Freedom Fighter:

The State Department Tours of Martha Graham in Berlin and "Behind the Iron Curtain", 1957, 1962 and 1987

A lecture by Victoria Phillips

FRIDAY, MAY 20, 5:00 p.m. | BLINKEN OSA ARCHIVUM | Research Room

While modern dancer Martha Graham claimed throughout her career that she was not political, between 1955 and 1987 she performed under the ageis of the State Department for every seated president in over 25 nations. This presentation will explore her tours in West Berlin, 1957, Poland and Yugoslavia, 1962, and East Berlin in 1987 – side-by-side with President Ronald Reagan as he declaired that the Wall must be torn down. As pro-Western cold war propaganda her dance modernism was used used by the United States government to demonstrate the power of democratic solutions to international problems. Why did the State Department choose Martha Graham? As with other art forms such as music or avant-garde paintings, dance modernism for export demonstrated American values of individualism and freedom. Graham used the freed body to make a new dance technique that reshaped narratives. But Graham took the pro-America argument one step further. She targeted elites to propound the "universalism" of human rights that could only be achieved through democracy.

Dr. Victoria Phillips

Victoria Phillips received her Ph.D. at Columbia University in the Department of History where she studied United States cold war cultural diplomacy and foreign policy, and modern choreographer Martha Graham. At present, her book *The Dance of American Diplomacy: Martha Graham and the Cultural Cold War*, is under contract with Oxford University Press. At Columbia, she teaches in the Department of History and the European Institute. As a part of the European Institute's initiative on soft power and diplomacy, she is the director of the Radio Free Liberty/Radio Liberty project.

Her articles have appeared in numerous publications, and she serves on the editorial board of editor for *American Communist History*. She has curated exhibits for the Centre National de la Danse and the Library of Congress, and has lectured extensively at conferences, colleges, universities, and government agencies, both nationally and internationally.