

DUMBARTON OAKS

RESEARCH LIBRARY AND COLLECTION

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Dumbarton Oaks Launches Second Urban Landscape Humanities Initiative

Funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the three-year initiative will focus on Democracy, Race, and Difference.

New York and Washington, DC,—Dumbarton Oaks, a research institute of Harvard University, has been awarded an Urban Humanities grant by [The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#). The grant will support research and scholarly programming on **Democracy and the Urban Landscape** with particular attention to questions of race, identity, and difference. To this end, the Foundation has awarded Dumbarton Oaks \$750,000 over three years.

Over the past four years, the initial [Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies](#) at Dumbarton Oaks has brought designers, urban theorists, and historians into conversation with anthropologists and geographers to explore narratives of urban history writ broadly. The Initiative has advanced historical understanding of urban landscapes and strengthened the contributions of landscape and environmental history to the broader humanities. In addition to innovative programs and events, the first phase has 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. It has also resulted in new educational programming at Dumbarton Oaks to help high-school students in the District increase literacy in landscape and environmental history.

In this second phase, the Urban Landscape Initiative will produce and disseminate scholarship that reframes the narratives of landscape history through a deeper inquiry into the legacies of race, identity, and difference as they shape the practice of democracy. By examining how violence and inequality have been inscribed into the urban landscape, the initiative seeks to contribute to the kind of inclusive dialogue required to nurture a dynamic democracy and address legacies of neglect and marginalization. As the premier research center for landscape history in the United States, located in the highly significant civic landscape of Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks is well placed to enhance and expand the field of urban humanities through fellowships, scholarly and educational programs, publications, and exhibitions.

“The Democracy and the Urban Landscape Initiative will contribute to critical studies of race and identity as traced in the landscapes of our public realm, deepening our humanistic inquiry and broadening our understanding of civic engagement,” noted Thaisa Way, Program Director for Garden and Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, who will lead the project. “This is a scholarly endeavor as well as a teaching project.”

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

- Eric Avila, Professor, Chicano Studies, UCLA
- NDB Connolly, Herbert Baxter Adams Associate Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University
- Justin Garrett-Moore, Urban Designer, Executive Director of the Public Design Commission, New York
- Dell Upton, Professor, Art History, UCLA
- Michelle Wilkinson, Curator, (and LOEB Fellow) NMAAHC
- Willow Lung Amam, Associate Professor, Urban Studies and Planning Program, University of Maryland

"The renewal of the Mellon Foundation's support recognizes and allows us to build on work we have been pursuing at Dumbarton Oaks for several years, through expanded opportunities for researchers and groundbreaking research and publications in landscape history." added Jan Ziolkowski, Director of Dumbarton Oaks. "Our institution has been collaborating on multiple fronts to ensure that the humanities and arts, through their historically informed knowledge and artistically inspired creativity, contribute as only they can do to the solutions the world so urgently needs. We feel gratitude and great pride for the trust that the Mellon Foundation has placed in us, and we hope to deliver in ways that do credit to them and us, Harvard and DC."

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-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.
