



Roman Vishniac Film Collection

Films; Photographic Negatives, Prints, and Slides; Paper Records

Volume: 198 film cans, 12 linear feet.

Processed: Various stages; this aid compiled by Mark Cooper, August 2011.

Creator: Roman Vishniac (1897-1990) and others.

Provenance: Donated to the University of South Carolina by Mara Vishniac-Kohn in 1994.

Citation Form: Roman Vishniac Film Collection, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina.

Use Restrictions and Copyright: Donor conveyed all rights to the University of South Carolina exclusively. Restrictions may apply to published, broadcast, or theatrically released materials.

Access: Motion picture film holdings are searchable via MIRC's [reference catalog](#); entries have the prefix RVFC. Many titles are available in access copies during regular hours. Provision may be made for viewing other titles with advanced notice. Patrons may request personalized reference copies for offsite access; the University charges a fee for this service. See [this page](#) for more detailed access information.

The non-film components of this collection are still being processed. Researchers should inquire with curatorial staff.

Online Items: Selected still images from photographic negatives are available [here](#). Clips from selected films are available [here](#).

History

Most of the materials in the collection were produced in the 1960s and 70s by Roman Vishniac, who was then working in New York City. In the early 1990s, University of South Carolina Biology Professor John Herr began corresponding with Mara Vishniac-Kohn, Roman's daughter, about the biological film legacy. In 1994, Mara Vishniac-Kohn gifted the motion picture films and some related materials to the University. Additional materials, which had been housed at Fairleigh Dickinson University, were conveyed to the University in 1996. The collection has been partially inventoried and described several times. MIRC is currently working to complete a comprehensive item-level finding aid.

Arrangement

The Roman Vishniac Film Collection is arranged in three series.

1. Motion Picture Film
 - 1.1. Naturalist Films
 - 1.2. Home Movies
2. Photographs
 - 2.1. Negatives
 - 2.2. Prints
 - 2.3. Slides
3. Paper records

Scope & Content

Series 1.1 includes film elements (work prints, outtakes, mag. track) representing Roman Vishniac's pioneering work in naturalist microcinematography. Work directly related to the *Living Biology* series sponsored by the National Science Foundation; the episodes entitled *The Pond* and *The Living Tide* are particularly well represented. Series 1.1 also includes representative examples from Vishniac's work for Encyclopedia Britannica Films (e.g., *Protozoa*), as well as copies of some documentaries produced by other entities that describe and contextualize Vishniac's work. Series 1.2 includes home movies of family travels in the late 1960s and early 1970s to Israel and various destinations in the United States and Europe. MIRC's reference catalog treats each film element as separate "title."

Series 2 is still being processed, more detailed information will be added to this finding aid as it becomes available. Series 2.1 includes over 800 negatives, primarily naturalist in orientation, and primarily color. Series 2.2 includes large black and white prints of images published in *Life* magazine as well as prints and negatives for Vishniac's *Building Blocks of Life: Proteins, Vitamins, and Hormones Seen Through the Microscope* (1971). Series 2.3 includes 15 35 mm. slide carousels, many of which illustrated lectures. Topics include: street and canal scenes in medieval Venice, miniature painting on lacquer, Russian painting, miscellaneous invertebrates,

“Comparisons and Common Sense.” Also included in this series are several packages of slides of insects and other naturalist subjects.

Series 3 is still being processed. The series comprises correspondence, film scripts and drafts, some books and magazines. Material relates to projects with the National Science Foundation and Encyclopedia Britannica Films. Biographical materials and discussions of Vishniac’s naturalist work are also included.

Container List

Series 1. Motion Picture Film (inventoried, basic catalog records; approximately 13% of individual film elements remain unidentified)

- 1.1. Naturalist Films ≈2,600’ 35 mm. film, 4 elements in 4 cans
≈150,000’ 16mm. film, 2002 elements in 183 cans
- 1.2. Home Movies ≈3,500’ 8 mm. film, 11 elements in 11 cans

Series 2. Photographs (partially processed)

- 2.1. Negatives 7 small boxes containing 642 negatives
.5 linear feet negatives in original sleeves and envelopes
- 2.2 Prints 2 oversize boxes (also contains some slides and negatives)
- 2.3 Slides 15 35mm slide carousels

Series 3. Paper Records 3 boxes (partially processed)
Letters
Film Scripts and Narration Drafts
Books and Magazines
Includes a few related print and negatives