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**HILLWOD ACQUIRES RARE PIECE OF TULA STEEL IN MEMORY OF LONGTIME CURATOR ANNE CURTIS ODOM (1935-2011)**

**Addition of candlestick to Russian imperial art collection places Hillwood among small group of museums in the United States to own Tula steel**

WASHINGTON—Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens recently purchased an 18<sup>th</sup>-century candlestick by the Armament Factory in Tula, Russia, in memory of longtime chief curator Anne C. Odom (1935-1911). Dating from 1780 to 1790, this cut steel and gilt bronze candlestick is an outstanding example of the decorative faceting, pierced lattice work, and encrustation that made late 18<sup>th</sup>-century decorative steel from Tula a favorite of Catherine the Great and the imperial court. Very few pieces of Tula steel exist in the United States and this superlative addition to the collection places Hillwood among a small group of museums who own examples of this rare craftsmanship.



“Hillwood houses what is considered to be the most significant collection of Russian imperial art outside of Russia, and Anne Odom contributed immeasurably to its understanding and appreciation,” said executive director Kate Markert. “This acquisition allows us both to honor Anne and her desire to fill this gap in Hillwood’s collection and to maintain our standard of expanding the cultural and historic significance of the collection with meaningful additions that allow for new perspectives, research, and interpretation.” The museum’s last major acquisition was in 2011, with the purchase of an immaculate jeweled silver and enamel box from the House of Bolin, one of the most important jewelers to work for the last Russian Imperial Court in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The candlestick will go on display to the public on March 19, 2013.

## Tula Steel

The city of Tula, 120 miles southwest of Moscow, became the center of arms production in Russia when Peter the Great established the first arms factory there in 1712. Tula was already populated by master smiths who were producing arquebuses (an early firearm) and other weapons of high quality, intricate design, and beautiful finish. By the second half of the century, the factory extended its products to objects of everyday use, including furniture, mirror frames, chess sets, and candlesticks, concurrent with weapons, yielding a distinctive reputation for Tula. From the 1740s on, the factory received frequent commissions to produce pieces for the imperial court including, in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many orders for richly-decorated hunting weapons—some as gifts to foreign dignitaries. For several years, Catherine the Great visited the town of Sophia, near Tsarskoe Selo (the Romanov summer residence), to see an exhibition of new creations by the Tula craftsmen.

By the late 1700s, decorative faceting was implemented to replicate, with variously-shaped intricate steel beads, the quality of precious stones. The Hillwood candlestick is a fine example of this faceting, with rows of diamond-like beading lending it an elegance and jewel-like quality. Tula's original method of encrustation in low relief with gold and silver is evidenced in this piece as well, with garlands of flowers and ribbons characteristic of Tula pieces from this time.



The purchase of the Tula candlestick was made possible with Hillwood acquisition funds and the support of the Hillwood Collector's Circle. On March 20, 2013, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, curator of Russian and Eastern European art Scott Ruby will present a lecture about the history of the Tula factory and its ornamental steel craftsmanship. *Steel Diamonds, in Memory of Anne Odom* will also feature chief curator Liana Paredes, who will narrate the in-depth search that led her to Paris to find this fitting piece in memory of Anne Odom.

An internationally known scholar in the field of Russian art from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Anne Odom first began working at Hillwood in 1978. She served as the chief curator from 1991 and both deputy director for collections and chief curator from 1997 to 2001. From 2001, she continued as a very active curator emerita until her death in 2011. Odom ardently researched and promoted Hillwood's collection, educating the staff, volunteers, and wider field of Russian scholars about the

genesis of the Russian collection, and its value as a repository of Russian culture in the United States.

### Hillwood background

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 18<sup>th</sup>-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.

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### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Location:** 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC  
Metro: VanNess/UDC, Red Line (20 minute walk)
- Information:** (202) 686-5807 for information and reservations or [www.HillwoodMuseum.org](http://www.HillwoodMuseum.org)  
Follow us [www.Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum](https://www.Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum) or Twitter @HillwoodMuseum
- Hours:** Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; Select Sundays, 1 to 5 pm. Closed Mondays, most national holidays, and for several weeks in January.
- Café:** The HILLWOOD Café serves lunch Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm.  
Afternoon Tea is served on Sundays only from 1 to 3:30 pm.  
Express Dining, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages is available Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday from 1 to 4 pm.  
Call (202) 686-5807 for café reservations
- Suggested Donation:** \$15, \$12 seniors, \$10 college students, \$5 for visitors age 6 to 18.  
No donation is suggested for children under 6.