National Postal Museum Art Exhibition Offers Vibrant and Colorful Portrait of New York City

*Original Stamp Artwork on View Dec. 10–March 13, 2017*

“New York City: A Portrait Through Stamp Art” opened today, Dec. 10, at the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum. The exhibition includes 30 pieces of original artwork commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service for stamp production, offering a vibrant and colorful portrait of New York City through March 13, 2017.

New York City has influenced American society through architecture, art, sports, politics and other cultural forces. One reflection of the city’s impact is the number of U.S. postage stamps with a New York City connection. When the Postal Service issued the voluminous “Celebrate the Century” stamp series commemorating significant events across America during the 20th century, 23 of the 150 stamps had a New York City connection.

The pieces on display are part of the Postmaster General’s Collection, which includes more than 5,000 original pieces of art commissioned by the U.S. Postmasters General for stamps issued during a 70-year period. The collection includes not only the final approved art that can be seen on many U.S. postage stamps, but also concept drawings that were submitted for consideration but never used. The collection is owned by the U.S. Postal Service and is on long-term loan to the National Postal Museum.

“Visitors can now witness original pieces of art that inspired some of the most beautiful stamps collected and shared by Americans over the years,” said Allen Kane, museum director. “By seeing New York City through such iconic artwork, visitors can better appreciate how postage stamps celebrate our nation’s history, heritage and heroes.”

The original stamp art is displayed in six thematic categories relevant to New York City’s heritage, showcasing a variety of art styles, mediums and colors used to create some of America’s most beautiful stamps. The artwork honors important citizens, events and iconic buildings that have defined New York City as one of the greatest cities in the world.

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Categories include:

**Icons**

New York City’s architecture and icons are immediately recognized around the world as masterpieces of architectural design and engineering. The iconic landmarks help bring the city’s history and stories to life, attracting visiting tourists and local New Yorkers alike. Original stamp art includes The Statue of Liberty, Grand Central Terminal, Ellis Island Immigration Museum and the Empire State Building.

**Politics**

New York City has one of the largest municipal governments in the U.S. The city’s leaders have tended to champion progressive government initiatives and have frequently used their positions as springboards to state and national political roles. Because the city has a large immigrant population, municipal leaders have often exerted influence outside the U.S. The city’s international role has attracted global institutions such as the United Nations. Original stamp art includes Fiorello H. LaGuardia, International Style of Architecture, A. Philip Randolph, Theodore Roosevelt and Frances Perkins.

**Broadway**

Broadway is much more than a major thoroughfare running through Manhattan. The word evokes the section of Broadway between 42nd Street and 53rd Street, which includes Times Square and is home to more than 40 professional theaters. This is the “Great White Way,” where theater marquees illuminate the evening and convey the pulse of a city that never sleeps. Broadway has helped make New York City a cultural capital of the world. Original stamp art includes Showboat, Moss Hart, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II and Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

**Baseball**

New York City once had three major league teams: the New York Yankees, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants. Fourteen World Series match-ups have pitted New York City teams against one another, and the famed Yankees have won the World Series 27 times. When a New Yorker (James Farley) became Postmaster General, he approved the issuance of the first baseball stamp in 1939 commemorating the baseball centennial. Original stamp art includes Joe DiMaggio, Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, The Shot Heard ‘Round the World, Babe Ruth and World Series Rivals.

**City Life**

New York City grew from a small Dutch trading settlement called New Amsterdam in the early 17th century into a bustling multicultural city of more than 8 million people. Influenced by geography and ethnic, cultural and economic diversity, New York City has been a major entry port for immigrants from across the globe. Iconic elements of New York City life include its complex transportation system, established seasonal traditions and recognizable popular culture personalities. Original stamp art includes Immigrants Arrive, Immigration, Streetcars, Thanksgiving Day Parade, Seinfeld Television Series and The First Published Crossword Puzzle.

**Music**

New York City is a vibrant hub for music, film, dance and visual art. The city’s cultural and ethnic diversity has long influenced its music and dance heritage, with jazz, rock, hip-hop, salsa and other styles thriving in all five boroughs. New York City is also home to many musical conservatories and landmarks, such as the Metropolitan Opera House and Carnegie Hall. Original stamp art includes Jazz, Tito Puente, Arturo Toscanini, Merengue and Ethel Merman.
Six pieces of the artwork—one from each category—will be on display at the World Stamp Show–NY 2016. The special showing will take place May 28–June 4, 2016, at the Javits Center in New York City. The World Stamp Show carries on the tradition of the once-a-decade international exhibitions from the past 100 years. Held in the United States, the shows typically occur on a year ending with “6” or “7,” honoring the anniversary of America’s first postage stamps issued in 1847. Admission is free throughout all eight days of the show.

The museum has designed a special pictorial postmark that will be available to visitors at the philatelic center inside the museum. A special website augments the exhibition as well, providing additional access to the rich content presented.

The National Postal Museum is devoted to presenting the colorful and engaging history of the nation’s mail service and showcasing one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of stamps and philatelic material in the world. It is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C., across from Union Station. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). For more information about the Smithsonian, call (202) 633-1000 or visit the museum website at www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

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