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## Press release

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### Deutsche Fotothek and Getty Research Institute receive photographic work of Fritz Block

The Deutsche Fotothek of the Saxon State and University Library Dresden (SLUB) received a donation of 1,500 vintage prints, 5,000 negatives as well as numerous press clippings and archival materials of German-Jewish architect and photographer Dr Fritz Block (1889–1955) from the Manfred Heiting Trust (MHT), Los Angeles. The object and journalistic photographs were taken in Germany between 1929 and 1938 as well as during extensive travels, including a round trip through the USA lasting several weeks (1931) and a Zeppelin flight to South America (1933).

The MHT has donated a further 6,000 colour slides made after Block's emigration to the USA to the Getty Research Institute (GRI), Los Angeles. The photographs represent the only complete set of all colour slide series produced and professionally distributed by Block in Los Angeles between 1943 and 1954, including early colour photographs of Californian architectural modernism.

Fritz Block's photographic work, which had been privately owned for decades, has now been acquired from the heirs, including rights of use, by the foundation of Manfred Heiting. The goal of the distinguished German-American collector and promoter of photography was to preserve as much of the work as possible, to donate it to appropriate institutions for further indexing and thus making it permanently accessible to researchers in the field of history of photography.

Dr Jens Bove, head of the Deutsche Fotothek at SLUB Dresden: "We are immensely pleased about the generous donation from Manfred Heiting. Fritz Block's work is a substantial addition to our 'Archive of Photographers'. The Deutsche Fotothek and the Getty Research Institute will jointly coordinate access to Fritz Block's photographic oeuvre and catalogue the collection in the coming months. The first 300 photographs can already be viewed in our online database."

#### Fritz Block – Architect with a camera

Fritz Block was born in Warburg in 1889. Between 1908 and 1913, he studied architecture at Technische Hochschule Dresden, where he received his doctorate in civil engineering in 1915. For the next four years, Block worked at the planning and building office of the city of Königsberg before moving to Hamburg, where he founded the architecture firm Dr. Block & Hochfeld together with Ernst Hochfeld (1890-1985) in 1921. As an architect, Block, an active member of the Association of German Architects and the German Association of Craftsmen (Deutscher Werkbund), was one of the committed representatives of *Neues Bauen* (New Building) in Germany. From 1929, Block also expressed the ideas of Modernism as a photographer. His passion for photography developed into a second career. His photographs of technology, nature and people in the style of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and *Neues Sehen* (New Vision) found favour in German architecture magazines

early on, in the weekly supplement of the *Hamburger Anzeiger* and other illustrated magazines. Block provided photojournalistic city and travel reports from Paris, Marseille or North Africa. In September and October 1931, he made his first extensive journey through the United States, taking almost 4,000 photographs with his Leica. In 1932, the entrepreneur and collector Kurt Kirchbach acquired some of Block's works for his collection of contemporary avant-garde photography from the "International Photographic Exhibition" in Hamburg.

From 1933 onwards, Fritz Block, as a Jew, was forced to end his activities in architectural publishing and photojournalism and to limit his architectural work to conversions. Nevertheless, he was able to travel extensively with his camera until 1938. After being temporarily imprisoned for a few days in the Oranienburg concentration camp, he managed to emigrate to Los Angeles in November 1938. Unable to obtain a licence to open an architecture firm, Block shifted his professional focus to colour photography shortly after Kodachrome slides had hit the market. In the early 1940s, he produced a thematic colour slide series for art classes in schools and museums, followed by the first colour slide series on architectural modernism in California. In 1943, he founded Dr. Block Color Productions to distribute his overall 27 slide series in architecture, art, sculpture, design, technology and nature. Fritz Block died in Los Angeles on 23 January 1955.

Fritz Block's photographic oeuvre, which was little known for a long time, has now been thoroughly researched. Roland Jaeger's opulent monograph "*Foto-Auge Fritz Block. Neue Fotografie und moderne Farbdias* (Photo-Eye Fritz Block. New Photography – Modern Color Slides)" (Scheidegger & Spiess, Zurich) was published in 2018. The book shows Block's career from architect to photographer, from New Vision small-format photography of the 1920s in Europe to Kodachrome colour photography as a teaching tool in 1950s USA, from Jewish-German avant-garde culture to the culture of exile in America.

### About the Deutsche Fotothek

Founded in 1924, the Deutsche Fotothek is a universal cultural history archive holding over six million images in total. It offers a diverse range of subjects with a focus on photography, art, architecture, and the history of technology. The most important task of the Deutsche Fotothek is the preservation and activation of photographic works and archives. Its "Archive of Photographers" showcases the works of distinguished German photographers or photographers working in Germany. Around 2,230,000 images are currently searchable in the online image database at [www.deutschefotothek.de](http://www.deutschefotothek.de).

- ✓ [Website of the Deutsche Fotothek](#)
- ✓ [About the life and work of Fritz Block](#)
- ✓ [The photographs by Fritz Block](#)

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### Press images

- [df\_fb-pos\_0000001] Fritz Block: Hamburg, Turbinendampfer Europa im Schwimmdock der Werft Blohm & Voss, 1929 © Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Block
- [df\_fb-pos\_0000067] Fritz Block: Hamburg, Fischer am St. Pauli-Fischmarkt, 1931 © Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Block
- [df\_fb-pos\_0000130] Fritz Block: Paris, Blick vom Kaufhaus Galeries Lafayette auf den Boulevard Haussmann, 1930 © Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Block
- [df\_fb-pos\_0000198] Fritz Block: Hochofen-Ladebühne, Ford-Fabrik in Dearborn, Detroit, 1931 © Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Block
- [df\_fb-pos\_0000247] Fritz Block: New York, Zwei Jungen in Harlem, 1931 © Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Block
- [df\_fb-pos\_0000121] Fritz Block: Ellobium aurismidae (Midasohr), Röntgenaufnahme, 1931 © Deutsche Fotothek / Fritz Block