This one hour documentary film is about the life and work of Svetlana Boym, literary and cultural critic, media artist, novelist and playwright. In 1980, age 21, Svetlana left the USSR for the US, unable to pursue studies at the Leningrad university because of the Jewish quota. After graduate studies at Boston University and Harvard, 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 Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Mandelstahm, Akhmatova, Brodsky, and many others, in a total of six books, with two more about to appear.

Through videos of her lectures and interviews, together with photographs since her childhood, and her own photographs, and photomontages, we convey this 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 different perspectives. The text of the film is, for the most part, drawn from her writings.

Exuberant, ironic and witty, Boym was a charismatic critic and teacher until her untimely death from cancer, summer of 2015, at age of 56, after nearly a year long struggle. She is buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Filmmaker Judith Wechsler will be in attendance to answer questions and discuss the making of the film.

Judith Wechsler is an art historian and filmmaker.

This event will be held at Story Chapel
Mount Auburn Cemetery
580 Mount Auburn Street / Cambridge, MA


The Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery is a nonprofit charitable trust promoting the appreciation and preservation of the cultural, historic and natural resources of America’s first garden cemetery, founded in 1831.