

Rodolfo Usigli: The Walter Havighurst Special Collections Library Miami University

The Man and his Work

Rodolfo Usigli was born in Mexico City in 1905, the son of immigrant parents. Unable to establish himself as a dramatist and encountering political opposition, Usigli entered the diplomatic corps and served for over two decades in France, Lebanon and Norway. During this “diplomatic exile” he continued to write essays and drama, completing his great trilogy of Mexican history, the *Corona* plays. Upon his return to Mexico in 1972, Usigli was honored with Mexico’s highest literary award, the National Prize for Literature, and acknowledged as the founder of modern Mexican theater. He died in 1979. The “Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información Teatral “Rodolfo Usigli,” (CITRU),” the most important center dedicated to the study of the dramatic arts in Mexico, bears his name.

The Collection

The Rodolfo Usigli Archive was acquired by Miami University in 1995 and is housed in the Walter Havighurst Special Collections Library. Since its acquisition the Archive materials have been rehoused in acid-free containers. A preliminary survey of the collection has been completed and plans are underway for the preparation of an online catalog record and finding aid for researchers. The Archive is the definitive research collection relating to Usigli’s life and career. Stored in more than 70 boxes with multiple files, with close to a quarter of a million items, it includes correspondence, both manuscript and typed drafts of original plays and translations of works by other artists, personal, theatrical, and diplomatic photographs, essays, books, playbills, posters, theses written about Usigli, awards, newspaper and magazine articles, memorabilia, and ephemera. The correspondence includes letters to and from George Bernard Shaw, José Clemente Orozco, Octavio Paz and many others. The archive also includes rare materials such as Usigli’s unpublished poems, plays and short stories; and the correspondence between Usigli and Diego Rivera regarding their joint efforts to publicize André Breton’s lectures during the 1938 Surrealist Week in Mexico City. The archive not only has copies of Breton’s lectures, which Usigli translated for the occasion, it also has a rare print of Rivera’s poster “Communicating Vessels (Homage to André Breton)” and a broadsheet with the famous “Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art!,” both produced as a result of the visit by Breton.

Special Collections at the Miami Library has made the brochure available electronically:

[<<http://www.lib.muohio.edu/libinfo/depts/spec/rodolfo.pdf>>](http://www.lib.muohio.edu/libinfo/depts/spec/rodolfo.pdf)

Ramón Layera

Miami University of Ohio