

Coins to Art

Winston Ingram

The source materials for these images are silver and copper coins, including a selection of the old Irish punt and a US silver dollar. I used stereo and metallurgical microscopes and in a few instances, a transmission polarising microscope.

My first task was to change the shape of the coins from round to rectangular; then remove the wording on them by using the software's 'clone' tool to blend the characters into the texture of the image. Finally, I chose the colours for the image and background. Some of the images required multi-coloured treatment and special effects and I found I could produce these by using the facilities on the polarising microscope, perhaps an unusual use of this instrument.

Once I get an idea of something I want to produce, I use every technical device and piece of equipment available to me to achieve the final result. This is a fascination which has kept my interest for over forty years.



The Deer is from a 1 Rand South African coin

The Goat is from an Irish coin



The production of my photomicrography work starts with a prepared slide or solid sample I feel will make a good art subject. I have a number of different microscopes (except SEM) to cover all the major disciplines. When I started many years ago, I used a 5 x 5 plate camera loaded with sheet film and this was attached to the microscope with a special adapter.

Today of course it is all digital, and I have sold all my film equipment. My first camera was a Nikon DIX and today I use a Nikon D5000 with live view which allows me to focus the microscope looking at a larger image on the computer monitor. It is vital to have a good quality first image to work with and as the depth of field is very limited focussing is critical. My programme of choice is Photoshop CS3 and when part of an image is out of focus, I use the marquee tool to draw around the subject and then the smart sharpen to fine focus. I then crop the image as required. I always have an idea in my mind before starting of what I want the final result to be and most of the time this happens, but there are times when an idea is altered owing to the art manipulation taking me in another direction.

I then need to have suitable colours for the subject and I like good contrast to make the image jump off the page. Most of this work I do using the mouse

as my paint brush in conjunction with the clone tool lasso and magic wand tools. I also use some of the effects in the filter gallery if they fit with my idea and can not be painted in. All images are at 300dpi and the printers I use are Epson R800 and Photo 1400.

Steps for obtaining the texture:

1. Crop the coin to an oblong shape.
2. Use the software's 'clone' tool to remove all the text on the coin to leave the original silver or copper background.
3. Lasso the subject and isolate it from the background.
4. Select a texture (I choose from my database of pre-designed textures) and apply, then colour the texture as desired (using the mouse as a paint brush).
5. Save the work done so far. Select inverse, so as to now work on the background.
6. Select a design and colour to complement the main subject (again using the mouse as a paintbrush).
7. Finally, decide a lacquer varnish or other device to give desired final touch and size the image ready for printing.

The **Hen** is from a 1p Irish punt



The **Bison** is from an old US coin



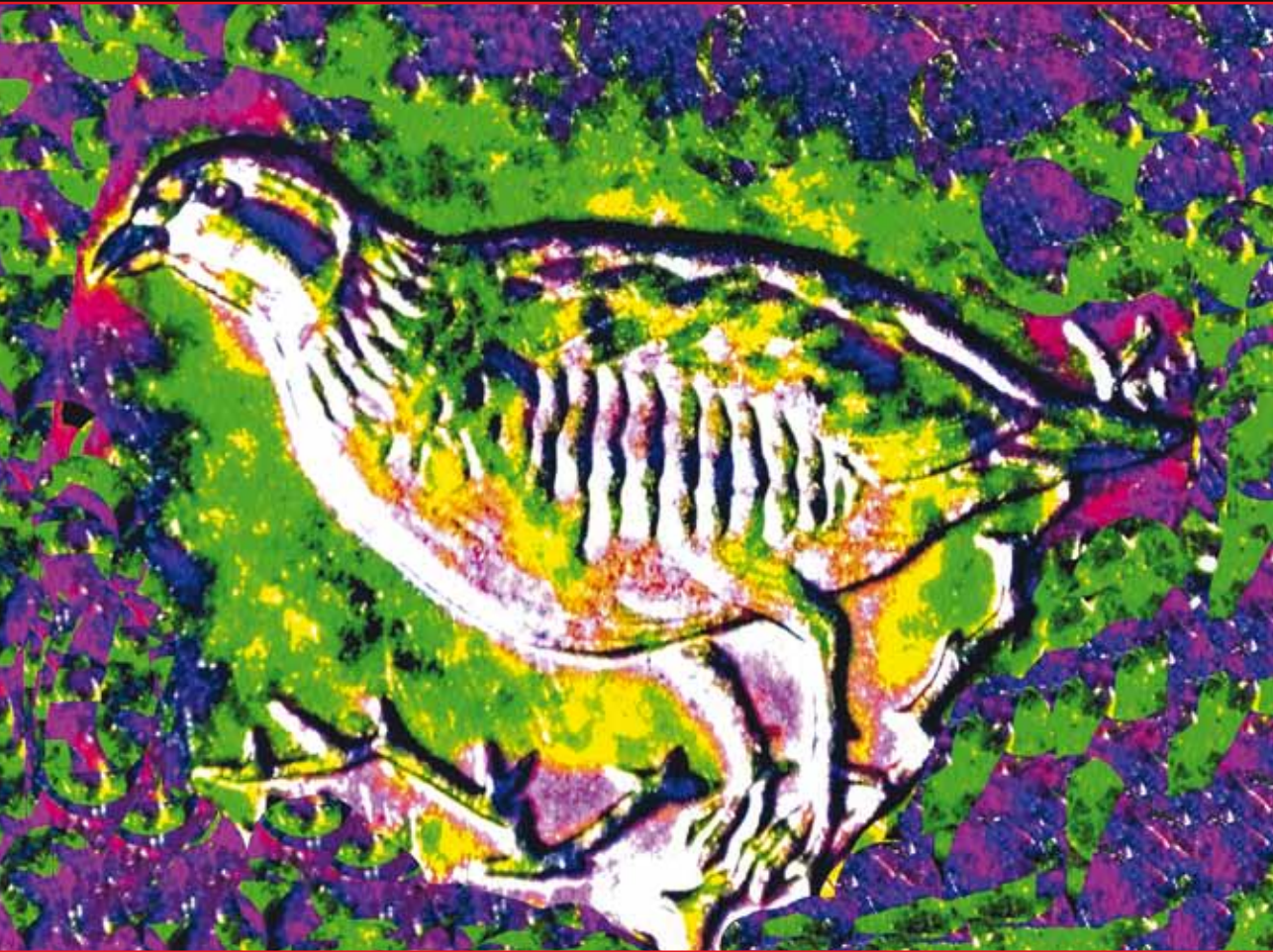
The **Bull** is from a South African copper coin



The **Love Bird** is from an antique coin;
a limited issue Peace Medallion



The **Pigeon** is from a Wild Life Preservation Award



The **Rabbit** is from an Irish 3d punt



The **Small Gold Animal** is from a series of coins from Malawi called Endangered Wildlife



About the author

Winston's main interests have always been music, science and photography and he qualified in all disciplines. His qualifications include: FBPA, FISTC, FRSA, ARPS (Medical), LCGI, NIMIT, and although no longer a member, he also passed ABIPP (Micrography) and The AMPA Distinction. He spent most of his career in these subjects. Positions he has held include Royal Household staff music teacher 1974 – 1979, and composer of music for H M The Queen, Magnum jubilee Opus, Princess Margaret, and HRH Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales Sonata for cello and Piano. In photography, he has been a teacher and government training provider and Chief Examiner for the British Professional Photographers Association for many years before retiring in 2005.

Winston has always been fascinated by the microscope and photomicrography, and the fine art creativity side of photography and has spent over 40 years with this kind of photography. To date he has produced five books: Let the Lens Speak, Photomicrography Art, Photomicrography Creativity, Banned Horns Plus Art and My Body in Medical Art.