

The Oaks News, December 2014



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Visiting Scholar: Julian Gardner



Julian Gardner, professor emeritus at the University of Warwick, a 2014-2015 Visiting Scholar in Byzantine Studies, spent the month of October in residence at Dumbarton Oaks. Margaret Mullett interviewed Gardner, a historian of late medieval Italian art, about his experiences at Dumbarton Oaks and his post-retirement career.

So what are you working on this month?

Before I came to Washington, I was invited to give a paper on microarchitecture for a conference at INHA in Paris this month. Dumbarton Oaks has proved (with a few strategic sallies to the library at CASVA) to be an ideal place to work on this. Microarchitecture as a concept has often been used by architectural historians working on the Gothic period, roughly between ca. 1150 and 1500, to describe a variety of phenomena. These include the building of smaller spaces, like discrete chapels attached to Gothic cathedrals; the architecture of important metalwork shrines, which seem to resemble miniature buildings; the elaborate baldachins that increasingly crowned the standing statues flanking Gothic portals; and representations of buildings in manuscripts or on panel paintings, choir stalls, and the like. But the idea is much older and more widespread. There has been important recent work done on columnar sarcophagi from this point of view, and engraved drawings have been found on architectural elements at Baalbek that show similarities to design techniques in Gothic buildings such as the cathedrals of Bourges or Clermont-Ferrand.

My interest comes from the study of thirteenth-century seal impressions, which often have exquisitely detailed Gothic frameworks, such as miniature church façades framing the figures of their owners. Seals were used by living patrons and the matrices broken at their deaths, so the nexus between patron and practical taste is unusually close. The enthusiasm for seals at Dumbarton Oaks is contagious—it is rare to find such a group of colleagues—even if many of the problems encountered are rather dissimilar. So that has given me a considerable push during my time here.

Read more about Julian Gardner [here](#).

Unknotting the Past

Gary Urton on a New *Khipu* Archive at Inkawasi, Peru



“Let me make this clear, that we cannot read *khipus*,” Dumbarton Oaks Visiting Professor Gary Urton told a crowd of assembled Fellows, staff, and Pre-Columbian scholars as he began to present his findings on a cache of *khipus* recently uncovered at Inkawasi, an archaeological site located on the south coast of Peru.

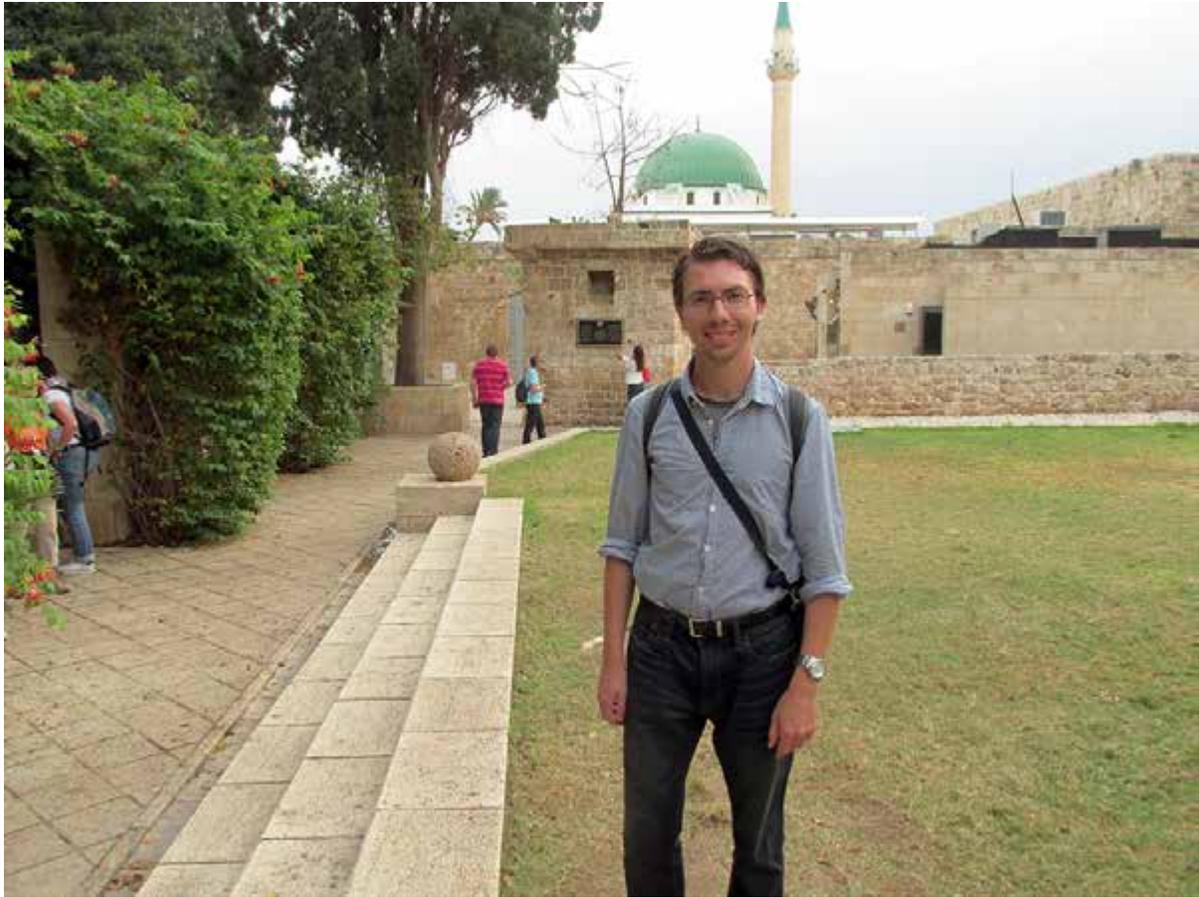
Urton, Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies at Harvard and Anthropology Department Chair, has spent much of the last two decades studying *khipus*, the knotted-string devices that the Inca used for record-keeping across the vast Andean empire. While neither Urton nor anyone else can read *khipus*, twentieth-century anthropologists were able to decode the numeric significance of the knots, and Urton has done much to delineate their structural elements.

A new *khipu* archive, the subject of Urton’s lecture, has recently been discovered at the site of Inkawasi, an Inca storehouse and administrative center in the dry Cañete Valley on the south coast of Peru. “The site was apparently built when the Incas moved down from Cusco to the south coast to begin conquering the people” there, Urton said. Spanish accounts of the city, he continued, suggest that it was built exactly like Cusco, with each structure and hill named after those that existed in the Inca capital.

Read more [here](#).

Dr. Alejandro Chu (left) removes a *khipu* from storage facility floor (photo by Gary Urton).

Tyler Fellow Update: Julian Yolles



Julian Yolles is currently a doctoral candidate in medieval Latin philology at Harvard University.

In my dissertation, I study all of the extant Latin literary output of the Crusader Levant in the late-eleventh and twelfth centuries, from the establishment of the first so-called Crusader state at the County of Edessa in 1098 to the fall of Jerusalem in 1187. I am particularly interested in what these texts can tell us about a developing Latin literary culture in the Crusader states.

As part of my travel and research year of the Tyler Fellowship, I have spent the past three months traveling through various libraries in Europe and Israel to consult medieval manuscript witnesses of the texts I study, and to examine manuscripts that show traces of having been in the Levant during the crusader period. In just under three months, I consulted twenty-three manuscripts and traveled to some thirty cities in seven countries, from London to Jerusalem.

During my time in Israel, I spent three weeks at the Kenyon Institute and Research Library of the Council for British Research in the Levant and attended the first-ever manuscript conference and exhibition held at Saint Savior's Library of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem. I also attended the Seventh International Medieval Latin Congress, held in Lyons, where I presented a paper on William of Tyre's use of Einhard's biography of Charlemagne as part of his own agenda as historiographer of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Read more about Julian's travels [here](#).

Julian Yolles stands outside of the Crusader compound in Acre, Israel, which he visited during his travels as a Tyler Fellow.

Bliss Symposium Awards

Harvard Students Travel to Garden and Landscape Studies Colloquium

Dumbarton Oaks provides travel awards to Harvard students wishing to attend scholarly events at the institute. Recently, three students traveled to Dumbarton Oaks to attend the Garden and Landscape Studies colloquium, “Landscape and Sacred Architecture in Pre-Modern South Asia,” on November 14, and shared their experiences with us.



Sonali Dhingra, PhD candidate, Department of History of Art and Architecture:

The innovative research presented indicates to me a very exciting and inspiring trend in South Asian art and architectural history: looking beyond “masterpiece” monuments to lesser shrines and the immediate physical and even imagined terrain in which they were located. It made me think about the lived aspects of the spaces I study, such as the choice of their makers in their articulation, the negotiation and taming of the natural landscape for their creation, and their inextricable connection with the environs in the minds of the users. All these significant aspects, I was reminded by the papers, are easy to forget in a solely image- or monument-centric analysis.

Dane Carlson, Master of Landscape Architecture candidate, Graduate School of Design:

The relevance of landscape systems, especially those relating to the sacred in South Asia, was a particular focus of the papers presented at the colloquium. Although the sacred is abstract in conception, these papers emphasized the ability of the immaterial to dictate spatial forms.



Perhaps the most compelling subnarrative that arose during the colloquium was the argument for a systems-based understanding of sacred places on a variety of scales (site, complex, region, etc.). It has become apparent that a site cannot be legitimately studied at a single scale; regional narratives were integral to the development of any single site discussed during the colloquium.



Nicolas Roth, PhD candidate, Department of South Asian Studies:

As a South Asianist working primarily on historical texts and something of an outsider to the discipline of the history of art and architecture, I found it particularly enlightening to see some of the new avenues of investigation pursued by art historians, and to ponder the ways in which my own research may coincide with, draw on, support,

and perhaps complement this current work.

Read more from these students about their experiences [here](#).

From the Archives

An Eventful Decade Captured in Photographs



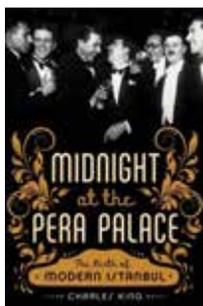
The American Distributing Service at 62 rue de Richelieu, Paris, and one of its storerooms.

Between 1912 and 1919, Robert Woods Bliss served as First Secretary and, later, as Counselor of the American Embassy in Paris. During this period, he kept an annotated album of photographs depicting various social and political events. The album begins in 1913 with images of elegant garden parties and country estates, but abruptly segues into the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 with images of French troops in uniform and badly damaged buildings. These photographs provide a graphic narrative of this eventful decade. They also document the philanthropy that the Blissesses engaged in during the war years. The Blissesses were instrumental in establishing the American Distributing Service, the first American organization for hospital aid in France, which supplied hospitals with whatever they needed free of cost. Several photographs show the Service's storerooms and personnel.

This photograph album is at the Harvard University Archives (HUGFP 76.74, Box 4) and is part of the Bliss Papers, a collection that Dumbarton Oaks gave to Harvard in 1982. This year, the entire album was scanned at the request of the U.S. Department of State as part of its centennial observation of the beginning of the First World War. The Dumbarton Oaks Archives has a copy of the scanned album pages, and they are also available [online](#) through the Harvard University Library page delivery service.

Read more about it [here](#).

Good Ink



Staff members of the Image Collections and Fieldworks Archives at Dumbarton Oaks were gratefully acknowledged in *Midnight at the Pera Palace*, a recently released history by Georgetown University professor Charles King. King utilized ICFA's [Byzantine Institute](#) collection in his writings about Thomas Whittemore's restoration work on the mosaics of Hagia Sophia.

From Garden to Refectory Table



Even as winter begins, our gardens keep giving! Fresh produce from the Kitchen Gardens made its way into lunch in the Refectory in late November.

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