Important Message

Spring events at Dumbarton Oaks cancelled, museum and garden closed temporarily

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are canceling all events through the end of May. The museum and garden are closed until further notice. The most up-to-date information about our operating status can be found on our website.

As “home of the Humanities” we are dedicated to sharing our collection with scholars and visitors from around the world. We are saddened by this temporary interruption; until we are able to reopen the physical doors to the garden and museum, and welcome back scholars to our library, we invite you to explore the wealth of digital resources listed in this newsletter.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these extraordinary circumstances.

In Memoriam Colin McEwan

1951-2020
On the morning of Saturday, March 28, former Director of Pre-Columbian Studies Colin McEwan died after a yearlong battle with leukemia.

Colin served as director of Pre-Columbian Studies from 2012 to 2019, supporting and mentoring a vibrant community of resident fellows, shepherding a succession of ambitious symposia and resultant volumes, and organizing discussions of future directions in scholarship at venues in Central and South America as well as in Washington, DC. He also took on a particularly complicated installment in the catalogues of the Bliss Collection of Pre-Columbian Art, focused on the objects from Central America and Colombia. In addition to the catalogue, Colin instigated a wide-ranging, innovative consideration of these objects that spawned an additional collection of essays to appear as a companion volume to the catalogue.

Colin was a passionate, devoted, and principled colleague.

For the full text of "In Memoriam Colin McEwan", read here.

Explore Margaret Mee: Portraits of Plants Online

Art, science, and women botanical artists and illustrators in the Rare Book Collection
The exhibition is postponed: new exhibition dates, as well as information about related public and educational programming, will be shared on our website. In the meantime, discover stunning paintings of Amazonian flora by the artist, explorer, and environmentalist Margaret Mee (1909–1988) and the longstanding tradition of women botanical artists and illustrators from your device.
The online exhibit examines the enduring interplay between art and science through a variety of media, such as botanical illustration, watercolor, and photography. Browse zoomable images and descriptions of stunning Mee plant portraits, highlights from the Rare Book Collection, loaned works, and more.

New digital tools build connections between the geographies and histories of featured artists and illustrators, such as Mee, contemporary photographer Amy Lamb, scientific illustrator Alice Tangerini, botanical artist Nirupa Rao, and close to a dozen other women from the seventeenth century onward. Explore how women artists were visualizing knowledge for several centuries with an interactive timeline, and discover mixed media that challenge the boundaries between art and illustration into the present day. Finally, consider Amazonian entanglements linking conservation and art via an interactive map of Mee’s expeditions in the Amazon. Learn more from additional resources such as a series of essays, interviews, a glossary, a timeline of Mee’s life, and further reading.

Educational Materials for Families, Teachers, and Students at Home

K–12 lesson plan, coloring pages, Zoom backgrounds, and more
Families, teachers, and students can find resources on our website to supplement distance learning. Choose from a growing selection of K–12 materials (under “Tours and Resources”) related to the exhibition Margaret Mee: Portraits of Plants. Bring nature into the home with coloring sheets of plants, taken from works by botanical artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An ecosystem classroom lesson plan for sixth- to twelfth-grade students explores an Amazon ecosystem, the impact of deforestation, and how to help protect the rainforest as youth activists. Look for more resources to be added soon.
Make our museum or garden your classroom with virtual backgrounds for Zoom and Webex. Curious about the medieval world? Your little ones can follow Barnaby the juggler back in time to the Middle Ages with our children's guide, exploring the recent Juggling the Middle Ages exhibition (accessible via virtual tour). For long-term fun, order from a selection of picture and coloring books that tell a medieval miracle tale. Check our website for future additions to educational materials.

Digging Into DOML

Discover hidden wisdom in Homer with the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library

Read Homer along with one of the poet's greatest interpreters in the first published translation from Byzantine Greek of Allegories of the Odyssey. Homer's stories of battles, sea voyages, strange monsters, heroic adventures, and the dramatic rivalries between pagan gods and goddesses, though widely read, would have been a challenge to readers firmly ensconced in the Christian worldview of the Byzantine empire. Twelfth-century author and grammarian John Tzetzes, a fixture in the scholarly circles, offered a poem of his own revealing how to appreciate the hidden wisdom that Homer had cleverly packaged inside a broadly appealing tale of
adventure. Learn how Zeus represents destiny, or how Athena personifies the natural properties of olive oil, a plumping and moisturizing ointment that augments the body and turns hair lustrous, in this preview by Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library Managing Editor Nicole Eddy. Allegories of the Odyssey is available now and was translated by Adam J. Goldwyn of North Dakota State University and Dimitra Kokkini of Birkbeck, University of London.

Dumbarton Oaks by the Numbers

1,200 gallons of microbes applied toward a sustainable garden

Gardeners applied 1,200 gallons of compost tea, a liquid superconcentrated in microorganisms that encourages healthy soil, in 2019.

Wander in a Virtual Cloud of Cherry Blossoms

Explore the garden online
Experience the iconic cherry blossoms of Washington, DC, at a safe distance from crowds. While our garden is closed temporarily, discover the history of Cherry Hill, designed by landscape architect Beatrix Farrand to bloom into one of the most magical places in the garden each spring. Farrand filled the peaceful sloping hillside with several cherry species, such as Prunus sargentii, Prunus subhirtella, and Prunus × yedoensis, to stagger blooms and extend the viewing period. Enjoy historical and recent photographs, a video with English/Spanish subtitles, and more information about the design of this landscape. Explore the entire garden with our interactive map and video virtual tour.

Fellows in the Spotlight

Catch up with our fellows and their research
Gina Buckley tracks ancient immigration through teeth, looking for skeletal traces of elite and working-class immigration at Teotihuacan, one of the largest ancient cities in Mesoamerica. Buckley is a dual PhD candidate in anthropology and demography at Pennsylvania State University.

Patrick Mullins surveys the chaupiyunga borderland, diversity, conflict, politics, and coca in the highland frontier landscape of ancient Peru. Mullins is a PhD candidate in the anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh.

Digital Tools and Online Treasures

Written in Knots: Undeciphered Accounts of Andean Life Online Exhibit

Long before the arrival of the Spaniards, the people of Andean South America had a system of recorded information that was portable, precise, and so complex that it remains undeciphered today. Meet the khipu in our new **online exhibit** for recent exhibition *Written in Knots: Undeciphered Accounts of Andean Life*. Find out what researchers know so far about this **sophisticated device** of cords, **knots**, and **colors**, and learn what mysteries still remain. *Written in Knots* was the first exhibition to bring together **Inka**, **Wari**, and **colonial khipus**, and the online exhibit presents close-up images of the unusual objects as well as full label text. Make sure to explore **gallery images**, a digital **catalog**, and **videos** presenting a deep dive into a rare khipu.
and showing cocurator and researcher Jeffrey Splitstoser at work making his own *kipus*.

**On View Online**

Discover the collection of Dumbarton Oaks from anywhere.

**Highlights from the Collection**
Explore curated selections from our Byzantine, Pre-Columbian, garden and landscape, and related holdings in a series of online exhibits. Historians and students of early modern architecture can explore digitized eighteenth-century vedute of Vienna, illustrations of German baroque and Dutch
villas, and works by Hans Vredeman de Vries. Get a curated look at some of the most comprehensive collections of Byzantine coins and seals in the world, with highlights on emperors and rare leaden gospels. Reflecting the rich Dumbarton Oaks collection of botanical illustration, several exhibits explore Margaret Mee and the tradition of women in botanical art, seventeenth-century French botanical artists, Maria Sibylla Merian, and the botany of empire. Dive into Pre-Columbian culture with archival and book holdings that illuminate timekeeping, warfare, monuments, and processions in Mesoamerica and the Andes. Browse materials from the Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, vivid witnesses to Byzantine architecture and art—and their afterlife—including Hagia Sophia, the lost church of the Holy Apostles, Tunisian mosaics, Istanbul market gardens, and twentieth-century Turkey in photographs by Nicholas V. Artamonoff. A section of miscellany features early numismatic books, nineteenth-century connoisseurship of the Byzantine minor arts, and book bindings in the Rare Book Collection.

Dumbarton Oaks History

Find out about the history of Dumbarton Oaks, including the development of the art and garden collections, the lives and legacy of our founders, and the role of the institution in international diplomacy. Search our database of nearly one thousand letters and telegrams exchanged between Mildred and Robert Bliss and Royall and Elsina Tyler between 1902 and 1953, then read contextual historical essays and annotations. Journey to 1944 in an exhibition on the meeting of
diplomatic and personal spheres at the Dumbarton Oaks Conversations, from which emerged a tentative agreement that was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the United Nations Charter. Find resources for learning and teaching garden history in our Garden Archives, offering thousands of drawings, photographs, and pieces of correspondence supplemented by histories of the Dumbarton Oaks garden areas, biographies of landscape architects, and features on contemporary art installations in the garden. Learn about Philip Johnson at Dumbarton Oaks and the creation of the Pre-Columbian Pavilion, reflecting the architect's shift from International Style modernism to postmodern classicism.