Important Message

Spring events at Dumbarton Oaks will be cancelled

Dear colleagues and friends,

Out of an abundance of caution, we will cancel all public events at Dumbarton Oaks through the end of May. This was a difficult decision to make. The cancellation accords with the policies set by Harvard University in response to public health advisories, with the objective of containing the spread of COVID-19. One wonderful aspect of Dumbarton Oaks, and our institution has many, is that we open our “home of the Humanities” to scholars and visitors from around the world. While interrupting this access is saddening, it is a necessity right now.

The Museum and Garden remain open, for the time being, and the most up-to-date information about our operating status can be found on our website.

I thank you for your patience and understanding in these extraordinary circumstances.

With best wishes,

Jan Ziolkowski
Director
Dumbarton Oaks | Trustees for Harvard University
Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor of Medieval Latin
Department of the Classics | Harvard University

New Exhibition Explores Art, Science, and
Women Botanical Artists and Illustrators in the Rare Book Collection

*Margaret Mee: Portraits of Plants* opens this month
Twenty stunning paintings of Amazonian flora by the artist, explorer, and environmentalist Margaret Mee (1909–1988) go on display in the exhibition Margaret Mee: Portraits of Plants. These works, dating to Mee’s first three expeditions in the Amazon, have never been displayed together. Opening March 24, the exhibition draws on manuscript and print works from the Rare Book Collection to situate Mee in a tradition of women botanical artists and illustrators that stretches back to the seventeenth century. Portraits of Plants also examines the enduring interplay between art and science through a variety of media (botanical illustration, watercolor, photography) extending to the present day, with works by contemporary photographer Amy Lamb, scientific illustrator Alice Tangerini, and botanical artist Nirupa Rao.

Applications Due March 15 for the Garden and Landscape Studies Graduate Workshop

Three weeks in May and June studying public landscapes

Apply by March 15 for an intensive workshop focused on the public realm and the design and
construction of public landscapes. The 2020 Garden and Landscape Studies Graduate Workshop is May 17–June 6, offered in collaboration with the Arnold Arboretum and with the support of the Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies. The workshop brings together practitioners and early-career scholars—typically doctoral candidates in early or advanced states of writing dissertations and current Master of Landscape Architecture candidates—to pursue cross-disciplinary research on landscape-related topics. Participants attend seminars by Dumbarton Oaks staff and invited scholars, visit sites in the Washington metropolitan area, and stay for four days at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, where they also go on field trips to public landscapes.

Dutch Golden Age Masterpiece Loaned to Dumbarton Oaks Through Early Summer

Time-travel to seventeenth-century Holland
One of the finest works by seventeenth-century Dutch painter Jacob Ochtervelt, The Music Lesson, now hangs in the Music Room thanks to an exchange with the Art Institute of Chicago. Read more on how the intimate scene of musicmaking illuminates a rare instrument and the intermingled histories of music, colonialism, social status, and American collecting practices. The painting finds a special home in the Music Room, where strains of early music can still be heard at concerts. While The Music Lesson is on view, the Dumbarton Oaks treasure The Visitation by El Greco joins more than 57 works in a landmark Art Institute exhibition from March 7 to June 21. Such an exchange is “a sign of the great esteem between the two institutions,” says Dumbarton Oaks associate curator Elizabeth Dospêl Williams.
Faculty interested in exploring the potential of using plants in courses on local and world history, art history, literature, environmental studies, and more are invited to apply by April 6 for Faculty Residencies in Plant Humanities. The residencies aim to provide opportunities for professional and intellectual enrichment to college teachers, particularly from four-year teaching institutions and community colleges. Participants spend one week investigating the historical significance of plants to human culture using the Rare Book Collection, digital tools, the library, and the historic garden. The program is offered in the context of the Dumbarton Oaks and JSTOR Labs Plant Humanities Initiative, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Travel reimbursement, accommodations, weekday lunches, and a stipend of $250 are provided.
Order a Garden Season Pass

Receive expedited admission and unlimited visits

Garden season passes are now available for order at the Garden Gate, in the Museum Shop, or downloading the online form. Spring and summer showers the garden in tulips, plum blossoms, narcissus flowers, roses, the famed cherry blossoms, and many other natural beauties. As a season pass holder, you can stroll this splendor as often as you want while the garden is open. Plus receive expedited admission to beat the line and a 10% discount on all Museum Shop merchandise. Make sure to have your pass by March 15, when garden hours extend from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

Dumbarton Oaks by the Numbers

3,000 years of history in one academic year

Fellows this year have worked on research projects that span a time period of 3,000 years.
The Bulbs Are Blooming

Spring has sprung in the garden

Gardeners planted 16,780 bulbs last calendar year, and results are starting to show. Visit an impressive display of flowers emerging this month, including crocus, hyacinth, iris, snowdrop, lily, narcissus, tulip, summer snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*), and Virginia bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*). Mixed bulbs bloom along Mélisande’s Allée, while Beech Terrace and Lilac Circle sport early-season colors. Later in the season, elegant hyacinths appear in Arbor Terrace, and tulips
dazzle in Fountain Terrace and the Herbaceous Border, which also features particularly lovely lilies and irises. Meander through the first signs of spring in the Dumbarton Oaks Garden free of charge through March 14.

Fellows in the Spotlight

Catch up with our fellows and their research

Zeynep Kezer studies the making of modern Turkey from the margins, researching Elazığ, Tunceli, and contested histories. Kezer is a professor in the School of Architecture Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University.

John Mulhall investigates Eastern knowledge and Latin letters, finding medieval translators who sought to remedy Latin deficiency with Greek and Arabic texts. Mulhall is a PhD candidate in history at Harvard University.

Digital Tools and Online Treasures
Middle East Garden Traditions

Looking to design a course or conduct research related to garden cultures in the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds? Begin with our recently updated online research tool Middle East Garden Traditions, a compendium of garden history spanning 12 centuries and three continents. Tyler fellow Sasson Chahanovich expanded the multilingual glossary of plant and gardening terms by 48% and added 209 new entries to the project bibliography. These updates add important context for the core feature of the tool, a searchable catalogue of nearly 200 of the most well-known gardens that existed under the Ummayad, Abbasid, Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid dynasties, as well as in al-Andalus and North Africa. Each entry provides a description of the garden’s characteristics and history, citing archival and archaeological sources where this information can be found. Introductory essays gloss key geographical regions and their related catalogue entries. Other supplementary resources include a glossary of Andalusian ornamental trees and shrubs, a dictionary of Ottoman Turkish garden terms, and an online exhibit of 20th-century photographs of market gardens (bostans) in Istanbul.

On View

Discover Dumbarton Oaks’ collections in a series of exhibitions.

Special displays: last chance to see economic tools from Rome and Byzantium
Experience the first exhibit in more than 30 years focused solely on Byzantine seals from the 17,000-strong Dumbarton Oaks collection. The display reveals how researchers played detective to solve an 800-year-old mystery involving a broken seal and a mysterious and powerful person from the twelfth century. On the reverse of the case, examine weights, balances, and a scale the Romans and Byzantines used to ensure accurate transactions in the marketplace.

Ancient art and Pre-Columbian textiles on display in the museum
Beloved works from the ancient art collection begun by Mildred and Robert Bliss have returned to the Courtyard Gallery. Spanning from Hellenistic Greece to imperial Rome, the collection contains many pieces of distinction, such as the Romano-Arabian bronze statue of a rearing horse (back from loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), the purple marble porphyry head of a Roman emperor, and Greek bronze statuettes that date as far back as the fifth century BCE. Stunning Byzantine jewelry in gold, sapphire, pearls, and rock crystal are also displayed. Meanwhile, discover “Clothing from the Afterlife” in the Textile Gallery, featuring rare and stunning objects from the Pre-Columbian Collection, including several feathered pieces from Peru, intricate Wari tunics and looped hats, and mummy masks more than 2,000 years old.