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April 11, 2013

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Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens announces two new staff appointments

Corinne Topper, named development officer, to focus on grant and foundation funding opportunities; research fellow, Wilfried Zeisler, brings distinctive academic perspective to the French and Russian collections

WASHINGTON—Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens announced new staff appointments in the areas of collections and fundraising. Wilfried Zeisler has been appointed as a doctoral fellow and Corrine Topper has been named development officer, bringing significant professional and academic experience to these important areas of focus at Hillwood. Topper began her new role in February and Zeisler in March.

“The appointments of both Wilfried and Corinne, both having proven excellence in their fields, highlight the continued research potential of the collections and the significance we place on our fundraising efforts,” explained Hillwood executive director Kate Markert. “The largest imperial art collection outside Russia, Hillwood’s holdings have been extensively researched. But this new perspective that Wilfried brings shows there are still many connections to make and much relevance to be uncovered for today’s audiences”

“Along with research into the collections, Hillwood continues to develop dynamic programming to attract contemporary audiences and Corinne’s expertise will help us to secure the funding necessary to continue growing and meeting the needs of our visitors,” Markert continued.

Zeisler comes to Hillwood as part of the newly-initiated doctoral fellowship program and will conduct special research on the intersection of French 19th-century decorative with Russian imperial art collections and patrons, Zeisler received his doctoral degree in art history from Sorbonne University, Paris, with a dissertation on “The Purchases of French *objets d’art* by the Russian Court, 1881-1917,” offering a dual perspective on French and Russian decorative arts in the context of political, commercial, and artistic interactions of the time. He has also been a research lecturer at the École du Louvre on the subjects of French decorative arts from the Middle Age to Art Nouveau, French 19th-century art, French jewelry, 18th to 19th-century Russian art, Fabergé, and the history of Russian palaces from 1825 to 1925.

Topper brings a wealth of arts related fundraising experience to this growing effort at

Hillwood. As executive director of the Susquehanna Art Museum from 2006 to 2009, Topper wrote a case for a \$10 million capital campaign, successfully secured funding from both public and private sources, and developed outreach programs to increase museum attendance by 15 percent. Prior to the Susquehanna Art Museum, Topper was executive director of a city non-profit funding resource, and executive director of the Demuth Foundation—the home, museum, and gardens of artist Charles Demuth. She has a bachelor of arts degree in art history from Wake Forest University and a master's in government administration from the University of Pennsylvania.

At Hillwood, Topper will focus on grant and foundation funding opportunities. Zeisler will conduct further research into the connections between the French and Russian collections and present his findings at the end of his fellowship period this summer.

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When Post cereal heiress, art collector, social figure, and philanthropist Marjorie Merriweather Post left to the public her northwest Washington, D.C. estate, she endowed the country with the most comprehensive collection of Russian imperial art outside of Russia, a notable 18th-century French decorative art collection, and 25 acres of serene landscaped gardens and natural woodlands. Opened as a public institution in 1977, today Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens offers a gracious and immersive experience unlike any other. Highlights of the collection include Fabergé eggs, Russian porcelain, Russian Orthodox icons, Beauvais tapestries, and Sèvres porcelain, and Post's personal collection of apparel, accessories, and exquisite jewelry. Thirteen acres of enchanting formal gardens include the Japanese-style Garden, Rose Garden, French Parterre, and a greenhouse full of orchids.