

Screening and Discussion, Tuesday, 26 November 2019, 19:30, in English

This one-hour documentary released in 2017 engages with the life and work of Svetlana Boym (1959 – 2015), literary and cultural critic, media artist, novelist, playwright, and 2003 fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.

In 1980, at age 21, Svetlana left the USSR for the US, being barred from studying at Leningrad University because of anti-Jewish quotas. After her graduate studies at Boston and Harvard Universities, she became the Carl Hugo Reisinger Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at Harvard. A brilliant writer of ambitious scope and great imagination, combining personal memoir with philosophical essay and historical analysis, she explored motifs of exile, nostalgia, the diasporic imagination, and different forms of freedom in works by Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Mandelstam, Akhmatova, Brodsky, and many others, in altogether six books, with two more to appear. Through videos of her lectures and interviews, together with photographs taken since her childhood, as well as her own photographs and photomontages, this film conveys Svetlana Boym's remarkable person and her scholarly, critical, and artistic contributions. Interviews with family, teachers, colleagues, students, and friends – including writer Masha Gessen and artist Vitaly Komar – provide a variety of different perspectives. The text of the film is, for the most part, drawn from Boym's writings.

Judith Wechsler is an art historian and filmmaker who has written and directed 29 films, predominantly on art. Within the past decade, she has made five films on Jewish European historians of ideas, most of them working in exile. *Nahum Glatzer and the German-Jewish Tradition* (2011) was researched in part during her time as fellow at the American Academy in Berlin in 2010, and was followed by *The Passages of Walter Benjamin* (2014) and *Aby Warburg, Metamorphosis and Memory* (2016). Her most recent film explores the life of the Russian-born British historian of ideas, Sir Isaiah Berlin (2018).

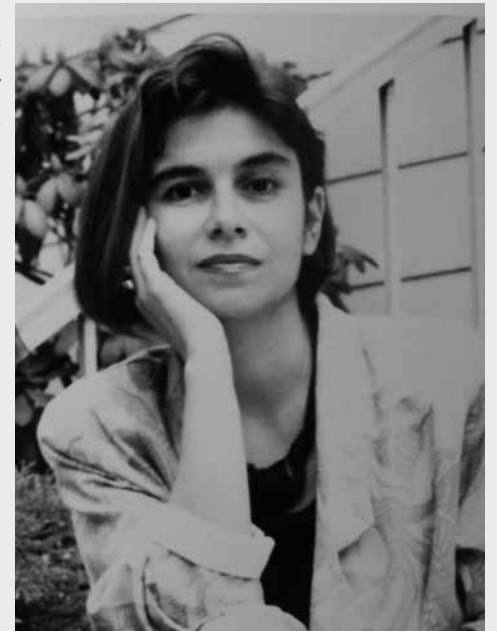
Wechsler is the current *Marcus Bierich Distinguished Visitor* at the American Academy in Berlin, was the National Endowment for the Humanities Professor in art history at Tufts University, taught for many years at MIT, and was a visiting professor at Harvard, *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, and The Hebrew University. Her books include *The Interpretation of Cézanne* (1981); *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th-Century Paris* (1982); *Cabinet des dessins, Honoré Daumier* (1999), and she is the editor of *On Aesthetics in Science*, among other volumes. She is a recipient of six grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and two from the National Endowment for the Arts and was decorated with the *Chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres* from the French government in 2007.

Svetlana Boym: *Exile and Imagination* is distributed by The Museum of Modern Art, NY, The Circulating Film Library.

An ICI Berlin event in cooperation with the American Academy in Berlin

Please note that a screening of Judith Wechsler's film *Isaiah Berlin: Philosopher of Freedom* will take place at the American Academy in Berlin (Am Sandwerder 17 – 19, 14109 Berlin) on Monday, 25 November 2019, at 19:30.

Svetlana Boym



with and by
Judith Wechsler

exile & imagination

Moderated by
Tatyana Gershkovich



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