Garden Art Installation

Artist Hugh Livingston

Dr. Hugh Livingston, a cellist, composer, and sound-installation artist, spent seven weeks in the Dumbarton Oaks Gardens this spring creating a unique sound sculpture. Situated in the Lovers’ Lane Pool, *The Pool of ‘Bamboo Counterpoint’* consists of twelve speakers mounted on clear acrylic pipes that play a soundscape of melodic piano and nature recordings from the gardens—birdsong and the rustling of wind in the bamboo.

Hugh Livingston: “In advance of the installation this spring, I visited last July for a garden tour and brainstorming session. There were a variety of opinions about where to locate the installation, whether it should be part of the central environment of the garden, in a spot where visitors experience it as soon as they arrive, or in a corner of the garden that you might not visit. And we decided that [the latter] was the best way to go.

“When I first looked at the space, I saw the tiered seating and wondered, ‘Why is there a pool of...
water where a performance stage should rightly be?’ From that, I developed the idea of representing an opera. The pipes are arranged to look in different directions like twelve characters in search of the opera that they’re supposed to be singing in.”

Read more [here](#). *The Pool of ‘Bamboo Counterpoint’* will be available for viewing in the gardens through the 2014-15 season.

Above: Hugh Livingston in front of *The Pool of ‘Bamboo Counterpoint’.*

**Behind the Scenes**

Riemenschneider’s *Virgin and Child on the Crescent Moon*

The Music Room at Dumbarton Oaks is well known for its concerts, but the Blisses also designed it as a space for the display of Renaissance and Baroque art from the [House Collection](#). An outstanding example is the sixteenth-century *Virgin and Child on the Crescent Moon* by the German artist Tilman Riemenschneider.

Mary is depicted as the lady atop the moon from Revelation, who stands between Heaven and Earth to watch over her children. Her somber expression is characteristic of Riemenschneider’s work, which is often steeped in the style of Gothic sculpture, but it can also be attributed to the intended function of this piece. The statue was a miniature workshop model for an altarpiece. In the full-sized version, the Virgin would have gazed in sorrow upon the salvific sacrifice of her son.

Although the piece was intended as a model for larger, finished works, the rarely seen back of the sculpture is surprisingly complete. According to House Collection manager James Carder, before the Blisses acquired the sculpture, someone had “stripped a paint layer with lye and thereby had raised the grain of the wood.” Recent work restored the original smoothness of the sculpture’s surface. Following short exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art, Riemenschneider’s *Virgin and Child on the Crescent Moon* returned to Dumbarton Oaks.

The Blisses intended the Music Room to match the elegance of their collection while still retaining a welcoming air, and its aesthetic makes it an ideal space to display a sculpture that, according to Carder, is of “a wonderful scale: imposing but not overwhelming.”
The Music Room is open to the public as part of the Dumbarton Oaks Museum on Tuesdays through Sundays from noon until 6:00 p.m.

Read more here.


Farewell to James Doyle

The Dumbarton Oaks postdoctoral fellowships are intended to enhance the career skills of recent recipients of the PhD through their involvement in significant institutional projects, while enabling them to benefit from the resources and community of Dumbarton Oaks.

James Doyle (PhD, Brown University, 2012) was a Dumbarton Oaks Postdoctoral Fellow in Pre-Columbian Studies in 2013-14. Recently he moved to the position of Assistant Curator in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. We asked James how his experience at Dumbarton Oaks contributed to his professional development.

James Doyle: “When I began my postdoctoral position at Dumbarton Oaks, I had two primary tasks: to document the objects from Central America and Colombia in the Bliss Collection as a foundation for the final Pre-Columbian catalogue, and to help organize an objects-based workshop for scholars to write entries for the publication. The workshop was a resounding success and resulted in new object entries for the catalogue.

“My experiences at Dumbarton Oaks, in both the documentation project and the workshop preparation, directly influenced my desire to pursue a curatorial career. My new position will allow me to research and publish information about objects in the Metropolitan’s collection, present works of art in the galleries in an informative and exciting way for the public, and curate exhibitions on intellectual themes within Pre-Columbian archaeology and art history. I am really grateful for my time at Dumbarton Oaks, which was instrumental in helping me forge a new trajectory in my academic career.”

Read more here.

Above: James Doyle conducting research at the National Museum of the American Indian.

One-Month Research Stipends
Byzantine and Garden and Landscape Studies

Dumbarton Oaks offers one-month research stipends to scholars engaged in advanced research that would benefit from use of the library, museum, and archival collections. More information about the program can be found here.

Above, left to right: Thanasis Vionis, Erin Jordan, and Boris Sokolov.

Thanasis Vionis is assistant professor of Byzantine archaeology and art in the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Cyprus. While at Dumbarton Oaks, he has undertaken specialized bibliographical research for an extensive article on the evolution of settlements in Byzantine Greece from the mid-sixth to the mid-fourteenth century.

Erin Jordan is associate professor of history at Old Dominion University. Her work focuses on issues of gender, politics, and religion in the Middle Ages. At Dumbarton Oaks, Professor Jordan perused the extensive collection of Byzantine seals as well as the numerous volumes in the library and Rare Book Reading Room relating to the history of the Crusades.

Boris Sokolov is professor of art history at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow. Professor Sokolov is working on the first Russian translation of Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (Venice, 1499).

Matthew Gin is a doctoral candidate at Harvard University. He was recently awarded a predoctoral residency at Dumbarton Oaks to work on his dissertation, “Royal Representation and the Formal Landscape in Ludovican France, 1643-1715.”

Betsy Anderson recently completed a master’s degree in landscape architecture at the University of Washington. Her thesis, “Deconstructing Hydrologies: Reviving the Memory of Water in Dumbarton Oaks Park,” proposes a storm water-mitigation design for Beatrix Farrand’s naturalistic garden, now a unit of the national park system adjacent to the Dumbarton Oaks Gardens.

Read more about the award recipients here.

From the Archives

The Oral History 100
This month, the Dumbarton Oaks Oral History Project posted its 100th interview. Inaugurated in 2008, the project includes interviews with former Dumbarton Oaks directors, directors of studies, fellows and scholars, staff members, gardeners, and people who knew the founders, Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss, and the residential period of Dumbarton Oaks. The majority of these interviews have been undertaken by Harvard University summer interns who research, conduct, and transcribe the audio/videotaped conversations.

The developing critical mass of oral-history memories now provides Dumbarton Oaks with an interwoven narrative, in many voices, of the intellectual and social history of the nearly 75-year-old research institution and collection.

The posted oral history interviews are tagged and searchable. Anyone interested in a particular aspect of Dumbarton Oaks and its history has only to enter a search term—such as archaeology, Maya art, the Byzantine Institute, symposia, Beatrix Farrand, or Alexander Kazhdan—to uncover the multiple layers and to discover which topics receive the most commentary.

Read more about the Oral History Project here.


**From Garden to Kitchen**

The Dumbarton Oaks community continues to enjoy fresh produce harvested from the Kitchen Garden by the gardens staff and transformed by the Refectory staff into delectable lunches.

**Good Ink**

*The Virgil Encyclopedia*, edited by Jan Ziolkowski, Director of Dumbarton Oaks, and Richard Thomas, was reviewed in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*.

Learn some architectural history about Dumbarton Oaks in this article from *Architectural Digest*. 
A post by one of our summer interns about Henry of Avranches’ *Saints’ Lives* (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library) recently appeared on the Harvard University Press Blog.

*Merchants, Markets, and Exchange in the Pre-Columbian World*, edited by Kenneth G. Hirth and Joanne Pillsbury, a volume in the Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Symposia and Colloquia series, was recently reviewed in the *Journal of Field Archaeology*.

Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan, archivist of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, referred to the “exemplary” cataloguing of Thomas Whittemore’s papers in her blog.

### Now on View

![Seldom Seen: A Selection of Prints, Drawings and Decorative Art Never Before on Public Display](image)

**EXTENDED THROUGH OCTOBER 12, 2014**

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Dumbarton Oaks  
1703 32nd Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20007

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