

# **Petheo, Bela, 1934-2017.**

**Papers, 1961-**

## **SJU Manuscript Collection 6**

**Location: 065/1, 106/3, Case D04**

**1.15 cubic ft. (2 archive boxes, 3 flat files)**

**Update: January 9, 2025**

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**ABSTRACT:** Papers of St. John's University professor Bela Petheo.

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**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:** The collection includes correspondence, photographs, catalogs, newspaper articles, a video, artworks, biographical information, and financial records. The focus of the collection is Mr. Petheo's activities as an artist, including teaching, writing, and arranging exhibitions.

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**ARRANGEMENT:** The files have been arranged in a manner that reflects their original arrangement by Professor Petheo. Groupings by folder and subfolder have been preserved. Correspondence is organized by correspondent. Within each file, documents are in reverse chronological order.

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**ACCESS RESTRICTIONS:** There are no access restrictions on the materials, and the collection is open to all members of the public.

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### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**

Bela Petheo was a working artist who taught art history and painting at St. John's University for more than thirty years, served as chair of the Art Department, led the first semester-long study abroad group from St. John's, and retired as professor emeritus in 1997.

Bela Petheo was born in Budapest, Hungary, on May 14, 1934. He studied painting with Pál Molnár-C. In 1956, Petheo received his Master of Arts degree in art history from Eötvös Loránd University. Following the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Uprising, he departed for Vienna in 1957, where he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1959, he immigrated to the United States and, in 1961, entered the University of Chicago.

There he studied lithography under Max Kahn and continued his studies in art history under Joshua C. Taylor. Petheo was awarded a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1963. Before coming to St. John's University as an artist-in-residence in 1966, he had had a full-time teaching appointment at the State College of Iowa for two years.

Petheo was chairman of the St. John's University Art Department from 1967 to 1971. He served as associate chairman of the Art Department of the College of Saint Benedict and St. John's University from 1971 to 1973. When the art programs at St. John's and the College of Saint Benedict entered the Three College Consortium with St. Cloud State College, Petheo was again chairman of the St. John's University Art Department, from 1973 to 1977. He led St. John's University's first semester-long study abroad program when he guided a group of students in Salzburg in fall, 1977. He chaired the joint College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University Art Department from 1990 to 1993.

Petheo was trained as a painter in the realist tradition. His own style as a painter and printmaker was also influenced by Expressionism and Impressionism. Petheo contributed articles to art periodicals and academic publications. He organized an exhibition and wrote a book about Oskar Kokoschka's activity in Minnesota.

A. Carlo Quintavalle published a 1968 monograph in Italian on Petheo's work. J. Gray Sweeney wrote a book in 1985 about Petheo as a painter. Two catalogs have been published in conjunction with Bela Petheo retrospective exhibitions.

Petheo became a United States citizen in 1965. He married Kathleen Benko in 1970. They had two children.

Bela Petheo retired from St. John's University in 1997 as professor emeritus. He died May 3, 2017.

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**COLLECTION CITATION:** This collection should be cited as:

Petheo, Bela, 1934-2017. Papers, 1961- . SJU Manuscript Collection 6. St. John's University (Collegeville, Minn.).

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**RELATED COLLECTIONS:** Further materials in the St. John's University Archives related to Bela Petheo can be found by [searching for "Petheo" in the Saint John's University and Special Collections database](#). Most documents pertaining to International Education after 1978 are in the [College of Saint Benedict Archives](#), as are most Art Department records after 1981.

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**ACQUISITION:** The collection was given to the Archives in May 2011, by Bela Petheo. The donor added more documents, in response to a question, in June 2011. The

accession number is 2011-008. Accession 2024-001 was donated to the Archives by Jane and Jeff Opitz on January 11, 2024.

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**PROCESSING:** The collection was processed by Elizabeth T. Knuth in December 2012, January 2015, and October 2018, and by Molly Heller in June 2015. Elizabeth T. Knuth processed accession 2024-001 in February 2024.

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**SUBJECT TERMS:**

- Petheo, Bela, 1934-2017
  - St. John's University (Collegeville, Minn.)
  - Painters—Minnesota.
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**INVENTORY:** For contents, see the "[Petheo, Bela Papers](#)" collection in the Saint John's University Archives and Special Collections database.

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