

Beauty is in the eye of the Beholder

By Stephen Kuhl, April 28, 2018

OOPS! Aw shucks, I made a mistake! You made an error! In most circles, making an error is a cause for consternation, perhaps triggering embarrassment or provoking an apology. But in the world of numismatics, finding an error is a source of happiness! Whoever created the adage “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” must have been a Numismatist!

Mr. John Kolmar and Mr. Jim Sproull recently presented an educational program on the types of errors that can be encountered (or sought!) when coin collecting. Their talk defined and showed examples of the many types of errors, which can be grouped broadly as Planchet, Die, or Strike Errors. Their discussion included the following topics:

Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise:
Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye,
Not utter'd by base sale of chapmen's tongues

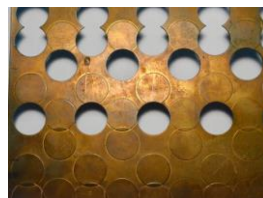
William Shakespeare, *Love's Labours Lost*, 1588

Planchet Errors:



Examples of Curved and Straight Clipped Planchet error coins - <https://www.fleur-de-coin.com>

Clipped Planchets - Curved and Straight – A clipped error coin exists because there was a mistake when making the planchet. Coin planchets are stamped from a rectangular sheet of metal. When the planchet stamping die is too close to the edge of the sheet, a straight clip planchet will occur; when the stamping die stamps a planchet too close to a previously stamped one, a curved clip will occur.



Partially punched planchet strip containing outlines of clipped planchets <https://sullivannumismatics.com>

Defective Planchets – The planchet sheet may be defective for a number of reasons, such as when dirt, foreign material, or impurities are introduced when the planchet sheet is made. The foreign material can produce a sheet that has holes or is missing some, or all, of a layer (called a lamination error). Three examples of these types of errors are shown below:



Sample of defective planchet <http://www.lincolncentresource.com>



Sample of defective planchet - <http://coinauctionshelp.com>



Lamination error on 1921-S Morgan Dollar - <https://sullivannumismatics.com>

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Incorrect Planchet - The most basic type of planchet error is when the wrong planchet is fed into a press, such as when a dime planchet is fed into the press when cents are being minted. Because planchets are fed via a feeding tube sized for the coin being minted, and the collar of the coin is also sized for the given denomination, these conditions restrict this type of errors to only occur when the planchet is smaller than the coin being minted. As an example, using the 11 cent piece shown, a dime-sized planchet (or in this case an actual dime itself) fit inside the cent-sized feeder tube and collar. For this particular coin, we know that the cent image is overstruck on a dime since a cent planchet will not fit in the dime sized feeder tube or collar.



Example of two errors – an incorrect planchet and an overstrike error: 11 Cent Piece 1995-D Cent struck on struck 1995-D Dime, Graded MS67 by NGC.
<https://coins.www.collectors-society.com>

Die Errors



Example of a die cud error: 1975-D Cent with cud on the left where the piece of die shown broke away.
<https://www.ngccoin.com>. Photo courtesy of Dave Camire of NCS and Andrew Steiner of Harlan J. Berk, Ltd.

Die Breaks – Cracks and Cuds – Through use, minting dies may crack and actually break during their working life. Die cracks typically start out small and become bigger with age. When a cracked die is used to mint a coin, the planchet metal will flow into the crack, creating a raised error on the coin. A “cud” occurs when the die actually breaks, leaving a void when the coin is struck. Since there is no die face, and hence no design elements, in this section, the corresponding portion of the coin will be featureless. There are many different types of cuds, to include: Irregular, Ovoid, Crescent, Circumferential, and Rim to Rim cuds. A good reference website to learn about cuds is Cuds-on-Coins.com.

Double Dies – A doubled die is a variety that is created during the die making process. Consequently, the doubling will appear on every coin struck from that die. The error occurs when the die or the hub (used to make the design impression on the die) shifts during the image transfer

process, imparting two distinct images on the finished dies, which then are transferred to each coin struck. Usually doubling of the design elements is most noticeable in the lettering and / or the numbering. The most famous example of this type of error is the 1955-P Double Die Obverse Lincoln Cent.

Manual Die changes – In some cases an error is introduced when the die undergoes changes to the design as a result of maintenance or human error. A famous example of a maintenance-related error is the 1937-D Three-Legged Buffalo nickel, where one leg of the animal was essentially removed from the design by polishing of the die. Another common example is the overdate error, which applies to older coins minted when the dates were manually punched into the dies. In this case an incorrect date is over stamped with a new number. There are many examples of this error, one of the more popular (and expensive) being the 1942 over 1 Mercury Dime.



1942 over 1 Mercury Dime error
<http://www.pcgscoinfacts.com/Coin/Detail/5036>

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Strike Errors:

Mechanical Doubling - This type of doubling, (also known as strike, ejection, shelf or shift doubling) is not the result of the design on the die being doubled. Rather, this type of doubling happens when the die is not fully seated, allowing it to move during striking. This creates a flat, shelf-like doubling which is much different than the doubling resulting from a die error. Typically a coin with this type of error has much less value than a double die error coin.

Clashed Dies – During minting, if the planchet is missing, it allows the anvil and hammer dies to strike each other, which typically causes damage to both dies. Generally, some element(s) of one die will be transposed onto the other die. Subsequent coins made using the damaged die(s) will show the changed design.



Clashed Die error on 1881-O Morgan Dollar. <http://www.1881o.com/clashing.html>



Example of cupped Broad struck 1997-P dime. www.coincommunity.com

Broad Strike – When the collar (used to contain the planchet when a coin is struck) is missing from the coin press, it allows the planchet metal to expand during the strike, typically resulting in a coin that has swelled beyond the normal size for that denomination.

Double Strike - In the normal process of striking coins, a blank planchet is struck once by the dies, and then it is ejected and replaced by another planchet to be struck. If, after striking, the coin is not ejected properly it can be struck again (or more times). This multiple striking typically results in some of the design elements being repeated on the coin.



Off center strike, 1999-P Cent. <http://www.coinforums.com>

Off Center Strike – This occurs when the planchet is not centered in the holder during striking, resulting in a coin with an off-center image. Usually the more off-center, the higher the value of the coin; however, the date must show on the coin, otherwise the value will be significantly reduced. Off center strikes are a fairly common error, relatively speaking.



Example of strike through error 199X-D Kennedy Half-Dollar. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/526006>

Struck Through Errors – Sometimes a foreign object will get into the minting press. If this object comes between the planchet and the striking dies, then an outline of the object will be imparted onto the coin. These errors are very rare and typically unique, given they are the result of a transient foreign body in the press.

A final topic discussed by John was the subject of value. One difficulty in collecting error coins (and currency, for that matter) is being able to establish a value for a given item. While there certainly are categories of errors, as defined above, by their nature error coins are rare and often are of varying degree. This leads, in many cases, to difficulty in establishing a value for any given item. The author recalls reviewing three examples of 11 cent pieces (dimes overstruck by cent dies) which varied significantly in price based



Error coin reference book used by Kolmar

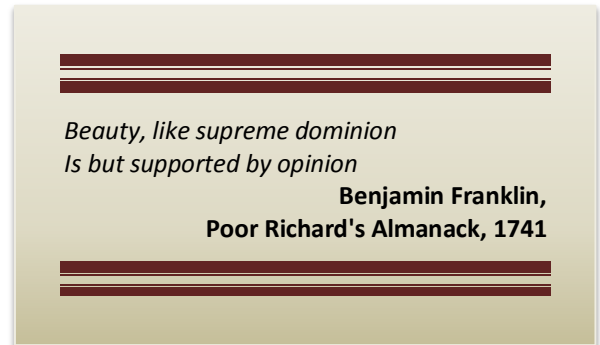
on how full, and how centered, the overstrike was. John reminded the audience to “buy the book before you buy the coin” and showed us one key reference he uses.

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Author's Notes:

Regarding the adage "Beauty is in the eye of the Beholder": Per Mr. Gary Martin of The Phrase Finder webpage: *The person who is widely credited with coining the saying in its current form is Margaret Wolfe Hungerford (née Hamilton), who wrote many books, often under the pseudonym of 'The Duchess'. In Molly Bawn, 1878, there's the line "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder", which is the earliest citation that I can find in print.*

John Kolmar started collecting coins when he was 8 years old. One of his aunts had jars full of wheat pennies that she gave him. Going thru them sparked his interest in coins. He also had an uncle who would send him coins to expand his collection. John's interest in error coins started around the same time. He found some error coins, which spurred his desire to learn more about them. John gained much of his knowledge by subscribing to a monthly journal about error coins. While John's collecting activities took a back seat for many years while he raised a family, he routinely checked his pocket change for errors, and occasionally he found one. With more time available now, John continues to research and catalog error coins.

Jim Sproull's numismatic collecting interest also began at an early age. When he was 8 or 9 years old a neighbor who owned a local gasoline station would let Jim "borrow" rolls of coins to search for interesting items, which he would swap for routine coins, and then he would return the rolls. This pattern continued through high school, after which Jim's coin collecting efforts took a breather as he began a family and a career. Fascinated with history, Jim's collecting interest spans a broad spectrum: Shipwreck coins, Jefferson nickels, Peace dollars, foreign silver coins (for their beauty and inherent value), and more recently, error coins.