



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

Irving Block papers

Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Irving Block papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.blocirvi
<b>Date:</b>	1938-1986
<b>Creator:</b>	Block, Irving
<b>Extent:</b>	1.62 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated 1984 by Block and in 1996 by Jill Block, the widow of Irving Block. Additional drawings, print and poster donated 2015 by Virginia Elwood-Akers, a former librarian at California State University, Northridge who received the drawings from colleague Dean Norman Tanis, head of the Santa Susana Press.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

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## Biographical / Historical

Irving Block (1910-1986) was a painter and educator in Los Angeles, California. Block was born in New York City. He was involved in the Works Projects Administration's Federal Art Project in the 1930s, and worked as a matte shot artist at 20th Century Fox during the 1940s and 50s. He taught for many years at California State University, Northridge (1963-1980). Block co-authored with Alan Adler the original story for the science fiction film *Forbidden Planet*, for which he designed *Robbie the Robot*.

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## Scope and Contents

Biographical material, professional and personal correspondence, subject files, financial records, artwork, printed material and an audio cassette.

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## Scope and Contents

Biographical information includes a résumé and award. Business correspondence, 1964-1984, regards the opening of The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and Block's teaching position at California State University, Northridge, and personal correspondence includes 5 illustrated letters by Block to his wife and two printed cards from Fritz Faiss. Subject files regard the WPA, 1938-1983, film animation, 1957-1976,

and book illustration, 1978-1984. Financial records relate to Block's association with the Ankrum Gallery, 1936-1981. Photographs are of Block, his friends, family and works of art.

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## Scope and Contents

Artwork includes 2 sketches, 1962, and approximately 60 pencil figurative drawings and studies done during weekly life drawing sessions established by Block and Hans Burkhardt at the Studio Club on the MGM lot from the 1950s to mid-1970s (among them is a pastel by Burkhardt of Block drawing the nude model); and 16 drawings and one print and one poster, most of which were executed by Irving Block for Santa Susana Press, California State University, Northridge's 1986 broadside of John Updike's poem, A Pear Like a Potato. Printed material, 1941-1982, includes exhibition catalogs and clippings. An audio cassette contains Block's reminiscences of his friendship with Burkhardt and a recording of Block delivering a lecture to a senior seminar class on Walt Whitman.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

- Animation (Cinematography) -- California -- Los Angeles
- Art and motion pictures
- Federal aid to the arts
- Illustration of books
- Motion picture industry
- Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- California -- Los Angeles

### Types of Materials:

- Drawings
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Ankrum Gallery
- Burkhardt, Hans Gustav, 1904-1994
- California State University, Northridge -- Faculty
- Faiss, Fritz
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
- United States. Works Progress Administration
- Whitman, Walt, 1819-1892

### Occupations:

- Art teachers -- California -- Los Angeles
- Painters -- California -- Los Angeles

### Functions:

- Motion picture studios -- California -- Hollywood