Slavic Scene

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Letter from the Chair



Dear Friends:

I am happy to present you with another issue of The Slavic Scene, the newsletter of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures of the University of Michigan. At this point the winter term has just finished and we are looking back at a very busy academic year. Speaking in academic terms, the past year was very productive—two faculty members published monographs (see p. 8), and a number of graduate students have presented their research both departmentally and at major national conferences (see p. 9). The Department also organized two major events—in March 2005, the Ruins of Modernity conference (together with the German Department and the Institute for the Humanities) and in April 2005, the Sixth Workshop in Czech Cultural Studies. We also had distinguished speakers come to the Department, including renowned text-book author and pedagogue, Olga Kagan (UCLA). We also celebrated the eightieth birthdays of Professor Emerita Assya Humesky and Professor Emeritus John Mersereau (facing page).

As you may remember, the Department was preparing its Long-Range Plan a year ago when the previous issue of The Slavic Scene was mailed out. In the meantime, the College reviewed the plan and responded positively to our proposal to extend our range towards an interdisciplinary cultural-studies model. Here is a quote from the LSA Executive Committee response conveyed by the Associate Dean for the Humanities, Michael Schoenfeldt:

"The committee wants to congratulate you on presenting a forward-looking document that shows a department in the process of pulling together its resources and interests into a common mission. The committee is pleased to see that the department is ready to change in response to changes in and beyond the discipline, and is willing to reach out to other areas on campus in order to consolidate this effort."

The process of the change is, however, still far from being completed. The next major step will be an external review in October 2005. It has been overdue—the last one we had was in 1992. We are looking forward to preparing it and reporting on the results in the Winter 2006 Slavic Scene.

As is to be expected, the Department is not immune to changes. Our distinguished Czech language instructor of a good sixteen years, Dr. Zdenka Brodská, has retired (facing page); moreover, Professor Andreas Schönle, who has been with us since 1995, has accepted an offer from the University of London—we will miss him in our efforts to reposition the Department on the map of Slavic Studies and wish him a successful career in England. He will continue to be in touch with the Department, especially with the doctoral students who worked with him.

As always, we are happy to hear from our alumni and friends. The Slavic Scene intends to keep you in touch with the Department—and the Department with you. Let us know about your careers, accomplishments, and what you would like to see in future issues.

Jindrich Toman ptydepe@umich.edu

From the Assistant Editor

I hope that you will enjoy this better-late-than-never edition of The Slavic Scene. Of course, it is but a small representative of the Slavic whole; you'll see familiar faces, great accomplishments, and many new beginnings.

As you're perusing the following pages, you may recall an event or idea that would be worthwhile for our next issue—if you do, please email it to me. Thank you, Rachelle Grubb rcgrubb@umich.edu

Feature Slavic Scene

Bidding a Fond Farewell to Zdenka Brodská

A reception in Zdenka Brodská's honor was held April 7th, celebrating her 16 years of dedication to teaching Czech. Dr. Brodská was presented with a folder containing letters from her previous students—here are a few excerpts:

Dr. Brodská is a rare creature in academia—a gifted and hardworking teacher, endlessly giving mentor and advisor, who still manages to pursue a rich creative life of her own. For me—and, I believe, for many in our department—she embodies the essence of the scholarly life well lived. (Rachel Harrell)

Dr. Brodská is a model I attempt to emulate every day, as a teacher myself. If only I become one tenth as wonderful as a teacher as Dr. Brodská, I will consider myself worthy of praise. (Madelaine Hron)

Dr. Brodská will continue teaching part-time in the Fall. We thank her cordially and wish her great happiness with her new endeavors.



Zdenka Brodská and Bogdana Carpenter

Assya K. Humesky and John Mersereau — Birthday Celebration

Assya Humesky came to this country in 1947 and joined the Department in 1953. Her doctoral degree is from Harvard (1955), where she worked with Roman Jakobson, among others. She has been among the senior American scholars specializing in Russian and Ukrainian literatures; she has authored textbooks, including *Modern Ukrainian* (1980), that set the standard for college use even today (a fourth edition has just been published). She has also translated poetry and prose from Russian and Ukrainian. We understand she is now thinking about putting together her recollections of her family life in Ukraine and Russia, and the time of her captivity in Nazi labor camps.

John Mersereau received his doctoral degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1957, at which time he was already appointed as an instructor at Michigan. He was an active faculty member, among other things serving as Chair in the Department and in the Residential College, for many years until his retirement in 1990. His publications on Russian Romanticism are well known—less known is the witty saga of his culinary (ad)ventures in Ann Arbor—How to Grill a Gourmet: A comédie française in the Athens of the Midwest (2000).

We wish them many more years of good health.



Assya K. Humesky and John Mersereau at their 80th Birthday Celebration

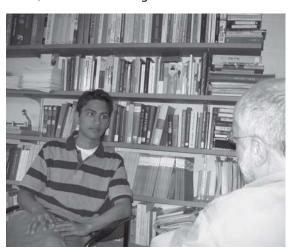
Classroom Spotlight Classroom Spotlight

An Interview with Ruchir Agarwal, Slavic 225 Student

Ruchir, you are a Junior here at Michigan—tell us how you came here.

I am an international student from Calcutta. Initially, I did not have good sources for information about American universities and consequently resorted to online references. After conferring with other students who were already studying in the United States, I short-listed Michigan.

Ruchir Agarwal, a junior studying Economics and Math, enjoys the balance between academics and aesthetics.



Last year, you took Slavic 225—Arts and Cultures of Central Europe. Had you had any exposure to Eastern Europe before?

I knew where these countries were, but otherwise had no exposure, having come from India. I was quite open to learning about East European culture. My motivation was entirely exploratory.

What did you like most in Slavic 225?

This being an ideas course, we spent a lot of time discussing and debating, and such an experience did allow me to construct better arguments.

Moreover, being exposed to the material via diverse channels—cinemas, art, plays, novels and poetry—allowed me to comprehend and appreciate the topic at hand more completely and with greater appreciation. Such an effect was augmented by having three instructors for the

course, each of whom provided me with varied perspectives via different lenses.

I particularly liked reading Kafka. To be unknowingly drawn into his endless world of bureaucracy was very remarkable.

So did it change your life, as they say?

I've gotten more involved academically. My interest in Central and Eastern European economies stemmed from my experience in the Slavic class and from conversations with the instructors. Having been exposed to the culture, history and literature, I could appreciate and understand the economic concerns of these countries, most of which have undergone an economic transition from a communist system to a free-market system in the past decade and half. One strand of my current research involves analyzing the growth and development of these countries.

I got involved with the European Students Association, and also helped organize the European Business Conference. A significant component of the conference involved discussion of the recent enlargement of the European Union by extending membership to 10 new countries, many of which are former communist countries.

In the process of such academic and research involvements I have met many luminaries and scholars from Slavic countries. Having had a good background in Slavic culture and history always made such interactions much more fruitful than they usually can be.

Language Coordination— Building a Bridge between Coursework and Experience

Understanding current education methods, gathering ideas and data, and assimilating them into a course is the basic approach that Svitlana Rogovyk takes as Interim Language Coordinator for the Slavic Department. She wishes to bridge pedagogical theory and practice to provide instructors with a principled basis for decision making about teaching Russian language as well as building a community learners' atmosphere.

Stepping up to the challenge last Fall, one of her first action items was to coordinate regular meetings with Graduate Student Instructors and Lecturers. These meetings allow a supportive environment to incorporate current education methodologies, personal approaches, and compliment students' interests. Several Pedagogy Workshops were set up to incorporate various styles: e.g., National Standards for Foreign Language Learning; Teaching with the Web; Planning Warm-up Activities—Interrogation or Conversation?; An Overview of ACTFL Proficiency Interviews; Foreign Language Students vs. Heritage Students of Russian: A Comparison (with UCLA Professor Olga Kagan as a guest speaker).

These workshops provide a kind of continuous education for Graduate Student Instructors and Lecturers with their own involvement as speakers and/or discussant.

In order to determine the needs and interests of the students, a survey

was distributed to undergraduate classes. The purpose of the survey was to gather information regarding where students' foreign language interests lay. It also identified an opportunity to share with students various Faculty research that was underway. Initiated by Svitlana, the Faculty visited Russian language classes and enthusiastically shared their interests, research, and passion for Russian literature, culture and language, effectively bridging undergraduate language courses with real benefits of studying the language. An experience that students undoubtedly find memorable and useful.



Svitlana Rogovyk

Undergraduate Book Awards

As Interim Language Coordinator, Svitlana Rogovyk inaugurated the Book Award for outstanding achievement in Russian language studies. This semester, five students in Russian 100- and 200-level language courses were nominated. They received either 501 Russian Verbs or Liubvi bezumnoe tomlen'e (Love's Burning Languor), unedited Russian stories of the nineteenth century.

This semester's Book Award recipients are (from upper left) Caitlin Bumford (Russian 202), Anthony Fader (Russian 102), Molly Saunders-Scott (Russian 102), Stephanie Ketchum (Russian 202), and Thomas Bandy (Russian 101). *Congratulations!*







Recognized for outstanding achievement in 100- and 200-level Russian courses, these students were recognized by their instructors and we applaud their motivation.

Highlights Javic Scene

Soviet Writers, American Images: Il'f and Petrov Tour the United States, 1935–1936



Aleksandra Il'f, Annie Fisher, and Elena Godina (graphic designer) Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, two popular Soviet writers were sent as correspondents for the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* to tour America and report to the Soviet public on their impressions. The year was 1935.

They obtained a guide, bought a Ford, and drove from New York to California and back, Il'f snapping

hundreds of photographs along the way. The result was *Amerikanskie fotografii* (American Photographs), an extended photo-essay published in 1936, which the co-authors reworked and expanded in 1937 into a book without photographs, *Odnoetazhnaia Amerika* (*One-Story America*).

The project "Soviet Writers, American Images: Il'f and Petrov Tour the United States, 1935-1936" brought together Slavic Department Ph.D. candidates Vadim Besprozvanny and Annie Fisher; Dr. Erika Wolf, Lecturer, University of Otago, New Zealand; and Il'ia Il'f's daughter, Aleksandra Il'f, to present their work on Il'f and Petrov's two American travelogues. The exhibit and lectures explore the interplay of the coauthors' verbal and visual images of America and invite audiences to reflect on the America of 2005 by presenting the America of 1935 as Il'f and Petrov saw it.

Support for this project has come from the Institute for the Humanities, the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the International Institute, and the Center for Russian and East European Studies (CREES).

Ruins of Modernity Conference, March 2005

Counterintuitive as it may seem, modernity has desired a particular aesthetic of the ruin. From the creation of artificial ruins in eighteenth-century gardens to the ruin fantasies of Albert Speer, from the Soviet practice of collapsing buildings to Andrei Tarkovsky's haunting ruin movies, the history of modernity is littered with aesthetic theories that glamorized the ruin. Ruins bespeak a loss of meaning, yet provoke the imagination with the suggestive spectacle of decay. They evoke an ambivalent break from, and nostalgia for, the past.

Organized by Professors Andreas Schönle (Slavic Department) and Julia Hell (Germanic Department), Ruins of Modernity brought together scholars from a variety of disciplines including architecture, cultural studies, film, history, history of art, literature, and music. They discussed the meaning and function of ruins in modern culture, from American post-fordism to Soviet architectural modernism, from urban design in India to the link between democracy and destruction in Iraq. An exhibit of photographs by major Ukrainian photographer Boris Mikhailov depicted the dehumanizing experience of urban decay in the former Soviet Union. And the public unveiling of a documentary film on Detroit by George Steinmetz and Michael Chanan generated much debate in the media and drew an unexpected large number of spectators.

See www.umich.edu/~iinet/ces/ruins for details.

6th Annual Czech Workshop, April 2005

The Czech Workshop has almost become a permanent feature of the Department's annual program. This year there were seventeen presenters in six panels, including Politics of Culture; Liberalism Nationalism, Patriotism; Modern Histories; Czech Modernism; and a panel on Czech/Jewish themes. The last was interestingly complemented by the

keynote address "Choosing to Bridge: Revisiting the Phenomenon of Jewish Cultural Mediation in the Bohemian Lands" by this year's guest speaker, Professor Hillel Kieval (Washington University, St. Louis), a renowned historian of Modern Czech Jews. See www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic for details.

The Annual Copernicus Lecture—featuring Adam Zagajewski—Winner of the 2004 Neustadt International Prize for Literature



Adam Zagajewski

Adam Zagajewski was born in Lwów, in what is now Ukraine. Considered to be the finest poet of his generation, he continues in the best traditions of Polish postwar poetry established by Czeslaw Milosz, Zbigniew Herbert, and Wislawa Szymborska, whose works are characterized by intellectuality, historical awareness, a strong ethical stance and formal sophistication. In his poetry, Zagajewski combines tradition with innovation, and participation in a poetic community with staunch individualism. Zagajewski's poetry is made of disparate elements: reality and dreams, keen observation and imagination, artistry and spirituality, erudition and spontaneity of emotions, and culture and nature.

Since 1980 the University of Michigan has hosted prominent political, cultural, and academic figures from Poland as part of the Annual Copernicus Lecture series. Prominent presenters in this series include Leszek Kolakowski, Czeslaw Milosz, Stanislaw Baranczak, Timothy Garton-Ash, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Górecki, Krzysztof Zanussi, Ryszard Kapuscinski, President Aleksander Kwasniewski, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Kora Jackowska, and many more.

Sponsored by the Copernicus Endowment at the Center for Russian and East European Studies, Institute for the Humanities, MFA Program in Creative Writing, and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

Slavic Studies Need Your Help!

We ask you to SUPPORT the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures gift funds. Your gifts will ensure:

- Continuation of exceptional programs such as the Ruins of Modernity Conference and the graduate student seminars.
- Increased support for the Department's research and fellowship programs, which support student and faculty projects.
- Enhancements to the teaching and learning of less commonly taught languages such as Czech, Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian, Polish or Ukranian.

Please consider giving generously to our effort to build the Department's future financial security. A gift of at least \$10,000 would create an endowment in your name for a purpose which will support the future of the Department and aligns with your interest in Slavic studies. In these tight budgetary times your support is all the more critical.

Please complete the envelope found in the center of this edition of *The Slavic Scene* and return it with your gift to the Department.



2005 Slavic Graduates and Faculty

Research Slavic Scene

POHEH POPOJA 3HH

Omry Ronen's new book, *Iz* goroda Enn [From the Town of Ann], St. Petersburg, 2005.

Omry Ronen is Professor of Russian Literature at the University of Michigan

Omry Ronen, Iz goroda Enn

Omry Ronen's newest book *Izgoroda Enn*, a collection of eighteen essays that appeared in the St. Petersburg literary journal *Zvezda* between March 2001 and January 2004, received enthusiastic marks from Russian critics. Here is a selection of reviewers' comments:

"Omry Ronen is not only an American professor, but also a former Soviet citizen, who lived in the Soviet Union for fifteen years, attended the Soviet school during the period of post-war fight against cosmopolitanism, reading *Twelve Chairs* and *Engineer Garin's Hyperboloid* in his childhood, and capable of analyzing texts from the contemporary point of view, not forgetting his childhood impressions. This is what makes the book unique. Some authors publish skillful philological studies, some write skillful reminiscences [...] but the capability of marrying philology with reminiscences within the boundaries of a single text—that is something rare and thus particularly valuable." (Marija Mureeva, *Knizhnoe obozrenie*)

"The fundamental characteristic of Ronen's essays is the indivisibility of thought and passion. His discourse on "words" is inseparable from the defense of dignity, culture, and nationality, while the history of one's own development is inseparable from the gratefulness to those persons and books—especially those encountered in the childhood—that exposed the future philologist to unshakable values. And reflections on affronts—it's not a coincidence that the hero of the book turns out to be Heine—are inseparable from the imperative of fairness, historical or aesthetic, which, alas, lead to new affronts. Ronen's daring and sharp prose would deserve a more detailed discussion, but even leaving a detailed analysis aside, I dare say that there are very few books today in which love for the word and life would be as strongly manifested as in the novel From the Town of Enn." (Andrej Nemzer, Vremja novostej)

"The originality of essays included in this book consists of intricate philological analysis closely intertwined with a vivid experience of a reader and human being—it turns out that these two points of view cannot be separated." (Konstantin Mil'chin in Innostrannaja literatura)

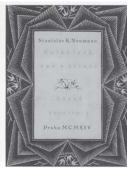
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Jindrich Toman, Czech Cubism and the Book—An Interview



Frontispiece and title page from Stanislav K. Neumann, Kniha lesu, vod a strani [The Book of Woods, Streams, and Meadows], Prague 1914.



Jindrich, you have recently published a monograph on the so-called Czech cubist books in Prague. Can you tell us something about it?

There is a phenomenon called Czech Cubism, basically situated in the early 1910s. It has been

studied extensively, especially in regards to architecture and applied design, such as furniture, and, of course, painting. I have, naturally, nothing to say about such things, but I have always liked to read about this period and it occurred to me that the role

of book design in this movement was largely ignored. There would be an article here and there, perhaps five examples or so, but in the end I succeeded in putting together a base of more than two hundred items, so that is a leap in quantity, if nothing else.

What is so interesting about this topic?

As scholars of literature, we are used to appreciating books for their textual qualities, or, occasionally, illustrations. But the book, especially in the late nineteenth century and then in the first decade of the past century, became an important cultural object in all of its aspects. The bookcase was an important element of the middle-class household. There is

continued on next page

much in this material that leads beyond the text and into the middle-class domesticity. And as you can imagine, the fine-book movement played also some role in Czech national emancipation right before 1914. Although much in my book is about design history, there are many other facets to complete a broader picture.

But this looks like a book that would not be typically written in a Slavic Department, would it?

Yes and no. For one, I would say that there is a lot of interest in the variety of contexts in which literature appears. Foci and methodologies may differ, as you would expect, but the change is perhaps not so big as it would appear—much in the semiotic revolution of the 1960s and before pointed in this direction. And as an author, I must simply say that I have always been interested in such topics—so now I only fit the paradigm and don't have to pretend that I make my living on my hobbies—although one usually does one's hobbies best.

Understood, but this book is nothing like what you've written before. Aren't there dangers and pitfalls in writing something so different?

Of course, quite a number of them. I completely underestimated the fact that I was working on an illustrated book. I thought that the illustrations would be a natural complement to the text, a kind of data base. But when the design started shaping up, I realized that everyone looked at the pictures first—and possibly at nothing more than the pictures, not reading at all. I tried to minimize this effect—and the designer helped a lot as well—but I already had one reaction saying that the main contribution of the book is the pictures! What can I say?

Who was the designer?

Robert Novák—he is one of the top Prague book designers. Working with him was really a great privilege. In the final stages, this was quite a futuristic enterprise. He would send me the entire design, section by section electronically, I would look at it overnight, and next day we would do the final touches on the phone, each looking at the same images, he on his monitor in Prague and I in Ann Arbor. The phone bill was stiff, but it was worth it.

Jindrich Toman is Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan

Graduate Students Present Their Research

Fostering graduate student research is an essential part of the Department's mission. A forum dedicated to this purpose is the Graduate Student Symposium where graduate students present their research, receive feedback, and demonstrate the level of research conducted in the department. Participating in the Winter 2005 Graduate Student Symposium were Victoria Dearman and Christopher Becker.

Victoria Dearman presented "Pelvin's Heterotopic Restroom: 'Vera Pavlovna's Ninth Dream' as a Ruin of Modern Soviet Space." The paper was also presented at the Graduate Student Workshop as part of the

Ruins of Modernity Conference at the University of Michigan.

Also presenting was Christopher Becker. His paper "The Syntax and Semantics of Russian Container Nouns" is an analysis of noun-noun constructions and the conditions under which certain cases are assigned. Christopher points out difficulties with past analyses that numerals behave syntactically as nouns, and offer an alternative hypothesis for similarities between these two categories. This research will form part of his dissertation on syntactic agreement in Russian.

Staying Connected School

Alumnus Gains NEH Fellowship

We are proud to hear that our distinguished alumnus, Gerald Janecek, was awarded a prestigious research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The following is reprinted with permission from the University of Kentucky.

Gerald J. Janecek, professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Kentucky, has received a one year National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship to complete a book on Moscow Conceptualism, an art and literature movement that occurred during the later years of the Soviet Union.

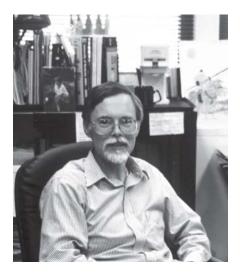
"I congratulate Dr. Janecek for receiving this highly competitive national award, further enhancing the academic reputation of our Department of Modern and Classical Languages," said Steven L. Hoch, dean of the UK College of Arts and Sciences. "The fellowship will enable Dr. Janecek to complete an important work of original research on a rich and culturally significant artistic movement of the former Soviet Union."

Janecek is the editor-in-chief of Slavic & East European Journal and is the author of The Look of Russian Literature: Avant-Garde Visual Experiments, 1900-1930 (1984), ZAUM: The Transrational Poetry of Russian Futurism (1996), and Sight & Sound Entwined: Studies of the New Russian Poetry (2000).

Janecek received his doctorate in Slavic languages and literatures from the University of Michigan in 1971 and joined the UK faculty as an instructor the same year. He was promoted to professor in 1984 and twice served as department chair. He teaches courses on 20th century Russian literature in translation, various Russian language courses, and Russian and Soviet Culture of the 20th century.

"Professor Janecek is in a unique position to give a comprehensive account of Moscow conceptualism, both to a Russian and a Western

audience," said Ted Fiedler, chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Cultures. "The NEH Fellowship was awarded in recognition of work already accomplished and the promise of a completed study that will be of interest to an educated general audience and to scholars in many disciplines."



Michigan alumnus Professor Gerald Janecek, recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship

Slavic Day 2005

Slavic Day 2005 was held Saturday, April 16th at the International Institute. Attending were Adam Mickiewicz Polish Language School (Sterling Heights), School of Ukrainian Language & Culture (Warren), and St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church (Dexter), and students from the Ann Arbor public schools reading Serbo-Croatian poetry.

Slavic Day celebrates those who learn and teach Slavic Languages in Michigan schools and community organizations. Together with CREES, we are proud to sponsor the opportunity for students of Slavic languages to read poetry, and present skits, songs, and other musical offerings.



Serbo-Croatian Students performing a dance medley



Children from St. Vladimir Church performing Tarakanische by K. Chukovsky

In Print www.lsa.umich.edu/slavic/msp

Michigan Slavic Publications Monumenta Series

The Monumenta Series is a series of older Slavic texts in bilingual format—the original text faces its English translation.

The volumes are intended for general use in courses on Bulgarian, Croatian, Serbian, and Polish literatures to acquaint students—and other novices—with the abundance and high quality of early Slavic literatures.

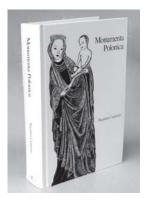
Monumenta Bulgarica, edited by Thomas Butler, has been awarded a special book prize by the Bulgarian Studies Association for Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Bulgarian Studies. The second printing, 2004, confirms its popularity and usefulness.

Monumenta Polonica, edited by Michigan faculty member, Bogdana Carpenter, focuses on the first four centuries of Polish poetry. The anthology is intended both for the general reader interested in poetry, and also for the student of Polish literature. It is divided into four sections: the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Enlightenment.

Monumenta Serbocroatia, edited by Thomas Butler, covers a broad range of South Slavic text from early Church Slavonic materials to the 19th century Croatian and Serbian writers. A section with folklore texts is also included.



Monumenta Bulgarica



Monumenta Polonica: The First Four Centuries of Polish Poetry



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New! From Michigan Slavic Publications

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The FASL conference series was conceived and initiated in 1992 at the University of Michigan. There are 13 volumes to date, the most recent being FASL 13: The South Carolina Meeting. Each volume consists of revised and edited versions of all of the papers presented at the annual meeting of Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics.

[Formal] Approaches to [Slavic] Linguistics

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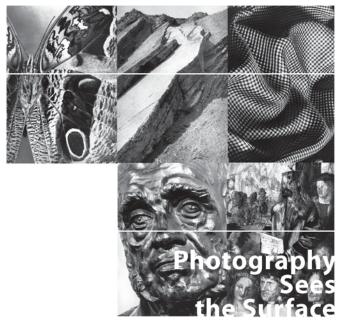
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invites you to swim in folds of cloth, to rub the bronze sculpture's nose and lips or lock eyes with the now unquiet characters in Dürer's much-restored painting. This book is first and foremost a collection of lovely surfaces, and the octavo format and bleeding of reproductions encourage the impression that the loveliest surface of all belongs to the book itself. Photographic reproduction is not secondary here, it is primary, and its own planar reality supplants the three-dimensional world from which it derives.

A complicated and in many ways paradoxical book, it appeared in May 1935 as a joint publication for the State Graphic School in Prague and Cooperative Venture. Now available in English from Michigan Slavic Publications.

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