



Emmy Hennings / Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi November 18 – January 3, 2021

Swiss Institute is delighted to present a two-person presentation of underrecognized 20th-century writer and artist Emmy Hennings (b. 1885, d. 1948) and emerging Zurich-based artist Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi (b. 1995). The exhibition situates Henning's rarely-seen archive of art and writing within a series of vitrines and showcases made by Ghaznawi. Newly conceived for the Reading Room at SI, *Emmy Hennings / Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi* was originally presented this past spring at Cabaret Voltaire, Zürich, where it was curated by director Salome Hohl.

Hennings co-founded Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 with her partner Hugo Ball, after the pair fled from Germany to Switzerland during World War I. Despite some vivid descriptions of her as a performer and presence, for many years there was little trace of Hennings's work in histories of Dada, the artistic movement that flourished around the cabaret in Zürich. In her poems and novels, Hennings astutely analyzes her own existence and stages her personal experiences within a multitude of identities, exploring themes of ecstasy and faith, captivity and freedom. The autobiographical undercurrents of her writing include depictions of poverty, periods of sex work, imprisonment for theft and forgery, and morphine addiction. Her writings and artworks, along with a number of documents, publications and photographs in which she is featured are represented here.

Hennings's archive is here drawn into an associative dialogue with the work of Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi, who has created vitrines, showcases and other presentation devices. Situating Hennings's work within the materiality of cabaret performance, Ghaznawi employs plastic roses, red PVC and lace fabrics that evoke aesthetics of fetishism and sex. In drawing attention to the power of framing and display to shape narrative, histories and knowledge production, Ghaznawi highlights the inherent questions of value at stake in preservation and memorial.

Ghaznawi has commissioned two new texts on the occasion of this exhibition at SI: "WHEN EMOTION BECOMES FORM. A CODE FOR SITARA." by Ian Wooldridge and "ALL YOU GET BACK IS THAT FLUORIDE STARE" by Shamiran Istifan. A forthcoming publication for the exhibition, featuring these essays along with five other recently commissioned texts by the artist's friends and peers, will be released in January 2021.

About Emmy Hennings / Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi

Emmy Hennings (b. 1885, Flensburg, Germany, d. 1948 Soregno, Switzerland) was a writer, actress, cabaret artist and co-founder of the Cabaret Voltaire and the Dada Gallery. During her lifetime, the following writings were published among others: *Die letzte Freude*, 1913; *Gefängnis*, 1919; *Das Brandmal. Ein Tagebuch*, 1920; *Helle Nacht*, 1922; *Die Geburt Jesu*, 1932; *Der Kranz*, 1939. She also wrote for magazines and newspapers, including *Revoluzzer*, and painted.

Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi (b. 1995, Ghazni, Afghanistan) lives and works in Obwalden and Zurich. Group exhibitions include Fri-Art Kunsthalle, Fribourg, 2020; Kunsthalle Zurich, 2020; Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, 2020; Museum in Bellpark, Kriens, 2019. In 2019, Ghaznawi had a solo exhibition at schwarzescafé, LUMA Westbau, Zurich.

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, SI is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new contexts for celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. Open to the public free-of-charge, SI seeks to explore how a national perspective can foster international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design and architecture.

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