On Campus

Library Acquires Archive of Playwright Myrna Casas

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Courtesy of EL VOCERO DE PUERTO RICO / Myrna Casas.

Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library has acquired the archive of Puerto Rican playwright Myrna Casas, who is considered one of the most important Latin American dramatists of her generation.

Casas, who is eighty-six and lives in San Juan, is best known for writing politically themed plays like *Absurdos en soledad* (Absurdities in solitude) and *La trampa* (The trap), which explore the lives of women in patriarchal cultures and broader issues of Puerto Rican identity. She is also an influential theater director and producer, having served for many years as artistic director of the prestigious San Juan company Producciones Cisne, which she cofounded in 1965.



Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

“Informed by feminist perspectives and often termed ‘surrealist’ or ‘absurdist,’ Casas’s work has focused on disrupting gendered rhetorics and expanding the reader’s political imagination,” says Frances Negrón-Muntaner, a Columbia professor of English and comparative literature and the curator of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library’s Latino Arts and Activism Archives.

The Casas archive contains annotated manuscripts of all her plays; directorial notes; photos of theater productions; personal correspondence with Spanish playwright Antonio Buero Vallejo, Puerto Rican playwright Luis Rafael Sánchez, and other writers; and home movies.

Negrón-Muntaner says the archive strengthens the Rare Book and Manuscript Library’s already formidable collection of materials related to Puerto Rican arts and literature. “The archive allows researchers to investigate Casas’s impact as a precursor to writers such as Rosario Ferré and Manuel Ramos Otero, whose papers are already at Columbia University, and inscribe Casas as part of this rich Caribbean

tradition," she says.



Guide to school abbreviations

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