



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Dimitar Krustev films, 1971-circa 1977, 1996

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November 2020

Human Studies Film Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Human Studies Film Archives
Title:	Dimitar Krustev films
Date:	1971-circa 1977 1996
Identifier:	HSFA.2006.04
Creator:	Krustev, Dimitar
Extent:	2 Film reels (color silent reversal; 2,036 feet; 16mm) 1 Book 180 Slides (35mm) 2 Sound cassettes
Language:	English .
Summary:	Dimitar Krustev was a painter, photographer, and writer who travelled in Central and South America to document vanishing cultures. This collection includes materials relating to trips to the Pirre highlands in Darién province of Panama, where he filmed the Choco.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The materials within this collection were donated by the creator, Dimitar Krustev.

Related Materials

Krustev's papers and journals are held at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, and some of his films are held at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

Processing Information

Processed by HSFA staff

Encoded by Katherine Christensen, November 2020

Preferred Citation

The Dimitar Krustev films, Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Dimitar Krustev was born in Bulgaria in 1920. He emigrated to the United States when he was 19 because he did not want to live under soviet rule. He was later condemned to death by the Communist Party, leading him to seek American citizenship.

He graduated from the National Academy of Art in Sofia, Bulgaria, prior to his emigration. After reaching the United States, he earned his BA in Commercial Art from Kent State University and his Masters in Art History from the University of Iowa.

Krustev worked for nine years as a graphic artist for *Better Homes and Gardens*, while simultaneously working as a commissioned portrait artist. He then founded the Des Moines Krustev Studio of Art.

After becoming inspired by Rousseau's concept of the "Noble Savage," he made it his goal to paint and document disappearing, indigenous peoples. In pursuit of this goal, he travelled through Central and South America during the 1960s and 1970s. His student, later wife, Helen Marie came with him on many of these trips. The two travelled frequently between Des Moines and Ajijic, Jalisco, in Mexico for nearly 30 years before they moved to Ajijic in 2000. In addition to painting, Krustev was an avid photographer and writer. His paintings are held in a number of private collections and have been exhibited around the world.

Sources Consulted

Bercovitch, Heilyn. "Dimitar & Helen." *Lake Chapala Review*, February 2005.

"Dimitar Krustev." *Des Moines Register*, March 3, 2013.

Chronology

1920	Born in Bulgaria
circa 1939	Emigrated to the United States
1960s-1970s	Travelled through Central and South America documenting vanishing cultures
2000	Moved to Ajijic, Jalisco (Mexico)
2013	Died on February 11 in Ajijic

Scope and Contents

The films in this collection were shot in the Pirre highlands in Darién province of Panama, and document the Choco. According to *The Journals of Dimitar Krustev* (1996), Krustev filmed with a Bolex in 1971 and again in 1977. The supplemental materials in this collection include a copy of *The Journals of Dimitar Krustev*, slides taken on his trips to Pirre, and audio cassettes of music (probably recordings of the Choco for the films).

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in 2 series: (1) Films, 1971-circa 1977; (2) Supplemental Materials, 1971-circa 1977, 1996

Bibliography

1970. *River of the Sacred Monkey: Authentic Chronicle of Wilderness River Exploration in Central America, with a Valid Portrayal of the Last Remaining Descendants of the Vanishing Mayans*. Charleston: printed by the author, distributed by Wilderness Holidays, 1970.

1992. *Voices in the Night*. Des Moines: Studio Press, 1992.

1996. *The Journals of Dimitar Krustev, an Artist-Explorer, vol. 1*. Des Moines: printed by the author, 1996.

1997. *Black Hand Over the Jungle*. Des Moines: printed by the author, 1997.

2013. *Lacondón Journal-1969: From the Journals of Dimitar Krustev: Artist-Explorer*. Chicago: Editorial Mazatlan, 2013.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Choco/Chocoan

Cultures:

Choco/Chocoan

Places:

Darien (Panama : Province)

Container Listing

Films, 1971-circa 1977

2 Film reels (color silent reversal; 2,036 feet; 16mm)

Item 2006.4.1 An Artist in Paradise, 1971
1 Film reel (color silent reversal; 1,082 feet; 16mm)
Notes: A film portrait of artist Dimitar Krustev in Panama.

Item 2006.4.2 The Happiest People on Earth, circa 1977
1 Film reel (color silent reversal; 954 feet; 16mm)
Notes: A film of the Choco people, Darién, Panama.

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Supplemental Materials, 1971-circa 1977, 1996

1 Book

180 Slides (35mm)

2 Sound cassettes

Volume 1	The Journals of Dimitar Krustev, an Artist-Explorer, vol. 1, 1996 1 Book
Box Slides	Slides, 1971-circa 1977 180 Slides (color slides; 35mm) Notes: Photographs of Choco people in the Pirre highlands of Darién, Panama. The images seem to mostly include posed people and children and their activities.
Box Audio	Audio cassettes, 1971-circa 1977 2 Sound cassettes Notes: Probably recordings of Choco music for the film(s).

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