The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century

Dumbarton Oaks Symposium
October 4-5, 2013

This two-day symposium brought together an international body of scholars working on eighteenth century botany against the background of imperial expansion. Perspectives from eighteenth-century history, art history, the history of science, and the history of the book converged in an interdisciplinary conversation that broadened the European and Atlantic map to include developments in South Africa, China, Japan, and the Middle East.
The symposium was an innovative collaboration of several Dumbarton Oaks departments, including the Library and Rare Book Collection, the Garden and Landscape Studies Program, the Dumbarton Oaks Gardens, the Publications department, and the Director’s Office.

You can read more about the symposium on our [website](http://www.doaks.org).

Images: Dissertatio de generatione et metamorphosibus insectorum surinamensium. Merian, Maria Sibylla. Dumbarton Oaks Rare Book Collection (left); Jardin de la Malmaison. Ventenat, Étienne Pierre. Dumbarton Oaks Rare Book Collection (right).

### The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century

#### Rare Book Exhibit

The Dumbarton Oaks Symposium ‘The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century’ was timed to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the Rare Book Room, whose holdings are particularly strong in botanical publications from this period. To celebrate the anniversary of the Rare Book Room, two Harvard interns, Jasmine Casart and Deirdre Moore, worked with special projects librarian Sarah Burke Cahalan on a physical exhibit of rare botanicals that spanned the Main House and Library. The exhibit covers such topics as developments in botanical illustration; new technologies of plant transportation; the narratives of botanical explorers; Linnaean taxonomy; and economic botany.

An online version of the exhibit can be viewed at: [http://www.doaks.org/botany-of-empire-exhibit](http://www.doaks.org/botany-of-empire-exhibit)

Image: Directions for bringing over seeds and plants, from the East Indies and other distant countries, in a state of vegetation. Ellis, John. Dumbarton Oaks Rare Book Collection.

### Bliss Travel Award Recipients

Dumbarton Oaks offers travel grants to Harvard students for attendance of symposia. Two award recipients share their experience of the symposium below. More information about the awards is available [here](http://www.doaks.org).

**Leah Aronowsky**

Leah Aronowsky is a second-year PhD student in History of Science at Harvard University. She is currently developing a project on the history of science exploration and natural history collecting in the mid-nineteenth century United States.
The symposium was a profoundly stimulating experience for me. I am currently training to be a historian of natural history in the nineteenth-century United States, and I am particularly interested in the history of technologies for representing objects found in the natural world in museum and laboratory settings (such as science illustrations, field notes, and taxidermy). The presentations prodded me to think about how the practices of natural history in the nineteenth century differ from those of the eighteenth. The answer to this is, of course, the task of an entire dissertation, but I am grateful that the symposium afforded me the opportunity to think about these issues in a more concrete way.

Jasmine Casart
Jasmine Casart graduated from Harvard University with a B.A. in History of Science last summer. During the summer, she was a Rare Book intern at Dumbarton Oaks.

It was a great honor to return to my summer job at Dumbarton Oaks for the Botany of Empire symposium on October 4th and 5th. I enjoyed putting the finishing touches on the online and onsite exhibit material the week before the symposium. However, it was just as rewarding to converse with and present the exhibits to symposium participants in those action-packed two days of talks and tours. This symposium and the exhibits were beautiful ways to honor the 50th anniversary of the Rare Book Room.

Read Leah and Jasmine’s full reports here!

Tyler Fellows in Residence

The William R. Tyler Fellowships at Dumbarton Oaks support two years of travel and dissertation completion for advanced Harvard graduate students in areas related to the fields of study at Dumbarton Oaks. We are pleased to present Saskia Dirkse, a 2012-14 Tyler Fellow, currently in residence at Dumbarton Oaks and in the second year of her Fellowship.

Saskia Dirkse - 2012/14 Tyler Fellow in Byzantine Studies
I am writing my dissertation on early Byzantine attitudes towards and teachings about the end of life, death and the afterlife, as expressed in popular religious tales and related hagiographical and patristic texts. These stories of ascetics living in tombs, visionary tours of heaven and hell, encounters with avenging angels, and the temporary resurrection of the dead (to name but a few) represent collections in narrative form of warnings and instructions to the reader or hearer on how best to prepare for the end. Tales of this sort hold particular interest for modern readers not only because they reveal Byzantine attitudes towards death as presented through the filter of early monastic culture, but because they also offer a fascinating view into the architecture of early Byzantine imagination: after all, how does one still on this side of death picture that “undiscover’d country from whose bourne no traveller returns”?

Learn more about Saskia, and other Tyler Fellows in residence, on the D.O. website.
From the Archives

Dressing Up at Dumbarton Oaks

A recent acquisition of the Dumbarton Oaks Archives is the gift of five slides (AR.PH.Misc.224-228) from Alice-Mary Talbot, former Director of Byzantine Studies. These slides, which probably date to 1962, capture former Dumbarton Oaks fellows, staff, and their spouses impersonating famous Byzantine historical figures. The “Ravenna Group,” for example, (seen at the right) depicts Ernst Kitzinger (Professor of Byzantine Art and Archaeology) as Justinian, Arthur H.S. “Peter” Megaw (Byzantine Visiting Scholar) wearing Justinian’s crown, his wife Electra Megaw as Theodora, and Susan Kitzinger, wife of Ernst Kitzinger, and Jelisaveta “Seka” Allen (Byzantine library cataloguer) as attendants in Theodora’s retinue. Their costumes and poses are, of course, a mash-up of the famous mosaic depictions in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna.
We are pleased to announce that Heidi Dowding has joined Dumbarton Oaks as part of the inaugural class of the National Digital Stewardship Residency (NDSR) program. Created by the Library of Congress in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the NDSR program enables ten recent graduates of masters programs in relevant fields to complete a paid nine-month residency with the aim of advancing their digital stewardship knowledge and skills in real-world settings. Starting in September 2013, the NDSR residents will be embedded in institutions throughout the DC area, including Dumbarton Oaks. For the complete list of NDSR recipients and host institutions, visit: http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2013/13-120.html.

**Good Ink**

The Dumbarton Oaks gardens were recently featured in an online list, “5 Must-See U.S. Gardens,” of the online magazine *Lifescapes*.

Martha Stewart visited our gardens in September and featured us on her blog!

*ThinkProgress* encouraged DC tourists and locals to visit our gardens, landscape art, and rare books collections when confronted with the government shutdown.

**Now on View**

![inspiring art](image-url)
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

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

www.doaks.org

Subscribe to have The Oaks News delivered directly to your inbox each month.

unsubscribe from this list | update subscription preferences