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Counterfeit Panda Coins

Back in November, I wrote an article about a bizarre counterfeit, a silver 2001-D Panda coin. It is unfortunate, but now 2003 Pandas are also being counterfeited, so collectors, dealers, and the public should be aware of what to look for before making a purchase.

The fake counterfeit 2003 Panda differs from an authentic panda in several easy-to-identify aspects. The first and most basic aspect is that the coin is not silver. The coin is silver-plated over a cheaper, lighter metal. A real Panda is .999 fine silver with a weight of 31.1 grams, while the weight of the counterfeit is only 26.8 grams.



Real Panda

Fake Panda

Besides the obvious weight and metal differences, the design and details are quite different. On the counterfeit 2003 Panda coin, there is no denomination. All real Panda coins, with the exception of 1982 coinage, are denominated. Next, the lettering is thin on the counterfeit Panda in comparison to a real 2003 Panda coin. The letters look crude and are not mirrored like a real Panda coin. The bamboo above the Panda on the counterfeit is black and not frosted as that on a genuine 2003 panda coin. It is also sporadic and gapped in comparison. A thick line extending the length of the nose may be mistaken for a die break but is actually a tooling mark. Real Panda coins would not have this. Finally, the surface is granular and lacking details in comparison to a genuine Panda with a frosted reverse proof look.



Real Panda



Fake Panda

On the temple side of the counterfeit coin, the details are again just wrong. The counterfeit is less frosted and the details are different on the awnings of the building, as well as the doors and fencing on the temple and the steps. A large tooling mark extends into the field from the last character on the left. The surface is again granular and lacking mirrors inside the date.



Real Panda



Fake Panda

The most amazing aspect of the counterfeit is that real 2003 panda coins retail for about \$25. The reality is that this contemporary counterfeit is made for the sole purpose of fraud and deception. Even without a denomination, the coin still is marked as silver, a metal it is not. While a watchful eye can easily distinguish this coin from the real thing, someone making a quick purchase without knowledge of these counterfeits can and will be cheated by these pieces.