



## Dumbarton Oaks Garden Art Installations

While walking through the garden, have you noticed music emanating from the Lovers' Lane Pool or the chairs on the Urn Terrace? In this video, learn more about the garden art installation program and the current sound installations by artist Hugh Livingston.



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## Learning to Read

### Byzantine Coins and Seals Summer Program

This summer, eight students attended the [Byzantine Coins and Seals Summer Program](#), from July 6 to 31. The program was helped by Consultant for Byzantine Sigillography Eric McGeer; Professor



Vasiliki (Vasso) Penna of the University of the Peloponnese, in Greece; and Post-Doctoral Teaching Fellow Jonathan Shea. The participants were Sergio Basso of the University of California, Berkeley; Stefanos Dimitriadis of Koç University; Polina Ivanova of Harvard University; Rózsa Márton of Eötvös Loránd University; Nikolaos Mastrochristos of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; Brian Salas of the University of Chicago; Panagiotis Theodoropoulos of King's College; and Rossana Valente of the University of Edinburgh.

Students apply with project proposals that utilize coins and seals, and receive four weeks of instruction in reading, dating, photographing, and cataloging. The focus on material culture was a highlight for this summer's participants, who pointed to the scarcity of courses on coins and seals at their home universities. Students also emphasized the advantage of studying the material within a community of experts, rather than simply learning from books or journals.

The main goal of the course is to provide young scholars with a new tool to examine history, whether they make coins and seals the focus of future work or use them as ancillary sources. Shea and McGeer also pointed to the course as an opportunity for the students themselves to pass on knowledge in the classrooms, museum halls, and archaeological sites in which they work. "They can use the course to round out their teaching repertoire in addition to applying it to their own work," McGeer said. "We hope that it ripples outward."

Find out more about the program and participants [here!](#)

Above: Brian Salas of the University of Chicago, Byzantine Coins and Seals Summer Program participant.

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## **Seventy-Five Years in the Garden Library** *Still Life with Vase of Flowers*



This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Mildred Barnes Bliss's acquisition of a lesser-known but compelling painting in the [House Collection](#): *Still Life with Vase of Flowers* by the Dutch master Jan van Huysum. Bliss purchased the painting from a Munich art dealer in 1965 to decorate the [Rare Book Room](#), although today it hangs in the Director's Office. The 1720 canvas—by one of the most successful and eccentric still life painters of his time—is thus not only an intriguing work in itself, but also a glimpse of Bliss's original vision for her Garden Library.

Van Huysum—who often spent his summers studying and sketching in Haarlem, a center for the cultivation of tulips and other plants—sought to illustrate with exactitude the texture and detail of the flowers. He also depicted plants that bloom in different seasons flowering in the same frame, rendering the image a beguiling mix of realism and fantasy. The broken tulip, the drooping poppy, and the fragile moth evoke the transience of earthly life. The painting thus combines aesthetic and scientific goals while also serving as a memento mori, a reminder to the viewer of his or her own mortality.

The synthesis of art, science, and philosophy that characterizes van Huysum's still life reflects Bliss's own conception of the Garden Library. As John S. Thacher, a former Director of Dumbarton Oaks, wrote in 1971, the Garden Library grew from Bliss's "desire that the interests of scholarship at Dumbarton Oaks be extended to the field of [garden design](#), giving full recognition to its place in the history of western culture." The Garden Library today houses over six thousand rare books, manuscripts, photographs, prints, and drawings related to the history of garden and landscape architecture.

Read more about Van Huysum and the Garden Library [online](#).

Above: *Still Life with Flowers* in the Director's office, by Jan van Huysum, 1720, HC.P.1965.10.(O), oil on canvas, 77.47 cm x 59.69 cm (30 ½ in. x 23 ½ in.).

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## Redesigned Reading Room Offers New Study Spaces



The renovated Library Reading Room reopened to scholars this spring with new study carrels and work areas that will serve a growing community of Fellows, Junior Fellows, and Readers. Formerly an open space used to hold current periodicals, the room was redesigned during the winter of 2014–15 to house sixteen individual study areas.

The recent expansion of Dumbarton Oaks' academic programs has increased the need for space for resident and visiting scholars. In addition to record numbers of Fellows and Junior Fellows, new programming initiatives include the Early-Career Musician Residency and the [Mellon Fellowship in Urban Landscape Studies](#), which enables landscape architects working in the field to spend a semester at Dumbarton Oaks.

Read more about the renovation [here](#).

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## **Alice-Mary Talbot Receives Honorary Doctorate from St Andrews**

Alice-Mary Talbot, Director Emerita of Byzantine Studies, received a degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, from the University of St Andrews on June 25. Tim Greenwood, a Byzantinist and senior lecturer in the School of History at St Andrews, cited Talbot's groundbreaking research on Byzantium and her invaluable service to other scholars in her field.

Read an excerpt from Greenwood's laureation address on our [website](#).

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## **From the Archives**

### **The Swimming Pool**



On hot Washington summer days, the swimming pool offers welcome relief for Fellows and staff. It is not surprising, therefore, that in oral history interviews conducted by the Dumbarton Oaks Archives, many fondly reminisce about swimming in the pool. An early staff member, [Margaret Dawson](#), referred back to the summer of 1956:

*And then, of course, we found the swimming pool! Often we worked in the afternoon or maybe sometimes in the early evening and then we would swim. Or maybe on a day off we would just come and swim. It was pretty dreamy. It was very nice.*

Before Dumbarton Oaks became a research institute, its founders, Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss, also enjoyed the swimming pool and entertained guests there. Home movies (now in the Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives) were made of swimming parties and photographs (now in the Dumbarton Oaks Archives) were taken of the Blisses and their friends at the pool. Then, as now, the swimming pool proved an excellent means of beating the summer heat.

Watch Mildred Bliss swim the length of the Dumbarton Oaks pool [online](#).

Above: Mildred Bliss and Friend at the Dumbarton Oaks Swimming Pool, AR.PH.Misc.028.

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## Good Ink

*Smithsonian Magazine* featured Dumbarton Oaks in its list of “[D.C.'s Best Off-the-Beaten-Path Historic Homes and Gardens](#).”

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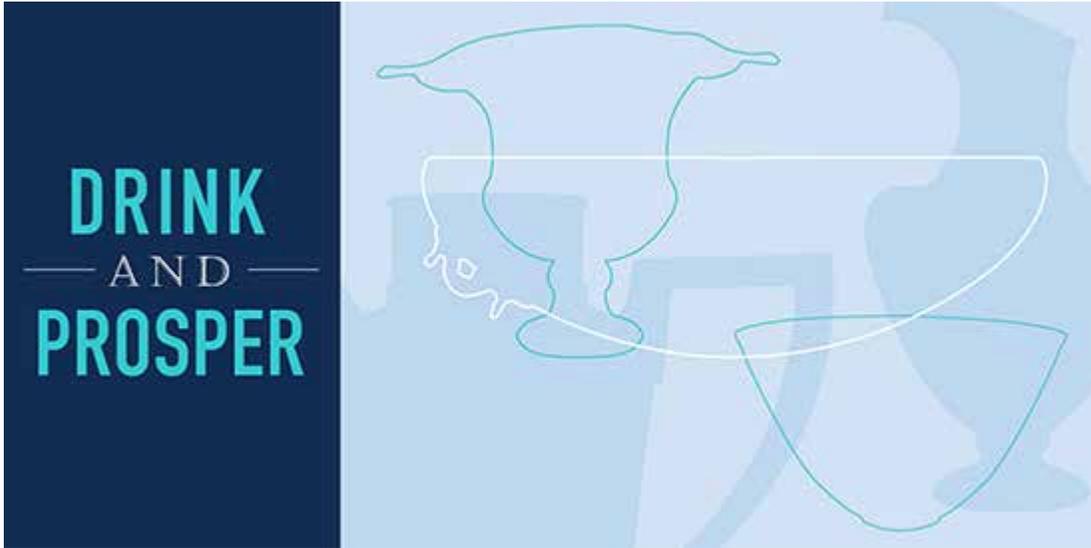
## From the Garden Blog



Above: Sunflowers, August 14, 2015. From What's Blooming at D.O. Photo by Luis Mármol.

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## Now on View



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