

Queer Sisters:

BERENICE ABBOTT AND
ELSA VON FREYTAG-LORINGHOVEN

A Salon Performance

Saturday, May 26, 2012, 5:00pm - 6:00pm

Ryerson University,
Modern Literature and Culture (MLC) Research Centre
111 Gerrard Street East, top floor, Room GER 354

RSVP

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BERENICE



ELSA

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One of the most important early influences in the artistic development of Berenice Abbott was the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874-1927). A German *émigrée* Dada poet and early performance artist in New York, the androgynous Baroness famously dressed up in a tomato-can bra. Abbott recalls: “She invented and introduced trousers with pictures and ornaments painted on them. This was an absolute outrage.” Sharing similarly difficult family histories, the pair practised their non-conformity by flouting gender and sexual identities, publicly radicalizing portraiture, and becoming fast friends. It was the Baroness who encouraged Abbott to set her sight on Paris in 1921.

In 1923, both women rekindled their friendship in post-war Berlin, when the city was in the throes of violent inflation and social turmoil. Berenice worked as a dance teacher in Berlin, visiting and supporting the Baroness. To thank Abbott, the Baroness dedicated the poem “Pastoral” to her, conjuring up their friendship in fragments of memory. She describes Abbott in Dada fashion as “Strolling/ Over/ From/ Pary / ... / Spotting/ me --/ Her/ Mimicry / ... / Some/ Queer/ Dope/ Sister!” She also painted two remarkable portraits dedicated to Berenice: *Forgotten Like This Paraphuice* and *Dada Portrait of Berenice Abbott*.

A live performance of poetry from Freytag-Loringhoven’s recently published book *Body Sweats: The Uncensored Writings of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* (MIT Press, 2011) immediately follows the *Berenice Abbott: Photographs* conference. Please come and join us for a salon hour with a cocktail reception, small exhibition, and live performance.

Produced and curated by Irene Gammel with David Jones, choreographed by Emma Doran, performed by Annie Wong, Niomi Anna Cherney, and Coral Aiken.

Refreshments provided. All welcome. Free of charge.