

A Word from our Art Director

“Art history is my profession and passion. A native of St. Petersburg, I moved to the US in my mid-forties, leaving behind two decades of experience as a researcher and educator at the Hermitage Museum. Although I quickly became a lecturer at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), I felt a compelling aspiration to continue introducing St. Petersburg’s exceptional cultural treasures to wider audiences. It was at that junction in 2005 that I met Renee Stillings, the founder and director of SRAS. I couldn’t have dreamt of a better opportunity for realizing my vision than collaboration with SRAS. Ever since I’ve been thoroughly enjoying every moment of our partnership. I love teaching SRAS students, am happy to keep developing new programs in close consultation with SRAS leadership and my Russian colleagues, and I appreciate communication with other SRAS team members.

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“Our art and museum programs are hosted by the Youth Education Center of the Hermitage Museum. Support of such a prominent cultural institution augments our educational capabilities and ensures the highest professional level of instruction. At various times our programs focused on art history, studio art and on multiple aspects of museum studies. The student

population at SRAS is remarkably diverse, ranging from university students of undergraduate and graduate level to practicing professionals – artists, teaching faculty, museum administration, etc. It has been fascinating to fine-tune the course depending on its concentration. Our most memorable hands-on activities include direct copying of artwork in the halls of the closed Hermitage Museum, visiting studios of St. Petersburg sculptors, and participating in masterclasses at a print artist’s workshop. Alternatively, those interested in museum operations are given a chance to meet with educators, curators, restorers, visit museum press and marketing departments, etc. At all times the culmination of the program is its final event held by the hosts at the Hermitage. Whether the students’ presentation session or an exhibition of students’ artworks or the two combined, this is a glorious minute when we, the providers, can assess the intellectual

and artistic outcome of the course. I am profoundly grateful to SRAS for these fifteen plus delightful, fulfilling years of sharing what I love with the interested audiences.”

- Elena Varshavskaya

