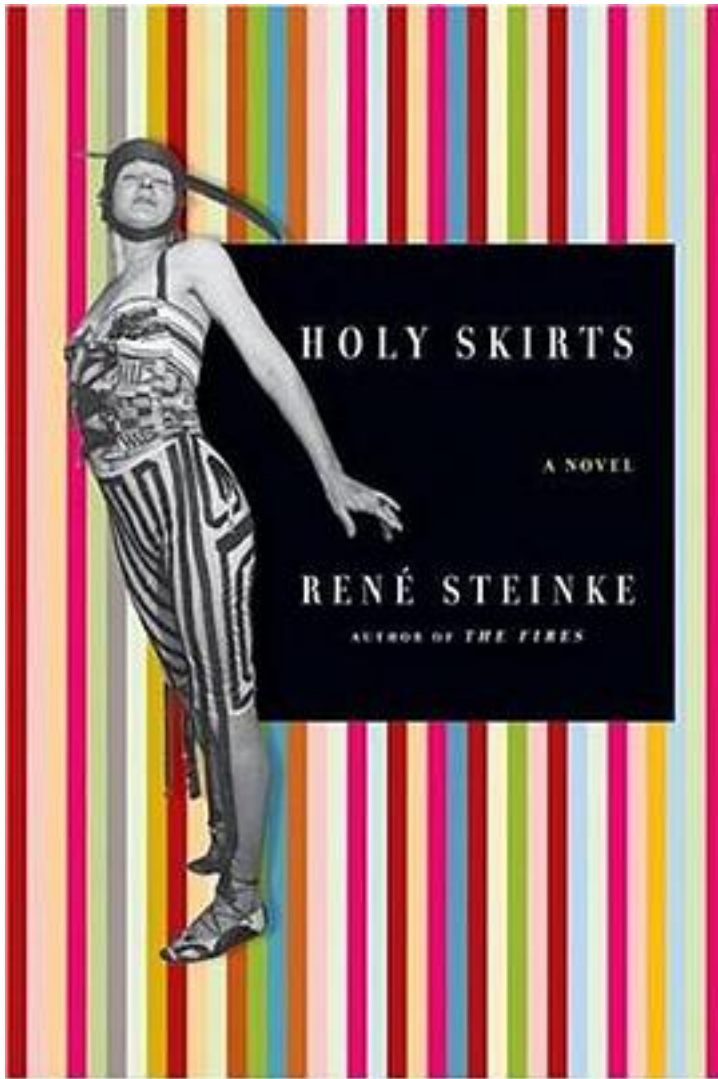


Holy Skirts



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著者:Rene Steinke

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作者介绍:

From Publishers Weekly

Literary Review editor Steinke's second novel (after *The Fires*) is a lively, sympathetic fictionalized account of the true adventures of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, a poet, artist's model and friend of Marcel Duchamp whose irrepressible life bordered on the fashionably sordid. Fleeing her burgher home in Swinemünde, Germany, at age 19 for the liberation—and poverty—of Berlin circa 1904, Elsa learns early to lie about her past and dress outrageously (often in male clothing), attracting numerous men who provide entrée to high society. Three husbands determine the direction of her life: the first, August, is an effete, hashish-smoking architect; the second, his best friend, Franz, is a charming, tortured poet and con man who brings Elsa to New York only to desert her; and the last is a German baron who gambles away his fortune and abandons her as well. Yet Elsa is an intrepid heroine who continually rises from her own ashes, muscling her way into artists' parties with bon mots and conversation-stopping "self-apparel pieces." Reading an account of an interior life that is not entirely fictional and not entirely factual can be disorienting, but Steinke shows palpable admiration and respect for her proto-feminist protagonist. This is an intelligent, spirited work that stimulates interest in the baroness's work and times.

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From Booklist

Starred Review Novelists are drawn to the lives of artists like moths to a flame, and no writer could ask for a more incendiary protagonist than Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. The provocative German dadaist was but a footnote in the annals of bohemian Greenwich Village until Irene Gammel's revelatory biography, *Baroness Elsa* (2002), appeared, and now Steinke (*The Fires*, 1999) attempts to get inside the head of this flamboyant poet and trailblazing performance artist. Steinke's wildly uninhibited Elsa, haunted by family tragedies and three extravagantly disastrous marriages and inspired by industrialization, ends up living hand-to-mouth downstairs from Marcel Duchamp, publishing her poetry in the plucky *Little Review*, and protesting everything from sexism to censorship by shaving her head and going forth adorned with a birdcage hat (with bird), soup-can brassiere, gum-wrapper jewelry, and a taillight. Sadly, her bravado masks an engulfing loneliness, and the brilliant flame of her boldly improvised life burns out of control. By evoking both the tactile details of her protagonist's precarious existence and her churning psyche, Steinke is able to embrace and transmute biographical fact, creating a fascinating character within a world-altering milieu, and exploring the dark side of creativity. Donna Seaman

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