

Finding Aid for Mario Castillo Papers

MS.2009.5

Finding aid prepared by Tracy Grimm

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Julian Samora Library at the Institute for Latino Studies

May 10, 2012

230 McKenna Hall

Notre Dame , Midwest, 46556

574-631-7391

ilslib@nd.edu

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Summary Information

Repository Julian Samora Library at the Institute for Latino Studies

Title Mario Castillo Papers

Date [inclusive] 1964-2009

Extent 2.0 Linear feet

Language Multiple languages

Language of Materials note Materials mostly in English, with some in Spanish.

Abstract The Mario Castillo papers document the artistic career of artist and art professor, Mario Castillo. Specifically, the collection provides insight into his work in Chicago during the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s as arguably the nation's first Latino artist working in the modern mural movement. The collection also documents Castillo's academic career as a professor of art and includes several of his writings including manifestos such as "A Generation of Semen Art, 1964 -1994" and "Perceptualism" that explore the philosophical reasons behind his more conceptual art. Notably, the collection also includes several newsletters, brochures, and administrative documents from several key Chicago-based arts organizations of which Castillo was a member. These organizations include the Movimiento Artístico Chicano (MARCH), Miraza Arts Consortium (Mira), and Taller Mexicano de Grabado.

Preferred Citation note

Researchers wishing to cite materials from this collection may use the following acknowledgement: [title of item], Mario Castillo Papers, Julian Samora Library at the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame.

Biographical/Historical note

Born in Coahuila, Río Bravo, Mexico, Mario Castillo immigrated to the United States with his parents. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for his BFA then at the California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts) for his MFA, and worked at CalArts and Santa Monica City Colleges then at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as professor. He moved back to Los Angeles after leaving UIUC and before accepting another teaching position at Columbia College in Chicago. Among his teachers are Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, Jules Engel, and Morton Subotnick. One of Chicago's pioneer muralists, Castillo did his first mural painting at Chicago's Lane Technical High School in 1964 as a teenager and in 1968 he painted what is widely accepted as the first outdoor Latino mural of the contemporary mural movement, "Metaphysics (Peace)" on the Urban Progress Center on South Halsted Street, Chicago. His 1969 mural, "Wall of Brotherhood," painted while teaching an art class to teenagers in Chicago's Neighborhood Youth Corps program, was one of the first multicultural murals of the 1960's public art movement. Mario Castillo's mother, Maria Enriquez de Allen, was an well known Chicago artist and teacher as was his step-father, photographer Harold Allen.

Scope and Contents note

The Mario Castillo Papers document the early artistic career of Mario Castillo as well as Latino arts activity in the Chicago region during the 1970s and 1980s. Portfolio/binders in the collection, prepared for Castillo's academic promotion as a professor of art, include certificates, scholarship letters, recommendation letters, work samples and other evidence of his exhibition and publication achievements 1964 -1988. The collection also includes Castillo's writings including poems and manifestos such as "Perceptualism" and "A Generation of Semen Art, 1965-1994." The latter manifesto explains his reasons for experimenting during the mid 1960s in Conceptual and Body Art by mixing his own semen with tempera and acrylic paint--a technique he adopted in an effort to explore bringing greater life and energy to his paintings and to explore the nature of human existance through his work. An outdoor work of his involving this technique was censored at Cal Arts in 1972 when his medium was made public. Also included are various collected exhibition announcements, newsletters, flyers, newsclippings, and membership newsletters related to muralism and Latino arts in Chicago and nationwide. Most notable are items such as a constitution and bylaws of MARCH (Movimiento Artístico Chicano) and newsletters and publicatons of organizations such as MIRA (Miraza Arts Consortium), The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum (Chicago), The Peace Museum, the National Puerto Rican Coalition, Taller Mexicano Grabado (Chicago), El Taller (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), the Association of Hispanic Arts, and Self-Help Graphics (Los Angeles).

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Julian Samora Library at the Institute for Latino Studies May 10, 2012

Related Materials

Separated Materials note

An oral history interview with Mario Castillo (OH 2009.6) is held by the Julian Samora Library. A 1977 MARCH calendar in which Mario's work is featured (photograph of a girl, titled "The Wall"), along with a snippet of his biography, can be found in the John Pitman Weber Papers.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Chicago Public Art Group.
- Columbia College. (Chicago, Ill.)
- MARCH (Organization).
- Mi Raza Arts Consortium. (Chicago, Ill.)
- National Museum of Mexican Art. (Chicago, Illinois)
- National Puerto Rican Coalition. (U.S.)
- Taller Mexicano de Grabado. (Chicago, Ill.)

Genre(s)

- Printed ephemera--Periodicals

Personal Name(s)

- Castillo, Mario
- González, José Gamaliel, b. 1933

Subject(s)

- Hispanic American art--20th century
- Hispanic American art--Exhibitions
- Hispanic American art--Illinois--Chicago--20th Century
- Mural painting and decoration, American--Illinois--Chicago--20th century
- Public art--Illinois--Chicago