

Special exhibit

Not just for payments ...

... but a great deal else besides. Inventiveness and playfulness did not leave the world of coins untouched, either. There were a variety of reasons to use money for purposes other than those intended. Very prestigious ornaments could be created by turning coins into jewellery or having them decoratively set into vessels. A small selection is on permanent display in the right-hand wall-mounted display case opposite the vault. By contrast, we are more concerned here with the element of playfulness, which, combined with a high standard of craftsmanship, led to the creation of some stunning objects.



One example is this watch, built into a US\$20 coin. Those who do not know where to press along the edge in order to cause the lid to flip open are doomed to be forever ignorant of the secret of this "coin".

Equally precise – if not quite as mysterious – craftsmanship is displayed in this cigar cutter, crafted from a Prussian 3 mark piece. This cigar cutter, and an ashtray made of three





Maria Theresa thalers and three small Ethiopian coins, were the perfect fashion accessories for the cigar-smoking, coin-collecting gentleman who also always wanted to be sure of the correct time.

The *fin de siècle* lady of independent means always carried a small supply of no more than



five golden 10 and 20 mark pieces each, discreetly hidden in her powder box. This made it nearly impossible to misplace money. Purses could be lost – but powder boxes?!?

Pieces like these satisfied ladies' need to be fashionable, although here one could almost argue about the taste. The rather garish display of colours might well have elicited the merest raising of eyebrows among high-society ladies. Crafted from a Frankfurt thaler, the bust of Francofurtia was completely sanded away and replaced by an enamel picture, and the coin was even gilded – which may have been going a bit over the top.



Whether this “decorative” addition of a top hat has a deeper meaning or whether someone’s playful instinct got the better of him is a question that will probably remain unanswered. We can only assume that the idea was to make the unpopular *Kaiser* look ridiculous, since there are also known specimens of coins depicting Wilhelm II smoking a pipe.