Sylvan Cemetery (New York, 25 Oct 14)

New York City, Columbia University, Schermerhorn Hall, Oct 25, 2014

Elisabeth Rochau-Shalem

Symposium
Sylvan Cemetery: Architecture, Art and Landscape at Woodlawn

(Free and open to the public; galleries will be open from 1–6 pm)

Authors for a new book published on the occasion of the exhibition by Columbia University's Avery Library and The Woodlawn Cemetery, will present their original research on the changing ideas about memorial monuments and commemorative landscapes. Speakers will include: Woodlawn Cemetery's historian Susan Olsen; Professor Andrew S. Dolkart, director of Historic Preservation, Columbia University; Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, curator of American Decorative Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Charles D. Warren, architect and architectural historian.

Curated by Janet Parks, Susan Olsen, and Charles D. Warren

PROGRAM

1:00
Welcome
Carole Ann Fabian, Director, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library

1:15
Commemorating an Anniversary: Woodlawn at 150
Susan Olsen, Director, Historical Services, Woodlawn Cemetery

1:45
Garden Necropolis: Planning Woodlawn's Landscape
Charles D. Warren, Architect

2:15
Designing Woodlawn: Buildings and Landscapes
Andrew S. Dolkart, Professor of Historic Preservation, Columbia University GSAPP

2:45
Behind Closed Doors: Notable Stained Glass at Woodlawn Cemetery

Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, Curator of American Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

3:15
Curating the Woodlawn Archive & Exhibit
Janet Parks, Curator of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library

3:30 Q&A

4:00
Welcome to the Sylvan Cemetery exhibition
Jeanette Silverthorne, Associate Director, Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery

The exhibition "Sylvan Cemetery" at the Wallach Art Gallery is co-curated by Janet Parks, Charles D. Warren and Susan Olsen.

Sylvan Cemetery: Architecture, Art and Landscape at Woodlawn coincides with Woodlawn's 150th anniversary celebration, and is an outgrowth of the Cemetery's 2006 gift of its archive—the most complete set of 19th– and 20th–century cemetery records held in the public trust–to the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. The exhibition marks the first time selections from this archive will be displayed.

Sylvan Cemetery highlights the renowned architects, artists, artisans and landscape designers whose work has come to define Woodlawn Cemetery, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2011 for the significance of its art and architecture. Through the display of preparatory and design drawings and sketches, maps, building elevations, early photographs, maintenance records and letters, the exhibition will examine Woodlawn's creation in 1863, its response and adaptation to changing ideas about memorial monuments and commemorative landscapes since then and its role in defining the art, architecture and landscape of American cemeteries.

Key objects in the exhibition include: a door from the Straus Mausoleum–the final resting place of Isidor and Ida Straus, who perished during the sinking of the Titanic–created by metalworker Samuel Yellin; a maquette of the Vernon Castle Memorial by sculptor Sally Farnham and a stained glass window by Tiffany Studios, from the Harbeck Mausoleum.

Woodlawn exemplifies the landscape-lawn style of cemetery that became popular after the Civil War. The park-like setting encouraged the creation of freestanding monuments and mausoleums, which wealthy New

Yorkers commissioned the leading architects to design and the era's best-known artists and craftsmen to embellish. In the process, fine art sculpture, metalwork and stained glass became central to Woodlawn's landscape and influenced memorials at other American cemeteries. Featured in Sylvan Cemetery will be the work of landscape designers Beatrix Farrand, the Olmsted Brothers and Ellen Biddle Shipman; architects McKim, Mead, & White, Carrère & Hastings and John Russell Pope; as well as craftsmen and artists Rafael Guastavino and son Rafael, Jr., Louis Comfort Tiffany, John LaFarge, Samuel Yellin and Alexander Archipenko.

"The creation of Woodlawn is a classic New York story of money, real estate, art and familial relationships," said exhibition co–curator and Woodlawn Cemetery's historian Susan Olsen. "It is also a national story, which started in the industrial age and goes through today, as prominent Americans continue to choose Woodlawn as their final resting place. This story is written into our landscape and is on view for anyone who visits our monuments and gravesites."

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, co-published by Columbia University's Avery Library and The Woodlawn Cemetery, which includes an introduction by Susan Olsen and essays by Andrew S. Dolkart, director of Historic Preservation, Columbia University; Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, curator of American Decorative Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art; the late Cynthia Mills, Smithsonian Historian Emeritus, and Charles D. Warren, architect and architectural historian. The catalogue also features previously unpublished images of memorials and mausoleums.

Reference:

CONF: Sylvan Cemetery (New York, 25 Oct 14). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 24, 2014 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/8620>.