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Swiss Literary Archives

The Swiss Literary Archives saw the emergence of new and innovative outreach formats in 2024: for example, a discussion series in the historic Villa Morillon salon and spoken-word performances accessible to a wide audience at midday were initiated. Collaborations with universities, museums and cultural associations were launched or enhanced. Thirteen archives and estates were acquired, including the estate of Afro-American writer and painter Vincent O. Carter, who processed his experiences in Bern from the 1950s through art.



Collection

In 2024, the Swiss Literary Archives (SLA) received a donation, which showed an external perspective of Switzerland: the estate of Afro-American writer and painter Vincent O. Carter (1924–1983) who lived in Bern from the 1950s reveals a subtle, thought-provoking and humorous take on how the locals responded to unfamiliarity. A total of 13 archives and estates were acquired, including the archives of two Swiss literary critics, Beatrice Eichmann-Leutenegger (*1945) and Pia Reinacher (*1954), of two authors and journalists, Fernando Grignola (1932–2022) and Jean-François Duval (*1947), and the archive of stage artist and writer **Jens Nielsen** (*1966) who completed many stage projects with writer and theatre artist Aglaja Veteranyi (1962–2002) who is also represented in the SLA. Through cooperation with other institutions, large holdings such as that of Eugen



Jens Nielsen

Material from the archive illustrating the cooperation with Aglaja Veteranyi

Gomringer (*1925), Albert Vigoleis Thelen (1903–1989) and Michel Thévoz (*1936) were catalogued and placed online.

Outreach

The Literary Archives launched three new event formats, which were well received: monthly soirées were held in Villa Morillon where guests engaged in dialogue about literary works in a salon atmosphere. Writer Vincenzo Latronico (*1984) spoke to a full room about the work of Anna Felder (1937–2023). The latest volume of the edition by Emmy Hennings (1885–1948), which includes the letters from the Dada years 1906–1927, was presented and writer **Ilma Rakusa** (*1946) discussed the topic of home with psychoanalyst **Rainer Gross** (*1953).



Ilma Rakusa and Rainer Gross

Dialogue in Villa Morillon

During the second half of the year, the Swiss Literary Archives also hosted spoken-word performances on Mondays at midday under the title **Das Ganze aber kürzer**, which attracted a young audience to the National Library. Jens Nielsen opened the cycle, followed by Jürg Halter (*1980) and Tabea Steiner (*1981). Author Meral Kureyshi (*1983) took a writing workshop with Matura classes from the vocational school in Bern, which involved using works held by the National Library to familiarise the students with literature.

One of the highlights of the year was a soirée with Russian-Swiss writer **Michail Schischkin** (*1961), who spoke about writing in emigration in view of the war in Ukraine.

Romansch author **Leta Semadeni** (*1944), winner of the *Swiss Grand Award for Literature*, provided insights into her bilingual work in conversation with **Rico Valär** (*1981).

The hybrid edition of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's late work *Stoffe* by the Swiss Literary Archives was revisited by edition philologists in a workshop. The final conference of the *Zukünfte der Philologien* series was dedicated to configurations in the archives of avant-gardists (Eugen Gomringer, Ilma Rakusa), in manuscripts and works (Rainer Maria Rilke, Peter Weber), in



Das Ganze aber kürzer
Tabea Steiner performs in
the National Library



Michail Schischkin
Reading and
discussion on writing
in emigration



Leta Semadeni and Rico Valär
Bilingual soirée in the National Library



Quarto

Two new editions about Adelheid Duvanel and Patricia Highsmith

editions (Emmy Hennings, Kurt Schwitters), in the archive as a knowledge space and in the “an-archive”, of an individually organised, sometimes even anarchic material management, which is incompatible with ease of use.

Richly illustrated editions of the periodical **Quarto** on Adelheid Duvanel (1936–1996) and Patricia Highsmith (1921–1995) were released, which were very well received and presented at soirées. The anthology *Bewegte Literaturgeschichte. Autorschaft, Text und Archiv im Porträtfilm*, about the portrayal of authors through film, came out at the end of the year. It casts light on the largely unresearched, intermedial connections in the collection.

User services

There were 896 users of the SLA reading room (2023: 1,528). The number of information retrievals was 3,857 (2023: 4,282). A total of 949 holdings were consulted (2023: 1,623).

Networking

The SLA participated in many cooperative ventures, which addressed a broad range of people: the Zentrum Paul Klee museum displayed photos, drawings and typescripts from the works of Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961) in the *Brasil! Brasil!* exhibition. Four Italian-speaking associations in the Bern area met at the SLA soirées in Villa Morillon. There was a conference on mobility in exile in cooperation with the association for exile research known as “Gesellschaft für Exilforschung”, which provided insights into many of the SLA’s holdings.

There were two thematic workshops as part of the research project on the Jonas Fränkel holding in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich and Walter Benjamin Kolleg from the University of Bern. The trilateral SNSF project *Lectures Jean Bollack* with the University of Fribourg and the University of Osnabrück was concluded successfully.