National Postal Museum Receives Donation of Original Artwork

Finding Guide of Collection Now Available

Howard Koslow, artist and illustrator, has donated his collection of original artwork for the U.S. stamps that he designed between 1971 and 2013 to the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum.

The material consists mainly of highly developed “roughs” of accepted and unaccepted stamp designs in the form of pencil sketches and acrylic paintings. The final artwork for Koslow’s stamps resides in the Postmaster General’s Collection, a one-of-a-kind philatelic resource with unusual, rare and unique holdings, on long-term loan to the museum from the U.S. Postal Service.

A finding guide with a complete listing of stamps represented in the collection is available on the museum’s website.

Koslow graduated from Pratt Institute in New York in 1944. He then was an apprentice to Jean Carlu, the French poster artist, in his New York City studio. Koslow went on to study painting at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., and continued his studies in graphics at the School of Visual Arts in New York. During his lengthy career, he developed a reputation for historical accuracy, which led to commissions from the U.S. Air Force, NASA—for whom he created official paintings of the Apollo 15 mission and the first launch of the Space Shuttle Endeavour—the National Park Service and the U.S. Coast Guard. He received his first stamp commission from the Postal Service in 1971 for a stamp to mark the 10th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty. Over the next four decades, Koslow designed 60 stamps for the USPS.

He is best known for his series of 30 stamps featuring lighthouses of the United States. The first appeared in 1990; the most recent set of five New England Coastal Lighthouses was issued July 13 of this year. Other notable stamps included issues for the bicentennials of the signing and ratification of the U.S. Constitution, Jazz Singers in the Legends of American Music Series and the Brooklyn Bridge centennial.
“Howard has been designing stamps since before I was born, and he is still going strong,” said museum curator of philately Daniel A. Piazza. “We are honored that he has chosen us to receive his life’s work and perpetuate his legacy of stamp design.”

“I really feel that I have been privileged to create artwork that has been printed and distributed throughout the world, in millions of copies,” said Koslow. “Stamp design has allowed me, in a small way, to participate in the pictorial documentation of our American history.”

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.