



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Isabella Howland papers,  
1899-1979, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Isabella Howland papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.howlisab
<b>Date:</b>	1899-1979
<b>Extent:</b>	1.2 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Howland, Isabella, 1895-1974
<b>Language:</b>	English  Collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of artist Isabella Howland measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1899-1979. The collection documents her career through biographical material, correspondence, personal business records, writings, printed material, artwork, and photographs.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated between 1975-1976 by Mrs. Martha Craig and Barbara Summer. Three photographs of works of art were donated by Eugenie Gershoy in 1979.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Helen MacDiarmid in 2014. All materials have been rehoused in archival folders and a new box for long-term stability.

### Preferred Citation

Isabella Howland papers, 1899-1979. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

### Conditions Governing Use

The Isabella Howland papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donors have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

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## Biographical / Historical

Isabella Howland (1895-1974) lived and worked in New York City. She drew portraits, painted on canvas, sketched on paper, and sculpted caricature busts of people in the art world. She wrote that she could do anything with her hands.

Howland was born in Brookline, Massachusetts. From her youth she knew she wanted to be an artist. She had her earliest artistic training at age 16. Her art education included time at the Boston Museum School and the Art Students League in New York City. She completed her secondary education in France and Germany, moved back to the United States afterwards, and in 1920 travelled again to Europe. In 1922 she settled in Greenwich Village and spent summers in Woodstock to paint landscapes and still-lives. She actively painted in the 1920s, and had three shows in 1927, 1929, and 1931. During the Depression she worked for the Public Works of Art Project and the Works Progress Administration. In 1934 she married Armando Zegri, and they divorced in 1937. While they were married they owned a club in the West Village named The Café Latino. She began teaching at a private school in the early 1940s while dealing with some personal difficulties. She found religion which comforted her as she dealt with her mother's declining health and her sister's waning mental state.

Howland had many friends in the art world and regularly received requests to exhibit at museums. She became known as an accomplished portrait artist, and she was commissioned many times to execute drawings or sculptures. She dabbled in writing and illustrating stories, and produced a set of 33 Christmas cards featuring two monks.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter, sculptor, caricaturist, and portraitist Isabella Howland measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1899-1979. Correspondence makes up about a third of the collection, with the remainder comprised of biographical material, writings, printed material, photographs, and artworks.

Correspondence is found between Isabella Howland and other artists or dealers. Among these are Eugenie Gershoy, Henry Strater, Edith Halpert, Peggy Bacon, Forbes Watson, Jerry Bywaters, Adolph Dehn and Dorothea Greenbaum. Letters from Juliana Force, the first director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, are present. Many invitations to exhibit are included. The collection includes a small number of letters with Howland's family. She maintained written communication with several individuals over decades.

The biographical material contains Isabella Howland's handwritten notes and typed documents about her life. Some legal documents and financial records are present. The writing series includes her story 'Willy Nilly' with accompanying illustrations of animals, in addition to some other writings. The artwork series includes sketches and sketchbooks from childhood into adulthood. Photographs include images of Howland as well as her paintings and portraits.

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## Arrangement

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1901-1972 (4 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1917-1973 (22 folders; Box 1)
- Series 3, Writings, 1935-1964 (8 folders; Box 1)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1928-1976 (5 folders; Box 1)
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1900-1979 (4 folders; Box 1, OV 2)

- Series 6: Artwork, 1899-circa 1940s (8 folders; Box 1, OV 2)

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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:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
Portrait painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York  
Women artists

Types of Materials:

Photographs  
Sketchbooks  
Sketches

Names:

Bacon, Peggy, 1895-1987  
Bywaters, Jerry  
Dehn, Adolf, 1895-1968  
Force, Juliana, 1876-1948  
Gershoy, Eugenie, 1901?-1983 or 6  
Greenbaum, Dorothea S.  
Halpert, Edith Gregor, 1900-1970  
Strater, Henry, 1896-  
Watson, Forbes, 1880-1960

Occupations:

Caricaturists -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1901-1972

#### *4 Folders (Box 1)*

Biographical material includes childhood memorabilia and financial records. Legal documents include dissolving of a partnership between Howland and her then-husband (Armando Zegri) from their partner for the business Café Latino. Another letter from an attorney discusses Howland's divorce from Zegri. One address book is present.

Box 1, Folder 1	Address Book, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Childhood Memorabilia, 1901-1915
Box 1, Folder 3	Financial Records, 1938-1972
Box 1, Folder 4	Legal Documents, 1935-1972

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1917-1973

### 22 Folders (Box 1)

Correspondence makes up about one third of the collection. Howland corresponded with friends and colleagues over many decades. There are letters or postcards from various people, including Eugenie Gershoy, Henry Strater, Edith Halpert, Peggy Bacon, Forbes Watson, Jerry Bywaters, Adolph Dehn, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Dorothea Greenbaum. Also present are a few letters regarding her work in the Treasury Department's Public Works of Art Project and the Works Progress Administration. Many letters are from museums, galleries, or organizations inviting her to participate in exhibits or thanking her for taking part. Other letters document sales of artworks.

Box 1, Folder 5	A, miscellaneous, 1917-1973
Box 1, Folder 6	B, miscellaneous, 1930-1973
Box 1, Folder 7	Bacon, Peggy, 1918-1971
Box 1, Folder 8	C, miscellaneous, 1933-1973
Box 1, Folder 9	D, miscellaneous, 1933-1973
Box 1, Folder 10	F, miscellaneous, 1954-1973
Box 1, Folder 11	Father of Isabella Howland, 1911-1921
Box 1, Folder 12	G, miscellaneous, 1932-1973
Box 1, Folder 13	Halpert, Edith, 1933-1963
Box 1, Folder 14	H, miscellaneous, 1911-1973
Box 1, Folder 15	J, miscellaneous, 1938-1973
Box 1, Folder 16	K, miscellaneous, 1933-1972
Box 1, Folder 17	M, miscellaneous, 1917-1973
Box 1, Folder 18	Mc, miscellaneous, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 19	P, miscellaneous, circa 1930s
Box 1, Folder 20	R, miscellaneous, 1936-1973
Box 1, Folder 21	Strater, Henry, 1953-1972

Box 1, Folder 22	S, miscellaneous, 1930-1973
Box 1, Folder 23	Unknown or First Name Only, 1932-1973
Box 1, Folder 24	Watson, Forbes, 1947-1964
Box 1, Folder 25	Whitney Museum of American Art, 1932-1964
Box 1, Folder 26	W, miscellaneous, 1935

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## Series 3: Writings, 1935-1964

### *8 Folders (Box 1)*

Writings include handwritten and typed autobiographical materials. There are some notes related to her art career. Howland wrote a story called 'Willy Nilly,' and the records contain handwritten and typed copies as well as illustrations. Also included are some poems and one translation by the artist from the Book of Proverbs. A photocopy of a guestbook from Café Latino and some unidentified writings complete the series.

Box 1, Folder 27	Autobiographical, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 28	Notes re Art Career, 1940-1969
Box 1, Folder 29	Poetry and Translations, circa 1930s
Box 1, Folder 30-32	"Willy Nilly", 1959-1964
Box 1, Folder 33	Cafe Latino Guestbook (photocopy), 1935
Box 1, Folder 34	Unidentified Writings, 1935-1964

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## Series 4: Printed Material, 1928-1976

### *5 Folders (Box 1)*

Printed material includes a set of 33 Christmas cards Howland designed. Exhibition pamphlets involve Howland and other artists. Many clippings from newspapers including photos of artists, politicians, and Howland sculptures.

Box 1, Folder 35-36      Christmas Cards Designed by Isabella Howland, circa 1959

Box 1, Folder 37      Exhibition Materials, 1928-1976

Box 1, Folder 38      Newspaper Clippings, 1924-1971

Box 1, Folder 39      Newspaper Clippings, 1938-1957

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## Series 5: Photographs, circa 1900-1979

### *4 Folders (Box 1, OV 2)*

Photographs depict Howland and her works. Also included are photos by Eugenie Gershoy of works by Howland. Portraits of the artist and member of the Lost Generation Henry Strater are present.

Box 1, Folder 40	Howland, Isabella, circa 1900-circa 1920s
Box 1, Folder 41	Howland Artwork, circa 1920s-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 42	Photos by Eugenie Gershoy of Works by Isabella Howland, 1979
Box 1, Folder 43	Portraits of Henry Strater, circa 1900-1979 Oversized material housed in OV 2.
Box OV 2	Oversize Portrait of Henry Strater from Box 1, Folder 43, circa 1900-1979

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## Series 6: Artwork, 1899-circa 1940s

### *8 Folders (Box 1, OV 2)*

Artwork makes up a significant portion of the collection. Many sketchbooks from Howland's childhood, sketches from a trip to Jamaica (probably), and other loose sketches. Also found are figure studies, ink drawings, landscapes, two watercolors with tropical iconography (probably Jamaica), and two sketches from 1914 with war theme.

Box 1, Folder 44	Early Childhood Drawings, 1899-1907
Box 1, Folder 45	Early Childhood Drawings, 1903-1909
Box 1, Folder 46	Sketchbooks, circa 1910s-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 47	Sketchbooks, circa 1910s-circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 48	Sketchbooks, circa 1910s
Box 1, Folder 49	Sketches, circa 1930s
Box 1, Folder 50-51	Sketches, 1899-circa 1940s
Box OV 2	Oversize Figure and landscape sketches, 1899-circa 1940s
Box OV 2	Oversize Sketches about War, 1914

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