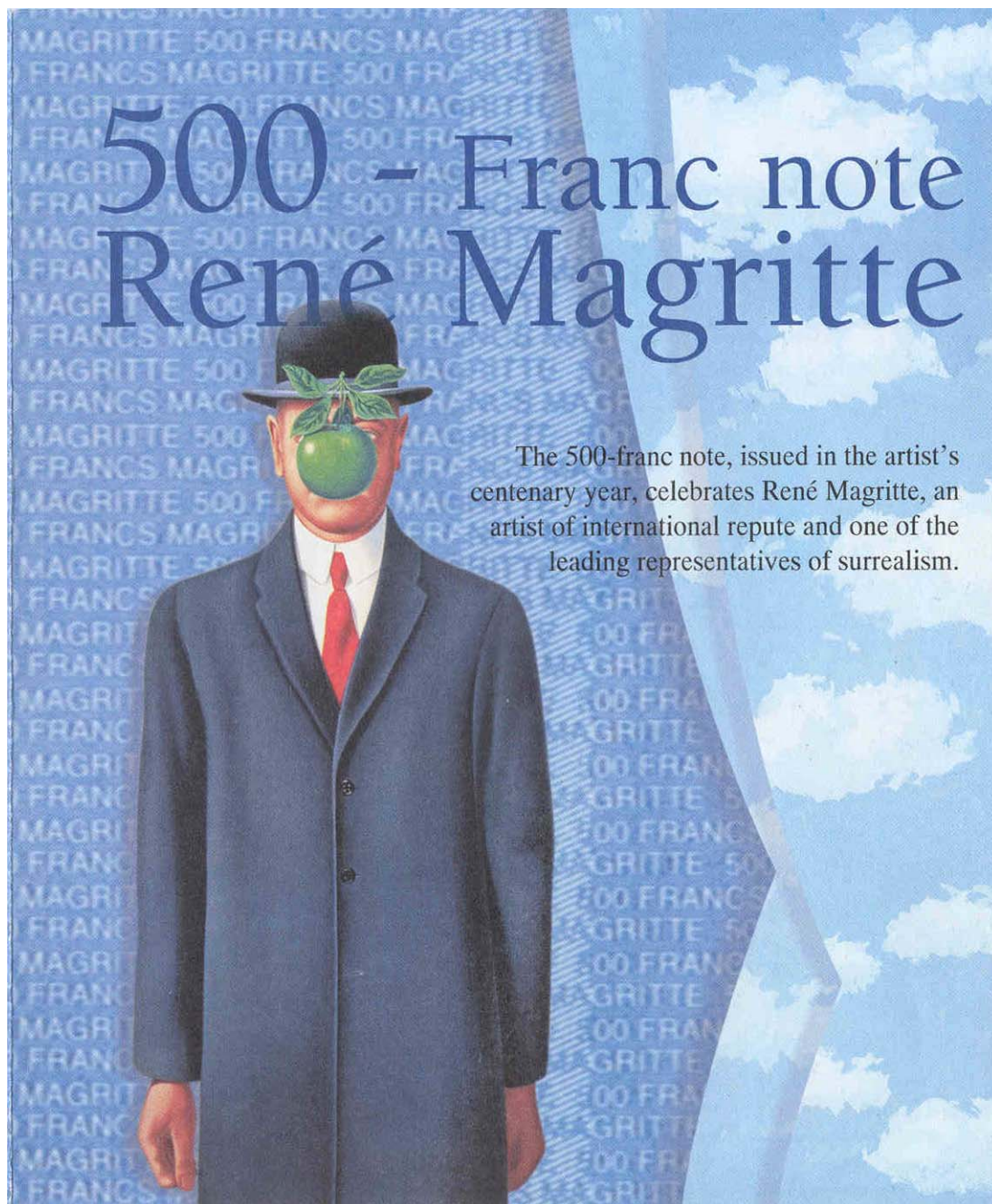




500 - Franc note René Magritte

The 500-franc note, issued in the artist's centenary year, celebrates René Magritte, an artist of international repute and one of the leading representatives of surrealism.

Security

The 500-franc note is protected by a number of effective security features enabling anyone to check that a note is genuine; examples are areas of raised print, the security thread, the watermark, the optically variable devices...

Code in raised print

In the top left-hand corner of the note, near the portrait, a group of bars in relief forms a code which can be identified by the visually handicapped. This indicates the value of the note:

“|” represents hundreds,
 “||” represents thousands,
 “|||” represents tens of thousands;
 the horizontal bars multiply these by: 1 (“—”), 2 (“=”) or 5 (“≡”).



Actual measurements: 149 mm x 76 mm

On the cover, elements of the banknote associated with details of « The Mona Lisa » and « The son of the man », Priv. coll., photo library René Magritte-Giraudon

Ways to identify a genuine banknote

1. Exclusive paper



When you handle a banknote you can feel the special quality of the paper and hear the crackle it produces. These features enable a preliminary identification of the note.

2. Raised (intaglio) print



Several areas on the front (including the portrait) can be perceived by touch. The engraving and the thickness of the ink raise the wording and the bar feature perceptibly, which helps visually impaired people to identify the note by touch.

3. Anti-copying features



The grey motifs are specially designed to change when reproduced.



The green and orange colour in the design changes if the note is copied.

4. Optically variable feature



The figure 500 on the back of the note gleams in the light and changes from green over blue to pink when viewed from different angles.

5. Watermark and thread



The watermark is of a finely drawn portrait of René Magritte with his very distinctive signature. Anything which appears dark when the watermark is held to the light, becomes light when the note is placed on an opaque surface.



On the back, the security thread looks like a broken silver line. When held to the light it seems black and continuous; the figure "500 F" is repeated over its whole length.

6. Printing in register



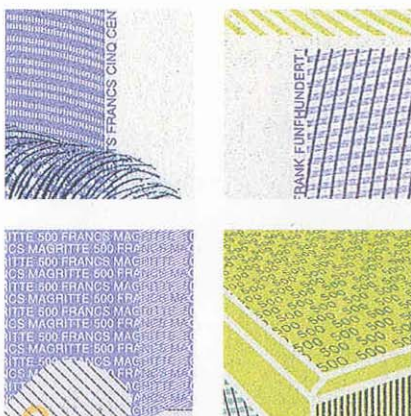
The accuracy of the printing can be checked by looking at the drawing of the keyhole against the light. The coloured areas on the face fit exactly with those on the back.

7. Hidden image



In the rectangle, the figure 500 appears when the note is brought up to eye-level and then tilted towards the light. It becomes lighter or darker depending on the way the note faces.

8. Micro-lettering



On both sides of the note, a magnifying glass reveals words in minute lettering on the border of the white band of the watermark.

Elsewhere, one can see the denomination in very small characters.

9. Under an ultraviolet lamp



Under ultraviolet light, some features on the back of the note stand out clearly in green and yellow. The security thread is also green, and additionally, red, green and blue fibres appear scattered throughout the paper.



that painting should help the individual to find himself and to discover the world and knowledge. Through the medium of his works he tackled the great existential problems and ventured into the unknown world of thought, using only everyday objects. The images which he created and painted with such attention to detail describe the world in all its beauty and poetry, but also its mystery.

Seeking to make thought visible despite its being, by its very nature, invisible, Magritte painted familiar objects drawn from everyday reality and presented them in a completely personal way. We all know these objects – a fireplace, a window, a door, a leaf, a bird, a mannequin, a shoe or an apple – they all belong to the world we live in but by the magic of his thought, Magritte creates chance encounters, beyond the bounds of all logic so that they become unusual, mysterious and poetic. Like a magician he takes them from their accustomed place and transforms them, either by metamorphosis of matter – a woman's flesh is turned into wood and a jacket is made of stone – or by change of scale, by associating the word with the image in order to subvert, by revealing their secret affinities and even by defying every law of physics. By deliberately setting our certainties at naught without trying to charm or coax us, Magritte attacks, baffles and frightens us. But he frees our mind and opens the way to revelation. There is a continuous dialogue between the artist and reality and between the newly constructed image and its objective reality.



Photography department of the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Speldidoom

The dominion of light (1954)
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique

The finished canvas is therefore a beginning and not an end; it is born again, different every time in each of us and we all find in it what we are looking for... or what we fear.

René Magritte died in Brussels in 1967.

Gisèle OLLINGER-ZINQUE
Head of Modern Arts Department
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique

René Magritte



Magritte was born at Lessines on 21 November 1898. He spent his childhood years at Gilly in the « Black Country », where the family went to live when René was only twelve months old, next at Châtelet and finally at Charleroi. When he was fifteen Magritte met Georgette Berger, the girl who was to become his wife. From 1916 to 1918 he studied at the Brussels Academy of Fine Arts and, as early as that, tried with his available resources to paint pictures « which meant something to him ». « I tried » he said « to paint to my satisfaction with the help of the theories of Futurism, Cubism and Dadaism. This period spent in searching lasted almost ten years, but I remained unconvinced. Around 1926, I gave up the search in response to what I believe was a revelation of what I had to paint... What must be painted is confined to a thought which can be described by painting (...). This thought does not « assemble » anything, does not « compose » but brings things together so that these visible things conjure up the mystery without which there would be nothing...»

Paradoxically, Magritte's pictures are at one and the same time among the most famous and the most enigmatic of the 20th century; shoes which change into feet, a pipe which is not a pipe, a locomotive coming out of a fireplace... all pictures which disturb, distress and bewilder the viewer, who is forced to say that he does not *understand* them. René Magritte's belief was

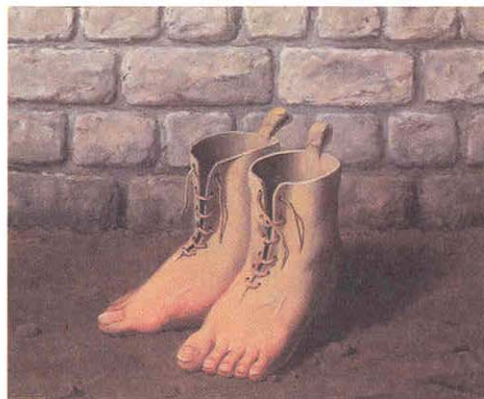


Photo archive René Magritte-Giraudon

The red model (1953) *Private collection*

What you should do if...

... you have a note which is withdrawn from circulation?

All banknotes of more than 100 F issued by the National Bank of Belgium since 1944 can be exchanged at its counters.

... you have a damaged note?

Take care when bringing it to the National Bank not to forget any fragment. The note will be passed on to experts who will check it free of charge and estimate its value.

If you want to know more...

... about the long history of the currency or the origin of banknotes, you can arrange a free guided tour of the *Musée de la Banque Nationale*, rue du Bois Sauvage 9, B-1000 Brussels. ☎ +32-2-221 22 06.

... about the work of René Magritte make sure to visit the *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, in Brussels, where the biggest public collection of the artist's works is on display. In 1998, which marks the painter's centenary, Belgium will be paying special tribute to Magritte by organising the biggest ever exhibition devoted to him in the same Museum.

Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 3 rue de la Régence, B-1000 Brussels. ☎ +32-2-508 32 11. Open every day except Monday.

René Magritte, a retrospective: same address, from 6 March to 28 June 1998; recorded information. ☎ +32-2-508 33 33.

Background : Sky (1941), *Private collection*, photo library René Magritte-Giraudon

Portraits of René Magritte: *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*;

first three photographs: autor unknown; last picture: C. Magelhaes © J. Coppens

Works of René Magritte: © Charly Herscovici, c/o SABAM, Brussels, 1997