Lungiswa Gqunta Named Artist in Residence at Dumbarton Oaks

WASHINGTON—We are delighted to announce that Lungiswa Gqunta will be Research Artist in Residence at Dumbarton Oaks from September 12 to November 4, 2022. Gqunta’s residency inaugurates a new program that brings contemporary visual artists to Dumbarton Oaks for varying periods of time to engage with the collections, museum and garden spaces, and the community. At the end of the residency, the artist may propose a site-specific installation in the garden, museum, or both. The Research Artist Residency complements the Musician in Residence Fellowship instituted in 2014 and is intended to further grow our community and revive the tradition of contemporary art installations at Dumbarton Oaks inaugurated by John Beardsley, who returns to Dumbarton Oaks as Consulting Curator for the program.

The Artist
Lungiswa Gqunta (b.1990 South Africa) is a multidisciplinary artist working in performance, printmaking, sculpture, and installation. She holds a BA from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and an MFA from the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in Cape Town. Gqunta is a founding member of iQhiya Collective, a network of young Black female artists based in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa.

Gqunta’s practice aims to deconstruct spatial modes of exclusion and oppression by addressing the access to and ownership of land, persistent social imbalances, and legacies of patriarchal dominance and colonialism. She explores how segregation and inequality are inscribed into spaces like public parks, suburban lawns, or botanical gardens. Gqunta’s multisensory installations often activate the senses through the scent of burning plants or petrol. A review of her immersive gardens, composed of razor wire and found objects, by Nkgopoleng Moloi in Art in America notes that “Her choice to highlight the dismal nature of her material surroundings only emphasizes the appeal of the alternative spiritual realms she conjures alongside them.”

Gqunta’s upcoming exhibition, Sleep in Witness, will open at the Henry Moore Institute, UK, on July 7. She has had five solo exhibitions to date, most recently Tending to the Harvest of Dreams (2021) at the MMK Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt. Noteworthy group exhibitions include Ubuntu a Lucid Dream at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2021); On the Necessity of Gardening at Centraal Museum, Netherlands (2021); and The Faculty of Sensing at Kunstverein Braunschwe, Germany (2020).
Her works are in public collections, including Kunsthaus Zurich; MMK Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt; and KADIST, Paris. Gjeta Gjunta has had residencies at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam; Gasworks, London; and the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos.

**History of the Art Installation Program**

The art installation program dates to 2008, when John Beardsley joined Dumbarton Oaks as Director of Garden and Landscape Studies. Drawing on his track record of organizing museum exhibitions and public installations, Beardsley initiated a program of temporary installations that explored the complex interactions between contemporary art and landscape. He invited artists to visit Dumbarton Oaks, spend time in the gardens, get to know the museum and library collections, and engage with staff and fellows prior to making a proposal for an artistic intervention. Projects were selected based on their affinity with the character of Dumbarton Oaks and the scale, materials, iconography, and design vocabulary of the garden, and featured artists such as Charles Simonds, Patrick Dougherty, and Cao/Perrot Studio. Some interventions were conceived in dialogue with scholarly programs—such as a sound installation by Hugh Livingston commissioned to coincide with the symposium “Sound and Scent in the Garden.” Recognizing that Dumbarton Oaks has multiple constituencies—local, national, and international; scholarly and public—the program aimed over time for a range of projects, some more site-specific than others, some more provocative than others, but all providing unexpected experiences and fresh perspectives on Dumbarton Oaks and its environment.

In 2020, executive director Yota Batsaki proposed to director Tom Cummins that the program should be revived in continuing partnership with John Beardsley. The renewed aim is to bring contemporary artists into consistent and extended engagement with the Dumbarton Oaks collections and community, and to attract existing and new audiences to the museum and garden. The external advisory committee has been reconvened and includes National Gallery of Art curator Molly Donovan and local artist Martha Jackson Jarvis, who created the most recent installation in the garden and museum in 2018.