Working with Heritage Landscapes
Jonathan Hallet, JLS Summer Travel 2014 Recipient

I spent the summer working for two nonprofit organizations relating to heritage landscapes: the Bloedel Reserve and Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks (FSOP). At the Bloedel, I provided design and planting advice for renovating the landscape around the original estate residence. At FSOP, I analyzed Olmsted-designed landscapes in Washington State for Olmstedonline.org, a hub for Olmsted projects. Both internships provided exciting experiences in understanding landscapes through historical and cultural lenses.

The Bloedel Reserve is an internationally renowned 150-acre public garden, intended as a peaceful and refreshing experience in nature. The garden is famous for blending native Northwest forest with landscaped gardens, including a moss garden, Japanese garden, and the Bloedel’s former Chateau estate home. The visitor emerges from the forest to see the Chateau, sitting just beyond a lake. The estate used to feature two massive elm trees on either side, and since they grew sick and were taken out last year, Bloedel management wondered what to do next with grounds.

This is where I came in. I began by studying the original plan drawings of the site by Thomas Church, Richard Haag, among other consulted landscape architects. I observed how visitors used the site, and collaborated with the Horticultural Director, Executive Director, and the Grounds Committee on long-term grounds improvements. Through multiple iterations, I came to a final proposed design, which includes embracing sickle-shaped perennial flowerbeds that create open garden rooms, for new views and interest in an otherwise inactivated area. The design also incorporates a water lily pond with small fountain, to bring some movement and sound to a space that feels overly one-dimensional. A paved courtyard provides transition from the formal to semi-formal lookout over the rhododendron glen, and helps to show visitors where to go once they leave the chateau. The Grounds Committee will and Bloedel staff will review these ideas in their next September meeting, and I hope they receive much support and are carried out.

I also led the high school interns at the Bloedel through designing a perennial planting for the front of the Chateau, which we took from drawing to installation together. These perennial plantings are the first use of summer flowers and color for the otherwise green and foliage-based Bloedel. We chose flowers and color to appeal to the current audience of more casual visitors and families than garden society people.

I also set up the parameters of a design competition for a neglected bank at the Bloedel. The competition will be open to higher education students sometime this academic year. It will be exciting to apply and have classmates at Berkeley apply too!

For the FSOP in Seattle, I went through archives of Olmsted correspondences and drawings to write synopses of the Olmsted bros. projects in Washington. I visited a number of the Olmsted designed landscapes in Seattle, and looked for what I could still make out from the original designs. I created a presentation board for FSOP of Olmstedian principles portrayed through Seattle Olmsted landscapes.

I thoroughly enjoyed both internships, and learned so much about 20th century landscape design and working with heritage sites. I am so grateful to have had the funding to embark on these incredibly enriching projects, which neither of the organizations could otherwise fund. I know my experiences will enrich what I bring to my landscape studio and the two CED landscape history courses I’m taking this fall. Thank you so much to Ray Lifchez, Christina Huang, and the jury that supported this adventure!
Design for Bloedel Chateau Grounds

View of Chateau across the lake
Front of Chateau, current grounds

Bloedel North Bank – site of upcoming design competition
Bloedel estate all set for its annual garden party fundraiser, this year its live auction raised a record-breaking $460,000

Interns installing our planting design
More of our new planting design

Bloedel Japanese garden
Olmsted-designed Green Lake, Seattle

Entry to the Olmsted-designed Dunn Gardens in Seattle