

DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

THE ENCHANTMENT OF THE LIVING WORLD

Garden & Landscape Studies Colloquium

February 10, 2023

Oak Room | Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC

SPEAKERS

Georges Farhat

Professor, University of
Toronto

Revisiting the Culture-Nature Binary in Boyceau's 1638 *Traité*'

This paper revisits select aspects of the culture-nature binary in 16th-18th-century French garden design theory, i.e., the technical literature of 'gardening'. To this end, I will use Jacques Boyceau's *Traité du jardinage selon les raisons de la nature et de l'art* (1638) as a pivot. Pointing to ways nature was defined relative to "art" as artisanship-*techné* will allow us to step aside from an anachronistic stress on aesthetics-*mimesis* in the historiography. Instead, close reading indicates a more accurate approach to living materials and agencies of nonhumans in the period's practice of landscape design. This move implies that we understand and apply categories belonging to Boyceau's knowledge system and environmental framework. The shift suggests alternative paths for drawing the lines between biotic/abiotic (or animate/inanimate) components. It should help enrich historical views of landscape design beyond metaphor and "naturalism", the late modern belief in nature as a universal continuum that also colonizes the past.

Georges Farhat is professor of landscape history and theory at the University of Toronto. His research investigates the interrelationships of territorial economy, design techniques, and epistemologies of landscape, with a particular interest in perspective. Farhat recently edited the volume

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Landscapes of Preindustrial Urbanism (Harvard University Press, 2020) resulting from the 2017 GLS Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks. Other major works include co-curating the exhibition *André Le Nôtre in Perspective* at the Museum of the chateau of Versailles (2013-14) and co-editing the eponymous companion book (Hazan/Yale University Press, 2013). Farhat was a Senior Fellow in GLS at Dumbarton Oaks from 2014-2020.

Rosalyn LaPier

Professor, History,
University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign

Ancient Plants of the Prairies: Kipitáakii's 'Lost Crops'

Ancient Plants of the Prairies: Kipitáakii's 'Lost Crops' will explore ancient plants utilized by the Amskapi Piikani or Blackfeet that are no longer cultivated and how the Blackfeet found meaning in these plants and the natural world. The paper will center on the historic land management practices of Blackfeet and other Indigenous women of the northern Great Plains, who after centuries of cultivating, gardening, tending, and harvesting created sustainable landscapes of abundance.

The Blackfeet had a distinctive world view that grew out of their thousands-year-old relationship with the environment of the northern Great Plains (what is now most of Montana, Alberta and Saskatchewan). The Blackfeet believed that there existed three parallel interconnected supernatural realms found within - the earth, the water and the sky. Náápi was the trickster-creator who once, together with their wife Kipitáakii, taught the Blackfeet about plants and their uses. They taught the Blackfeet how to communicate with these other realms and traverse these worlds. The Blackfeet believed that specific plants were itapissko or "inhabited with supernatural power" because they came from one of these three realms. Two cultivated Blackfeet plants are well-known for their long complex mythological

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stories and rituals. Tobacco came from the underwater world, a gift from the divine Beavers. Prairie turnips came from the sky world, a gift from the Moon, a major Blackfeet deity. But other plants were 'lost.' Kipitáakii's 'Lost Crops' will explore a variety of ancient plants of the prairies, and their connection to the supernatural realm.

Rosalyn LaPier returned to school to get a Ph.D. studying the environment after a career working for a tribal college and a non-profit that revitalized Indigenous languages. She is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana and Métis. In her research and writing, she blends the Indigenous knowledge she learned from elders with academic knowledge. She has written two books, two lexicons and dozens of publicly engaged articles. She is now working on a book of essays. As an environmental historian, she is fascinated with the past and the relationships that people develop with their natural landscapes.

Mihnea Mircan

Freelance contemporary
art curator

Landscapes of Transformation

The talk telescopes between two landscapes: the rocky outcrops of the Kimberleys in the Australian North-West that have been a millennial home for the gwion gwion paintings and the forest where the nymph Daphne's metamorphosis into a laurel tree takes place. Taking cues from texts by Barbara Johnson, Timothy Morton and Kathryn Yusoff, I will address the cycles of reanimation that sustain these images and the figure-ground relations they make imaginable. Generally preoccupied with the parlay between elegy and ecology as genres, in the sense proposed by Lauren Berlant, for the crises of the Anthropocene, I discuss the economy of signification by which the ancestral gwion gwion are fully integrated in a landscape that

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functions as a plein-air museum for their remarkable endurance. I will contrast their longevity with Daphne's illustrious iconography, extending from Medieval illumination to Surrealist re-stagings of her trauma: a body ceaselessly recomposed around a central, constitutive wound, precisely the conduit by which it communicates with, and is permeated by, its place. Daphne's paradox, an identity split open to become an environment that in turn ensures its safety, a self engulfed by a landscape and swaddled by the rhetoric of reconciliation in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and in many of his illustrators, is compared with the rhythms of bacterial reanimation that sustain the gwion gwion as a becoming-image of another landscape. Such images negotiate their metamorphic existence with different suns: the aridity of the Australian Kimberleys, the glare of Apollo's unconstrained might and the coming incandescence of the Anthropocene. With distinct means, they figure the metaphors of a photosynthetic humanism, or humanity.

Mihnea Mircan is a curator based in Bucharest, Romania. His recent projects include the exhibitions 'A Biography of Daphne' at ACCA Melbourne and 'Landscape in a Convex Mirror', an exhibition for the 2021 edition of the Art Encounters Biennial in Timisoara, Romania. Mircan has also curated exhibitions at institutions including Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp, where he served as artistic director between 2011-15; Museion, Bolzano; Stroom, Den Haag; Spinnerei, Leipzig; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Fondation Pernod Ricard, Paris; Project Art Center, Dublin; and the Venice Biennial, as curator of the Romanian Pavilion in 2007. Books he has (co-)edited include 'Allegory of the Cave Painting' (Mousse, Milan), 'Miklos Onucsan' (Kerber, Berlin), and 'Cross-examinations' (MER, Ghent).

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James T. Roane

Assistant Professor of Africana Studies and Geography and Andrew W. Mellon chair in the Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice, Rutgers University

Plot

This paper will explore the possibilities for the re-enchantment of Virginia's Tidewater landscape, centering research in Black cultivated landscapes alongside an ongoing experimental film project "Plot" that seeks to activate Black ancestral and spiritual practice and cultivation, through visual and sonic palimpsest to draw out the myriad meanings and uses of historic rural Black rural landscapes in the expression of intra and interregional familial and collective formations of place. This work sets the powerful possibilities of recovering alternative landscape cultivation through spiritual encounter, ancestral haunting, memory, and nostalgia—discredited epistemic entry points demoted through derisive association with femininity Blackness. This work sets these modes against the deadening disenchantment and resulting vulnerability of all life associated with the successive cataclysmic transformations in the regional ecological arrangement inaugurated during the enclosures of the historical plantation, genocide, and slavery, the recalibration of these relations in the early twentieth century through Jim Crow reterritorialization, and in the more recent early twenty-first century enclosure and corporatization associated with industrial agriculture and the purchase of rural land as part of transnational land portfolios responding to "green futures" that cast the rural Tidewater in an unceasing horizon of extraction and disposability.

J. T. Roane, author of *Dark Agoras: Insurgent Black Social Life and the Politics of Place* (NYU 2023), is Assistant Professor of Africana Studies and Geography and Andrew W. Mellon chair in the Institute for the Study of Global

Racial Justice at Rutgers University. He is also 2022-2023 Social Science Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study. Roane is also at work on an experimental short film titled Plot with support from the Crossroads Project at Princeton University.

Vanessa Watts

Assistant Professor,
Indigenous Studies &
Sociology, McMaster
University

Indigenous Places: Scapes of Understanding

Place for many Indigenous societies is more than a scape, but productive of intricate agreements and histories of human and other-than-human relations. When considering so-called “contemporary” landscapes and their histories (or what “used to be” versus what “is”), it is crucial to be cautious about indulging a binary which entrenches vanishing versus modern frames. Settler colonial analyses often centre whiteness as an orienting frame, and similarly when it comes to Indigenous lands, colonial impacts on landscapes are at the fore. As such, Indigenous peoples are often regarded in a reactionary capacity (i.e. how can Indigenous peoples help solve the climate crisis? How can Indigenous peoples fight against corporate interests?). But what of Indigenous understandings of lifeworlds that precede these orientations and proceed despite them? This paper examines Indigenous onto-epistemologies of what place might mean, both with and without so-called contemporary understandings of landscapes.

Vanessa Watts is Mohawk and Anishinaabe Bear Clan, Six Nations of the Grand River. She is an assistant professor of Indigenous Studies and Sociology at McMaster University, and holds the Paul R. MacPherson Chair in Indigenous Studies. Her research examines Indigenist epistemological and ontological interventions on place-based, material knowledge production. Vanessa is particularly interested in

Indigenous feminisms, sociology of knowledge, Indigenous governance, and other-than-human relations as forms of Indigenous ways of knowing.

Rebecca Zorach

Mary Jane Crowe

Professor of Art and Art History, Northwestern University

Totally Insensible to its Beauties: On Kant, Garden Aesthetics, and the Music of Birds

This talk begins by exploring the unexpectedly prominent place garden design (Gartenkunst) occupies in Immanuel Kant's understanding of the fine arts in his writings on aesthetics, particularly the Critique of Judgment, which has shaped ideas about aesthetics ever since it was first published in 1790. The talk addresses in particular Kant's discussion of the pepper "gardens" of Sumatra—actually plantings imposed with violence by colonial authorities—in which he draws upon an extended account in William Marsden's History of Sumatra. It opens up to a discussion of the many passing references and footnotes that relate to European colonialism in the text, and how we might consider this in relation to the ways in which the beauty of nature has been undervalued in the reception (especially the art historical reception) of Kant's text. Finally, it considers how non-human beings mediate the divides drawn between humans who accede to the powers of universal judgment and those who do not.

Rebecca Zorach writes on European and North American art, visual culture, and politics and teaches in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University, with affiliations in American Studies and Environmental Policy and Culture. Her books include *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago, 2005), *The Passionate Triangle* (Chicago, 2011), and *Art for People's Sake: Artists and Community in Black Chicago*

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1965–1975 (Duke, 2019). With Christopher Heuer, she co-edited *Ecologies, Agents, Terrains* (Clark Art Institute, Yale, 2018), and is working on two books relating to early modern and modern constructions of nature and land.

COLLOQUIARCS

Luke Morgan

Professor of Art History & Theory, Monash University

Luke Morgan is Professor of Art History & Theory at Monash University and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow. He is also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His books include *Nature as Model: Salomon de Caus and Early Seventeenth-Century Landscape Design* (2006) and *The Monster in the Garden: The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design* (2016), both published by The University of Pennsylvania Press.

D. Fairchild Ruggles

Professor/Debra L. Mitchell Chair in Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois Champagne-Urbana

An historian of Islamic art and architecture, Dr. Ruggles' research examines the medieval landscape of Islamic Spain and South Asia and the complex interrelationship of Islamic culture with Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism and the precise ways that religion and culture are often conflated in the study of these. She is the author of two award-winning books on gardens: *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (2000), and *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (2008). Additionally, she has edited or co-edited numerous works, including *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (2000), the award-winning *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision* (2007), *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights* (2007), *Intangible Heritage Embodied* (2009), *On Location* (2012), and *Islamic Art and Visual Culture: An Anthology of Sources* (2011).

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DISCUSSANT

Elizabeth Hyde

Professor of History;
Associate Dean, Kean
University

Elizabeth Hyde is Acting Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Professor of History at Kean University. Her first book, *Cultivated Power: Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis XIV* explores the collection, cultivation, and political importance of flowers in early modern France. She edited and contributed to *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Renaissance, 1400-1650*. Hyde is currently writing *Of Monarchical Climates and Republican Soil: Nature, Nation, and Botanical Diplomacy in the Franco-American Atlantic World*, an analysis of the North American mission of French botanist André Michaux. She has received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities; is a past Mellon Visiting Scholar at the New York Botanical Garden; a Senior Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks of Harvard University; and the Editor of *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*.