

# You Can't Dispose of Mercedes Lightly: Mercedes de Acosta, Queer Women, and Queer Female Desire in the Early Twentieth Century

Home About FAQ My

Account

Enter search terms:

Search

in this series

Advanced Search

Notify me via email or [RSS](#)

## Links

Department of History

## Browse

Collections

Disciplines

Authors

## Author Corner

Author FAQ

Submit Research

[Home](#) > [Student Research and Creative Works](#) > [HISTORY STUDENT](#) > [HISTORY THESES](#) > 24

< [Previous](#)

[Next](#) >

## HISTORY THESES

### "You Can't Dispose of Mercedes Lightly": Mercedes de Acosta, Queer Women, and Queer Female Desire in the Early Twentieth Century

[Katy Stehr](#)

#### Abstract

This thesis is based off of the life of Mercedes de Acosta (1893-1968), an out lesbian who was very active in the literary, theatrical, and screenwriting spheres at different points in her life. While many could consider her a "failed" artist, given that none of her works were financial successes, she is notable in this time period for the noted quality of her work, her many interpersonal relationships (romantic or otherwise) with others in her trade, and her artistic exploits on both sides of the Atlantic. Being "out" was incredibly unusual for LGBT+ identified people in this time period, and the homophobia of the period paired with the lack of financial success of her works may have contributed to the fact that she died in poverty. This thesis looks at the life and the historiography of Mercedes de Acosta in an attempt to reconstruct what a lesbian identity meant in this period for women and how her lesbian identity affected both de Acosta's life and her relationships, as well as how she was remembered afterward.

#### First Advisor

Katherine Smith

#### Second Advisor

Poppy Fry

#### Degree Type

Dissertation/Thesis

#### Rights

[Terms of Use for work posted in Sound Ideas](#)

#### Degree Name

Bachelor of Arts in History

#### Date of Award

Spring 5-14-2017

#### Department

History

#### Recommended Citation

Stehr, Katy, "'You Can't Dispose of Mercedes Lightly': Mercedes de Acosta, Queer Women, and Queer Female Desire in the Early Twentieth Century" (2017). *History Theses*. 24. [https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/history\\_theses/24](https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/history_theses/24)

[Download](#)

 INCLUDED IN

[History Commons](#)

#### SHARE

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [✉](#) [+](#)

 DIGITAL COMMONS  
powered by bepress

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [FAQ](#) | [My Account](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#)

[Privacy](#) | [Copyright](#)

Although de Acosta's writing is largely neglected, Schanke's well-crafted, deeply-researched biography makes her live again, walking down the streets of New York to show other

Cookies are used by this site. To decline or learn more, visit our [cookies page](#).

Close