



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Nickolas Muray Papers, 1910-1978, in the Archives of American Art

Judy Ng

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection
was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Nickolas Muray papers
Date:	1910-1992
Identifier:	AAA.muranick
Creator:	Muray, Nickolas, 1892-1965
Extent:	1.5 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of photographer Nickolas Muray measure 1.5 linear feet and date from 1910 to 1978. Found within the papers are biographical materials; business and personal correspondence, including a handful of letters from Frida Kahlo; writings; teaching files, primarily of photography courses taught at New York University; printed material; artwork; and photographic materials of Muray, his family and friends, and his work. There is a 0.6 linear feet Unprocessed Addition which includes biographical material, correspondence, photographs, research notes and a diary about Africa, and a subject file on the book <i>The Revealing Eye, Personalities of the 1920s</i> , written by Paul Gallico with photographs taken by Muray, 1967.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The papers were donated in 1988 and 2019 by Muray's daughter, Mimi Murray.

Other Finding Aids

Finding aid available at Archives of American Art offices.

Available Formats

The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2016 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website. Materials which have not been scanned include blank pages, blank versos of photographs, and duplicates. In some cases, published books and other publications have had their covers, title pages, and relevant pages scanned.

Processing Information

Materials received a preliminary level of arrangement after donation and the collection was microfilmed onto reels 4392-4393. The collection was prepared for digitization and described by Judy Ng in 2016, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Nickolas Muray papers, 1910-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Photographer Nickolas Muray (1892-1965) lived and worked in New York, New York and was known for his portrait, fashion, and advertising photography and for his mastery of the carbro color printing process.

Born in Szeged, Hungary, Muray spent time in Budapest as an engraver's apprentice and moved to Germany at the age of 16 to expand his technical knowledge of photo-engraving and photography. In 1913, Muray immigrated to America where he worked as a photo engraver at Stockinger Engraving Co. and eventually opened his own photography studio in 1920. After successfully completing a commission to photograph Broadway star Florence Reed, Muray continued to build his portfolio with regular commissions for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vanity Fair* to photograph movie stars, artists, musicians, artists, and models. In the 1930s, Muray mastered the carbro printing process and established one of the first color labs in America. His color fashion and advertising work continued to appear regularly in *Vogue*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *McCall's* and other periodicals.

In addition to his professional work, Muray wrote reviews for *Dance* magazine and represented the United States in 1928 and 1932 as a member of the Olympic fencing team. He maintained a long distance affair with artist Frida Kahlo throughout the 1930s, eventually ending the relationship but remaining friends until her death in 1954. In 1942, Muray married his fourth wife, Margaret (Peggy) Schwab, with whom he had a daughter, Mimi. Muray died of a heart attack in 1965.

Scope and Contents

The papers of photographer Nickolas Muray measure 1.5 linear feet and date from 1910 to 1992. Found within the papers are biographical materials; business and personal correspondence, including a handful of letters from Frida Kahlo; writings; teaching files, primarily of photography courses taught at New York University; printed material; artwork; and photographic materials of Muray, his family and friends, and his work.

There is a 0.6 linear feet Unprocessed Addition which includes biographical material, correspondence, photographs, research notes and a diary about Africa, and a subject file on the book *The Revealing Eye, Personalities of the 1920s*, written by Paul Gallico with photographs taken by Muray, 1967.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 2 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Nickolas Muray papers, 1910-1978 (0.9 linear feet; Boxes 1-2, OV 3)

- Series 2: Unprocessed Addition, 1927-1992 (0.6 linear feet; Boxes 4-5)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Latino and Latin American artists
Photographers -- United States
Photography -- Study and teaching
Portrait photography

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Kahlo, Frida
New York University -- Faculty

Container Listing

Series 1: Nickolas Muray Papers, 1910-1978

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, OV 3)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials include curriculum vitae, identification cards related to Muray's participation in Olympic fencing events, and membership related to the Circle of Confusion and the New York Coffee House Club. There is also a transcript of Muray's interview with the NY radio station WEAJ regarding beauty and aesthetics, and documentation of Muray's 1961 heart attack and recovery.

Correspondence is primarily with Muray's friends, business associates, and clients, including Martha Graham, Claude Monet, Ruth St. Denis, and H.G. Wells. There are also letters related to his participation in the Olympic Games, his application to the Army Signal Corps Photographic Services, and a handful of letters from Frida Kahlo that discuss her health, impending divorce from Diego Rivera, and plans regarding the exhibition of her artwork.

Writings include an autobiographical account by Muray; lists and notes regarding celebrity portrait photo sittings; typescripts of theater performance reviews; and a mock-up of *Great Tribes of the World*, with photographs by Muray. There is also a typescript commentary of *Revealing Eye* by Paul Gallico.

Teaching files are primarily course materials relating to Muray's 1940 and 1941 New York University photography classes and a lecture series based on his travels in Africa. Printed material includes a copy of Muray's book *Celebrity Portraits of the Twenties and Thirties*, a brochure advertising Muray Studios, clippings, and miscellaneous printed material.

There are also a handful of sketches by illustrator Willy Pogany and photographic materials of Muray, his family and friends, and his work. Photographs include Muray in uniform as a member of the 1928 Olympic fencing team; carbony prints of Loretta Young, 3 models, and arrangements of food; and a photograph of Muray with Miguel Covarrubias, Diego Rivera, and Frida Kahlo.

Box 1 Biographical Material

Box 1, Folder 1	Curriculum Vitae, circa 1950-1960
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Box 1, Folder 2	Identification Cards, Olympics, 1931-1932, 1964
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Box 1, Folder 3	Interview Transcript, WEAJ-NYC Radio, 1929
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Box 1, Folder 4	Medical History, Heart Attack, 1961-1962
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Box 1, Folder 5	Memberships, circa 1963
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Box 1 Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 6	A-B, 1926-1965 Notes: Includes letters from Evangeline Adams, Judith Anderson, and the secretary to the King of Belgium.
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Box 1, Folder 7	C, 1925-1965 Notes: Includes letters to Hall Caine, Feodor Chaliapin, Miguel Covarrubias, and Joan Crawford, as well as a Christmas card from Frank Crowninshield decorated with an etching by Gari Melchers.
Box 1, Folder 8	D-G, 1926-1965 Notes: Includes letters from John Galsworthy and Martha Graham.
Box 1, Folder 9	H-K, 1926-1965 Notes: Includes letters from Jascha Heifetz, Joseph Hergesheimer, Hedda Hopper, and A.S. Hutchinson.
Box 1, Folder 10	Kahlo, Frida, 1931-1940
Box 1, Folder 11	L-O, circa 1928-1960 Notes: Includes letters from Mary Martin, Claude Monet, and Agnes O'Neill. There are also two photographic Christmas cards of Murray in costume.
Box 1, Folder 12	Olympic Games, 1954-1956
Box 1, Folder 13	P, circa 1925-1960 Notes: Includes a letter from Bessie Breuer Poor.
Box 1, Folder 14	Parrott, Katherine Ursula, circa 1925-1945 Notes: Includes a profile of Muray by Parrott.
Box 1, Folder 15	Q-S, 1925-1967 Notes: Includes letters from Ruth St. Denis, George Bernard Shaw's secretary, H. De Vere Stacpoole, and Frank Swinnerton.
Box 1, Folder 16	Signal Corps Photographic Center, 1942-1944
Box 1, Folder 17	T-Z, circa 1926-1962 Notes: Includes letters from Carl Van Vechten, A.B. Walkley, and H.G. Wells.
Box 1	Writings
Box 1, Folder 18	Autobiographical Account, circa 1950-1960
Box 1, Folder 19	Book Mock-Up, Great Tribes of the World (unpublished)
Box 1, Folder 20	Lists, Celebrity Portraits, 1965
Box 1, Folder 21	Notes, Celebrity Photo Sitzings, circa 1920-1960

Box 1, Folder 22	Typescripts, Performance Reviews, circa 1920-1950
Box 1, Folder 23	Typescript, On Revealing Eye by Paul Gallico, circa 1967
Box 2	Teaching Files
Box 2, Folder 1	Lecture Materials, Peoples of the World, 1957-1962
Box 2, Folder 2	NYU Photography Course, 1940-1941
Box 2, Folder 3	NYU Photography Course Notes, 1940-1941
Box 2	Printed Material
Box 2, Folder 4	Book, Celebrity Portraits of the Twenties and Thirties by Nickolas Muray, 1978
Box 2, Folder 5	Brochure, Muray Studios, circa 1925
Box 2, Folder 6	Clippings, 1920-1942
Box 2, Folder 7	Clippings, 1943-1969
Box 2, Folder 8	Miscellaneous, circa 1960-1970
Box 2	Artwork
Box 2, Folder 9	Sketches, circa 1925
Box 2	Photographic Materials
Box 2, Folder 10	Nickolas Muray, Family, and Friends, circa 1910-1930 Notes: Oversized materials housed in OV 3.
Box 2, Folder 11	Nickolas Muray, Family, and Friends, circa 1931-1960
Box 2, Folder 12	Studio of Nickolas Muray, circa 1920-1960
Box 2, Folder 13	Advertising Work, Carbro Prints, circa 1950-1960
Box OV 3	Oversized Photograph scanned with Box 2, Folder 10, circa 1928

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Series 2: Unprocessed Addition, 1927-1992

0.6 Linear feet (Boxes 4-5)

Scope and Contents: The Unprocessed Addition includes biographical material, correspondence, photographs, research notes and a diary about Africa, and a subject file on the book *The Revealing Eye, Personalities of the 1920s*, written by Paul Gallico with photographs taken by Muray, 1967.

Box 4	Unprocessed Addition, 1927-1992
Box 5	Unprocessed Addition, 1927-1992

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