

***The Baroness Elsa Project: Lene Berg, Dana Claxton, ray ferreira, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Wit López, Taqralik Partridge, Sheilah ReStack, Carol Sawyer, Cindy Stelmackowich***

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Volume 47, numéro 1, 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091827ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1091827ar>

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Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Anderson, H. & Gammel, I. (2022). *The Baroness Elsa Project: Lene Berg, Dana Claxton, ray ferreira, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Wit López, Taqralik Partridge, Sheilah ReStack, Carol Sawyer, Cindy Stelmackowich*. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 47(1), 95–112.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1091827ar>

**Figure 1. The Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven in her Greenwich Village apartment, December 7, 1915. International News Photography Bettman/Corbis/Magmas Getty Images.**



## *The Baroness Elsa Project*: Lene Berg, Dana Claxton, ray ferreira, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Wit López, Taqralik Partridge, Sheilah ReStack, Carol Sawyer, Cindy Stelmackowich<sup>1</sup>

Heather Anderson and Irene Gammel, curators

*The Baroness Elsa Project* reached back a century to bring elemental traces of the radical art, poetry, and personage of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (née Else Plötz 1874–1927) | fig. 1 | into conversation with the work of eight contemporary artists. The exhibition featured artworks by Freytag-Loringhoven, as well as archival items including poem manuscripts, correspondence, literary publications, photographs, and ephemera. The exhibition explored Freytag-Loringhoven’s challenges to societal norms, as well as her experimentation with art’s materials and forms, as core to and in a continuum with the work of artists today. Shining a light on Freytag-Loringhoven, the exhibition also reminds us of other overlooked artists—many of them marginalized due to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class—who leave behind a legacy that is under-recognized within art history.<sup>2</sup> Active in New York’s artistic and literary scene in the 1910s and 1920s, “the Baroness” was an extraordinary artist, poet, and agent provocateur. She punctured gender and societal conventions through her sexual self-expression, subversive self-fashioned dress, performative presence and interventions in the city, and revolutionary use

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of language and found materials. Living in poverty, she sustained herself as an artists' model. She considered her body an artistic medium and her posing as essential to her "sheer life power."<sup>3</sup> Freytag-Loringhoven was described by a contemporary as "the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada."<sup>4</sup> Glints of the Baroness's energy endure in photographs of her taken by Man Ray and others, and in the vibrant accounts of artists and friends. Marcel Duchamp declared: "[The Baroness] is not a futurist. She is the future."<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship has illuminated her artistic and literary contributions to Dada during a fervent period of Modernism, yet she remains under-appreciated.<sup>6</sup>

*The Baroness Elsa Project* situates Freytag-Loringhoven's life and oeuvre in relation to a group of invited contemporary artists, whose diverse works generate a rich conversation with themes and material practices resonant with Freytag-Loringhoven's artistic output. Like the Baroness, with her unbounded spirit, the artists explore self-expression, intervene in dominant social and art-historical narratives, work against systems of exclusion, challenge social and disciplinary boundaries, and claim space, agency, and empowerment. They use found objects and materials, make portraits, write poems, and address the body, identity, and social relations and structures. They map networks of kin, friendships, and ancestors through portraiture, homage, and other means. Their works in sculpture, photography, assemblage, textiles, and video hold rich meanings and evoke the pleasures of performance, create beauty, and celebrate the self-fashioning of identity, while also reckoning with the body's fragility and ephemerality. The artworks in the exhibition collectively probe the complexity of embodiment, assert resistant identities, and underscore material culture's role in shaping and expressing belonging. Brought into relation together, the works of Freytag-Loringhoven and these contemporary artists reflect on the past and present while signalling the future.

### Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874–1927)

The exhibition featured artworks by and depicting Freytag-Loringhoven loaned by private collectors alongside a selection of archival material and images of artworks held in museum and private collections that could not be loaned. Including image reproductions of select artworks was deemed important in order to offer greater insight into who the Baroness was and the nature of her artistic output; previous exhibitions have relied on this strategy due to the small number of her works that survive and are available. The artworks Freytag-Loringhoven made were small and many were given as gifts to friends. This has factored into why her works have survived and found their way into important collections—such as the five works discussed here—and, on the other hand, why some have likely disappeared.

Freytag-Loringhoven gave a series of artworks to pianist Allen Tanner and artist Pavel Tchelitchev in gratitude for their support when she was destitute in Berlin in 1923–24. Works such as these, as well as *God* (1917), demonstrate her innovation in creating art with found objects. Reclaiming and bricolaging everyday and discarded objects as bold and new works of art, Freytag-Loringhoven was among the first assemblage artists.

*Enduring Ornament* (1913) | **fig. 2** | attests to the Baroness's poetic ingenuity; she designated this large, rusted metal ring an artwork two years before the arrival of contemporaries Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia in New York. She purportedly found it on a New York street in 1913, on her way to City Hall to marry Baron Leopold von Freytag-Loringhoven. The ordinariness of *Enduring Ornament* challenged Western art conventions and notions of aesthetic beauty; the Baroness maintained that *Enduring Ornament* was a feminine symbol representing Venus as well as a reference to her matrimonial ties. This artwork, however, proved more lasting than her marriage.

1. *The Baroness Elsa Project* was presented at Carleton University Art Gallery September 28–December 12, 2021, and Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, February 18–April 10 2022. The exhibition was supported by the Joe Friday and Grant Jameson Contemporary Art Fund. A brief video tour of the exhibition is available on CUA's YouTube channel. The Stonecroft Symposium: Materiality and Embodiment Artist Conversation which took place with four of the artists on October 19, 2021, is also archived there: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cuArtGallery>.

2. Freytag-Loringhoven is among the historic artists featured in the "time capsules" in Cecilia Alemani's *Milk of Dreams* exhibition in the Arsenale for the 59th Venice Biennale.

3. Baroness Elsa quoted in Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: a Cultural Biography* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2002), 156.

4. Jane Heap, editor of *The Little Review*, a fellow artist and friend, described Freytag-Loringhoven thus in her article "Dada," *The Little Review* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1922): 46. <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:517075/PDF/>

5. Marcel Duchamp quoted in Kenneth Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 77.

6. Major contributions to scholarship on Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven include Francis M. Naumann with Beth Venn et al., *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art/Abrams, 1996); Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: a Cultural Biography* (Cambridge MA, and London: MIT Press, 2002); Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism, A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2004); Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo, eds., *Body Sweats: The*

Figure 2. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Earring Object*, c. 1918. Steel watch spring, celluloid, ebony bead, brass ear screws, plastic screw guards, pearl earrings, Roboid wire, 7.62 x 3.81 cm. Wooden and glass display 10.8 high x 10.8 cm wide; *Cathedral*, ca. 1918. Wood fragment, wire support with wooden blocks on wood base, 26.5 cm high; *Enduring Ornament*, 1913. Found rusted metal ring, 10.8 cm. Collection of Mark Kelman. Photo: Roger J. Smith.



Figure 3. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Limbswish*, ca. 1917–1920. Metal spiral and curtain tassel on wooden base, approximately 55.1 cm high with base. Collection of Mark Kelman.

Figure 4 (far right). Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven with Morton Schamberg, *God*, 1917. Wood miter box; cast-iron plumbing trap, 31.4 cm (height), 7.6 × 12.1 × 29.5 cm (base). Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, 1950–134–182.



With *Cathedral* (ca. 1918), | **fig. 2** | the Baroness boldly claims the international symbol of New York City's modernity and injects it with an organic and fragile quality. Named for the city's skyscrapers or "commercial cathedrals," the piece is made of wood, not steel or glass. She employs a natural, jagged angle over the geometric lines favoured by some of her contemporaries, including a similarly scaled "skyscraper" work by Man Ray. Paralleling the way that Freytag-Loringhoven proudly displayed her own aging, weathered body, she conceptualized the skyscraper in a state of dignity and regal erosion.

*Earring Object* (ca. 1918) (fig. 2), made from a bouncy steel watch spring and swinging pearl earrings, exemplifies the found-object assemblages that Freytag-Loringhoven wore as body art. This included many bracelets and elongated earrings, some made from shower curtain rings and ice cream soda spoons, respectively. *Limbswish* (ca. 1917–20) | **fig. 3** | similarly illustrates her creation of art objects to be worn on the body, commingling art and life. Worn at the Baroness's hip, the curtain tassel, removed from its display within the metal spiral, would swing as she walked. The object's sound on the body (the limb swish) provided inspiration for its name, yet it also speaks to her queered aesthetic, as the term "swishes" was often used to describe publicly gay men. This kinetic, whip-like device also evokes reference to the whip used as an erotic tool and, thus, gives a dual meaning to the title's pun (the limb's wish).

*God* (1917), | **fig. 4** | a cast-iron drain trap set on its end and fixed to a miter box, resulted from Freytag-Loringhoven's collaboration with artist Morton Schamberg (1881–1918). In the way it humorously elevates the everyday bathroom object, the work is typical of the Baroness's anti-religious and scatological Dada. Made the same year as Duchamp's infamous *Fountain*,<sup>7</sup> the urinal signed R. Mutt, *God* can be seen to function as a visual representation of Duchamp's statement: "[t]he only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges."<sup>8</sup> The twisted phallic shape also suggests a critique of male-dominated

society, an ironic message, as the artwork was, for many years after its creation, attributed solely to Schamberg.<sup>9</sup>

#### Lene Berg<sup>10</sup>

Lene Berg pays homage to the Baroness by reimagining the mythic, sensationally titled film *Elsa, Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, Shaving Her Pubic Hair*, which Freytag-Loringhoven made in collaboration with Man Ray and Duchamp in 1921. Ruined in the developing process, the film was never shown. In a letter to Tristan Tzara, post-marked June 8, 1921 and signed "directeur du mauvais movies," Man Ray attached a tiny filmstrip from a test shoot (also ruined). Man Ray's letter is also headed by a double image of Freytag-Loringhoven posing nude—her pubic area shaved—likely taken at or around the same time.<sup>11</sup>

Born in Oslo and now residing in Berlin and New York, Berg was educated as a film director at the Dramatiska Institutet in Stockholm and has made four feature-length films. She also works with video, installation, photography, and text. *Shaving the Baroness* (2010) | **fig. 5** | arose from Berg's research on Freytag-Loringhoven and intrigue about her role in the destroyed film—particularly the lack of authorship attributed to her. While researching the film, Berg had to make sense of contradictory, anecdotal, and speculative sources, some written long after the 1920s. On creating her own film, Berg reflects, "One can only speculate in how a film like *Shaving the Baroness* would have been received in 1921 and how the reactions would differ then from now."<sup>12</sup> Making such a film entails risk and vulnerability: the performer displays her nude body as it is transformed—shaved or stripped bare—in an intimate act that is usually private. Berg's *Shaving the Baroness* at once pays homage to the Baroness and explores the essence of the moving image. It conjures the past yet, as Berg states, "will always take place in the present whenever the film is screened, be it a hundred years from now or a hundred years ago."<sup>13</sup>

*Uncensored Writings of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2011); Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick, "Reconsidering the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Kay Boyle: Feminist Aesthetics and Modernism," *Feminist Formations*, 28, no. 2 (2016): 51–72; Caroline Knighton, *Modernist Wastes: Recovery, Re-Use and the Autobiographic in Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Djuna Barnes* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

7. Irene Gammel and Amelia Jones, among others, propose that Freytag-Loringhoven may have played a role in the authorship of *Fountain* (1917). See Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 223–238 and Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 42–44.

8. The quote is attributed to Duchamp—but unsigned—and comes from the second and final issue of *The Blind Man* produced by Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché and Beatrice Wood: *The Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 5. [https://monoskop.org/images/6/6f/The\\_Blind\\_Man\\_2\\_May\\_1917.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/6/6f/The_Blind_Man_2_May_1917.pdf)

9. See Francis Naumann, "Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in his *New York Dada 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), 168–75. Naumann established Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven as co-author of *God*; for years the sculpture was attributed solely to Morton Livingston Schamberg, whose photograph of the sculpture is held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection. See also Margaret A. Morgan, "A Box, a Pipe, and a Piece of Plumbing," in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 48–78. The work is held in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Irene Gammel and Amelia Jones also discuss *God* extensively in *Baroness Elsa and Irrational Modernism*, respectively.

10. For more information on Lene Berg, see <http://www.leneberg.com>.

11. This letter is held in the Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet, Paris (TZR.C.3192) and reproduced in Serge Fauchereau, *Paris—New York Échanges littéraires au vingtième*



Figure 5. Lene Berg, *Shaving the Baroness*, 2010, featuring Dunja Eckert Jakobi and Leander Dønne. Black and white video, 7:33. Video still. Courtesy of Filmform.





Figure 6. Carol Sawyer, *Subjoyride*, 2021. Black and white video with sound, 7:00. Music and sound design by Aleksandar Zecevic and editing assistance by Amo Yue Wang. Video still. Courtesy of the artist.

### Carol Sawyer<sup>14</sup>

Continuing her research on historic women artists, Carol Sawyer, in her video *Subjoyride* (2021) channels Freytag-Loringhoven's radical poem of the same name. Written circa 1920–22, the poem strings together “readymade” language from the advertising slogans and brand names that were part of New York visual and radio culture of the period.<sup>15</sup> Set to an abstract, mechanistic soundtrack that evokes the burgeoning consumerism, new inventions, and optimism of the post-World War I era, Sawyer's performance of Freytag-Loringhoven's poem is entwined with a collage of found archival footage. | **fig. 6** | This video, like much of Sawyer's work since the early 1990s, revisits the work of women artists who came before her, particularly those who participated in avant-garde movements such as Dada and Surrealism, and whose work defied classification in a single medium or genre.

A Vancouver-based visual artist and singer who works with photography, installation, video, and improvised music, Sawyer created *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* over two decades (presented at CUAG in 2016; curated by Heather Anderson), which seeded the idea for *The Baroness Elsa Project*. Sawyer's ingenious *Natalie Brettschneider Archive* slyly delivers an interventionist feminist critique of the historical narratives that so often exclude and erase the achievements of women, such as Freytag-Loringhoven.<sup>16</sup>

### ray ferreira<sup>17</sup>

Language becomes fluid, slippery, and corporeal in the work of ray ferreira, a Blaqlatina artist, poet, and performer, who “uses iridescence, text, rhythms (aka systems), to cruise a quantum poetics” and “swerve past white cishet patriarchy.”<sup>18</sup> ferreira fashions and performs poetry across languages, conjuring unruly bodies, identities, and sexualities, pushing boundaries in digital (and real) spaces today, where the Baroness's radical play with language and embodied sexuality in her poetry challenged literary

norms and claimed space in the pages of the “little magazines” of her day. Also akin to the Baroness, ferreira creates corporeal sculptures using consumer items sourced from New York, the city both inhabit(ed). ferreira's shimmering pair of prints *existencia postballena* (2021) and video *benthichitchfantasy* (2019; re-edited 2021) rhythmically sound aqueous depths and conjure ocean creatures and resistant identities. The video evokes powerful, spiritual female figures, many who make their home in the water. They include sirena, in Spanish referring to sirens and mermaids; the Yemallá, a Yoruba figure known throughout the Afro-Cuban diaspora; Mami Wata (“Mama Water” or “Mother Ocean”), a West African water spirit; la Diosa del Mar, goddess of the sea in Spanish-speaking cultures; and la ciguapa, a creature from Dominican folklore who takes female form and lures humans into the forest and mountains.

In the entrancing video, ferreira voices, “what happens when a body can no longer hold true? what happens when a body cannot exist?” | **fig. 7** | She continues, “the girls been out here/hear through histories floating through. Marsha found home in these depths known and unknown.” ferreira is speaking about Marsha P. Johnson, an iconic activist and founding member of Gay Liberation Front and Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). Johnson's body was found in the Hudson River shortly after the 1992 Pride Parade in New York. As an activist she had been fighting anti-LGBTQ violence and police injustice, which may have led to her murder.

ferreira's use of fabric roses, sparkling crystals, and pearls, along with the graceful repose of a feminine wig head in *613rosebudkunt(bloom)* (2021), | **fig. 8** | distills references to silk flowers in her grandmother's home, European paintings of nymphs, and an homage to trans icon Johnson, a self-described drag queen who fashioned floral crowns from fresh flowers gathered from Manhattan's Flower District, where she sometimes slept. Made from

siècle, catalogue of an exhibition presented June 9–September 12, 1977. Bibliothèque publique d'information, Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, 34–35. See also Francis Naumann, “A Scholar's Nightmare: A Mistake in the Literature that Cannot be Erased,” <http://www.francisnaumann.com/PUBLICATIONS/A%20Scholar's%20Nightmare.pdf>.

12. See “Lene Berg: Shaving the Baroness,” *Kunstjournalen B-post*, <https://b-post.no/en/11/berg.html>.

13. “Shaving the Baroness by Lene Berg,” *Filmform*, <https://www.filmform.com/works/3791-shaving-the-baroness/>.

14. For more information on Carol Sawyer, see <http://www.carolsawyer.net/>.

15. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, “Subjoyride,” 1920–22, first published in its entirety in *Body Sweats: The Uncensored Writings of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, eds. Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 99–102.

16. See Carol Sawyer, *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* exhibition publication with essays by Heather Anderson, Mona Filip, Bruce Grenville, Michelle Jacques, and Erin Silver (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery with Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Koffler Gallery and Vancouver Art Gallery, 2020).

17. For more information on ray ferreira, see <http://rayferreira.net/in-d-e-x.html>.

18. Artist's bio, <https://www.latinx-project.nyu.edu/ray-ferreira>.

Figure 7. ray ferreira,  
*benthicbitchfantasy*, 2019, re-edited 2021.  
Digital video, 5:48 looping. Collection  
of the artist.

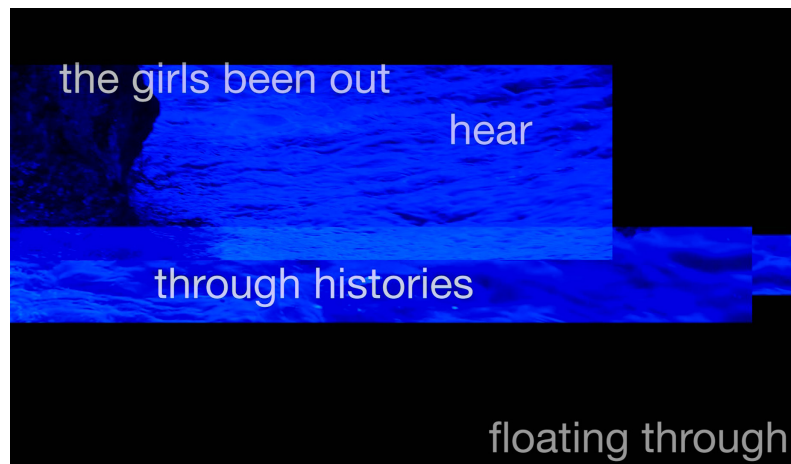


Figure 8. ray ferreira, *613rosebudkunt  
(bloom)*, 2021. Foam wig head,  
synthetic bundles, artificial roses, ab  
crystals, ab pearls, paint. Collection of  
the artist. Photo: Justin Wonnacott.



decorative accessories, this sculpture and the companion *?imreal¿whenichopmyface* (2021) echo Freytag-Loringhoven's self-fashioning with commodity items sourced from department stores, friends, the everyday, and street, highlighting the complexity and malleability of identity and how we compose it.

#### Wit López<sup>19</sup>

Wit López merges traditional quilt making with “digital quilt portraits” in *Red Yellow Green Purple* (2021). Arising from the artist's commitment to community building and a virtual residency they organized during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Red Yellow Green Purple* features a projected sequence of portraits of López, with other portraits created collaboratively with their peers that celebrate their identities as disabled artists. Brooklyn-bred and Philadelphia-based,<sup>20</sup> López is a disabled, gender non-conforming/nonbinary trans mixed-media creator, performer, and independent curator of African American and Boricua descent.

Sharing kinship with Freytag-Loringhoven's challenges to gender binaries and societal conventions, radical self-fashioning, and performance interventions in everyday life, as well as a collage/mixed-media<sup>21</sup> approach to portraiture, López and their collaborators playfully explore the role that artmaking—and portraiture in particular—can play in shaping and expressing identity and belonging.<sup>22</sup> In the two portraits of López that bookend the sequence, humorously titled *Don't Talk to Me or My Sons, Pt. 1 and Pt. 2* (2021), the artist holds four large colourful crocheted balls to their chest.” | **fig. 9** | López brings a similarly playful approach to “digitally quilting” portraits contributed by their peers into larger-than-life compositions. In *I know you get it. Fat Hugs.* (2021), Curtis Walker is surrounded by rectangular bars of colour and corresponding crocheted circles. Briana Hickman appears exuberant in *Briana Live and In Color* (2021). | **fig. 10** | Double symmetry is at play in Kenwyn Samuel's *Clownfriend Heart Emoji* (2021) while Ivan

J. Felder III becomes tripled and winks behind a surgical mask in *Sir Cubed Circus* (2021).

Aligned with quilt-making traditions that honour community and collaboration, López devised a way of working with peers that fosters connection in these times of physical distancing, which is also conducive for individuals with disabilities who can't easily gather in “normal” times. The grid fundamental to traditional quilt-making echoes the matrix of López's pixel fabric projections, while the playful red, yellow, green, and purple textile objects that appear in the portraits spill out of digital space onto the floor, into the space of our own bodies. With *Red Yellow Green Purple*, López's virtual quilts are as joyful and comforting as hand-sewn ones.

#### Cindy Stelmackowich<sup>23</sup>

Cindy Stelmackowich, an Ottawa-based artist, curator, and academic, devised *Shell Shock* (2021) by reflecting on the historical context of World War I and its aftermath, which shaped the New York Dada movement of which Freytag-Loringhoven was a key figure. Many European artists fled World War I by immigrating to New York, while others, including North American artists, were called to the European frontlines.

In her artistic and curatorial practices, Stelmackowich has long been interested in the history of medical practices and representation of the body, as well as the interconnections between art and science. Her acquisition of vintage medical splints produced by DePuy Manufacturing Co. in Warsaw, Indiana, informed the creation of this artwork. Splints such as these were shipped overseas during World War I to treat unprecedented numbers of wounded soldiers and civilians. *Shell Shock* invokes the devastation of trench warfare, the wounded, and those who treated them in field hospitals.

Dramatically lit and arranged on a long, low table, the splints and laboratory stands in *Shell Shock* create a

19. For more information on Wit López, see <https://witlopez.com/>.

20. That López is based in Philadelphia, the city Freytag-Loringhoven lived in when she made the sculpture *God* with Morton Schamberg in 1917, modeled for artist George Biddle, and from where she may have sent a urinal to Duchamp, was an additional serendipitous resonance for López's inclusion in *The Baroness Elsa Project*.

21. Like López, whose artist parents handed down skills including sewing, crocheting, and embroidery, Freytag-Loringhoven's mother, Ida-Marie (Kleist) Plötz produced “bizarre” textile artworks that seem to have been influential, one of which Freytag-Loringhoven kept throughout her life as an artistic touchstone. See Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 43.

22. Freytag-Loringhoven created numerous small, intimate, collaged and painted portraits of friends including *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (the Israel Museum), and *Dada Portrait of Berenice Abbott* (MoMA collection), as well as poems. She gave these as tokens of friendship in recognition of artistic kinship as well as financial and material support. In this way, the circulation of her artworks and poetry—whether given to friends or published in literary magazines of the period—evidence a network of peer support and community.

23. For more information on Cindy Stelmackowich, see <https://cindystelmackowich.com/>.



Figure 9. Owens Art Gallery exhibition view. Left: Wit López, *Red Yellow Green Purple*, 2021, digital portraits and animation (52 seconds looping) projected onto cotton quilt, acrylic yarn objects. Showing portrait *Don't Talk to Me or My Sons, Pt. 1*. Collection of the artist; Centre: Cindy Stelmackowich, *Shell Shock*, 2021. WWI metal and wire medical splints, wax, pigment, vintage metal laboratory stands, gauze, cotton bandages, wood, aluminum, LED spotlights. Collection of the artist. Right: ray ferreira, installation detail. Photo: Roger J. Smith.

Figure 10. Wit López, *Red Yellow Green Purple*, 2021, featuring portrait *Briana Live and in Color* made with the collaboration of Briana Hickman. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Roger J. Smith.



Figure 11. Cindy Stelmackowich, *Shell Shock*, 2021, detail. Collection of the artist. Photo: Roger J. Smith.



tableau of phantom limbs and choreography of shadows. | **fig. 9** | The uncanny character of these suspended limbs and their resemblance to shadow puppets resonate with the early twentieth-century artworks of Dadaists and Surrealists, who were reckoning with the body, mortality, and shattered notions of impenetrable masculinity.<sup>24</sup> Such corporeal vulnerability is foregrounded in Stelmackowich's theatrical display of the rigid metal splints with their soft, flesh-like wax to evoke wounds | **fig. 11** | and other injuries that we might only imagine, and which signal the often invisible and feminized labour of care.

#### Sheilah ReStack<sup>25</sup>

Born in Caribou River, Nova Scotia, and now living and working in Columbus, Ohio, Sheilah ReStack approaches the photograph as a tactile, material document. In works such as *Be a Highway, Be a Thigh (for Dani)* (2020), ReStack prints on soft fleece the cropped image of a woman's throat between a woman's thighs. | **fig. 12** | A number of works, including *Hold House* (2020), comprise "walking prints," which ReStack made by strapping fibre-based photographic paper to her feet to create a spectral palimpsest of shoeprints, scuffs, abrasions, and tears, rendered in warm, light-to-dark tones. The photographs of this most analogue of processes are then stitched together, the ends of loose thread and scrawled thoughts offering up a record and the remains of a day, of being an artist, mother, lover, and builder of a queer family and community. | **fig. 13** |

ReStack's perambulatory process recalls descriptions of the Baroness's performative promenades through Greenwich Village, where she, bedecked with self-fashioned items collected from the streets and shops, claimed the city as an artmaking space.<sup>26</sup> The Baroness's accumulation and radical use of everyday, eclectic objects in her art<sup>27</sup> shares affinities with ReStack's unconventional material choices—rabbit fur, hair, thread, angle iron, an oversized, water-filled plastic bag, coloured acetate, fleece,

cement—in sculptural assemblages sandwiched between Plexiglas, held together with taut, thick, dyed industrial rubber bands and tiny copper piercings, their precarity emphasized by balancing on cement wedges or propped up by a metal rod braced against a rock.

*Saddle as Material (for Elsa)* (2021) presents the artist in bed, her face buried in a pillow and hand reaching toward the viewer, while in *Blanket for Leonora's Hearing Trumpet* (2020) we see a hand holding papers as another hand enters from beyond the frame. ReStack's bricolaged assemblages invite close looking, haptic associations, and memories: a knee roll from a leather saddle that remembers every horse, rabbit fur for fingers, a person in a tiny vintage snapshot visible when one peeks behind the angled space created between the artwork and the wall. Submerged autumn flowers change colour and become tannic in a large bag of water set on the floor, that might burst at any moment. ReStack's works distill personal and domestic intimacies, charting a visual, tactile poetry of her everyday.

#### Taqralik Partridge<sup>28</sup>

In *Build My Own Home* (2021), Taqralik Partridge, an artist, writer, poet and spoken word performer, and curator originally from Kuujuaq, Nunavut, created four amautiit (women's parkas) based on one her mother wore when the artist was a child. | **fig. 14** | Her amautiit underscore the vital role of material culture in identity, resilience, and what she terms "homefulness," while at the same time they signal the precarity and homelessness many Inuit face in the urban South and in Inuit Nunangat. The use of Tyvek and tarpaulin in particular recalls not only the provisional state of some housing, but also the urgent funding and policy required to address the housing crisis. Partridge's use of materials found at hand—newspaper, tarpaulin, dental floss, hula hoops, packing tape—also operates in the tradition of bricolage, paralleling Freytag-Loringhoven's collage and assemblage work with found

24. See Jones, "War/Equivocal Masculinities," *Irrational Modernism*, 34–115.

25. For more information on Sheilah Restack, see <https://www.sheilahwilson-restack.com/>.

26. See Gammel "Living Dada with Phallus in Hand and Taillight on Bustle," *Baroness Elsa*, 182–204 and Jones "The City / Wandering, Neurasthenic Subjects," *Irrational Modernism*, 168–233.

27. See Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–23*, 170–71 or Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 220, for George Biddle's description of Freytag-Loringhoven's object-filled Greenwich Village studio apartment. Jones devotes a section, "The Ragpicker," to the Baroness's compulsive collecting and shoplifting of objects for her artmaking in *Irrational Modernism*, 190–99.

28. For more information on Taqralik Partridge, see the Inuit Art Foundation's Artist Spotlight: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBi\\_ziP7\\_Aw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBi_ziP7_Aw)



**Figure 12.** Sheilah ReStack, *Be a Highway Be a Thigh (for Dani)*, 2020. Fleece photo blanket, Plexiglas, copper, cement wedge. Collection of Joanne Hames. Photo: Patrick Lacasse.



**Figure 13.** Sheilah ReStack, installation view, Carleton University Art Gallery. Floor: *Hold House* (2020); wall works from left: *Blanket for Leonora's Hearing Trumpet* (2020), *Saddle as material (for Elsa)* (2021), *Be a Highway Be a Thigh (for Dani)* (2020), *Rita before her garden* (2020), *Queer Prayer for Elsa's Limbswish* (2021). Photo: Justin Wonnacott.



**Figure 14.** Taqralik Partridge, *Build My Own Home*, 2021. Tyvek, canvas, newsprint, tarpaulin, hula hoops, thread, dental floss, synthetic sinew, silver teaspoons. Collection of the artist. Photo: Roger J. Smith.



**Figure 15.** Taqralik Partridge, *Build My Own Home*, 2021 (detail). Tarpaulin, hula hoops, thread, silver teaspoons. Collection of the artist. Photo: Roger J. Smith.



materials. In *Build My Own Home*, these materials speak to the resourcefulness and eloquent repurposing of the everyday when it is necessary to work within an economy of means.

Shiny silver teaspoons adorn the front and back of each amautil. | **fig. 15** | Partridge collected the spoons while in Scotland, visiting the region where one set of her grandparents is from. She includes them in part as a nod to anecdotes of Freytag-Loringhoven's self-fashioned spoon earrings and extraordinary Dada accessories,<sup>29</sup> while also evoking layered references to her family history and to the history of colonial trade and intercultural exchange.

#### Dana Claxton<sup>30</sup>

Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota [Sioux]) is recognized for her rigorous and expansive approach to photography, video, film, installation, and performance, through which she explores Indigenous identity, beauty, pleasure, gender, and the body. These concerns are apparent in her *Headdress* series (2016–19), photographs of Indigenous womxn, whose heads, faces, and torsos are abundantly adorned with beaded cultural belongings. | **fig. 16** | Portraits in the Western tradition often signal aspects of a sitter's individuality and identity through a focus on facial features, physical attributes, and gestures, such as in painting and photographs of Freytag-Loringhoven posing in her avant-garde attire. Presented as backlit "fire boxes," the *Headdress* portraits, however, veil the subjects' faces with opulently beaded necklaces, fringed hairpieces, hats, necklaces, purses, earrings, and other handmade items.

Claxton created this portrait series with Indigenous womxn friends and colleagues. In *Headdress—Connie* (2019) and *Headdress—Dee* (2019), | **fig. 17** | the subject's first name is part of the title, but identities are otherwise withheld. While this relative anonymity resonates with that of the unidentified makers of countless cultural belongings held in museum collections—the majority of which were made

by womxn, as Candice Hopkins has observed<sup>31</sup>—here their identities and subjectivities are asserted through the networks of kinship and relations embodied in the carefully made objects, many of which, like Freytag-Loringhoven's artworks, were given as gifts to peers.

While Freytag-Loringhoven transformed found objects into artworks that can be considered amongst the earliest readymades and that index her experiences of city life,<sup>32</sup> Claxton speaks of the beautifully beaded items such as those depicted in *Headdress* as "made-to-be-ready" objects.<sup>33</sup> For Claxton, "made-to-be-ready" objects counter notions of Indigenous "artifacts" and the commodification of Indigenous aesthetics. Rather, these cultural belongings and Claxton's photographs subvert the concept of the found object in modernist art history and theory to privilege the everyday aesthetic power of Indigenous cultural forms.<sup>34</sup>

Carleton University Art Gallery and the Owens Art Gallery acknowledge the generous support of lenders to the exhibition, Francis M. Naumann and Marie T. Keller, Mark Kelman, Marianne Elrick-Manley, John Cook, Joanne Hames, and The Blue Building Gallery. We are grateful for the assistance from staff at the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre, Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University); Special Collections and Archives, University of Maryland Libraries; University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries; Filmform, and to the museums and collectors who provided images and granted reproduction permissions.

Heather Anderson and Irene Gammel express deep gratitude to the artists for their enthusiasm and creation and sharing of their works featured in the exhibition. Heather Anderson also thanks research assistant Phoebe Sampey, as well as Christine Hodge and Moriah Russel who assisted in the early stages of the project. The curators are grateful to cUAC's and the Owens Art Gallery's dedicated team members.

29. Numerous contemporaries described Freytag-Loringhoven's performative self-fashioning, as traced throughout Gammel's *Baroness Elsa and Jones' Irrational Modernism*.

30. For more information on Dana Claxton, see <https://www.danaclaxton.com/>.

31. Candice Hopkins, "Monuments and the Wounds of History," Zoom lecture, Cooper Union, February 16, 2021, <https://cooper.edu/events-and-exhibitions/events/candice-hopkins-monuments-and-wounds-history>.

32. See Gammel, "Lashing with Beauty: the Emergence of Assemblage Art in America," essay for the exhibition *The Art of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, Francis Naumann Fine Art, April 25–June 15, 2002 and Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 143–146 for her reading of how readymades operated in Freytag-Loringhoven's practice and engagement with the city. Freytag-Loringhoven in her poem "Subjective" includes a line "ready-to-wear-American Soul Poetry" perhaps alluding to the readymade language of advertising and urban life.

33. *Headdress* (2016) was first exhibited in *Dana Claxton: Made to Be Ready* at Simon Fraser University Art Gallery, January 14–March 12, 2016, Curated by Amy Kazymierchuk. Exhibition description <https://www.sfu.ca/galleries/audain-gallery/past/Dana-Claxton-Made-To-Be-Ready.html>.

34. *Ibid.*, *Dana Claxton: Made to Be Ready* exhibition description.

Figure 16. Dana Claxton, *Headdress-Dee*, 2019, detail. Courtesy of the artist.

