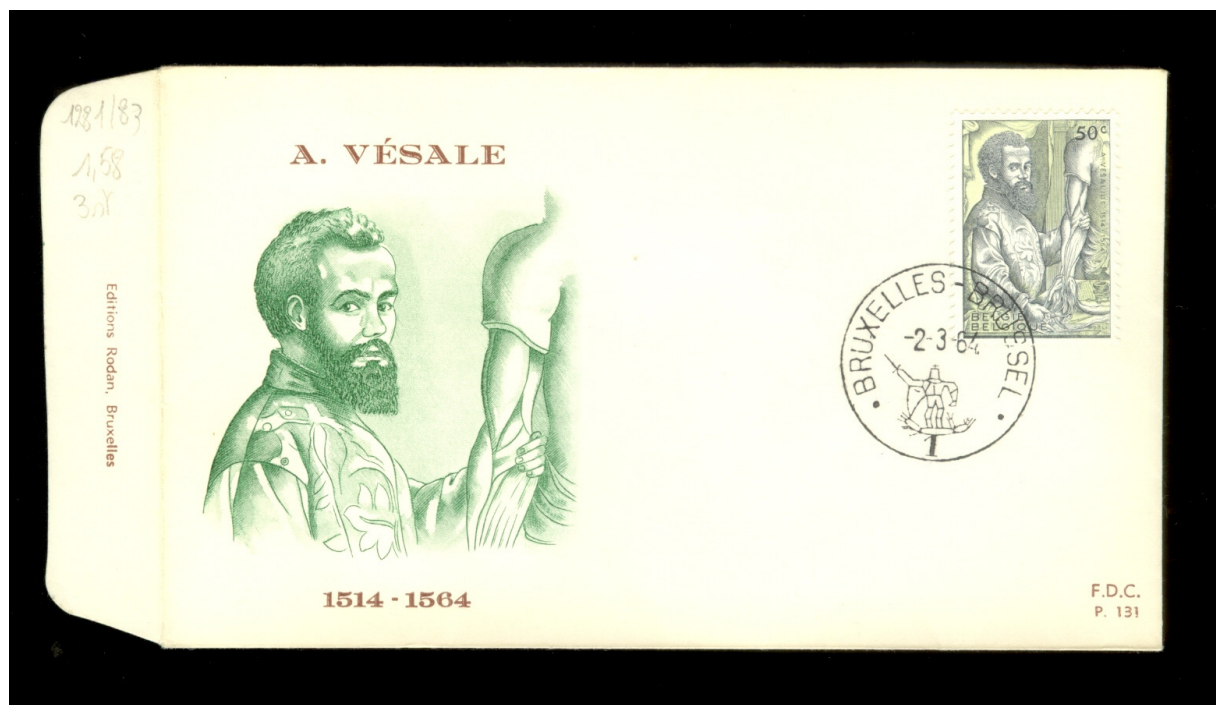
Perforation, gauge: comb, 11 ½

Variants: 1. left eye closed
2. missing cipher in year of birth

Stamps per sheet: 30

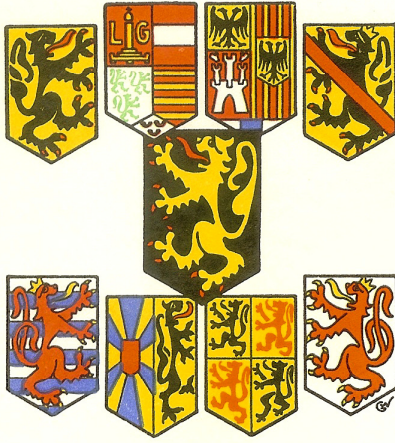
Number of copies: 12.000.000

Note(s): Commemorating the 400th anniversary of Vesalius's death, this stamp was issued by the *Belgische Posterijen* on March 2nd, 1964 as the first stamp in a set of three in the series *Belgische beroemdheden* (Famous Belgians), compiled by J. Malvaux, with the portraits of also Jules Boulvin (1855-1920) and Henry Jaspar (1870-1939).





**KONINKLIJKE LANDBOND DER
BELGISCHE POSTZEGELKRINGEN**



**FEDERATION ROYALE DES CERCLES
PHILATELIQUES DE BELGIQUE**



Transkei, 1985



Engraver: John Meyer

Face value: 12 cent

Color: full color face against a lilac-black background

Description: Head of Vesalius from the right. Only his hair and beard and the dissected hand on his left remind us of Vesalius.

Legends: 'Andreas Vesalius 1514-1564 / modern anatomy' (on top), and '12 c Transkei' (bottom).

Print: heliogravure

Perforation, gauge: comb, 14

Note(s): The *Thuisland* Transkei, belonging to the Bantoe-region, had a well developed autonomy since 1963 and was acknowledged as an independant state since 1976. On April 27th 1994 it was integrated into the Republic of South-Africa.

During its independance 8 series with the portraits of *heroes of medicine* were issued. In the fourth series, consisting of four stamps, edited on September 20th 1985, Vesalius is depicted as the father of 'modern anatomy', along with Marcello Malpighi (1628-1694) for his 'use of the

microscope', François Magendie (1783-1855) for his 'modern nutritional studies' and as the father of experimental pharmacology, and William Stewart Halsted (1852-1922) for his innovations in 'modern surgery'.



Hungary, 1989



Engraver: Tibor Szántó

Face value: 4 forint

Color: black and white

Description: Bust of Vesalius in $\frac{3}{4}$ from the right while dissecting an arm and in the same pose as on his portrait in the *Fabrica*.

Legends: 'A. Vesalius · 1514 – 1564' (on top), MAGYAR POSTA (bottom),

and 'Az orvostudomány nagy úttörői' (Pioneers in medicine). Lower rim: 'Kass 1989 Lengye. Gy'.

Print: heliogravure by Magyar Helikon (Budapest)

Perforation, gauge: comb, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$

Variants: not known

Note(s): Here Vesalius is hardly recognizable.

Belgium, 1993



Engraver: Rob Buytaert

Face value: 15 belgian francs

Color: black in yellow

Description: Detail in black and yellow of the frontispiece of Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* of 1543, with his portrait while dissecting a female corpse (described as an 'allegory').

Legends: 'België Belgique' (on top), 'De Humani Corporis fabrica' (below), and '1993 (12) Rob BUYTAERT' (lower rim).

Print: heliogravure by P.P.G. De Schutter

Perforation, gauge: comb, 11 ½

Variants: not known

Stamps per sheet: 30

Number of copies: 6.000.000

Note(s): Issued by the *Belgische Posterijen* on October 2nd, 1993 to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the edition of Vesalius's *editio princeps* of his *Fabrica*. in June 1543. (Faugeras 1993)





[Djibouti, 2006 *]

(* = Illegitimate stamps; timbres illégalement émis; falsche Briefmarke)

(We are indebted to Miss Fathia Ali of the *Service Philatélie de la Poste de Djibouti* for signaling the forgery)



Engraver: retrieved as *espacelollini*, being Bernard & Alexandre Lollini

Face value: 300 francs

Color: full color

Description: Head of Vesalius from the right as in his portrait in the *Fabrica*.
Legends: 'ANDREAS VESALIUS (1514-1564)' (left side).
'REPUBLIQUE DE DJIBOUTI 300F' (below).
On top: '2006' (left), and the symbol of *Rotary International* (right).

Print: offset

Perforation, gauge: comb, 13 ½

Stamps per sheet: 4

Note(s): So-called issued on November 23th, 2006 as M1107 and falsely attributed to the *République de Djibouti*. Portrait of Vesalius as the third stamp in a set of four in a series *Les grands scientifiques / de la Renaissance*, with the portraits of: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Nicolas Copernicus (1473-1543), Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642).

Except for some details of his jacket, this Vesalius's portrait is an almost perfect match with that of the authentic portrait in his *Fabrica*.



Latvia, 2007



Engraver: Arta Ozola-Jaunaraja

Face value: 22 Latvian lat

Color: ochre

Description: Collage on the history of medicine with Vesalius's skeleton.
Legends: 'LATVIJA 22' (on top). Middle: 'Paula Stradina / Medicinas Vestures / Muzejam / 50 Gadi' (Fifty years Pauls Stradins Museum on the History of Medicine).
Lower rim: 2007 Arta Ozola-Jaunaraja.

Print: heliogravure

Perforation, gauge: comb, 14

Note(s): The collage consists of a detail of the second skeletal figure in Vesalius' *Fabrica*, taken from the edition of 1555, with Vesalius's name in the typical type used by Oporinus in that edition for the running title. Below and in front *Der Herbarj: oder Krüterbuch, genant der Gart der Gesuntheit* by the

German Botanist Johann(es) Wonecke from Kaub, court physician of Frederik I. Above the book are three mortars. In the background a balcony of the Pauls Stradins Museum of the History of Medicine.

Paul Stradin (Viesite, 1701.1896 – Riga, 14.08.1958) was a surgeon and an oncologist and a scientist. Nowadays the University Teaching Hospital in Riga has his name. He was the founder of several medical and medical historical societies. His museum on the history of medicine was started in 1957, after he donated his own collections to the State of Latvia. For more details on this important, but not well known museum, see: (Steen0 2012).

Marshall Islands, 2012



Engraver: Ivan Sushchenko (Russia)

Face value: 45 dollar cent

Color: black on sepia, in yellow ochre frame

Description: Detail of bust of Vesalius from the right, after his portrait in the *Fabrica* in full color.

Legends: 'ANDREAS VESALIUS' (bottom), '45 MARSHALL / ISLANDS' (right side).

Print: by Pioneer Printing, Cheyenne, Wyoming (USA).

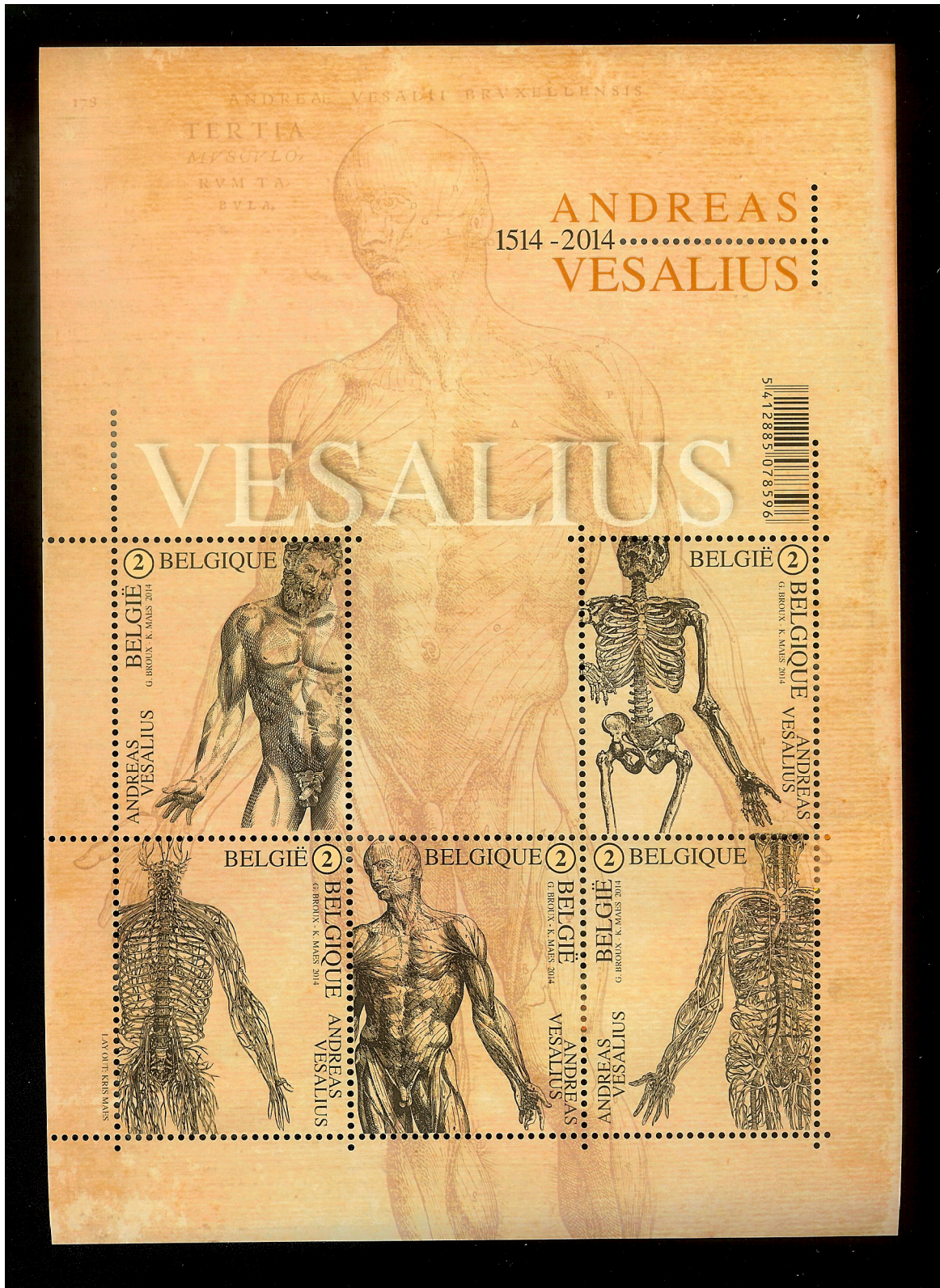
Perforation, gauge: comb, 14

Stamps per sheet: 20

Note(s): This Vesalius stamp (1st of row three) is issued at Majuro on April 23rd 2012. It is part of a series of twenty scientists whose pictures are assembled on one sheet and consisting of: Charles Darwin (1809-1882), theory on evolution; William Harvey (1578-1657), blood circulation; Robert Boyle (1627-1691), chemist, physicist and inventor; Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), mathematician, astronomer and astrologer; Thomas Edison (1847-1931), inventor and sales man; André-Marie Ampère (1775-1836), physicist and mathematician; Michael Faraday (1791-1867), electrochemist and electromagnetism; Jöns Jacob Berzelius (1779-1848), chemist; James Watt (1736-1818), inventor and engineer; Galileo Galilei (1562-1642), physicist, astronomer, mathematician; Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), anatomist and physician; Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794), chemist; Dmitry Mendeleev (1834-1907), chemist; Carl Gauss (1777-1855), mathematician, physicist; Isaac Newton (1642-1727), physicist, mathematician, astronomer; Gregor Mendel (1822-1884), geneticist; John Dalton (1766-1844), chemist; Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), botanist; Robert Fulton (1765-1815), engineer, inventor; and William Thomson, baron Kelvin (1824-1907), physicist, mathematician.

The Marshall Islands are part of Micronesia and situated eastern of it. They consist of about one thousand islands and atolls with somewhat more than 60.000 inhabitants on only two them. They fell under German (till 1914), Japanese (officially from 1920 on), and American (February 3th 1944) command, to be become a sovereign republic in 1972, and became a member of the UNO in 1991. One of the atolls is Bikini, known as the nuclear test region for the US between 1946 and 1958. Under the different occupants the islands issued postage stamps, and although they had stamps printed as 'republic', their first stamps as an undependant state date from 1990. (Steen, Deruyttere, Coutant, Biesbrouck 2013)

Belgium, 2014



Engraver: Guillaume Broux; lay-out by Kris Maes

Face value: 2 postage units each

Color: black on ochre background

Description: Each stamp represents a detail of one of the large plates in Vesalius's *Fabrica* or his *Epitome*.

Legends: 'ANDREAS / VESALIUS' preceded or followed by 'BELGIË' or 'BELGIQUE' upon (in small type) 'G. BROUX – K. MAES 2014' (one side).

On top: face value with 'BELGIQUE' or 'BELGIË'.

The title of the sheet itself reads 'ANDREAS / 1514 – 2014 / VESALIUS', divided by two crossing perforation lines (upper right), followed in the centre with (in large white type) 'VESALIUS' and a barcode with OCR at the right of it. In the left lower corner and in small type: 'LAY OUT: KRIS MAES'.

Print: photogravure

Perforation, gauge: comb, 11 ½

Stamps per sheet: 5; each sheet measuring 140 x 195 mm, with each stamp measuring 38,15 x 48,75 mm.

Total copies: 103.877

Note(s): Issued by the *bpost* on April 22nd, 2014, commemorating the 500th anniversary of Vesalius's birth in Brussels on December 31st 1514, and the 450th anniversary of his death at Zakynthos on October 15th, 1564.

The sheet represents part of Vesalius's third muscle man in his *De Humani Corporis Fabrica libri septem* (Basel: Oporinus, 1543 and 1555) and is running through the stamps, arranged in the form of an 'U', as a philigrane. The first stamp represent a male torso coming from the *Epitome*, which Vesalius edited at the same time of his principal work, the *Fabrica*. The second stamp is a detail of the first skeletal figure in the *Fabrica*, the third the thirty nerve pairs originating in the spinal cord (book IV of the *Fabrica*), the fourth is a detail of the already mentioned muscle man (in book II) which is repeated here as a miniature, and the fifth represents the venous system (book III).

Guillaume Broux, born in Tongeren (Belgium) 24th January 1963 studied humanities in Hasselt and is living now in Bilzen. He got his education in

sculpture and engraving at ICIBIC, St. Laurent Institut, and at the Léon Mignon Institut. He studied also with Czeslaw Slania in Stockholm (Sweden), a world famous specialist in stamps engraving. He produced about 150 stamps for Belgium, 20 for Luxembourg, and also for Poland. The lay out was by Kris Maes from Boortmeerbeek (Belgium), who followed a higher arts education at the institute Honim in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek (Brussels). He is working as a designer for *bpost* (Belgian Postage).

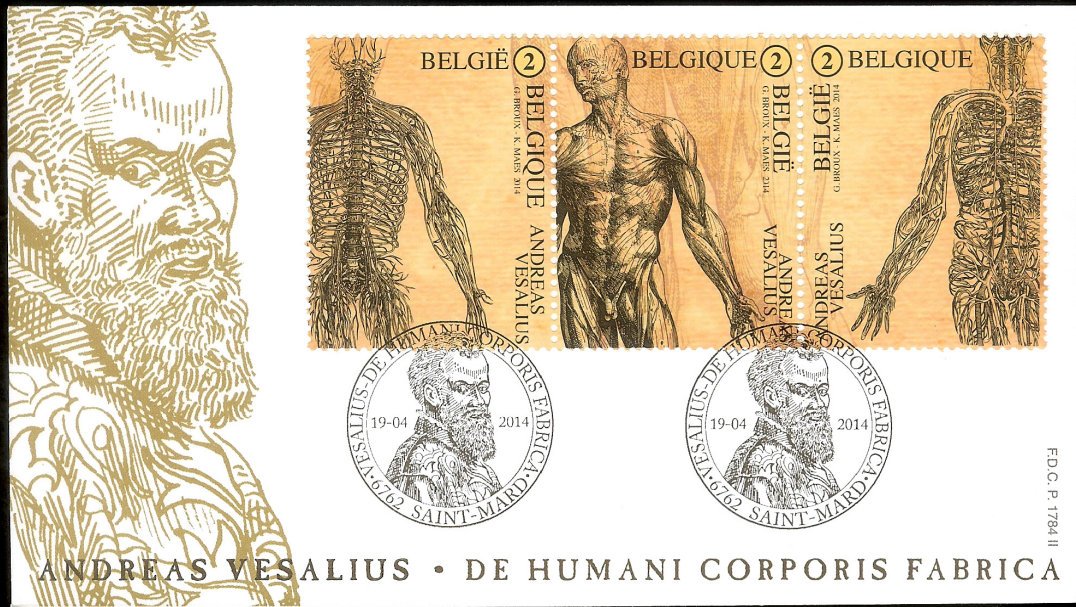
Those are by far the most beautiful postage stamps on Vesalius ever made and both won the Ambassador prize for the best postage stamp in Belgium (2005, 2011, and 2012), and the second prize for the best European stamp in 2012, and the third prize in 2013. (Steen, Deruyttere, Biesbrouck 2014)



Guillaume Broux (Bilzen, Belgium), engraver of the prize winning Vesalius stamps for Belgium and Portugal (2014)



Kris Maes (Boortmeerbeek, Belgium)
He made the design and the lay out for the
postage stamps on Vesalius for
Belgium and Portugal





Czech Republic, 2014



Engraver: Zdenek Ziegler

Face value: 25 crowns

Color: black on yellow green

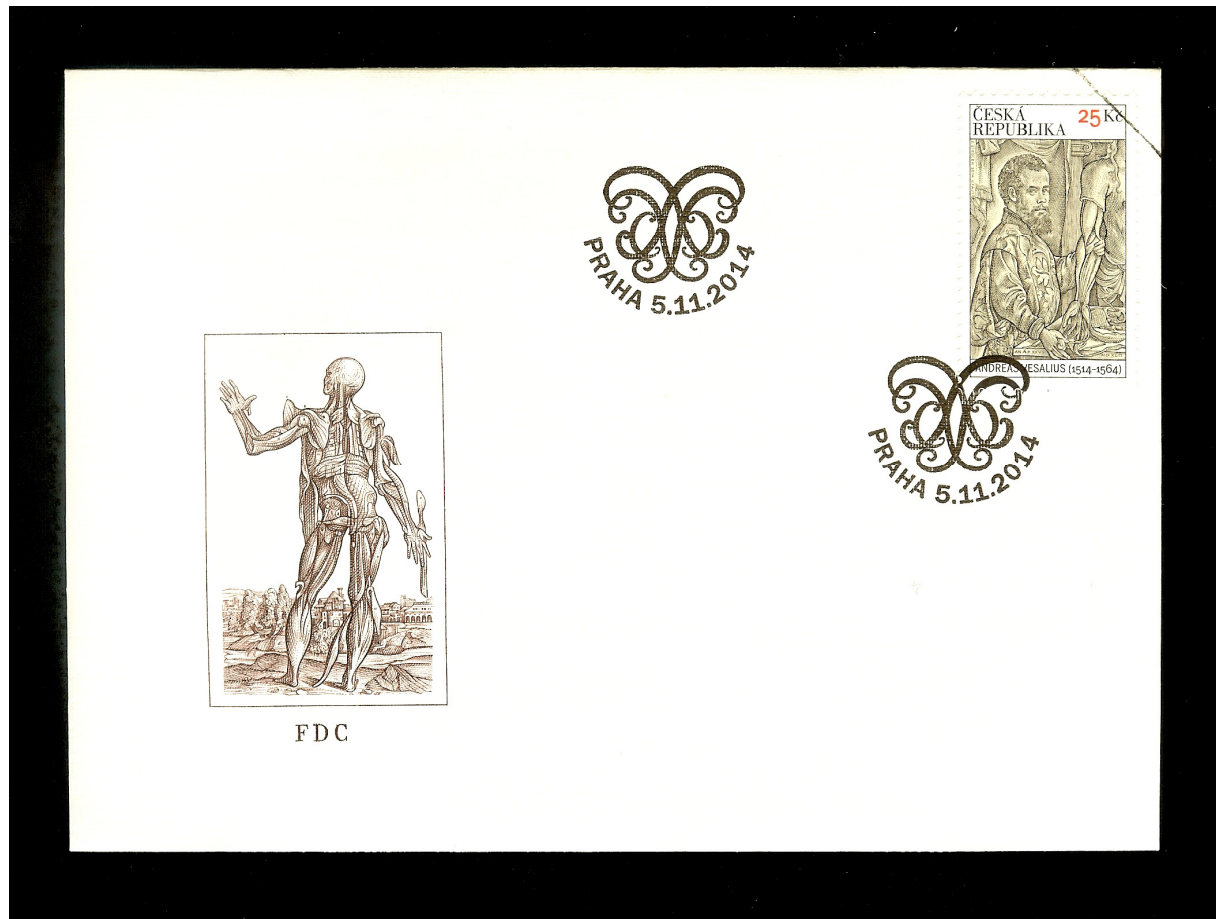
Description: Faithful rendering of Vesalius's portrait in the *Fabrica*, which was also used for his *Epitome* and the first edition of his *China Root Epistle*.
Legends: 'ANDREAS VESALIUS (1514-1564)' (below); 'ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA'; '25 Kč' (on top).

Print: heliogravure

Perforation, gauge: comb, 11 ½

Note(s): Although at first glance this stamp is reminiscent of the Vesalius stamp issued in Hungary (1989) the representation of the subject is of a much higher quality here. This Czech stamp was issued on November 5th 2014 with a graphic design by Ir. Arch. Zdenek Ziegler (° Praag, 27 October 1932). He finished studying at the Faculty of Architecture in Prague in 1961. From 1990 on he became a professor and from 2000 to 2003 rector of the Academy for Architecture and Graphic Arts in Prague.

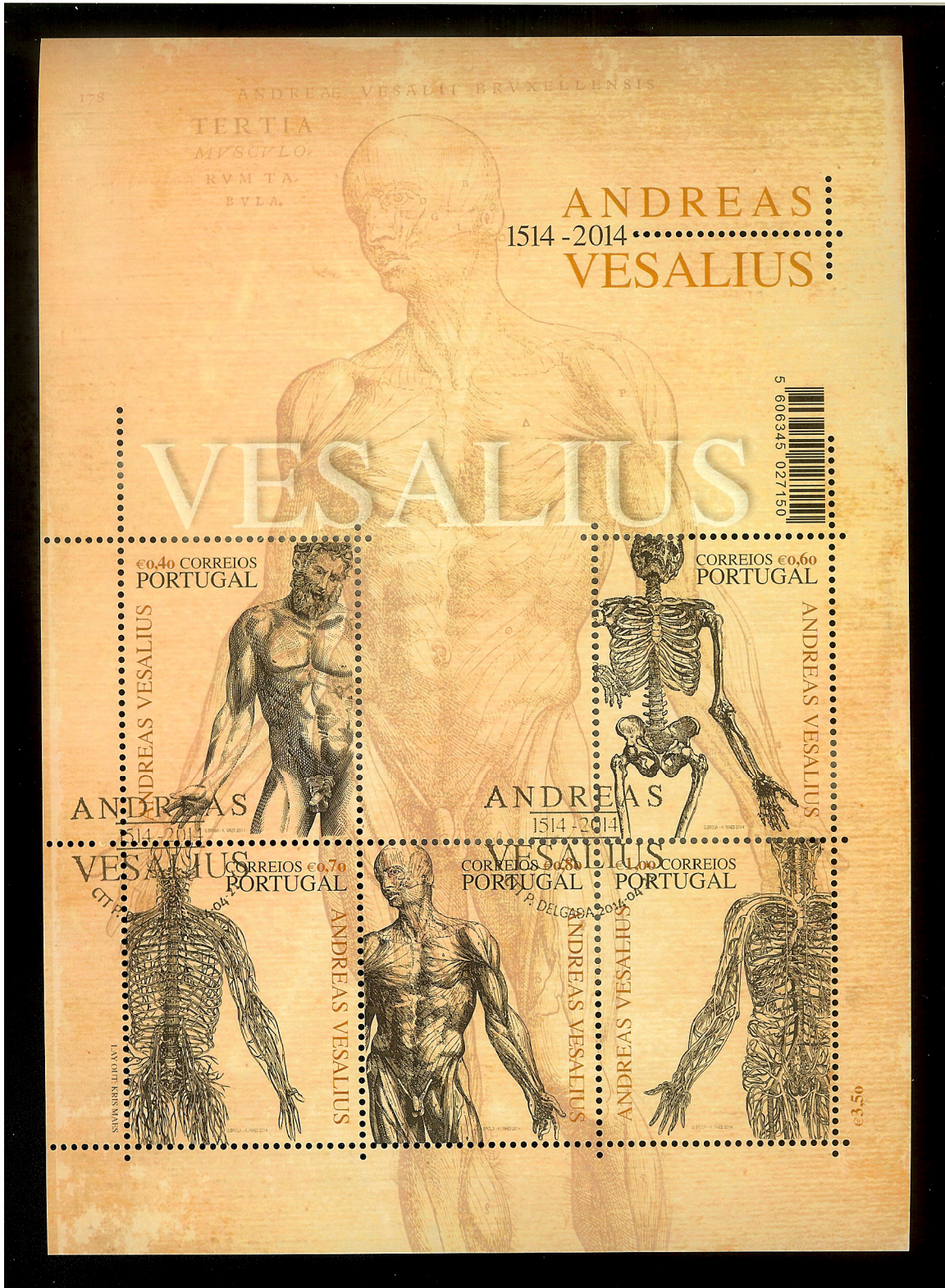
The etcher was Vaclav Fajt (° Pilsen, August 4th 1952) who got his education at the High School of Arts in Turnov and then at the Special Arts Academy of Prague. During the communist government in Czechoslovakia his designs for postage stamps were systematically rejected out of political reasons, he himself being not a member of the Communist Party, which he refused to be. It was only towards the end of the communist regime that he got the opportunity to manifest himself as an artsman. The topic of his first two stamps had to do with nature protection and in Italy they were elected as the best stamps on nature. After the splitting up of his country he became successful and he engraved a.o. President Vaclav Havel for his 60th anniversary. (Steen0 2015)





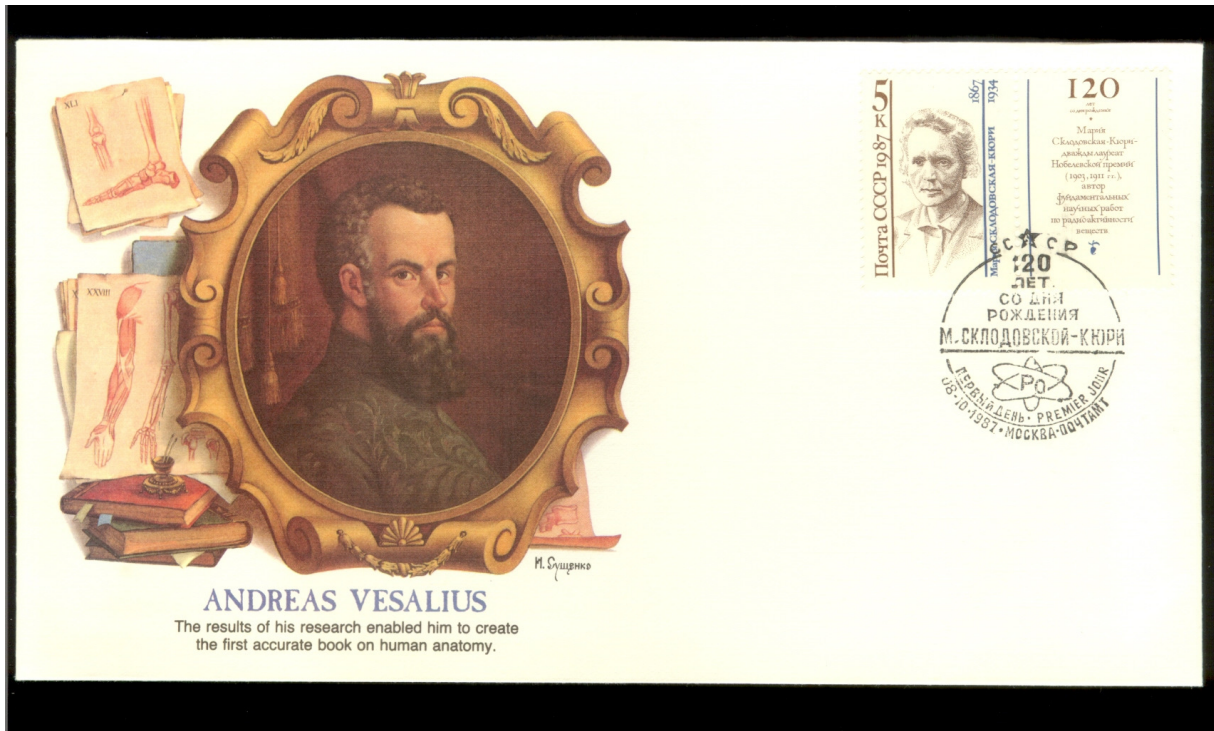
Prof. Ir. Arch. Zdenek Ziegler
Graphic designer

Portugal, 2014



- Artists: Guillaume Broux and Kris Maes, see 'Belgium, 2014'
- Face value: 0,40; 0,60; 0,70, and 0,80 euro cent; and 1,00 euro
3,50 euros per sheet
- Color: see 'Belgium, 2014'
- Description: See 'Belgium, 2014'. Differences are:
- the other face value, and addition of the price per sheet (right under);
 - on top of each stamp appears the new face value and 'CORREIOS / PORTUGAL' instead of 'BELGIQUE' or 'BELGIË';
 - at the left or right side of each stamp now one reads only the name 'ANDREAS VESALIUS';
 - at the bottom of each stamp, in small type: 'G. BROUX – K. MAES 2014'.
- Print: heliogravure
- Perforation, gauge: comb, 11 ½
- Stamps per sheet: 5
- Note(s): This edition came at the same time with the commemoration sheet issued by the Belgium bpost. A cooperation between bpost with the postal service of Portugal could be established thanks to the courtesy of Frans Vanderschueren, PR-manager of bpost. Willing to edit the Vesalius stamps in 2014 too, Portugal took the same lay out of Kris Maes and the gravures of Guillaume Broux. For further details see 'Belgium, 2014'.

Varia



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