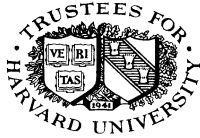


DUMBARTON OAKS WASHINGTON, DC

GARDEN & LANDSCAPE STUDIES



River Cities: Historical and Contemporary **2015 Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, Garden and Landscape Studies** **Call for Papers**

Resilience and adaptability are key elements of viable urbanism. But how have these concepts been understood historically? And how do they shape the design and stewardship of urban landscapes today? The dynamic relationships between cities and their rivers, a landscape of potentially critical adaptability and resilience, is the focus of the 2015 Garden and Landscape Studies Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks. Building on the emergence of urban humanities and urban landscape history, we propose to consider the urban river as a city-making landscape deserving of careful reading and analysis: past, present, and future.

The subject of this symposium builds on a new multi-year initiative in urban landscape studies, which Dumbarton Oaks is launching in 2015 with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Its principal goal is to create a dialogue between designers and scholars to address the landscape consequences of advancing urbanization. With this task in mind, the 2015 symposium aims to bring together the work of contemporary designers with the historical perspectives of scholars, encouraging practitioners and historians to bridge the gaps between their modes of thinking. We would particularly welcome proposals for collaborative or paired presentations by designers and historians working on similar topics or the same city.

Cities have emerged on the banks of rivers throughout history. Rivers are multi-faceted ecological, cultural, economic, and political agents, providing resources such as food, water, irrigation, sanitation, and transportation—and liabilities including flooding, drought, and occasional changes in their locations. While many cities share the history of rivers running through their cores, the relationships between rivers and cities are shaped by unique circumstances. New Orleans and Cairo, for example, were both located on the silt deposited by floods; yet, as these cities grew, one used a dam and the other levees to harness their rivers. While describing the river as part of urban infrastructure, how can we read the river landscape as a dynamic catalyst in the urban process? What is the role of the river, beyond its performance as a transportation corridor and a water source? How do its place, its flow, its speed, and its dynamic character shape the development of cities and the experience of the urban landscape spatially, geographically, and temporally? What landscape elements are distinctive to these urban river contexts—bridges, parks, ports, weirs, mills, various defensive structures—and how might the landscapes of inland river cities differ from those in deltas and on estuaries?

Another aspect of the relationship between cities and rivers that this symposium will explore concerns its representation in human experience, practice, and imagination. How do rivers frame the urban experience? Do they offer a connection to nature in the city as so many have claimed we need? What are their cultural and ritual uses? What can we discover by investigating the historical role of the river and city-making that might offer an alternative perspective on contemporary issues of access to clean water, public space, transportation, and the challenges of climate change are addressed? How might a historical investigation offer a means to re-imagine the way we think about and use our urban rivers today? Conversely, how can the spatial thinking of designers today revise our historical understandings of rivers and cities?

The 2015 symposium seeks papers that consider river cities from the earliest settlements to contemporary metropolitan regions around the globe. Just as rivers flow across continents, we are looking broadly to engage in a discussion of urban rivers, past and present, nationally and internationally.

Please submit a 300 word abstract to Thaisa Way (tway@uw.edu) by September 14, 2014 to be considered for the 2015 Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Landscape Studies symposium: *River Cities: Historical and Contemporary*. If accepted, full papers will be due on March 1, 2015 for presentation in May 2015. For more information, contact Thaisa Way, University of Washington / tway@uw.edu / 206 685 2523.