
José Rivera Collection

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Writers Guild Foundation Archive

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2021

Descriptive Summary

Title: José Rivera Collection

Dates: 1983-2009

Collection Number: WGF-MS-114

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 5.5 Linear Feet, 5 total boxes

Repository: Writers Guild Foundation Archive

Los Angeles, California 90048

Abstract: The José Rivera Collection contains drafts of playwright Rivera's produced and unproduced film screenplays, TV scripts and some stage plays. The collection also contains some outlines, treatments and correspondence relating to the projects.

Language of Material: English

Access

Available by appointment only.

Publication Rights

The responsibility to secure copyright and publication permission rests with the researcher.

Preferred Citation

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Acquisition Information

Donated by José Rivera on May 29, 2019.

Biography/Administrative History

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1955, José Rivera is a playwright known for his surrealist, symbolic and lyrical style. Raised in Long Island, Rivera's first play was *The House of Ramon Iglesia* in 1983. As a playwright, he has received two Obie Awards for his work – one for *Marisol* in 1993 and one for *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* in 2001. Both were produced by the Public Theater in New York City. His plays have been produced at Playwrights Horizons, the Goodman Theatre, Yale Repertory Theater, American Conservatory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse and Ensemble Studio Theater among many others. Rivera studied magic realism with Gabriel Garcia Marquez at the Sundance Institute in Utah. In 2007, he became the first Puerto Rican writer to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for *The Motorcycle Diaries*. The screenplay was adapted from the journals of Che Guevara and his friend Alberto Granado as young men traveling through South America. The script was also nominated for WGA and BAFTA awards. Other films include *Trade*, a film about sex trafficking, which is the first film to premiere at the United Nations, *On the Road* based on the novel by Jack Kerouac; and the romantic comedy *Letters to Juliet*. Rivera has also written for television, serving as a staff writer on the short-lived Norman Lear-produced series *AKA Pablo* in the early 1980s. He also co-created the NBC horror science fiction series *Eerie, Indiana* with Karl Schaefer in 1991 and served as executive producer until 1992. In 1994, Rivera wrote *Power: The Eddie Matos Story* part of an HBO anthology series called *Lifestories: Families in Crisis*. Rivera prefers to be known as a playwright and continues to write mostly for the stage.

Scope and Content of Collection

Series I - Film, 1998-2009: The collection contains multiple drafts of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, written between 2001 to 2005. Most of the drafts contain hand-annotations. One draft is written in Spanish. Other *Motorcycle Diaries* materials include an interview between Gianna Mina and Alberto Granado, research, notes, correspondence with director Walter Salles, notes from Salles on several drafts and some press clippings. The collection contains multiple drafts of the screenplays for *Letters to Juliet*, *On the Road*, *Trade*, *The Jungle Book: The Mowgli Years* (Disney, direct-to-video) as well as two annotated drafts of the short film script *The Tape Recorder*. Also in the collection are a number of unproduced screenplays, including *Almost a Woman* from 1998, a coming-of-age story about a 16-year-old Puerto Rican-born girl navigating contemporary New York City; multiple drafts of *Celestina* (2004), Rivera's planned directorial debut after *The Motorcycle Diaries* based on his play *Cloud Tectonics*; research and script drafts for a planned film about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers movement; several drafts of *Compositions in Black and White*, written between 2005 and 2006 based on the book by Kathryn Talalay about the life of pianist and journalist Philippa Schuyler; several drafts from 2008 of a biopic about abolitionist John Brown; several drafts from 2007 of *Katya* – a film based on the Korean film *Falian* (2001); *Lucky*, a magic realist script written between 1995 and 2002; a screenplay called *Martin Sheffield* written for Walter Salles about the U.S. Marshall who chased Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid through South America; several drafts of a screenplay called *Revenge* based on the novel *Revenge: A Story of Hope* by Lauren Blumenfeld; *Riders on the Storm* about the origins of the Greenpeace

movement adapted from two books, *Greenpeace* by Rex Weyler and *Warriors of the Rainbow* by Robert Hunter; *Spin*, a science-fiction film about the slowing of the world's rotation; *The State Boys Rebellion* from 2005 based on the novel by Michael D'Antonio about a group of boys who stage a rebellion at an institution for the feeble minded during the Eugenics crusade; *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* written in 2006 about the Armenian Genocide from 1915 to 1917 based on the novel by Micheline Aharonian Marcom; *Three King's Day*, about a couple in Brooklyn celebrating the feast of the Epiphany; an untitled prison project that takes place in Pennsylvania; a first draft of a horror film called *Water in Paradise*, which takes place in Maine and has elements of Magic Realism; a draft of *Weekends at Bellevue*, based on the book by Julie Holland about a psychiatrist in charge of the weekend shift at Bellevue Hospital. Series II - Television, 1983-1996: The collection also contains several scripts for all six aired episodes of the Norman Lear-produced TV show *AKA Pablo*. The collection contains scripts from both seasons of the NBC series *Eerie, Indiana* (1991-1992), some of which have been added to the library catalog. The collection contains a draft of the script for *Power: The Eddie Matos Story* from the HBO anthology *Lifestories: Families in Crisis*. In addition to aired television scripts, the collection also contains drafts and development materials for several of Rivera's unproduced television projects. Titles include *Logan Square* from 1996 and *Tremont Avenue* developed for ABC in the 1990s about law and journalism with a Latina lead. Series III - Plays, 1992-2008: The collection includes drafts and development materials for several plays including *Adoration of the Old Woman*, *Brainpeople*, *Cloud Tectonics* (which became the basis for Rivera's planned film directorial debut, *Celestina*), *Marciela De La Luz Lights the World*, *Marisol* (Collection contains a Spanish-language version of the script translated by Waldemar Burgos and Aurora Lauzardo), *Massacre* (*Sing to Your Children*), *School of the Americas* (Collection contains a few early drafts as well as a notebook with Rivera's notes), *The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona* (Collection contains two incomplete drafts).
