



Germany Philatelic Society, Inc.

EXPERT COMMITTEE
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Test Report



SIGNOSCOPE[®] Watermark Detector.

The Signoscope is an optic-electronic watermark detector which uses no liquid, paste or other chemical aid. Its use is entirely a self-contained dry procedure.

The necessary illuminating power for the Signoscope is provided by five AA batteries; alkaline batteries should be employed both for long use and for protection against battery leakage.

A 7.5-volt DC power supply is available for use with 110 volt house current. (The European adapter is made for 220 volts.)

Many watermark "detectors" have come on the market as replacements for the old benzene-and-black-tray system. Some of these are optical devices, others use chemical aids. None that I have examined provided wholly satisfactory results in the detection of all watermarks.

While some did work reasonably well, their usefulness was invariably confined to a limited set of conditions; none worked under all circumstances and none covered the entire watermark spectrum encountered by the average advanced collector.

The Signoscope does. It not only detects watermarks which are easy to find with benzene, but it also does a remarkably satisfactory job with watermarks which are difficult or, even, impossible to find by any other method.

An example of the effectiveness with which Signoscope operates is in the examination of British stamps with their various crown-and-initial watermarks. Some of these are actually impossible to find by any other method. The apparatus also works efficiently with engraved stamps, such as the 1950 posthorn stamps of Germany. While not impossible to reveal with benzene, the watermarks of these stamps often present considerable problems for collectors.

The Signoscope provides a 2-inch-by-2-inch working area. In most cases, this is large enough to allow placement of two stamps for direct comparison, a very useful situation.

Stamps are placed in a holder and subjected, under pressure, to surface-light reflection which exposes the watermark.

It also reveals thins, grills, repairs, silk threads, granite paper and paper irregularities. Again, some of the information comes through much better than with older methods. Tiny thins and difficult grills not otherwise visible, are clearly revealed. All this is done with complete safety for valuable stamps.

The size of the working area makes it impossible, of course, to examine large units of stamps or souvenir sheets. Covers are also not suited for the Signoscope, because of the size limitation and because of the extra layer of paper.

Enlarging the Signoscope to accept souvenir sheets would be cost prohibitive. The device is already expensive, listing for \$199.00 in the U.S. (plus \$12.00 for the adapter and \$6.00 for a dust cover.)

It is, however, a price well worth paying for the professional or advanced philatelist, whose materials have high value. In some cases, even a single successful watermark discovery can turn up a find equal to the Signoscope cost.