

**Milton Rogovin Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2024**

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2007085362>

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Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2011  
Revised 2024 April

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Milton Rogovin Papers

**Inclusive Dates:** 1928-2006

**Bulk Dates:** 1960-2003

**ID No.:** MSS85262

**Creator:** Rogovin, Milton, 1909-2011

**Extent:** 11,000 items

**Extent:** 35 containers

**Extent:** 14 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English with Spanish, Russian, German, Finnish, and Czech

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2007085362>

**Summary:** Social documentary photographer. Correspondence, draft of autobiography and other writings, interviews, printed matter, Federal Bureau of Investigation file, and miscellaneous papers relating to Rogovin's work as a photographer, especially of working people of the world and the working-class neighborhoods of his home city, Buffalo, New York, and his publications and exhibitions as well as the political activism that underlay his art work.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Burroughs, Margaret Taylor, 1917-2010--Correspondence.

Caudill, Harry M., 1922-1990--Correspondence.

Coles, Robert Traynham, 1929- --Correspondence.

Davis, Ossie--Correspondence.

Dee, Ruby--Correspondence.

Doherty, Robert J., 1924- --Correspondence.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963--Correspondence.

Gould, Stephen Jay--Correspondence.

Hart, Ellen Rogovin--Correspondence.

Mayer, Grace M.--Correspondence.

Neruda, Pablo, 1904-1973--Correspondence.

Rogovin, Anne--Correspondence.

Rogovin, Milton, 1909-2011.

Strand, Paul, 1890-1976--Correspondence.

White, Minor--Correspondence.

### Subjects

Documentary photography--New York (State)--Buffalo.

Documentary photography.

Photography--Political aspects.

Photography--Social aspects.

### Places

Buffalo (N.Y.)--History.

Buffalo (N.Y.)--Social conditions.

New York (State)--Social conditions.

### Occupations

Photographers.

## Acquisition Information

The papers of Milton Rogovin, social documentary photographer, were given to the Library of Congress by Milton Rogovin in 2007-2009.

## Processing History

The papers of Milton Rogovin were processed by Karen Linn Femia with the assistance of Jeffery Bryson in 2011. The finding aid was updated in 2024 by Maria Farmer as part of a division-wide remediation project by the Inclusive Description Working Group.

## Transfers

Some photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

## Related Collections

The photographs of Milton Rogovin are held by the Library's Prints and Photographs Division.

## Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Milton Rogovin in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for further information.

## Access and Restrictions

The papers of Milton Rogovin are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Milton Rogovin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1909, Dec. 30	Born, New York, N.Y.
1931	B.S. in optometry, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
1932-1938	Optometrist, New York, N.Y., attended classes at the New School for Social Research, New York, N.Y.
1938	Moved first to Niagara Falls, N.Y., and then to Buffalo, N.Y. Charter member, United Optical Workers Local Union Member, American League Against War and Fascism, and fund-raiser in support of the Republican forces in Spain
1939	Opened his own optometry practice, Buffalo, N.Y.
1942	Married Anne Setters (died 2003)

- 1942-1945 Served in the U.S. Army as an optometrist, 1944-1945, stationed in England
- 1944-1962 Anne and Milton Rogovin under Federal Bureau of Investigation surveillance for their political activities
- 1945 Returned to Buffalo, N.Y., and his optometry practice
- 1953-1957 Intermittent travels to Mexico, first serious photographic work
- 1957 Summoned before the House Committee on Un-American Activities  
Invited by William Tallmadge, a music professor, Rogovin began photographing African American storefront churches, Buffalo, N.Y.
- 1961 Began photographing Buffalo, N.Y.'s East Side community
- 1962-1971 Frequent trips to Appalachia to make photographs
- 1967 Traveled to Chile to make photographs and to collaborate with Pablo Neruda
- 1972 M.A. in American Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, N.Y.  
Began photographic documentation of Lower West Side of Buffalo, N.Y.  
Traveled to Soviet Union but was stymied in his attempt at photographic work
- 1972-1974 Teacher of social documentary photography, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, N.Y.
- 1975 First major exhibition, "Milton Rogovin: Lower West Side, Buffalo, New York," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.  
Published *Milton Rogovin: Lower West Side, Buffalo, New York / James N. Wood; with an appreciation by Paul Strand*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Albright-Knox Gallery
- 1976 Began "Working People" series
- 1978 Retired from optometry to work full time in photography
- 1981-1990 Traveled to France, Scotland, Spain, Cuba, China, Germany, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Czechoslovakia, and Appalachia to make photographs for his "Family of Miners" series.
- 1985 Published *Milton Rogovin: The Forgotten Ones / interview by Cheryl Brutvan; with essays by Robert J. Doherty and Fred Licht*. Seattle: University of Washington Press  
Published *Windows that Open Inward: Images of Chile / photographs by Milton Rogovin; poems by Pablo Neruda; edited by Dennis Maloney; introduction by Pablo Neruda*. Buffalo, N.Y.: White Pine Press
- 1992-1994 Returned to the Lower West Side of Buffalo, N.Y., to complete his "Triptychs," images of individuals and families taken over the course of twenty years
- 1993 Published *Portraits in Steel / Photographs by Milton Rogovin; Interviews by Michael Frisch*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press
- 1994 Published *Triptychs: Buffalo's Lower West Side Revisited / photographs by Milton Rogovin; foreword by Robert Coles; introduction by Stephen Jay Gould; text by JoAnn Wypijewski*. New York: W.W. Norton  
Honorary doctorate, State University of New York at Buffalo and Buffalo State College, Buffalo, N.Y.
- 1997 Due to low vision from cataracts, sold his Rolleiflex camera and began writing his autobiography
- 2000 After successful cataract surgery, bought back his camera and returned to Lower West Side of Buffalo, N.Y., to interview and photograph subjects from his earlier "Triptychs" series
- 2003 Exhibit of the Lower West Side "Quartets"  
Published *Milton Rogovin: The Forgotten Ones / [with] Dave Isay, David Miller and Harvey Wang*. New York: Quantuck Lane Press
- 2004 Published *With Eyes and Soul: Images of Cuba / poems by Nancy Morejón; photographs by Milton Rogovin; edited by Dennis Maloney; translated by Pamela Carmell and David Frye*. Buffalo, N.Y.: White Pine Press
- 2005 Published *Milton Rogovin: The Mining Photographs / essay by Judith Keller*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum
- 2011, Jan. 18 Died, Buffalo, N.Y.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Milton Rogovin (1909-2011) span the years 1928-2006, with the bulk of the material dating from 1960 to 2003. The papers are primarily in English, with some items in Czech, Finnish, German, Russian, and Spanish. The papers are organized into the following series: [Correspondence](#), [Museums and Galleries](#), [Writings and Photographic Projects](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The [Correspondence](#) series is divided into four categories. Drafts of letters sent is a chronological group created by Rogovin and maintained as a separate section of the series. The family correspondence includes letters exchanged with his wife Anne, daughter Ellen, his grandchildren, and a cousin. Additional correspondence with Anne is in the [Miscellany](#) series in an international file relating to Chile. The bulk of the [Correspondence](#) series is in a general correspondence file. It includes letters received and sent and is primarily professional in nature, including individuals, magazines, publishers, and various organizations. Special correspondence segregated by Rogovin includes files relating to Margaret Taylor Burroughs, Harry M. Caudill, Robert Coles, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Robert J. Doherty, W. E. B. Du Bois, Stephen Jay Gould, Grace M. Mayer, Pablo Neruda, Paul Strand, and Minor White.

The [Museums and Galleries](#) series contains correspondence about exhibits and sales of photographs as well as publicity material, news clippings, museum pamphlets, and other printed matter concerned with exhibits.

The [Writings and Photographic Projects](#) series contains Rogovin's draft of his autobiography, his poetry, and material concerning his major photographic series, many of which were published in book form. The file includes material concerning his photographic trips, exhibits, publications, publicity material, awards, correspondence, and drafts of writings from collaborators.

Of special interest in the [Miscellany](#) is Anne Rogovin's Federal Bureau of Investigation file revealing that she was under surveillance for almost twenty years because of the Rogovins' political activities. A large International File contains items from Anne and Milton Rogovin's many travels for photographic purposes and correspondence with foreign periodicals about publication projects of Rogovin photographs. Files on the Soviet Union indicate that despite the Rogovins' long-held political views, Soviet officials hindered Milton Rogovin's efforts to photograph miners, much to his disappointment. A file on Chile contains material from Rogovin's trip to visit and collaborate with the poet Pablo Neruda. Also important is the biographical material and interviews of Rogovin.

## Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged in four series:

- [Correspondence, 1955-2004](#)
- [Museums and Galleries, 1962-2005](#)
- [Writings and Photographic Projects, 1948-2003](#)
- [Miscellany, 1928-2006](#)

## Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-14	<p><b><u>Correspondence, 1955-2004</u></b></p> <p>Letters sent and received organized into drafts of letter sent, family correspondence, general correspondence, and special correspondence. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and chronologically therein.</p>
BOX 14-22	<p><b><u>Museums and Galleries, 1962-2005</u></b></p> <p>Correspondence, printed matter, and financial material. Arranged alphabetically by name of museum or gallery.</p>
BOX 22-26	<p><b><u>Writings and Photographic Projects, 1948-2003</u></b></p> <p>Drafts of writings, correspondence, notebooks, travel material, publicity and exhibit material, contracts, and financial material. Arranged alphabetically by name of project.</p>
BOX 26-35	<p><b><u>Miscellany, 1928-2006</u></b></p> <p>Correspondence, Federal Bureau of Investigation file, interviews, news clippings, travel files, grant applications, international file, notebooks, items pertaining to Rogovin's optometry practice and his education, and material concerning Buffalo, N.Y. Arranged alphabetically by topic or name of individual or organization.</p>

# Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-14	<b>Correspondence, 1955-2004</b> Letters sent and received organized into drafts of letter sent, family correspondence, general correspondence, and special correspondence. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and chronologically therein.
BOX 1	Drafts of letters sent 1990-1993 (11 folders)
BOX 2	1994-1997 (10 folders)
BOX 3	1998-2002 (4 folders) Family Hart, Ellen Rogovin (daughter) and Aliya and Malaika (grandchildren), 1958, 1969, 1980-1990, undated Rogovin, Anne (wife), 1978-1984 <i>For additional material see Container 28, Chile, Correspondence</i> Ross, Rose Rogovin (cousin), 1975-1976 General Adams, Peter, 1985-1994 Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1977-1978 Agosin, Marjorie, 1985, 1999-2004 Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, Ky., 1970-1971 American Institute for Marxist Studies, New York, N.Y., 1968, 1985 <i>Aperture</i> (magazine), 1960-2001 (2 folders)
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- BOX 22** Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1966, 1976-1977, 1987-1999, undated  
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Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., 1972-1983, 1994-1999, undated

### BOX 22-26

#### Writings and Photographic Projects, 1948-2003

Drafts of writings, correspondence, notebooks, travel material, publicity and exhibit material, contracts, and financial material.  
Arranged alphabetically by name of project.

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Correspondence, Federal Bureau of Investigation file, interviews, news clippings, travel files, grant applications, international file, notebooks, items pertaining to Rogovin's optometry practice and his education, and material concerning Buffalo, N.Y.  
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