

DUMBARTON OAKS
GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE STUDIES

PUBLIC LECTURE

Associate Professor Elizabeth Meyer, University of Virginia



Sustaining Beauty.

The Performance of Appearance

Thursday, December 4, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.
(Registration begins at 5:00 p.m.)

Sustainable landscape design is generally understood in relation to three principles—ecological health, social justice and economic prosperity. Rarely do aesthetics factor into sustainability discourse outside of negative asides conflating the visible with the aesthetic and rendering both superfluous.

This lecture examines the role of beauty and aesthetics in a sustainability agenda. It argues that for culture to be sustainable it will take more than ecologically regenerative designs. What is needed are designed landscapes that provoke those who experience them to become more aware of how their actions affect the environment, and to care enough to make changes. This requires considering the role of aesthetic environmental experiences, such as beauty, in re-centering human consciousness from an egocentric to a more bio-centric perspective. This argument takes the form of a manifesto inspired by American landscape architects whose work is not usually understood as contributing to sustainable design.

Elizabeth K. Meyer, FASLA, is an Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Virginia School of Architecture, where she has served as Department Chair and Graduate Program Director. She has published widely on landscape design theory, and in the past year has given several keynote lectures at international gatherings about sustainability and aesthetics: at the Royal Geographical Society in London; at Peking University, and at the European Landscape Biennial in Barcelona. These lectures contributed to her manifesto, “Sustaining Beauty,” published this year in the *Journal of Landscape Architecture (JoLA)* and in *Landscape Architecture* magazine. She is currently completing a book, *Groundwork. Practices of Modern Landscape Architecture*, with support from the Graham Foundation, the UVA School of Architecture, and a Dumbarton Oaks Fellowship. She has also taught at Harvard and Cornell and practiced with several design firms, including EDAW and Hanna/Olin.

Reservations are required. Please RSVP by December 2nd to: Landscape@doaks.org or 202-339-6460.

*The lecture will be held in the Music Room at Dumbarton Oaks's Main House located at
1703 32nd Street, NW, Washington DC.*

The lecture is open to the public without charge. A light reception to follow; Parking not provided.