

DUMBARTON OAKS

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Dumbarton Oaks Launches Third Urban Landscape Humanities Initiative

Mellon Foundation has renewed the grant on Democracy, Race, and Difference for five-years.

New York and Washington, DC —Dumbarton Oaks, a research institute of Harvard University, has been awarded a “Humanities in Place” grant renewal by **the Mellon Foundation**. The grant will support research and scholarly programming on **Democracy and Landscape** with particular attention to questions of race, identity, and difference. To this end, the Foundation has awarded Dumbarton Oaks \$2 million over five years.

Over the past three years, the second installment of the [Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies](#) at Dumbarton Oaks turned attention to the interrogation of *Democracy and the Urban Landscape* through questions of race, identity, and difference. By cultivating partnerships, supporting scholarly activity, and connecting with youth in the community, the initiative contributed to the inclusive dialogues required to nurture a dynamic democracy and address legacies of neglect and marginalization. The first phase produced publications on such topics as the resilience of river cities and the physical, social, and political relations between the production of food and urban settlements.

In this third phase, the Initiative seeks to build scholarship in landscape, environmental, and place histories that recenter cultural points of view historically un-heard, shared, and/or honored. Our role will be to actively support scholars who are researching, writing, and telling more accurate and thicker narratives of our past grounded in the complexities of people and places. Furthermore, this work broadens the contributions of Dumbarton Oaks to scholarship that promotes and strengthens the essential role of humanities and history in the landscape and in place.

“With the remarkable support of the Mellon Foundation initially under the rubric of Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities, Dumbarton Oaks and the Garden & Landscape Studies Program (GLS) are contributing to the re-shaping of how we understand and share histories of people in place and on/with land,” notes Thaïsa Way, Director for Garden and Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, who has retired from the University of Washington in order to continue to lead this project. “Underscoring this work is the intention to strengthen the GLS program and

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Dumbarton Oaks by expanding and strengthening our focus areas to contribute to leading scholarship in landscape, place, and environmental histories grounded in questions of diversity, equity, difference, inclusion, and justice.”

The advisory board for the Dumbarton Oaks Urban Landscape Initiative includes:

- Willow Lung Amam, Associate Professor, University of Maryland
- Eric Avila, Professor, University of California, Los Angeles
- N.D.B. Connolly, Herbert Baxter Adams Associate Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University
- Alice Nash, Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

With the addition of three new board members:

- Sarah Lopez, Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania
- Andrea Roberts, Associate Professor, University of Virginia
- Gabrielle Tayac, Associate Professor, George Mason University

The Board also sees the departure of the following two members and thanks them for their years of service:

- Dell Upton, Professor, Art History, University of California, Los Angeles
- Michelle Wilkinson, Curator, (and LOEB Fellow), National Museum of African American History and Culture

The renewal of the Mellon Foundation’s support underscores the future of the Garden and Landscapes Studies program and the greater institution. “Dumbarton Oaks is one of the few institutions in the world with a program devoted to garden and landscape studies that serves humanities scholars. Building on this legacy, we seek to further constructive dialogues about issues in the history and future of democratic landscapes and the public realm through the lenses of race, identity, and difference,” adds Thomas B.F. Cummins, Director of Dumbarton Oaks.

About Dumbarton Oaks:

Dumbarton Oaks is a Harvard research institute, library, museum, and historic garden in Washington, DC. The institution emerged thanks to the imagination and legacy of Robert and Mildred Woods Bliss, collectors of art and patrons of the humanities. The museum houses their world-class collections of Byzantine and Pre-Columbian art. A third collection of a different sort exists in the historic garden, which Mildred Bliss created in partnership with renowned landscape designer Beatrix Farrand. The garden is perhaps the last remaining landscape in North America that hews closely to the original Farrand design; it was voted by National Geographic one of the ten best gardens in the world. Buildings of architectural importance on the Dumbarton Oaks campus are the museum’s Pre-Columbian Pavilion, designed by Philip Johnson and completed in 1963, and the research Library designed by Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates and completed in 2005. Since 1940, when the Blisses gifted the estate and collections to Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks has supported the advance of knowledge in the three areas of Byzantine, Pre-

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Columbian, and Garden and Landscape Studies through a fellowship program and other awards; scholarly conferences; publications; and digital initiatives. In recent years, Dumbarton Oaks has extended its service to the community by developing collection-based educational programs for DC students. Simultaneously, it has also strengthened its profile in the arts. Learn more at www.doaks.org.