

# CHOICE

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Phone: (860) 347-6933 Fax: (860) 704-0465  
www.choicemag.org

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HUMANITIES

Art & Architecture

Yvonne Crevier Business Manager  
University of Massachusetts Press  
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**Civic art: a centennial history of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**, ed. by Thomas E. Luebke. U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2013. 626p index ISBN 9780160897023, \$85.00

The editor of this massive tome, an architect, is secretary to the US Commission of Fine Arts, an agency of the federal government with seven members appointed by the president. His preface describes the work of the commission since 1910. The commission seeks "urban cohesion and order" and stewards the cultural heritage of Washington. The book covers the commission's purview of architecture, sculpture, city plans, White House renovations, cemeteries, monuments, public art, war memorials, medals, coins, and commemorative objects. Old Georgetown is also in the commission's purview as is the mass transit system's architecture. Neighborhood development and historic preservation are described, and accompanying controversies and political machinations are covered in detail. More than 900 excellent pictures illustrate everything covered. In six insightful essays, historians discuss Washington's issues and classicism, Beaux Arts style, modernism, postmodernism, new urbanism, environmentalism, post 9/11 security, environmentalism, and sustainability. Appendixes cover legislative history, biographies of commissioners, the Old Georgetown Board, and contributing staff and essayists. A list of abbreviations/acronyms is included. This highly detailed, monumental work is an important resource covering Washington's history and the processes that have created the capital's built culture since 1910. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and above; general readers. -- *W. L. Whitwell, formerly, Hollins College*