Spiro, Eugen; Papers

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
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Summary Information

| Repository: | M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives |
| Title: | Eugen Spiro Papers |
| ID: | ger086 |
| Date [inclusive]: | 1940-1972 |
| Physical Description: | 3 cubic ft. |
| Physical Location: | The materials are located onsite in the department. |
| Language of the Material: | German, English |
| Abstract: | German-Jewish painter interned in the French concentration camp at Gurs, painted portraits of Thomas Mann, Albert Einstein, and other notables. The collection includes correspondence, photographs of Spiro's artwork, and exhibit catalogues. |

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, Eugen Spiro Papers, 1940-1972. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Spiro Papers).

Biographical History

Eugen(e) Spiro, portrait and landscape painter, graphic artist and illustrator, is best known for his portraits of European personalities (incl. Thomas Mann, Theodor Heuss, Albert Bassermann, Fritz von Unruh, and his first wife Tilla Durieux), American personalities (incl. Archbishop Edward Cardinal Mooney, Judge M. J. Proskauer and George N. Shuster), and famous musicians (incl. Richard Strauss, Bruno Walter, Arturo Toscanini, Bronislaw Hubermann and Gregor Piatigorsky). Perhaps his most well-known portrait is his 1941 rendering of the émigré physicist Albert Einstein. His paintings hang in many museums worldwide including the National Galerie in Berlin, the Musée Nationale d’Art Moderne in Paris, the Bezelle Museum in Jerusalem and the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Spiro was born in Breslau, Germany, on April 18, 1874, the son of a cantor, Abraham Beer, and his wife, Fanny Form Spiro, and one of nine children. He studied art in Breslau under Albrecht Bräuer and later became a master student of Franz von Stuck in Munich. His early portraits of women appeared frequently in, as well as on the covers of, the Jugendstil magazine, Der Jugend. After a brief marriage to the actress Tilla Durieux (1904-1906), Spiro relocated to Paris where he studied the French masters and impressionists, became a Professor at the Académie Moderne, co-founded the Salon d'Automne, and belonged to the circle of artists and writers of the Parisian Café du Dôme.

In 1914, Spiro returned to Berlin where he became Chairman of the Berliner Sezession and a Professor at the Berlin Academy of Arts. He remained in Berlin until Hitler's rise to power in 1933, when he was forbidden to work because of his Jewish background. He voluntarily resigned from his posts in 1934, secured a visa, and was allowed to immigrate to Paris in 1935. Spiro remained in Paris for the next five years, operating as a freelance artist, painting portraits and giving private lessons, participating in exhibits in Amsterdam and London. Together with other immigrants he founded, became co-director and first chairman of the Union des Artistes libres in Paris.

With the spread of the Hitler's influence to France in 1940, Spiro was again forced to flee, this time via Spain and Portugal, arriving in the United States in 1941 at the age of 67, a relatively unknown artist in America. Spiro, a well-known artist in Europe, had asked Albert Einstein years earlier to sit for a portrait. At the time, Einstein had replied that he would sit only for unknown artists. After Spiro's arrival in the U.S. in 1941, he once again approached Einstein to sit for a portrait, this time as a newly arrived émigré and an unknown artist in his newly adopted homeland. This time Einstein agreed and Spiro painted his well-known portrait of the physicist.

Eugen Spiro was married three times: first to actress Tilla Durieux (1904-1906), second to Elisabeth Saenger-Sethe in 1917, with whom he had one son, Peter, and lastly to Lilly Jacoby, whom he met in the French internment camp of Gurs in 1940 and married a year later. The couple settled in New York in 1941. Spiro lived to the age of 98 and died in New York City on September 26, 1972.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>Born on April 18, in Breslau, Germany, one of nine children of the Jewish cantor, Abraham Beer and his wife, Fanny Form Spiro.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880-1892</td>
<td>Attended the Elisabeth-Gymnasium, Breslau.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Apprenticeship in fashion design with a ladies garment firm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892-1894</td>
<td>Attended Royal School of Arts, Breslau; studied under Albrecht Bräuer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894-1897</td>
<td>Attended the Academy of Arts in Munich, studied under Franz von Stuck.</td>
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<td>1897-1898</td>
<td>Study trip to Italy with the Saxon school.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899-1904</td>
<td>Teacher and portrait painter in Breslau; contributed to Jugendstil journal Jugend; first series of portraits of musicians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Became member of Münchner Sezession.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Moved to Berlin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904-1906</td>
<td>Married to actress Tilla Durieux.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Became a member of Berliner Sezession; participated in exhibits, including Wiener Sezession; moved to Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1914</td>
<td>Professor at the Académie Moderne and co-founder of the Salon d'Automne, Paris; belonged to circle of artists and writers of the Café du Dôme; copied French masters and impressionists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Returned to Berlin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914-1933</td>
<td>Member of the executive board, and President of the Berliner Sezession. Professor at the Academy of Arts, Berlin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915-1917</td>
<td>Served in the cartographic department of the German general staff.</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Married Elisabeth Saenger-Sethe, with whom he had one son, Peter. Professor at the Staatliche Kunsthochule in Berlin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Study trip to Italy.</td>
</tr>
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<td>1924-1933</td>
<td>Chairman of the United Artists' Corporation (Kartell der Vereinigten Bildenden Künstler Berlins).</td>
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<td>1927-1933</td>
<td>Member of the Experts' and Purchase Committees of the Nationalgalerie Berlin and other German museums.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>First trip to United States; exhibited his work at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, PA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Prohibited from working by Hitler; voluntary resignation from all honorary posts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Left Germany in September and immigrated to Paris (with visa).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935-1940</td>
<td>Freelance artist in Paris, painting portraits and giving private lessons; participated in exhibits in Amsterdam, London; co-director and first chairman of Union des Artistes libres.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Resigned his German citizenship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Not interned because of age; fled with family to Marseilles via Nantes, Biarritz and Pau; met future third wife, Lilly Jacoby in French concentration camp Gurs.</td>
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<td>1940-1941</td>
<td>Emigration to the United States via Spain and Portugal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Arrived in the U.S. in Baltimore, MD on May 18; moved to New York in May; married Lilly Jacoby on September 30.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>First individual exhibit at the Galerie St. Etienne, New York, where he would exhibit seven times, the last exhibit on the occasion of his 90th birthday in 1964.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948-1952</td>
<td>Teacher at the Wayman Adams School, Elizabethtown, NY.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>First post-war visit to the Federal Republic of Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>First post-war exhibit in the Federal Republic of Germany at the Gallerie Wolfgang Gurlitt in Munich.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Awarded Das Grosse Verdienstkreuz from the Federal Republic of Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Retrospective exhibit in honor of Spiro's 95th birthday at the Berlin Museum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Died in New York City on September 26 at the age of 98.</td>
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</table>

Scope and Contents

The Eugen Spiro Papers consist of 3 cubic feet of materials, 1903-1985, and include 1 cu. ft. of correspondence of Eugen Spiro and his wife, Lilly. Although there is some correspondence with friends, most of the correspondence relates to Spiro's artwork, including letters from many of the individuals he sketched (Thomas Mann, Albert Einstein, Theodor Heuss, and numerous prominent musicians). The collection also contains photographs of Spiro's artwork, either in private ownership or in museums, as well as catalogs of his exhibitions, especially with the Galerie St. Etienne in New York City.

Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is organized into seven series:

1. **Series 1: Correspondence, 1903-1913, 1941-1985**
2. **Series 2: Biographical materials and documents**
3. **Series 3: Writings of Eugen Spiro, 1932-1964, undated**
4. **Series 4: Newspaper clippings pertaining to Spiro and his artwork; catalogs of exhibits, 1903-1978**
5. **Series 5: Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's artwork, 1905-1979**
6. **Series 6: Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends, 1941-1978, undated**
7. **Series 7: Miscellaneous materials**
Administrative Information

Publication Statement
M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

Revision Description
EAD file created Encoded in EAD by Conversion and encoding by ArchProteus 2014 2015

Processing Information
Processed May 9, 2007 by Sandra Hunt Hawrylchak.

Acquisition Information
All items in this manuscript collection were transferred to the University Libraries, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, in June 1986.

Access
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Controlled Access Headings

- Art
- Artists -- Germany.
- Artists -- United States.
- Concentration camps -- France.
- Portrait painting, German.
- Germans -- France.
• Berlin (Germany) -- Jews.
• Concentration camps -- France -- Gurs.
• Spiro, Eugen, 1874-1972.
• Spiro, Lilli.
• Mann, Thomas, 1875-1955.
• Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955.

Collection Inventory

Correspondence, 1903-19131941-1985

Physical Description: 120 file folders

Scope and Contents

The series is arranged in three sub-series: general correspondence of Eugen Spiro, 1903-1913 and 1941-1972; correspondence with owners and subjects of Spiro paintings; and correspondence of Lilly Spiro, primarily dating from the years after Eugen's death, 1972-1985. Among the noteworthy correspondents are: Tilla Durieux, Albert Einstein, George Grosz, Theodor Heuss, Otto Loewi, Thomas Mann, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Albert Schweitzer and Gottfried Reinhard Treviranus.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

General correspondence of Eugen Spiro (after 1972, with Lilly Spiro), 1960-1969

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<td>Amt für Kunst Zehlendorf, 1963</td>
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<td>The Bezalel National Museum, Jerusalem, 1959</td>
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**Correspondence with owners and subjects of paintings, 1943-1985**

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### Correspondence of Lilly Spiro, 1969-1985

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### Biographical materials and documents, Undated

**Physical Description:** 4 file folders

**Scope and Contents**

This series consists primarily of texts prepared by Eugen Spiro, including versions of curriculum vitae, short biographies, and lists of paintings for exhibits.

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**Digital Object:** [Online Object Uploaded through Hyrax UI](#)

### Biographical statements about Spiro by others, incl. Ernst Freund, Max Osborn, Ernst Scheyer, Margarethe Steinberg, Undated

| Box 2 (2-Biographical materials and documents) | Folder 2 |

### Documents, ca. 1964

**Scope and Contents**

Including death certificate, Grosse Verdienstkreuz.

| Box 2 (2-Biographical materials and documents) | Folder 3 |

### Awards -- newspaper clippings, Undated

| Box 2 (2-Biographical materials and documents) | Folder 4 |

---

**Writings of Eugen Spiro, 1932-1964Undated**

**Physical Description:** 8 file folders

**Scope and Contents**

This series consists of typescripts of essays as well as several early stories by Spiro.

**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

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<td>&quot;The double-mirror&quot;, ca. 1954</td>
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<td>&quot;Als ich Albert Einstein malte&quot;, 1955 May 9</td>
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**Scope and Contents**

also related correspondence.

| "Die Vier (Ein fragmentarische Pessacherzählung)". Unpublished, 1961 April 1 | Box 2 (3-Writings of Eugen Spiro) Folder 8 |

"Weg der Menschlichkeit". Unpublished, 1962 April 18
Digital Object: Online Object Uploaded through Hyrax UI

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**Newspaper clippings pertaining to Spiro and his artwork; catalogs of exhibits, 1903-1978**

**Physical Description:** 16 file folders

**Scope and Contents**

This series consists of articles in newspapers and magazines about Spiro, reviews of exhibits of his work, as well as catalogs of exhibits.

**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

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## Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's artwork, 1905-1979

**Physical Description:** 8 file folders

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains printed reproductions of Spiro's paintings in magazines and newspapers, as well as copies of early magazine covers illustrated by Spiro. In addition, the series contains photographs (mostly dated) of Spiro's portraits, landscape paintings and sketches of prominent musicians. Additional photographs of Spiro's artwork are located in the correspondence files of their owners (Series 1).

**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

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<td>Box Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductions of early artwork in magazines, magazine covers, etc., 1916-1930</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photographs of Albert Einstein portraits, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductions of Einstein portraits, 1943-1979</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductions of Spiro sketch entitled &quot;Round trip&quot;, 1949-1950</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductions of artwork in magazines, 1953-1967</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photographs of Spiro's prophet series, newspaper clippings, 1960-1961</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductions of Spiro's prophet series in magazines, etc., 1960-1961</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photographs of Spiro's artwork, 1905-1962Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (5-Reproductions and photographs of Eugen Spiro's art)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends, 1941-1978 Undated

**Physical Description**: 20 file folders

**Scope and Contents**

This series consists primarily of snapshot photographs of Eugen and Lilly Spiro, their friends and family members, including vacation photos and candid photos of Spiro's summer teaching classes.

**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Description</th>
<th>Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photos, early and ca. 1941-1943</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends) Folder 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Object</strong>: Online Object Uploaded through Hyrax UI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Old passport photos, Eugen and Lilly Spiro, Undated | Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends) Folder 10 |
| **Digital Object**: Online Object Uploaded through Hyrax UI |

| Callicoon, 1948 | Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends) Folder 11 |

| Lawrence Painting Group, 1948-1957 | Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends) Folder 12 |

| Postcards, 1947 Summer1954 Summer1959 Summer | Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends) Folder 13 |

<p>| Teaching, Elizabethtown, 1949-19521955 | Box 3 (6-Photographs) Folder 14 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Box Details</th>
<th>Folder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching, Hanover, NH, 1953</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photograph, 1954 Summer</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 15</td>
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<td>Kennebunkport, ME, 1955 Summer</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 16</td>
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<td>Europe, 1956 June</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 17</td>
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<td>South America, 1956 October</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orta, Italy, 1958</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 19</td>
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<td>85th birthday, 1959</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 20</td>
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<td>Denmark, 1960</td>
<td>Box 3 (6-Photographs of Eugen Spiro, Spiro family and friends)</td>
<td>Folder 21</td>
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<td>Folder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photograph, 1965 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snapshots, 1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slides, ca. 1970</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends: G. R. Treviranus &amp; family, Undated</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends, Undated</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends, 1961-1970</td>
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<td>Exhibition openings, 195419601978</td>
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<td>28</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Miscellaneous materials, Undated**
**Physical Description:** 8 file folders

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains copies of original Spiro holiday cards, memorabilia, and materials concerning subjects of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Description</th>
<th>Instances</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original Spiro Christmas cards, 1950-1965</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balthus. Magazine articles about, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loewi, Otto. Publications, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorabilia, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polgar, Alfred. &quot;Cera&quot;, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 33</td>
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<td>Physical Description: typescript 3 p.</td>
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<td>Scheyer, Ernst. Publications, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous materials, Undated</td>
<td>Box 3 (7-Miscellaneous materials) Folder 35-36</td>
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</table>

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