



Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center

New Directions Lecture with Maria Mayofis

A Socialist Revolutionary at a Rendezvous, or How Cultural History Can Benefit from Studying Love Letters

By Sonia Kelly
(MA/MS Student, REEES/LIS)

On April 11, as part of the New Directions Lecture Series, Maria Mayofis gave a lecture titled, “A Socialist Revolutionary at a Rendezvous, or How Cultural History Can Benefit from Studying Love Letters.” Mayofis is currently a Research Fellow at the Center for Russian Culture at Amherst College, and she utilized the center’s archives to reconstruct Vladimir Zenzinov and Amalia Fondaminskaya’s love affair. Zenzinov and Fondaminskaya were both socialist revolutionaries in the early twentieth century, and Amherst’s archives have preserved decades of their correspondence from several different countries.

In her lecture, Mayofis argued that beyond the personal, Zenzinov and Fondaminskaya’s correspondence is indicative of the intellectual culture of socialist revolutionaries. While the discipline typically separates nineteenth and twentieth centuries into two distinct eras, Mayofis suggested that understanding the continuities in thought between the two periods can help historians better understand the philosophical underpinnings of socialist revolutionaries in Russia. Zenzinov and Fondaminskaya, for example, consistently referenced Friedrich Schiller’s works, especially “The Robbers” and “Sturm und Drang,” which both studied while at university in Heidelberg. Mayofis



suggested that Zenzinov and Fondaminskaya’s international experience, including their families’ involvement in international tea trade, education abroad, and time in exile, significantly influenced the revolutionary ideas that they had for their home country. Mayofis also made note of the cultural ephemera mentioned in their letters, such as perfumes and flowers, suggesting that these notes can give historians a better sense of the texture of life in St. Petersburg and in exile.

Mayofis’s research process also provides important insight on doing historical research about Russia today. Zenzinov’s papers, for example, are held in three different archives: documents relating to his political activity are primarily held at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, many of his personal

documents can be found in the archives of Amherst’s Center for Russian Culture, and the rest are held at Columbia University’s Bakhmeteff Archive. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has made many archives accessible to historians in the United States; by working with émigré collections in the United States, Mayofis has been able to uncover and introduce new archival material into her scholarship. Her work is one of the prominent examples of creative use of cultural history and the history of emotions methods to work with rare archival materials about Russia in the early 20th century.

Sonia Kelly is a student in the joint MA in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies and MS in Library and Information Sciences program. Her research focuses on cultural change in Soviet Central Asia.

Letter from the Director



John Randolph

Two hours south of Chicago if the traffic is forgiving, surrounded by corn and beans as far as the eye can see (and indeed much further),

the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign would not seem to be a crossroads of the world. We also live in a time when war, authoritarianism, and the aftershocks of “globalization” seem to be erecting new walls between people. Yet it’s interesting, as we report on a new year at REEEC, to note that our campus suddenly feels more deeply connected to the world than ever. Our ties with different countries in the REEEC region continue to diversify, in reaction to both the tragedies and the new possibilities of our time.

Units across campus are bringing new scholars to our campus, both to visit and to stay. In late May, Illinois

International’s Global Education and Training Program welcomed eighty-eight (that’s right, 88) new Bolashak Fellows to campus, in the fields of data science, law, environmental science, and education. Shortly thereafter, on June 6-8, the Slavic Reference Service hosted the 2024 Conference of the Association for Women in Slavic Studies. This precedes the 2024 Summer Research Laboratory program, which will bring another 50 scholars to campus, to work on research projects on almost every topic imaginable, all seen through the prism of our campus’s remarkable research collections.

Next fall, the Slavic Department is adding two new scholars, a new tenure stream faculty specialist in modern Ukrainian literature and a new full-time coordinator for language instruction. Both will help build our historic and growing program in Ukrainian studies, even as we also will be welcoming three new visiting scholars from Ukraine through the BridgeUSA scholarship program. And all of that activity—all

of those arrivals and departures by visiting scholars from all over the world—exists in addition to (and alongside) the basic research, teaching, and public service mission of our University and REEEC as a Center. In these pages you’ll find more about that programming, and what people in Urbana-Champaign have been doing.

But none of it would be possible, truly, without the network of support that Illinois has built up over decades, and the support of alumni and colleagues like you. It’s a pleasure to be able to provide, in these short pages, an accounting of a year in the life of a great public research university that truly has a global reach. Thank you for taking the time to read it, and for sending us any news you may have. We look forward to hearing from you.

John W Randolph, Director
Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center



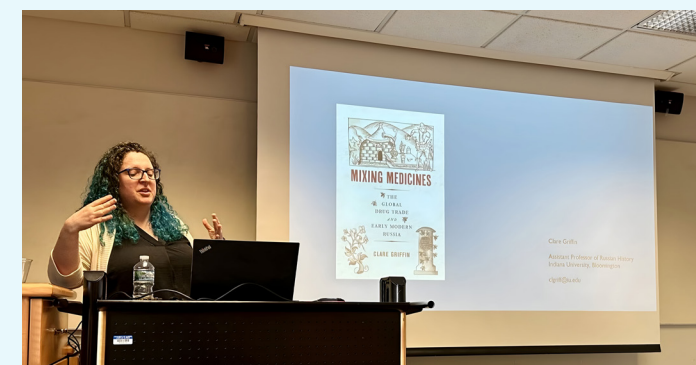
Coble Hall is the home of the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center.

Balkanalia at 25—Jilted Lovers and Runaway Brides: Dancing and Romancing on the Balkan Square

On Saturday, April 27, the University of Illinois Balkan music ensemble, Balkanalia, celebrated its 25th anniversary with the presentation of their annual spring concert, *Jilted Lovers and Runaway Brides: Dancing and Romancing on the Balkan Square*. Under the direction of Donna A. Buchanan (Professor, Musicology), Balkanalia performs traditional, village, urban, and popular music styles of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey on indigenous, orchestral, and electronic instruments.



Mixing Medicines: The Global Drug Trade and Early Modern Russia



By Mariana Kellis (PhD Student, History)

On March 7, as part of the REEEC 2023-2024 New Directions Lecture Series, Clare Griffin presented a lecture titled, “Mixing Medicines: The Global Drug Trade and Early Modern Russia.” Griffin is an Assistant Professor of Russian History at Indiana University Bloomington, and this presentation was based on her first book of the same name. Griffin began her presentation with the thought-provoking question: “What would you do to heal yourself?” Elites of Early Modern Russia faced decisions of whether to try new medicines from around the world or depend on local resources, all the while considering if these medicinal practices were consistent with their Russian Orthodox Christian beliefs.

In the late 16th century, the medical department of the Moscow Court was primarily tasked with making medicines for the tsar and his family and other elites. The possibilities for these medicines were based on what the Moscow Court was able to access. Due to diplomatic and trade relations, the Moscow Court’s connections across the world, and

by having the necessary funds, they were able to access medicinal materials from Western Europe, Central Asia and India, China, and even the Americas. These items included roots, herbs, flowers, and more; the Russians were most interested in herbal remedies, not those of chemicals or flesh. Griffin’s research interests are primarily the medicines and concoctions that were consumed or applied to the skin.

While the Russian monarchy had access to even the most luxurious medicinal products, there were restrictions on Muscovite groups that determined what could and could not be used as medicine. This was especially because spiritual and physical health were believed to be connected, and that sickness meant the individual should be brought back to God’s good graces. Many of these restrictions came through inspiration from Biblical teachings or icon images of Jesus, and times of the year, such as fast days. Russian doctors were influenced by religious doctrine in their ideas of how much medicinal substance was appropriate to treat people. Furthermore, doctors at apothecaries made pledges to not spoil the patient’s health through medicinal practices that contradicted religious beliefs.

Thus, Griffin’s presentation brought up important questions about individual choices in Early Modern Russia, and how individuals were subject to choices by other people. It also raised questions about medicinal accessibility and practices between social classes and regions.

Mariana Kellis is a History PhD student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on comparative unfree labor in the Russian and Spanish empires.

Revolution, New Life, Utopia: Vladimir Tatlin's Art

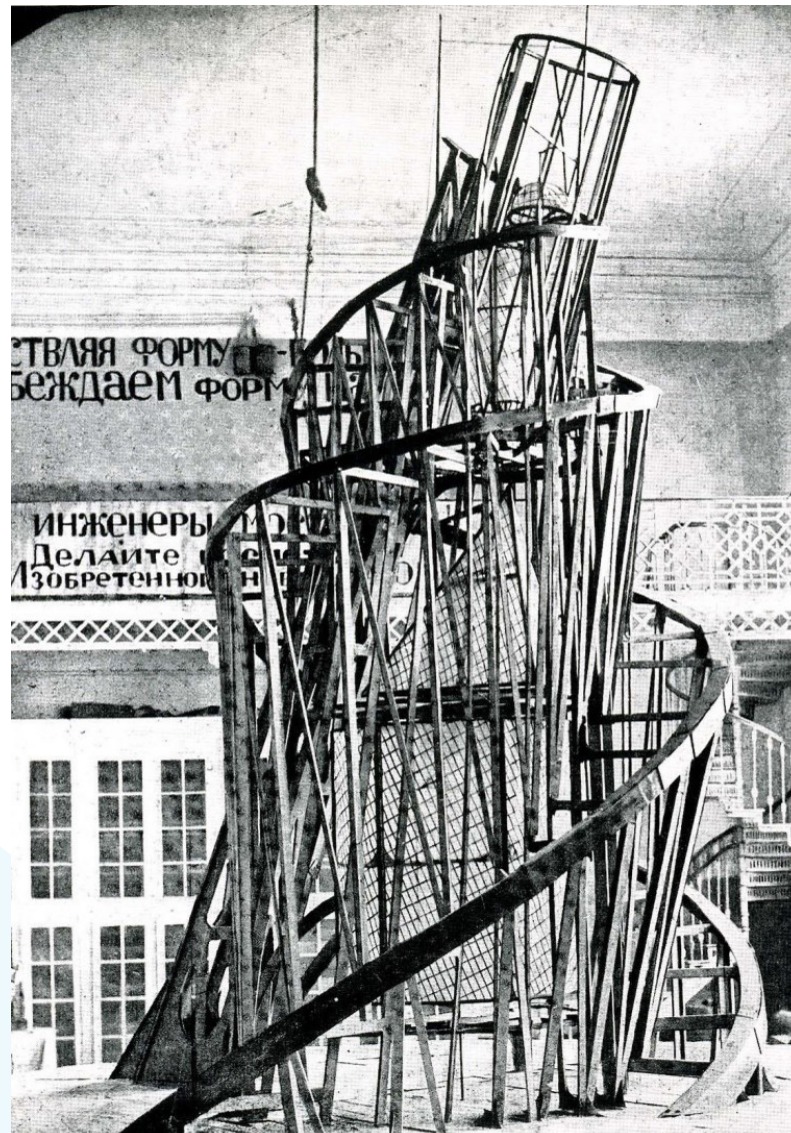
Noontime Scholars Lecture with Ksenia Golovko

By Ivan Cherniakov (PhD Student, Art History)

On March 1, Ksenia Golovko (PhD, University of St. Gallen), currently a Fulbright Visiting Researcher at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, presented a lecture on the work of Vladimir Tatlin as part of the REEC Noontime Scholars Lecture series. While Tatlin has been recognized as one of the founding figures of the Soviet avant-garde and Constructivism, Golovko explained that a significant part of his legacy remains in the shadows. The lack of substantial research on Tatlin's work exemplifies the aftermath of the avant-garde's suppression by the Soviet regime. One could argue that there is not much of Tatlin's work left to study today because of the intended ephemerality of his objects. The majority of his work—such as most of his counter-reliefs or the original model of his Monument to the Third International—exists today only as reconstructions or reproductions. Tatlin's objects—often made of everyday debris, such as iron sheets, pieces of wood, paper, and glass—resisted conventional museum preservation from the moment of their creation.

Nevertheless, as Golovko emphasized, the cultural politics of the Soviet state also made a significant contribution to the destruction and disappearance of the artist's legacy. For decades, Tatlin's work, as well as the avant-garde in general, remained banned in the Soviet Union and, consequently, impossible to study and preserve. To close the existing gap in research on Tatlin, Golovko has been working to assemble an anthology book on the artist and his legacy. Prior to her residency in Illinois, Golovko conducted extensive archival research in Russia and located writings of Tatlin's contemporaries that help contextualize his work and its impact. In addition, the anthology includes works by contemporary artists paying homage to Tatlin's work.

In a conversation after her lecture, Golovko said that studying Tatlin today brings the political aspect of the Soviet avant-garde to the forefront. The history of the avant-garde can still provide important examples of art's potential for the political transformation of society. Political approaches to the history of the avant-garde also reveal its darker side, which is not less worthy of attention. Gaps and omissions in that history often conceal the price many avant-garde artists paid—being silenced, incarcerated, or murdered—when their



Model of the Monument of the Third International (1920)

revolutionary ideas fell out of favor with the increasingly repressive Soviet regime.

Ivan Cherniakov is a PhD Student in Art History at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His research focuses on the role of photography in extractive practices related to the industrialization and collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union.

Prestige, Manipulation, and Coercion: Elite Power Struggles in the Soviet Union and China after Stalin and Mao

IGI Series on Global Responsibilities with Joseph Torigian

By Lea Karpov (BA Political Science, 2024)

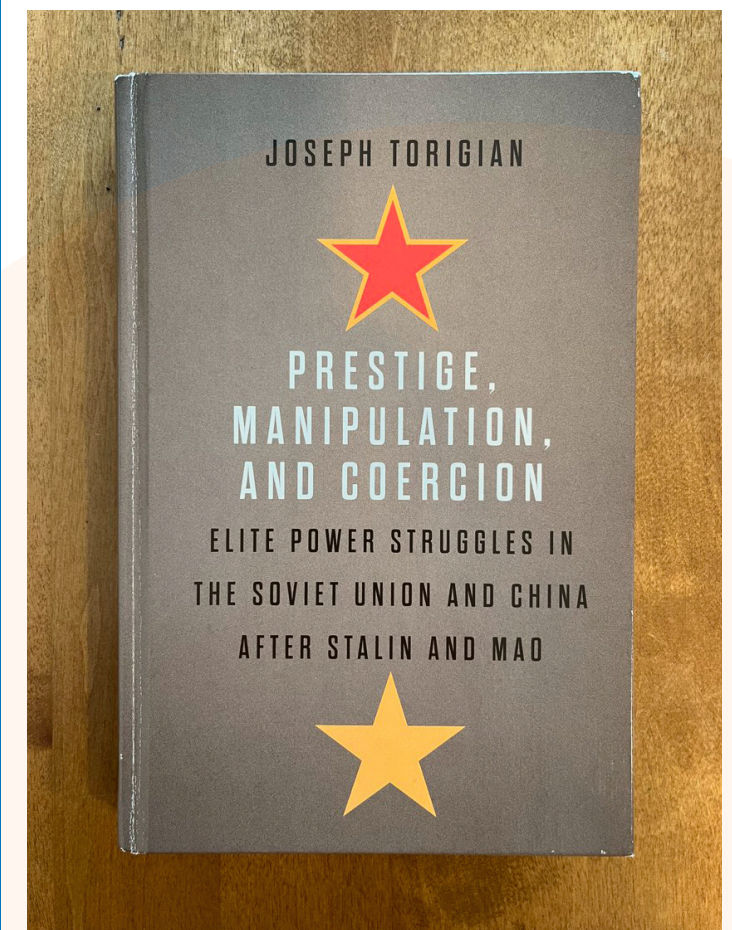
On March 26, REEC hosted Joseph Torigian (Assistant Professor, School of International Service, American University) to give a virtual talk on his recent book, *Prestige, Manipulation, and Coercion: Elite Power Struggles in the Soviet Union and China after Stalin and Mao*, as part of the IGI Series on Global Responsibilities: "China and the World." An accomplished scholar and expert in international relations, Torigian has made significant contributions to the field through his research on authoritarian regimes and qualitative methods with a concentrated focus on Chinese and Russian politics and history. By way of his diverse academic background, extensive research, and collaborative engagement, he has emerged as a strong voice in the study of international relations, particularly within the context of authoritarian politics and grand strategy in Russia and China. His book delves into the complex dynamics and power struggles in the aftermath of two pivotal revolutions and served as the topic of conversation during his lecture.

During his lecture, Torigian offered a compelling discussion of historical events that challenge conventional narratives. First, he offered an examination of the structural elements of Leninist regimes including their economic models and institutional frameworks. Torigian proposed that the key to political succession in these regimes hides itself in personal prestige and covert political maneuvering mechanisms deployed by the politicians in question. Furthermore, he highlighted the significance of popular policy platforms in determining the outcome of the power struggles within these authoritarian systems. He drew upon newly discovered archival material from Russia and China to further illustrate how historical antagonisms influenced these trajectories.

The lecture also included interesting discussions surrounding attempts at co-optation during transitional periods, particularly in the context of Mao's rule and the Cultural Revolution. Torigian referenced statements attributed to Tao Zhu, a former advisor to the Cultural Revolution, and how these statements collided with Deng Xiaoping's political ideologies. Torigian's lecture presented compelling research which stands to enrich our understanding of how strategic maneuvering shapes the

succession of power and the timeline of post-revolutionary Leninist regimes. The lecture exemplified a commitment to advancing nuanced scholarship and offering enlightened perspectives on the nature of power in authoritarian regimes. The examination of the dynamics that exist amongst the Russian, East European, and Eurasian regions alongside China offers important insights into global power structures, demonstrating how an interdisciplinary approach highlights the interconnected nature of how political maneuvering truly operates.

Lea Karpov ('24) is a recent graduate from the University of Illinois with a bachelor's degree in political science and a minor in legal studies. This fall, she will continue her studies at Illinois, pursuing a Master of Arts in European Union Studies.



REEEC K-12 Outreach: Building Connections and Community beyond the Classroom

By Dimitri Glaros
(BM Student, Music Composition)

One of my favorite parts of working for REEEC this year was presenting at several cultural events for elementary and middle school students in the Champaign-Urbana area, together with other members of our outreach team. In October, Danielle Sekel (REEEC Outreach and Programming Coordinator) and I went to Edison Middle School to showcase artifacts from different countries to nearly one thousand local students. These included instruments like the *balalaika* and *domra*, Albanian textiles, Bulgarian rose oil, Russian chocolates, and matryoshka dolls—which are always fun to take apart and are a favorite of both kids and adults! We gave a similar presentation at Bottenfield Elementary’s multicultural night in January, and I brought along my Turkish *saz* to give some musical demonstrations.

In late February, I presented with Eden Zorne (MA REEES Student) on Poland at Dr. Howard Elementary’s Hands Around the World event. We focused on the traditional paper cutting art called *wycinanki* and colorful hand-crafted eggs called *pysanky*. We provided a variety of paper shapes inspired by *wycinanki* for students to create their own designs. At our last elementary event at Southside Elementary in March, I presented with Caroline Kness (History and Economics BA, '24) on Bulgaria, focusing on springtime traditions. We talked about *martenitsa* bracelets given on March 1, as well as the masked dancers known as *Kukeri*, who announce the end of winter and the coming of spring. Attendees were able to make their own bracelets,



and we brought two Bulgarian instruments to demonstrate: the *kaval* (end-blown flute) and *tambura* (plucked string instrument). The event was full of sights and sounds, including performances by Jason Finkelman (Director, Global Arts Performance Initiatives; Coordinator, Robert E. Brown Center for World Music) on berimbau, and a floor-shaking Korean drumming ensemble.

One of the things I’ve most enjoyed has been sharing the musical traditions I practice through outreach events, especially when I can introduce others to musical traditions they are not familiar with. One such opportunity this year was getting to teach a Greek circle dance to elementary students at Orchard Downs Kids Club, an after-school enrichment program, in preparation for their talent show in April. In addition to our usual monthly cultural outreach visits, we had several dance practices with the kids, who caught on quickly to the steps. The dance is traditional among the Pontic people, a Greek ethnicity from the Black Sea region. The song I chose for them, “*Seranda mila*”

(“Forty Apples”), is one of the most famous Pontic songs. The kids did a fantastic job at their talent show; I was pleased to see the dance come together and to expose students to a new style of music.

I enjoyed being able to give both students and their parents a taste of the diverse cultures we interact with through REEEC. For many people, our presentations were their first introduction to these countries and their unique practices, so it was rewarding to be able to increase people’s knowledge of the world and open their perspective to different traditions. Programs like this are crucial for exposing kids to cultures beyond their own and helping them develop greater awareness that will help them in their future education and life outside of school.

Dimitri Glaros is an undergraduate student pursuing his BA in music composition. His interests include folk music traditions of Greece and Turkey, as well as intercultural exchange through music improvisation.

Talent in Translation: Artist-Scholar Angela Rodel brings Bulgarian music, literary translation, and Fulbright expertise to Illinois

By Dani Nutting
(DMA Candidate, Flute Performance & Literature)

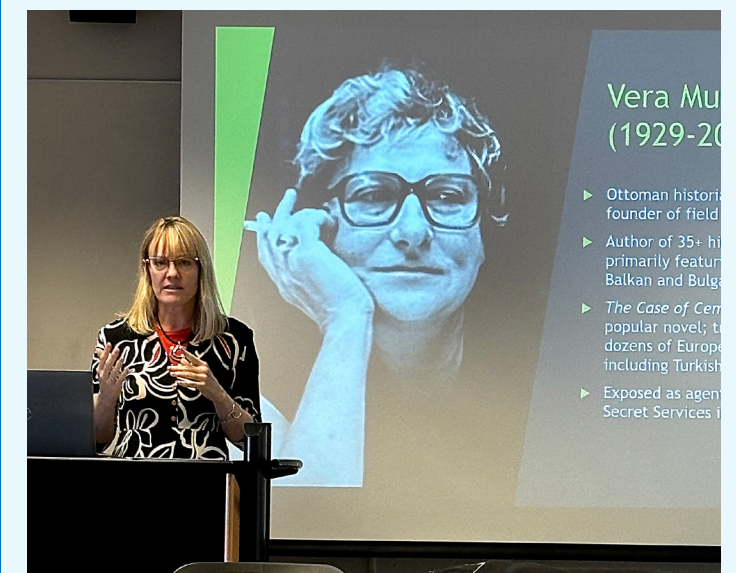
On February 6, REEEC welcomed to campus award-winning translator, ethnomusicologist, and Executive Director of the Bulgarian Fulbright commission Angela Rodel. The visit showcased Rodel’s multidimensional work through a triptych of events: a lunchtime workshop on Fulbright in central and Southeastern Europe; a REEEC Authors and Artists lecture on translating Bulgarian literature; and a masterclass with UIUC’s Balkan music ensemble, Balkanalia. Rodel’s time on campus was a vivifying celebration of Balkan culture and of the potential for impactful cross-disciplinary work in the region.

A two-time Fulbright recipient to Bulgaria for music and linguistics and director of Bulgaria’s Fulbright commission since 2015, Rodel co-facilitated the Fulbright workshop with David Schug, director of UIUC’s National and International Scholarships Program. Rodel highlighted perks of Fulbright in the region and zoomed in on Bulgaria’s unique offerings: special awards for archeology and history research, joint grants with Greece and Romania, collaborations with the American University (Blagoevgrad), country-wide English Teaching Assistant placements sponsored by the America for Bulgaria Foundation, and more. Coming on the heels of her 2023 International Booker Prize win for Georgi Gospodinov’s *Time Shelter*, Rodel’s visit centered on her afternoon lecture, “Cem Sultan and the Discreet Monsters of the Past: Strategies for Translating History in Georgi Gospodinov and Vera Mutafchieva.” Rodel demonstrated how authors’ use of the past as a narrative device to critique the present—from Mutafchieva’s “court of history” in *The Case of Cem* to Gospodinov’s “absurdist approach”—shapes the “linguistic atmosphere” she creates in translations of Bulgarian literature. Finally, Rodel spent the evening jamming with Balkanalia, housed in the School of Music and directed by REEEC-affiliated Donna Buchanan. Rodel’s skill on the tambura brought fresh verve to the group’s strummed strings, and her extensive experience in traditional Balkan singing styles provided valuable insights in vocal timbre and ornamentation.

Asked after her lecture if (ethno)musicological research informs her work as a translator, Rodel affirmed unhesitatingly that working with musicians prepared her to work with authors: both ethnography and translation

require careful handling of complex personal and cultural truths—and thoughtful, skillful representations of those truths across linguistic barriers. I’d argue, too, that this outlook shapes Rodel’s skill in facilitating meaningful cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary initiatives at Fulbright Bulgaria and, ultimately, her virtuosity in navigating such a holistic, multifaceted career. So, while Rodel was able to interact with an impressive diversity of UIUC students—aspire Fulbrighters came not only from REEES but from mathematics, engineering, linguistics, and more, and her lecture bridged REEE studies with music, translation, and literature—it’s about more than just bringing fresh faces to Coble Hall. Hosting artist-scholars like Rodel affords breadth and depth to the conversations that can be had at REEEC, reinforcing area studies centers as critical spaces for cultural discourse and interdisciplinary innovation.

Dani Nutting is a DMA candidate in Flute Performance & Literature with an ethnomusicology cognate at Illinois. Her research explores Bulgarian flute traditions and praxis, centering on the intersection between the classical flute and the kaval (Balkan wooden pastoral flute) and on the diverse artistic realities lived out by Bulgarian flutists as they navigate heritage, citizenship, and belonging in today’s world. As a former Fulbrighter to Bulgaria (2019–20) and avid reader of Angela Rodel’s translations of Bulgarian literature, Dani was thrilled to visit with Rodel on campus in February and to contribute this write-up for REEEC’s newsletter.



Victory of the Black Square

By Sam Veremchuk
(PhD Student, Art History)

The Lyric Theatre @ Illinois presented *Black Square* this past April 2-6. The project began as a commemoration of the October Revolution of 1917, and as a reimagining of the 1913 futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun*. The idea for *Black Square* came from Igor Konyukhov, who also wrote the libretto with Olga Maslova (Associate Professor, Costume Design); Ilya Demutsky composed the music. The production is not a re-staging or a remake, but a wholly new show which was inspired by *Victory Over the Sun*. Still, comparisons were unavoidable for me, as an art historian.

Victory Over the Sun was an irreverent futurist opera. The staggers sought to establish a clean break from art, language, and music of the past. Just about everything about the opera was difficult for the audience to comprehend, except the goal of overthrowing the Sun in favor of a new order. The libretto was written by Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov in a beyond-sense (*zaum*) language and plot, the music by Mikhail Matyushin was inharmonious, and the costumes by Kazimir Malevich were abstract and geometric—turning the human actors into something beyond human. The Futurists in the Russian Empire desired to throw everything from the past (politics, art, just about everything) “overboard from the Ship of Modernity.”¹

Black Square bore similarities to *Victory Over the Sun* in many areas. The language was largely nonsensical, though there were moments of understandable dialogue. The costumes were non-traditional—though not fully abstracted or geometric. And the music had

moments of dissonance. *Black Square* also mentioned taking a boat into the future. It was exciting for me to look for these references and inspirations. But this was not a futurist opera, it played like a postmodernist work—such as Bi Ba Bo’s glimmering Rocky Horroresque appearance, absurdist beach party, the selfie-stick weapons, the stacked TVs (referencing the art of Nam June Paik?).

The authors of the *Black Square* libretto have said that their production is open to different interpretations by its viewers.² *Victory Over the Sun* was an opera about the new doing away with the imperfect old, and this new becomes the old again at the end (the opera begins and ends with a war march). This narrative of a continuous struggle between the old and new motivates artists to create continuously, and for society to evolve and grow. My accepted interpretation of Malevich’s *Black Square* artwork is it is a symbol of all possibilities in all times. Black was

like a deity for Malevich, omnipresent omnipotence. He desired for the world to embrace this possibility for anything. To me, it seemed like *Black Square* was a cautionary tale of embracing the new, as it will lead to a society with no hope. The cyclical element of *Victory Over the Sun* and the power of Malevich’s *Black Square* did not seem present to me. I wonder if this is my personal projection, the authors’ intent, or is this a reflection of a contemporary hopelessness?

Sam Veremchuk (he/him), from Rivne, Ukraine, is a second year Art History PhD student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, studying Ukrainian art. Sam’s areas of interest pertain to late nineteenth and early twentieth century Avant-garde art, Soviet art, and contemporary Ukrainian art.

¹ Anna Lawton and Herbert J. Eagle, *Russian Futurism through Its Manifestoes, 1912-1928* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 51-52.

² <https://reeec.illinois.edu/news/2024-04-02t213157/unveiling-black-square-behind-scenes-creative-team>



Photo Courtesy of James Treichler

Graduating Student Profiles



Caroline Kness graduated this year with a BA in history and economics. Caroline joined REEEC as an undergraduate assistant in her junior year after taking a Russian history course with Dr. Randolph. During her time at REEEC, she worked on projects related to historical literature review, digital humanities development, and K-12 outreach. Her experiences at REEEC have furthered her passion for the humanities, education, and research. After graduation, Caroline plans to take a gap year to travel while applying to graduate programs. She is interested in pursuing either law school or further education in history. She also hopes to earn her TEFL certificate and spend a year teaching English abroad.



Richard Byington graduated with an MA in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES) and MS in Library and Information Science (LIS). He received an MA in Comparative History of the Circumpolar World from Northern Arctic Federal University (Arkhangelsk, Russia) and a BA in History from Ferris State University. Richard joined the REEES/LIS dual degree program to develop his understanding of Finno-Ugric Northern Russian Indigenous Peoples and Finnish language skills. During his time as a REEES MA student, Richard studied Russian and Finnish as a FLAS fellow. His research focuses on the Russian Imperial and Grand Duchy of Finland’s interpretations of Finno-Ugric alterity and the development of the Finnish nationalist movement. This summer, Richard will be studying Russian language in Daugavpils, Latvia as a FLAS fellow before beginning his PhD studies in history at Illinois.



Morgan Fox graduated with the dual MA REEES/MSLIS degree. In 2009, she received her BA in Theatre from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she also completed a Film Studies Certificate. She came to UIUC after receiving an MFA in Creative Writing with interdisciplinary specializations in Fine Arts and Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. At Illinois, she held a graduate assistantship at the Main Library in Acquisitions and Cataloging Services, where she cataloged books in Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Albanian, Romanian, Kazakh, and more. She has also received six FLAS fellowships in six different languages: Latvian, Russian, Kazakh, Turkish, Georgian, and, most recently, Hungarian. This past semester she even took her interest in Russian folklore outside academia, by performing as the Firebird (жарптица) in her first aerial rope solo in Aloft Circus Arts’ Student Cabaret in Chicago. Morgan’s research focuses on death history and culture in the Soviet Union, and she hopes to combine all she has learned in a career in cataloging.

Welcome New REEEC Colleagues!



Sarah Pierson joined REEEC in November 2023 as an Office Support Specialist, following an extensive career in food service and hospitality. We are pleased to welcome Sarah back to campus after it being nearly twenty years since she graduated from Illinois (FSHN/Dietetics.) She will assist with our many crucial administrative tasks, from arranging travel and assisting with event coordination to processing payments.



Mia Alibi has joined REEEC as our new Title VIII Visiting Project Coordinator. Mia holds degrees in Finance and Management from the University of South Florida. For the past two years, she served as a Project Manager at New Age Clinic, a medical firm in Astana, Kazakhstan, before moving to Champaign this past January. At REEEC, Mia will be providing budgetary, logistical, and organizational support for our Title VIII Research Laboratory programs. She also will help develop plans for advancement.

New Faculty Spotlight



Tetyana Dzyadevych joins the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures this fall as the new language program coordinator. Dr. Dzyadevych holds a PhD in Slavic Studies from the University of Illinois Chicago and joins us from Grinnell College, where she held an assistant professorship. She also held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University. Her research specializes in Russian and Ukrainian literature and 19th-21st c. visual and performing arts and pop culture. She is currently working on her monograph, *Voices of Political Revival: Post-Soviet Literature of Russia and Ukraine*.



Olha Khometa joins the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures this fall as a new tenure stream faculty specialist in modern Ukrainian literature. She holds a PhD in Slavic Literatures and Languages from the University of Toronto, where she taught literature and language courses. Dr. Khometa's research focuses on 20th c. Ukrainian and Russian poetry, modernism, late modernism, socialist realism, contemporary Ukrainian literature, theory of communicative act, ventriloquism, grotesque, and trauma theory. At Illinois, Dr. Khometa will teach courses on Ukrainian culture and war and resistance in contemporary Eastern Europe.



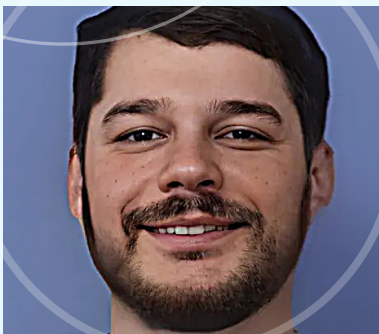
Anastasiia Strakhova joins the Program in Jewish Culture & Society as the new Associate Director. Dr. Strakhova received her PhD at Emory University specializing in Modern Jewish history, Eastern European history, and migration. In her dissertation, "Selective Emigration: Border Control and the Jewish Escape in Late Imperial Russia, 1881-1914," she examines how the racialization of Jews in late imperial Russia functioned through migration policies and everyday border-crossing practices. Before arriving at the University of Illinois, she held post-doctoral fellowships at the Duke Center for Jewish studies and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University. At Illinois, Dr. Strakhova will oversee the academic offerings of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society and will teach a course on Russian-Jewish culture.

2024 Yaro Skalnik Essay Prize Recipients

We extend our congratulations to the recipients of the 2024 Yaro Skalnik Prize. The recipients were presented with these awards at the REEEC Spring Reception on Wednesday, May 1, 2024.



Louise Shannon (BS Student, Mathematics) was the recipient of the Yaro Skalnik Prize for Best Undergraduate Essay in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Her paper, "Sleep, Self, and Society: Autobiography in Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*," was praised by the committee for its reworking of the sociological myths surrounding Goncharov's masterwork, noting her thesis—that Goncharov was building from autobiographical as much as social insights—was a compelling avenue for research with broad implications for our understanding of the novel and its reception.



Sergei Motov (PhD Student, Slavic Languages & Literatures) was the recipient of the Yaro Skalnik Prize for Best Graduate Essay in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. The committee remarks that his paper, "German Puppet Theater of Horror: Dostoevsky's Hidden Criticism of Russian Autocracy in *The Double*," offers a set of interpretations that both fascinate and inform. He thoughtfully summarizes, and helpfully synthesizes, several decades of criticism that illuminate the novella's recurring motif of the puppet theater—a venue that, despite its role in popular entertainment, is also a site of dehumanization, violence, and menace. To this set of interpretations Motov adds his own fascinating ethno-historico-political twist that substantially raises the stakes of Dostoevsky's pre-exile writing: he sees in the cruel (and parodically German) character of Dr. Rutenspitz (whose name can be read as "Beating-stick") an image of Emperor Nicholas I himself, depicting him as an oppressor of foreign origins.

2024 Yaro Skalnik Scholarship Grant Recipient



Sonia Kelly (MA REEES/MS LIS Student) was awarded the Yaro Skalnik Scholarship Grant, which helps support student research and conference travel. Sonia shares, "I traveled to Almaty, Kazakhstan this May, which was an incredibly gratifying experience after several years of studying and reading about Central Asia. I spent one month conducting research at the Presidential Archive for my master's thesis, and everyone I met there was welcoming, helpful, kind, and interested in sharing about Kazakhstani identity and culture. I cannot wait to return for further research and travel, and I am so grateful that the Skalnik Scholarship Grant helped make this trip possible for me."

2023-2024 FLAS Fellow Spotlight: Lea Karpov



Lea Karpov is a graduating senior in the Department of Political Science and held a 2023-2024 REEEC FLAS Fellowship, studying fourth-year Russian. Her interest in political science stems from her advanced placement high school studies in U.S. history and government. Along with her B.A. in political science, Lea is also completing a minor in legal studies, prompted by her interest in Middle East politics. As a FLAS fellow, Lea enjoyed the interdisciplinary experience of studying Russian in tandem with area studies courses, noting that this approach prompted her to consider how language study could aid in developing her research interests. She has found her Russian language training to be helpful in building a research specialization in human rights law, with a focus on European Union peripheries.

This fall, Lea will be continuing her education as a student in the Master of Arts in European Union Studies program at the University of Illinois. She is grateful to FLAS for providing a strong foundation in language and area studies as she begins this next chapter of her education.

Foreign Languages and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships

Academic Year 2024-2025

FLAS Fellowships are administered by the Illinois National Resource Centers and are awarded competitively through an annual competition to support graduate and undergraduate study in modern foreign languages in combination with area studies, international studies, or international or area aspects of professional studies.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Elinor Kness
Astrophysics/REEES – Russian

Lisette Tokarskiy
Integrative Biology – Russian

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Sonia Kelly
REEES/LIS – Kazakh

Asher Bryant
Mathematics – Russian

Rachel Schmalz
REEES/LIS – Russian

Alyssa Hirsch
History – Russian

Jared Meunier
REEES – Ukrainian

Maureen E. Marshall Named Deputy Director, Illinois Global Institute

By John Randolph (Director, REEEC)

We are excited to announce that in early April, our wonderful colleague Dr. Maureen Marshall became the new, inaugural Deputy Director of the Illinois Global Institute (IGI). A specialist in the archaeology of Armenia and past president of the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC), Maureen had served as Associate Director of REEEC since 2015. In her new role at IGI, Dr. Marshall will be leading efforts to build student programs and experiences at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. She will also support IGI operations, lead IGI programming, and represent IGI across campus.

Before coming to Illinois, Maureen received her PhD in Anthropology from the University of Chicago. While there, she was Outreach and Campus Programs Coordinator at CEERES. For REEEC, of course, Maureen's departure as Associate Director is in some sense bittersweet. It has been a great privilege to work with her these past eight years, and she has been a stalwart champion and insightful advocate for our Center nationally and internationally, as well as here at Illinois. She fulfilled the many roles of an Associate Director—undergraduate advisor, grants manager, fiscal officer, staff supervisor, and FLAS coordinator—with tremendous intelligence, grace, and goodwill. Several cohorts of students (and directors) owe her much gratitude.

We are very happy that Maureen Marshall will be staying at Illinois and look forward to the energy and ideas she will bring to this important new role at IGI. Maureen herself, in leaving REEEC, has noted that she enjoyed her time at the Center very much, and is grateful for working in such an engaged and supportive area studies community. Best of luck in your new role, Maureen!



Affiliated Faculty News

Donna A. Buchanan (Musicology)

Donna A. Buchanan was named one of fifteen scholars to participate in the 2024 Summer Institute for the Study of East Central and Southeastern Europe (SISECSE) in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, where she continued work on her book project, titled, *The Girl in the Bell: Cosmologies Ensounded in Bulgaria*.

David Cooper (Slavic Languages & Literatures)

David Cooper published a book, *The Czech Manuscripts: Forgery, Translation, and National Myth* (Cornell University Press, 2023).

David Cooper and Valeria Sobol (Slavic Languages & Literatures)

David Cooper and Valeria Sobol served as co-PIs on a collaborative project, **Rulyova** — Russophone Literary Diversity and Peripheries, which was selected for funding under the auspices of the Birmingham-Illinois Partnership for Discovery, Engagement, and Education (BRIDGE) strategic partnership initiative.

Harriet Murav (Slavic Languages & Literatures)

Harriet Murav published a book, *As the Dust of the Earth: The Literature of Abandonment in Revolutionary Russia and Ukraine* (Indiana University Press, 2024).

Alumni News

Rachel Brichta

(MA REES, 2004) has accepted a position as Chief Administrator at the University of Michigan International Institute, which houses 17 international and area studies programs, including six National Resource Centers as well as the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. In this role, Brichta is responsible for long-range planning, strategic operations, financial management, and human resources across the institute.

Kirk A. Foster

(BA REES, 1994) has been appointed Dean of the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Arlington, effective February 1, 2024. Foster currently leads funded research in community trust in law enforcement, with a specific emphasis on the voices of BIPOC communities. In 2016, he received the Society for Social Work and Research's award for Best Scholarly Book for *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes*.

Matt Schultz

(BA Political Science, French, Spanish, 2021; REEEC FLAS Alum) was selected as a recipient of the U.S. Department of State's 2024 Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund (CDAF) as an alum of an IFLE Title VI program. His project proposes an eight-day English immersion summer day camp for 10- to 14-year-olds in the town of Qusar in the Caucasus mountains of northern Azerbaijan. Alongside the language focus, the camp will build community through creative programming and offer a pedagogical workshop to 20 local English teachers.

Steve Schulwolf

(BA REES, 1991) is President of Schulwolf Mediation, PLLC in Austin, Texas. He is a Credentialed Advanced Mediator by the Texas Mediation Credentialing Association and a panel member for the American Arbitration Association, with over 25 years of experience in litigating high-dollar, complex commercial disputes throughout the United States. He is a frequent speaker for the American Bar Association, the Insurance Section of the Texas Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Association, the Construction Section of the Texas Bar Association, CLM, FETTI, the Austin Bar Association, the Central Texas Dispute Resolution Center, and the Austin Mediators Association.

Student News

Tabitha Cochran

(PhD Student, History; MA REEES, 2022) received the Robert McColley Graduate Student Research Fund Award through the Department of History.

Will Doty

(BA Student, History, REEEC FLAS Fellow) was awarded the C. Ernest Dawn Undergraduate Research Travel Award and the Thomas A. Manning Memorial Scholarship through the Department of History.

David Mock

(BS/BA Student, ACE/REEES) has been accepted into and will complete the Nancy Pelosi Foreign Affairs Internship Program this summer in Washington, D.C.

Lilly Tira

(BA Student, Cultural Studies/Dance) was named a recipient of the Vekich Scholarship through the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures to support her study of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian in the 2024-2025 academic year.

New Acquisitions in REEES at the University Library

By Kit Condill (REEES Library, University Library)

Over the past year, the Illinois Library has made a number of important additions to its world-class Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies collections. These include massive full-text-searchable digital archives of periodicals such as *Nowy Dziennik* (the leading Polish-language newspaper in the United States, 1971-2022), *Turkmenskaia Iskra* (one of Central Asia's major newspapers, 1943-1995), *Izvestiia RAN: Seriiia Literatury i lazyka* (one of the leading Russian journals on language and literature, 1940-2022), and a full 100 years' worth of *Cumhuriyet* (i.e., "The Republic," arguably the most important Turkish newspaper, 1924-2024).

Our print acquisitions program for REEES spans 29+ countries and over 40 languages, enabling in-depth research on almost any topic throughout the region. Examples of print reference works acquired during the past 12 months include an encyclopedia of the artistic, cultural, and social life of the Ukrainian diaspora in Czechoslovakia (1919-1939); catalogs of Ukrainian, Tatar, and other Soviet-era posters; a multivolume encyclopedia of Soviet authors who were victims of political repression; a bibliography of Jewish publications from Serbia between 1837 and 2017; and several indexes to significant Serbian periodicals published as part of the "*Istorija srpske književne periodike*" ("History of Serbian Literary Periodicals") series.

In addition, the Library continues to support and expand the Borderlands Web Archive, which includes archived

copies of hundreds of websites from Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia that are at risk of disappearing from the internet (or in some cases have already ceased to exist). In keeping with the "borderlands" theme, the Library is also building one of North America's strongest collections of materials by and about ethnic minorities (Armenians, Bosnians, Greeks, Circassians, Crimean Tatars, etc.) in Turkey, as well as an impressive collection of Turkish scholarship on the countries and peoples of Central Asia, Siberia, and the Caucasus, which provides an alternative perspective to materials in Russian, English, and other languages.

This year we were also fortunate to be able to acquire several unique items now housed in our Rare Book and Manuscript Library, including North America's only copy of *Bor'ba za voliu gor Kavkaza* ("The Struggle for the [Free] Will of the Mountains of the Caucasus") by the famous Ossetian activist Ahmed Tsalikkaty/Tsalikov (Prague, 1928); a 1903 history of Jerusalem written in Karamanlidika (i.e., Ottoman Turkish written in the Greek alphabet); several Islamic texts published using the Arabic script in early-20th-century Sarajevo; a 1730 map of the Adriatic Sea published by the Ottoman Empire's first Muslim printer, Ibrahim Müteferrika; and the Arabic-script text *Tevarih-i Tatar Han ve Dağistan ve Moskov ve Deşt-i Kıpçak ülkelerinindir* (i.e. "The History of the Tatar Khan, Daghestan, Muscovy and the Dasht-i Qipchaq"), which appears to have been published in Romania in 1922.



2023 Research Laboratory Alumni Publications

The Open Research Laboratory and Summer Research Laboratory alumni publish articles, book chapters, and monographs that help to shape the field of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Find below a selection of the 2023 publications that have resulted from research conducted at the Research Labs.

Barris, Roann. 2023. *Reclaiming and Redefining American Exhibitions of Russian Art*. New York: Routledge.

Blauvelt, Timothy, and Davit Jishkariani. 2023. "Deciphering the Stalinist Perpetrators: The Case of NKVD Investigators Khazan, Savitskii and Krimian." In *The Secret Police and the Soviet System: New Archival Investigations*, edited by Michael David-Fox, 152-185. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Brinegar, Sara J. 2023. *Power and the Politics of Oil in the Soviet South Caucasus: Periphery Unbound, 1920-29*. London: Bloomsbury.

Budryte, Dovile. 2023. "'A Decolonizing Moment of Sorts': The Baltic States' Vicarious Identification with Ukraine and Related Domestic and Foreign Policy Developments." *Central European Journal for International and Security Studies* 17 (4): 82-105.

de Oliveira, Cassio. 2023. "Mark Twain on the Soviet Silver Screen: Stalinist Laughter and Anti-Racism in 'Tom Soier' (1936)." *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 14 (2): 29-49.

Gorshkov, Boris. 2023. *The Dark Side of Early Soviet Childhood, 1917-1941: Children's Tragedy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Grusiecki, Tomasz. 2023. *Transcultural Things and the Spectre of Orientalism in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hristova, Maria. 2023. "Post-Soviet Filmic Depictions of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Tests" in *Energy/Waste: Approaches to the Environment in Contemporary Post-Soviet Cultures*, edited by Maria Hristova, Alyssa DeBlasio, and Irina Anisimova, 65-90. Bergen: Slavica Bergensia.

Kefeli, Agnès. 2023. "In the Land of Giants: Eco-Mythology and Islamic Authority in the Post-Soviet Tatar Imagination." *Slavic Review* 82 (1): 137-158. <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2023.97>.

Miller, Melissa L. 2023. "Learned Neighbors and Hypnotic Seances: On Chekhov's Darwinist Parodies." In *Reading Darwin in Imperial Russia: Literature and Ideas*, edited by Andrew M. Drozd, Brendan G. Mooney, and Stephen M. Woodburn, 257-278. Boston: Lexington Books.

Pollock, Sean. 2023. "'The Duty of Perfect Obedience': The Laws of Subjecthood in Tsarist Russia." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 24: 753-790. <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2023.a910976>.

Ramet, Sabrina P. 2023. *East Central Europe and Communism: Politics, Culture, and Society, 1943-1991*. Abingdon (UK): Routledge.

Svobodny, Nicole. 2023. *Nijinsky's Feeling Mind: The Dancer Writes, the Writer Dances*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.



For a full list of 2023 Research Laboratory Publications, please visit:

go.illinois.edu/2023RLAlumniPublications



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REEEC Hosts 2023 Ralph and Ruth Fisher Forum for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

On June 14 and 15, the 2023 Fisher Forum was convened on the topic of “Arts, Heritage, and Belonging: Armenian Transcultural Entanglements.” Organized by Donna A. Buchanan and Maureen E. Marshall, the forum brought together specialists from around the world for two days of engaging panels and keynote lectures surrounding ideas of diasporic entanglements, Armenian subjectivities, and transcultural heritages.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We would love to share any news, achievements, and announcements that you have with the REEEC community, including new positions, promotions, publications, or other professional development achievements. Any and all news and updates are welcome.

If you have any news to share, please write to us at reec@illinois.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!