

University of Chicago Library

# Guide to the Eva Zeisel Papers 1981



© 2021 University of Chicago Library

## **Table of Contents**

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Related Resources	4
Subject Headings	4
INVENTORY	4

## Descriptive Summary

**Identifier** ICU.SPCL.ZEISELE

**Title** Zeisel, Eva. Papers

**Date** 1981

**Size** .25 linear feet (1 box)

**Repository** Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center  
University of Chicago Library  
1100 East 57th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

**Abstract** Eva Polanyi Zeisel (1906-2011) was a Jewish Hungarian designer active in Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States. She created artisan pieces, primarily pottery, and taught design at art schools such as the Pratt Institute in New York. This collection consists of photocopies of typescript drafts and handwritten notes for Eva Zeisel's memoir, *Memories of Long Ago*. Zeisel describes her arrest and imprisonment while working in the ceramics industry in Moscow in 1936. She had been accused of plotting to assassinate Joseph Stalin and was imprisoned for sixteen months before being deported to Austria in 1937. Also included in the collection is a brief (four page) undated paper or speech in which she described her design process and philosophy.

## Information on Use

### Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Zeisel, Eva. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

### Biographical Note

Eva Polanyi Zeisel was born as Éva Amália Striker on November 13, 1906 in Budapest, Hungary to a prominent Jewish family. Her mother, Laura Polányi Striker, was a historian and educator and her father, Alexander Striker, was a textile factory owner.

She studied painting at Budapest's Magyar Képzőművészeti Akadémia (Hungarian Royal Academy of Fine Arts) and later served an apprenticeship with pottery master Jakob Karapancsik. She worked with several ceramics companies in Germany and gained a reputation as a promising designer before moving to Moscow in 1932 and working with several ceramics concerns in Russia and the Ukraine.

She was accused of involvement in an assassination plot against Joseph Stalin and arrested on May 26, 1936. The Soviets eventually deported her to Vienna in September 1937. As the Nazis invaded Austria and approached Vienna in early 1938, Eva and her future husband, Hans Zeisel, fled to England where they were married. Together they moved to the United States where she taught at the Pratt Institute until 1952 and designed pieces for several international companies such as Sears Roebuck and Noritake.

She received many awards from around the world. In 1942 she was selected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York to design a line of dinnerware and in 1982 she received an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and her work was the subject of a traveling exhibit sponsored by the Smithsonian. In the 1960s-1970s, she focused on research and writing about historical incidents of injustice before returning to design in the 1980s. At that time, she started designing objects in other media such as rugs and furniture. She continued to be active as a designer and educator until her death in New York City on December 30, 2011.

## **Scope Note**

This collection is primarily comprised of photocopies of portions of typescript drafts of Eva Zeisel's memoir of her experience as a political prisoner of the Soviet Union from 1936 - 1937. Some copies contain handwritten notes as well as editing marks and corrections. Some of the copies are also different versions of the same portions of the text. Also included in the collection is a brief (four page) undated statement in which she described her design process and philosophy.

## **Related Resources**

Hans Zeisel. Papers

## **Subject Headings**

- Zeisel, Eva
- Political prisoners' writings, Russian

## **INVENTORY**

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 1**

Memories of Long Ago - portions of typescript draft - photocopy, 1981 (folder 1 of 3)

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 2**

Memories of Long Ago - portions of typescript draft - photocopy, 1981 (folder 2 of 3)

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 3**

Memories of Long Ago - portions of typescript draft - photocopy, 1981 (folder 3 of 3)

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 4**

Paper or speech about the design process - photocopy of typescript, undated