

2016 Mary Zirin Prize

The Association for Women in Slavic Studies is pleased to announce Dr. Margaret Samu as the recipient of the 2016 Mary Zirin Prize for independent scholarship.

Dr. Samu received her PhD from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts in 2010, specializing in art history. The list of Dr. Samu's activities and accomplishments is impressive. She currently maintains adjunct positions at New York University, Parson's School of Design at the New School, and the Stern College for Women at Yeshiva University, while maintaining an active schedule of conference presentations. Dr. Samu serves as a lecturer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she has previously been a Fellow, research assistant, and translator. Her museum experience includes time at the Neue Gallery in New York and the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.

She is currently a resident at the Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia, and has had fellowships at Dumbarton Oaks and the Library of Congress. She has also won a Fulbright Fellowship Grant to Russia, an Erwin Panofsky Fellowship for Graduate Study, and an Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Humanistic Studies. The National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute on America's Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Refugees and the Solow Art and Architecture Foundation Fellowship have awarded Dr. Samu research grants. Her scholarly publications appear in both Russian and American journals, while the article submitted to the Zirin committee, "Making a Case for Realism: The Female Nude in Russian Satirical Images of the 1860s," appeared in the anthology she co-edited with Rosalind Blakesley, *From Realism to the Silver Age: New Studies in Russian Artistic Culture*.

"Making the Case for Realism" works "to overturn the long-held assumption that censorship and socially critical realist art excluded the production of nudes in Russia." Dr. Samu's current book-length project focuses on the female nude in the Russian art world. Provisionally titled *Russian Venus*, the book will argue "that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian artists sought to establish cosmopolitan credentials by undertaking themes associated with Western European art, in particular the female nude. [This] work shows how the prestige of the nude in art came under attack when nationalist sentiments began to undermine westernizing impulses in the 1860s. It concludes by assessing the impact of life classes, with their emphasis on drawing from female models, on the nascent Russian avant-garde."

The Zirin committee commends Dr. Samu for both her work as an academic and as a museum professional, and for bringing these two communities together in her work. She played an important role in re-establishing SHERA, the Society of Historians of East European, Eurasian, and Russian Art and Architecture – a vital and vibrant organization which contributes in manifold ways to the field of Slavic studies.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Samu, an outstanding independent scholar and this year's recipient of the Mary Zirin Prize.