

FACE VALUE 200 ZE

metal Au 900/1000 ■ finish proof ■ diameter 27,00 mm weight 15,50 g ■ mintage (volume) 11.200 szt.

OBVERSE: On the left-hand side, an image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. On the right-hand side, the half-figure of Zbigniew Herbert. In the rim, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA and the notation of the year of issue, 2008 plus an inscription, 1924-1998 ZBIGNIEW HERBERT. Below, in the centre, a vertical inscription, 200 ZŁ. The Mint's mark, M/W, under the Eagle's left leg.

REVERSE: Stylised image of a fragment of a mounted statue of Marcus Aurelius. On the left-hand side and above a circumscription, DO MARKA AURELEGO / TO MARCUS AURELIUS.

Coin designer: : DOMINIKA KARPIŃSKA-KOPIEC

Photograph of Z. Herbert used in the coin design by ISOLDE OHLBAUM



FACE VALUE 10 Zł

metal 925/1000 Ag ■ finish proof ■ diameter 32.00 mm weight 14.14 g ■ mintage (volume) 113,000 pcs

OBVERSE: On the right-hand side, an image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. On the left-hand side, the half-figure of Zbigniew Herbert. In the rim, an inscription, ZBIGNIEW HERBERT 1924-1998 RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA and the notation of the year of issue, 2008. Below, in the centre, a vertical inscription, 10 ZŁ. The Mint's mark, M/W, under the Eagle's left leg.

REVERSE: Stylised image of the Nike of Samothrace statue against the background of a bent silhouette of Zbigniew Herbert with a double outline of the head. On the right-hand side, a semicircular inscription, NIKE KTÓRA SIĘ WAHA / NIKE WHO HESITATES.

Coin designer: : DOMINIKA KARPIŃSKA-KOPIEC

Photograph of Z. Herbert used in the coin design by DANUTA ŁOMACZEWSKA

COINS ISSUED IN 2008 COINS ISSUED IN 2008 COINS ISSUED IN 2008 COINS ISSUED IN 2008



metal CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy \blacksquare finish standard \blacksquare diameter 27.00 mm weight 8.15 g \blacksquare mintage (volume) 1,510,000 pcs

OBVERSE: Image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland and, on both sides of the Eagle, the notation of the year of issue, 20-08, below the Eagle an inscription, 2 ZŁ, in the rim an inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, preceded and followed by six pearls. The Mint's mark, M/W, under the Eagle's left leg

REVERSE: On the left-hand side and in the centre, the half-figure of Zbigniew Herbert in profile. Above, on the right-hand side, a semicircular inscription, ZBIGNIEW HERBERT. Below, on the right-hand side, a semicircular inscription, 1924-1998.

ON THE EDGE: An inscription, NBP, repeated eight times, every second time inverted by 180 degrees, separated by stars.

Obverse designer: EWA TYC-KARPIŃSKA

Reverse designer: DOMINIKA KARPIŃSKA-KOPIEC

Photograph of Z. Herbert used in the coin design by ISOLDE OHLBAUM

The National Bank of Poland

holds the exclusive right to issue the currency in Poland.

Whereas the NBP issues coins and banknotes of general circulation, since 1966 it has also been issuing collector coins. In 2006, the first Polish collector banknote was put into circulation. The issue of collector items is destined both to commemorate events, anniversaries and well-known personalities and to disseminate knowledge about Polish culture, science and tradition.

Since 1996, the NBP has also issued the occasional Nordic Gold coins of 2 złoty denomination, which accompany collector coins.

All coins issued by the NBP are legal tender in Poland.

Information about the Schedule of Issue and the Sale of Collector Coins can be found at the website:

www.nbp.pl www.numizmatyka.nbportal.pl

The coins have been struck at the Polish Mint Plc in Warsaw.

Edited and printed: NBP Printing House

NBP

National Bank of Poland

c o i n s



Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998)

Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998)

• The National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation coins commemorating the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert with the following face values:

on 30 May 2008

200 zł struck in proof finish in gold, **10 zł** struck in proof finish in silver.

on 28 May 2008

2 zł struck in standard finish in Nordic Gold alloy.

Zbigniew Herbert known and unknown

- In spite of all the attention Herbert has attracted in Poland and around the world, there remains an air of mystery to him. For many years he had taken great care not to write directly about himself or parade his personal experiences or feelings. It is only in his last volume of poems entitled *Epilogue to* a Storm that we can discover some more personal remarks about his long illness, frailty and suffering, along with some more straight-forward allusions to his childhood. Literary scholars go to great lengths trying to decipher biographical references in his work carefully concealed from the sight of his readers. For instance, hints at his lost home city of Lviv can be identified in his early work, notably in the poem My City (published in the volume Hermes, Dog and Star, 1957) talking about the locked gate of his city, even though the name of the city is only mentioned at the end of his life. This may indicate that the Poet, exiled from his little homeland, was struggling with this tragedy, both national and personal, for many bitter years.
- Herbert was a man with a complex personality. In everyday life he might have been a sociable and cheerful person, prone to jokes, yet in his writing he was preoccupied with fundamental questions and, at times, even resorted to pathos, as in *The Envoy of Mr. Cogito*. He was a genuine European, successor to the Mediterranean cultural legacy, free of any nationalistic inhibitions or prejudice, yet, at the same time he was truly patriotic. As an author aware of his civic duties to the Nation, he felt a guardian of the memory of the Poles fighting in the Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising, the generation which was condemned to official

oblivion in communist Poland. Writing about his killed or murdered comrades (*Prologue*, volume *Inscription*, 1969) he said that they implacably returned his stare.

- The public perception of Herbert evolved with time. In the 1960s he was deemed a "classic" and "aesthete" a poet who referred to the Antiquity in order to defy the intellectual, aesthetic and moral mediocrity of communism. After he wrote Mr. Cogito (1974), he became the hero of anticommunist resistance and when the Marshall Law was declared in 1981 he came to be perceived as the "national banner" his poems from the volume Report from a Besieged City (published in Paris and printed underground in Poland) were recited at illegal literary meetings held secretly at private homes or in churches. For the Solidarity generation Herbert was someone who taught them how to be brave and courageously stand up for dignity of each person and rights of the community.
- The uncompromising civil stance he displayed after 1989 led the Poet to a violent clash with some of his erstwhile allies. It started with a famous interview with Jacek Trznadel for the book Hańba domowa (Dishonour to the Nation) (1986) where Herbert condemned opportunistic attitude of writers involved in Stalinist propaganda. His vehement political commentaries of the 1990s expressing outrage at blurring the moral distinction between former communist apparatchiks and unvielding patriots exposed the Poet to ostracism from his fellow dissidents. Ironically, even communists in the time of the Polish People's Republic did not dare attack the Poet as ferociously as some former members of the opposition who took over power in the reborn country. Making a bitter reference to the Stalinist past of some of the Poet's adversaries, he wrote that from then on he would not be in any group picture and went on sarcastically that he was ostracized as though he were "an enemy of the revolution" and a follower of "the leader".
- After his demise in 1998 the superficial and simplified political reception of his poetry lost its timeliness as did his political journalism dubbed "Mr. Cogito's Duels" in one press interview. Instead, the existential and metaphysical component of his writing came to the fore. Herbert's poetry is permeated with compassion for the fragility of the world: people, animals and objects alike. It reflects joy rooted in the eternal charm of art and nature and admiration

for the ethical virtue and the effort to multiply goodness and beauty. $\,$

- On the other hand, there is melancholy in Herbert's works that finds its source in the transitoriness of life and fundamental loneliness of a human being, as expressed in the poem *Lament* (written in the memory of his mother). In his poetry, man does not suffer but rather, as ancient Greeks believed, man is nothing but suffering. The only way to come into terms with the tragedy of human existence is through art, which has the power to defy the verdicts of history. History is the record of evil and violence, hence Herbert's poems abound in the existential and historical pessimism. In the Poet's opinion, history is the struggle between the thugs at the head of addled crowds and the righteous and reasonable. The outcome is a foregone conclusion as there are just a handful of the latter ones.
- Human beings are the victims of history, yet if they can face up bravely to their fate, they stand a chance of accomplishing greatness. This is as much true about the Philosopher Emperor in the poem To Marcus Aurelius, thus an outstanding personality who came to be remembered by his posterity, as it is about the unknown soldier in Nike Who Hesitates. This difficult optimism of Herbert assumes that we are capable of saving our own humanity, and also that of other people, in spite of the whole evil of the world, on the condition that we take responsibility for our neighbours. This attitude of solidarity – teaches Zbigniew Herbert – does surpass the existential solitude of a human being. Everyone is capable of achieving greatness. Although we have no influence on what happens to us, whether we can rise to the challenge or not depends exclusively on us. It is this decision, this conscious act that turns an accidental event into fate and creates the human being.

Józef Maria Ruszar

Zbigniew Herbert was born on 29 October 1924 in Lviv (now Ukraine); died on 28 July 1998 in Warsaw, Poland. He studied economics, law and philosophy. Before the Second World War, his father, Bolesław, was a bank employee. It happened that in 1948 Zbigniew Herbert himself was for a while employed at a branch of the National Bank of Poland in Gdańsk. He resigned after enrolling at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.