

Miniature Messages



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In "Miniature Messages", Jack Child analyzes Latin American postage stamps, revealing the messages about history, culture, and politics that nations have encoded in the design and text of their stamps and disseminated to their populations and to the rest of the world. While postage stamps are a sanctioned production of official government agencies, Child argues that they accumulate popular cultural value and take on new meanings as they circulate in the public sphere. As he demonstrates in this richly illustrated study, the postage stamp conveys many of the contestations and triumphs of Latin American history. Child combines history, political science, and philatelic research involving the collection and examination of nearly 40,000 Latin American stamps. He focuses on Argentina and the Southern Cone, highlighting stamps that indicated the consolidation of the Argentine republic and those produced under the Peronist regime. He describes how Argentine postal authorities have made ample use of slogans through their postmarks, delivering messages ranging from the patriotic ("San Martin consolidated the freedom of America with his sword"), to the nationalist ("Always ask for products made in Argentina"), to the public health notice ("To spit on the floor is to sow microbes"). Child considers postage stamps issued by dictatorial regimes in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and Nicaragua. He compares Chilean stamps issued by the leftist government of Salvador Allende and by Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, and he studies how international conflicts have been depicted on the stamps of Argentina, Peru, and Chile. Child also covers the cultural and political history of stamps in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Grenada, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In "Miniature Messages", Child finds the political history of modern Latin America in its "tiny posters."

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