

Press Release

18 December 2017

Akademie der Künste takes over the manuscripts and correspondence of Werner Ackermann

Marking the occasion of Werner Ackermann's 125th birthday on 28 December 2017, the Akademie has taken over an extensive collection of his manuscripts and correspondence. In addition to journalistic works and socially critical plays and novels, the writer, translator and chronicler of the Monte Verità artists' colony in Ascona also wrote his 1930 book on the history of the "Monte Verità", which is still in print today. Previously unpublished poetry and texts that deal with themes from South Africa are still to be discovered. Werner Ackermann, a German born in Flanders, who lived in South Africa for a good thirty years, crossed borders in more than just the geographical sense. His political and socially engaged texts highlight the debates of the 1920s in Berlin and the post-war period. The first documents had already been contributed to the Archives as far back as 1989/90 by the sociologist Hans Mayer on behalf of Ackermann's daughter Sonja Reissmann. After her death in 2015, Hans Mayer brought Ackermann's written legacy to Berlin and has now handed it over to the Akademie's Literature Archives. About four running metres of manuscripts, correspondence, print documents and newspaper clippings chronicle Ackermann's multi-faceted life and work. In-depth interviews by Mayer with Sonja Reissmann in preparation for his biography of Werner Ackermann are also included as audio files. After indexing, the archival holdings will be available to interested members of the public.

Werner Ackermann (pseudonyms: Rico Gala, Robert Landmann, etc.) was born in Antwerp in 1892. As a war volunteer, he moved to the German side during the First World War and very soon became a pacifist. After being wounded in 1917, he was able to study literature in Berlin, after which he worked as a publisher, among other things. In 1923/1924, he became co-owner of the "Monte Verità" hotel for artists in Ascona. In 1928, he founded the "Cosmopolitan Union" in Ascona, which was dissolved in 1933. Ackermann emigrated via Vienna, Turkey and Spain to Belgium. In 1940, he initially worked there as a translator, but was then drafted into the Wehrmacht. After being an American prisoner of war in 1945/46, he lived in Weinheim on the Bergstraße route. In 1951, he emigrated to South Africa and died in Mbabane (Swaziland) in 1982.

Works (selected):

Flucht nach Shanghai. Play, Berlin 1927/28, premiered in 1930; *Ascona – Monte Verità*. Berlin 1930, *Fünf Akte Lotterie*. Comedy, premiered in 1931, *Wehe dem Sieger*. Novel, Heide/Holstein 1932; *Langusten für das Volk*. Drama, Antwerp 1934/35, premiered in 1949; *Kinder aus Spanien*. Play, Brussels 1938, premiered

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in 1947; *Das Gold der Bolleboers. Südafrikanisches Lustspiel*, Johannesburg 1952.

The biography by Hans Mayer was published in Berlin in 2015 under the title *Das Glückskind vom Monte Verità. Das Leben des Schriftstellers Werner Ackermann*.

In case of queries

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