

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Patricia Simons, Ph.D., professor of history of art and professor of women's studies in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on February 28, 2019.

Professor Simons received her B.A. (1974) and her Ph.D. (1985) degrees from the University of Melbourne. She served on the faculties of the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney. She joined the University of Michigan faculty as an associate professor in 1989, and was promoted to professor in 2011.

A specialist in art and visual culture of the Italian Renaissance, Professor Simons was best known for her field-defining scholarship on gender and sexuality. As an emergent scholar in Australia during a period of exceptional vitality in Italian Renaissance studies, she co-edited with historian F.W. Kent the volume *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy* (1987). Two subsequent publications in 1988 had a transformative impact on her field, establishing the foundation and framework for analyzing visual constructions of gender: "Women in Frames: the Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture" (anthologized in 1992 and still widely read) and *Gender and Sexuality in Renaissance and Baroque Italy: A Working Bibliography* (updated in 1990). In well over fifty articles, Professor Simons has maintained her place in the vanguard of a feminist art historical engagement. Interrogating masculinity, homosociality, and same-sex eroticism, always alert to humor and playful double-entendre, she has shown how visual genres and subjects like portraiture, chess playing, and bathing scenes operated as rich discursive spaces for articulating cultural views about eroticized bodies, sexual performance, and gendered power relations. Her acclaimed book *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (2011) challenged prevailing interpretations of male sexuality in the early modern period. A gifted and effective teacher and mentor, Professor Simons helped bring gender analysis into the mainstream in the many courses she developed and in exhibitions she created, including *Seeing is Healing? The Visual Arts of Medicine* (2002). In the department she led a major revision of the art history curriculum, encouraging cross-cultural and cross-period training, and in the university she played a key role in the formation of the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Program.

The Regents now salute this distinguished scholar and teacher by naming **Patricia Simons, professor emerita of history of art and professor emerita of women's studies.**

Requested by:



Sally J. Churchill, J.D.

Vice President and Secretary of the University

May 2019