



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Manuel Quiles Films

NMAH.AC.0765

Alexis Ainsworth

2007

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

P.O. Box 37012

Suite 1100, MRC 601

Washington, D.C. 20013-7012

[archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	3

---

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Manuel Quiles Films
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0765
<b>Date:</b>	1944-1947.
<b>Creator:</b>	Wood, Priscilla (Donor) Quilles, Mario (Donor) Quiles, Manuel, 1908-1989 (Creator)
<b>Extent:</b>	0.3 Cubic feet (1 box)
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is in English. Some films contain Spanish titles.
<b>Summary:</b>	Home movies documenting various events in a small, close-knit, South Bronx, New York community of Puerto Ricans who came to the mainland U.S. in the 1920s and 1930s. The films depict birthdays, weddings and Christmas celebrations.

---

## Administrative Information

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by Mario Quilles and Priscilla Q. Wood in 2001.

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Alexis Ainsworth, 2007. The spellings of the names Quiles and Quilles in this record are correct, reflecting changes in the spelling of the family name.

### Preferred Citation

Manuel Quiles Films, 1944-1947, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research and access on site by appointment. Unprotected films must be handled with gloves.

### Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Manuel Ismael Quiles (June 17, 1908 - October 1989) grew up in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, and moved with his family to the U.S. in the 1920s. Throughout his life, Quiles worked in a number of professions that allowed him to use his artistic talents. During the Depression he traveled to Chicago and joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, which sent him to Wyoming to work as a photographer for a

newspaper. Later he returned to New York City and studied tool and die, machine, and patent model making at Gompers High School. After World War II, Quiles continued to pursue his artistic interests by working as a silk screen artist for a sign and showcase company. Later, he designed Spanish greeting cards and created labels for products sold in religious and botanical stores. Throughout his lifetime Quiles worked as a photographer, camera maker, silk screen artist, sculptor, locksmith, and wood carver. Eventually Manuel Quiles gained recognition as an artist through his relationship with Jay Johnson, the owner of America's Folk Heritage Gallery. Quiles began to sell and exhibit his work at Johnson's New York gallery. When working on his sculptures, Quiles relied on woodworking skills he learned as a child from his cousin, a cabinet maker in Puerto Rico. References to his art work can be found in both Jay Johnson's American Folk Art of the Twentieth Century and Carolyn Morrow Long's *Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce*.

---

## Scope and Contents

These films, created by Manuel Quiles, document a small community of Puerto Rican immigrants who arrived in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s. These Puerto Rican families were located mostly in the South Bronx, New York. The films contain footage of family gatherings and holiday celebrations, as well as family trips to the Bronx Zoo, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair, and Mexico.

---

## Arrangement

The collection is organized into one series that contains all films and videos. The original order of each reel of film was retained. The reels are organized chronologically.

---

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Birthday parties
- Christmas
- Puerto Ricans -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York
- Weddings

### Types of Materials:

- Home movies
- Motion pictures (visual works)

### Places:

- Bronx (New York, N.Y.)

---

## Container Listing

Box 1, Tape OV 765.1;	[Compilation Video - Quiles Films 3, 4, 5], 1958-1966 1 Videocassettes (BetacamSP) (Betacam-SP, 63:35 minutes)
Box 2, Tape RV 765.1;	Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles
Box 2, Disk RDVD765.1	Content Description: Contains films 3 (OF 765.5), 4 (OF 765.6), and part of 5 (OF 765.7). There is a portion of this video for which we do not have the original film (it is located between films 4 and 5). This section contains video of a crowd wearing masks and costumes, a young boy and girl playing outside, and footage of a house and its yard.
Box 1, Tape OV 765.2;	Compilation Video - Quiles Films 5, 1, 2, 1938-1959 1 Videocassettes (BetacamSP) (Betacam-SP, 42:20 minutes)
Box 2, Tape RV 765.2;	Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles
Box 2, Disk RDVD765.2	Content Description: Contains the end of film 5 (OF 765.7), and films 1 (OF 765.3) and 2 (OF 765.4). The beginning of this video contains footage from the end of [Compilation Video containing Quiles Films 3, 4, 5]. There is a portion of this video for which we do not have the original film (it is located at the beginning, before film 5). This section contains video of a young boy and girl playing outside, and footage of a house and its yard.
Box 1, Reel OF 765.3	[Quiles Film 1], [1938?] 1 Film reel (8mm, black & white, camera original reversal, silent, 160 ft)
	Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles
	Content Description: This film, shot at a Christmas celebration, includes footage of the Christmas tree and presents, dancing, the dinner table, a panning shot of the guests, and additional footage of the guests with their gifts. This is followed by film of a young girl's birthday party and her birthday cake.
	Note: The edge codes on the film place the film in 1938, but the Quiles family states that the films were created between 1944 and 1947.
Box 1, Reel OF 765.4	[Quiles Film 2], 1964-1966 1 Reel (8mm, black & white, camera original reversal, silent, 350 ft)
	Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles
	Content Description: Contains film of a toddler playing in the yard with a toy, a birthday celebration for a 96 year old woman, Alicia's wedding and reception on October 14, 1944, a Christmas celebration with a Christmas tree and presents, and a birthday party for Frank.
	Note: The edge codes on the film place the film in 1938, but the Quiles family states that the films were taken between 1944 and 1947.

Box 1, Reel OF  
765.5

[Quiles Film 3], 1964-1965  
1 Reel (8mm, color, camera original reversal, silent, 420 ft)

Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles

Content Description: Contains film of a visit to the Bronx Zoo, a Christmas celebration with a Christmas tree and presents, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the view out a car window while driving on a highway, dancers and acrobats possibly at the 1964-1965 World's Fair in New York.

Box 1, Reel OF  
765.6

[Quiles Film 4], 1963-1965  
1 Reel (8mm, color, camera original reversal, silent, 360 ft)

Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles

Content Description: This film contains footage of the 1964-1965 World's Fair in New York. This includes images of the Unisphere, fountains, acrobats, a Chinese temple, a parade, and African dancers. This is followed by footage of fireworks that may have been part of the World's Fair. Next is footage from a vacation, possibly to Mexico. This includes film of buildings, riverboats, a bullfight, a church, and ancient ruins (most likely Teotihuacan). Also there is film of the view from a hotel room patio, cliff diving at a beach, and people swimming in pool.

[Quiles Film 5], 1958-1959  
1 Reel (8mm, color, camera original reversal, silent, 200 ft)

Notes: Creator: Manuel Quiles

Content Description: Contains film of a family celebration, featuring a baby in a white dress, presumably celebrating a baptism. Also contains fireworks and film of the family caring for the baby.