

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Hi res images available upon request

**Media Contact Only:**

Lynn Rossotti (202) 243-3975  
[lrossotti@HillwoodMuseum.org](mailto:lrossotti@HillwoodMuseum.org)

Lizzie Axelson (202) 243-3906  
[eaxelson@HillwoodMuseum.org](mailto:eaxelson@HillwoodMuseum.org)

***Roaring Twenties: The Life and Style of Marjorie Merriweather Post***

**On view June 12, 2021 to January 9, 2022**

**Explore the Jazz Age fashion, decorative art, jewelry, and design that made Marjorie Merriweather Post one of the most influential women of the 1920s.**

Washington, D.C.— Hillwood founder Marjorie Merriweather Post was an iconic tastemaker during the era known as the Roaring Twenties. One hundred years later, Hillwood celebrates Post's influence on the period—her impeccable attire, impressive art collection, and sumptuous design—in the special exhibition *Roaring Twenties: The Life and Style of Marjorie Merriweather Post*, on view at [Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens](#) from June 12, 2021 to January 9, 2022.

The 1920s was a decade of change for Marjorie Post, and she rose to the occasion, emerging as a prominent figure in the worlds of art, fashion, and business. The decorative objects and glamorous gowns on display in this exhibition reveal a legendary lifestyle and the range of art and style that embodied the essence of the Roaring Twenties.

"Marjorie Post was a leading influencer throughout the twentieth century," explained Kate Markert, Hillwood's executive director. "The 1920s was a seminal decade for her as she developed into the icon we know her as today—a collector, philanthropist, humanitarian, and businesswoman, determined to do good and use her means to benefit others."



**Background**

The progress, prosperity, and liberation that characterized the 1920s had a significant effect on the role of women in America, and Marjorie Post was no exception. The Post Cereal Company, which she inherited from her father, was thriving, and she, along with new husband E.F. Hutton, established herself firmly within the new society that was burgeoning. The stylish French 18<sup>th</sup>-century furnishings and decorative arts that once populated her multiple residences, the glamorous attire

that typified the independent “new woman,” and her astonishing collection of exotic gems and jewelry tell the story of the Roaring Twenties through the lens of one of its most influential women.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) epitomized this age of excess and glamour embraced by Post and her peers in his 1926 novel, *The Great Gatsby*, writing, “The parties were bigger. The pace was faster, the shows were broader, the buildings were higher, the morals were looser, the liquor was cheaper.” As wealthy business and social figures darting between New York City, Palm Beach, and Europe, Post and her husband, Hutton, found themselves at the center of this splendor, which will be feted to dazzling heights in this special exhibition.

“During the 1920s, Marjorie Post collected French decorative art, attained business success, managed remarkable homes, and became a fashion icon on best-dressed lists,” said Megan Martinelli, exhibition curator. “Her engagement in all these spheres reflects the spirit of the 1920s and the decade’s contributions to art, design, and social change.”

Gathered together for the first time at Hillwood, these objects of Post’s incredible life will demonstrate the glamour, excitement, and international nature of this remarkable decade.

## Exhibition Organization and Highlights

*Roaring Twenties* will open with an introduction about Marjorie Post in this era, as she transitioned into the 1920s. As the decade gave rise to new trends and changes across the United States, Post experienced shifts of her own, embracing her role as the owner of Postum Cereal Company, moving to Manhattan and adopting apartment living, seriously collecting art, and supporting her philanthropic causes.

The post-World War I environment and expansion of international travel in the 1920s increased interest in other cultures around the globe. Trends arose and came to the West, notably art deco, Asian influences, and the Russian avant-garde. Decorative objects on view in the exhibition reflect Post’s important criteria for collecting: that objects be finely crafted, made of exquisite materials, and have royal connections.

Art deco, derived from *arts décoratifs*, featured simple, clean lines, often with colorful geometric abstraction, and was incorporated into fashion, jewelry, and furniture design. Post was a major client of Cartier during this period and, like many of her wealthy cohort, chose exquisite frames and personal accessories in bold, deco designs studded with jewels. Asian influences, from Japanese, Indian, and Chinese cultures, became popular in America and Europe as the countries incorporated techniques, motifs, and materials into fashion, jewelry, architecture, and furniture. Some of the fashion accessories Post added to her collection during this time are evocative of the



popular Western taste for these global designs, especially her collection of Chinese hand-painted silk and carved ivory fans and a white jade and needlepoint Cartier handbag. Post also acquired her famous carved Mughal emerald brooch pendant and accompanying necklace to punctuate her more dramatic looks. Russian avant-garde flourished through 1930, informing the concurrent art deco movement and influencing artistic and sartorial designs.

With her marriage to E.F. Hutton in 1920, Post's social agenda expanded to Gatsby-level proportions, with glamorous events that often raised funds for the philanthropic causes she supported. These lavish parties, operas, and fundraisers demanded splendid gowns and ensembles. Post commissioned her attire from New York's finest dressmakers and boutiques, frequenting Bergdorf Goodman, Madame Frances, and Thurn. Dresses in the exhibition include drop-waisted, flapper-style gowns, dramatic capes, and custom fancy-dress ball costumes.

Homes were important to Post, serving not only as spaces for entertaining and settings for her growing art collection but also as the nucleus of her family life. The style in which Post furnished her residences, including her palatial New York triplex apartment, the original Hillwood on Long Island, her Adirondack camp, and her Palm Beach mansions, was emblematic of what was in vogue at the time, notably French and English antiques. Post began collecting in earnest during this period. A French 18<sup>th</sup>-century chest of drawers, crafted of wood marquetry, ormolu, and marble reflects the type of furniture that was the trend of the day. Gold boxes and objects of vertu were also popular among collectors of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A pair of heart-shaped boxes made in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century is among the rarest pieces in Hillwood's collection. They epitomize Post's taste for beautifully crafted items and her affinity for these small objects that embody the civility and frivolity of the *Ancien Régime*. These works, and others, will be on view among re-creations of Post's residences of the time.

## **Curator**

Megan Martinelli became Hillwood's assistant curator of apparel, jewelry, and accessories in January 2018. Previously, Megan was a research assistant at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, where she contributed to internal object assessment research and assisted with exhibitions including *China: Through the Looking Glass* (2015) and *Manus x Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology* (2016). Before joining The Met, Megan curated an exhibition titled *The Other White Dress: Non-Wedding Dresses of the Twentieth Century* (2014) at the University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile Gallery and contributed to *Artist, Rebel, Dandy: Men of Fashion* (2013) at The RISD Museum of Art. At Hillwood, she was the curator of *Mid-Century Master: The Photography of Alfred Eisenstaedt* (2019). Megan holds a MS in historic textiles and costumes from the University of Rhode Island and a BA in English literature from Providence College.

## **Events and Programs**

*Roaring Twenties: The Life and Style of Marjorie Merriweather Post* inspires an array of programs and events throughout the presentation of the exhibition.

A benefit celebration will be held in September 2021. Inspired by Post's grand affairs at Hillwood, the evening will include cocktails and a glamorous dinner on the Lunar Lawn in honor of Post's singular style and in support of Hillwood's mission to share her cultural treasure with future generations.

In October, a 4-part lecture series will delve deeper into the world of the 1920s.

### **Press Preview**

A press breakfast and preview is planned for June. Date and invitation to follow.

### **Sponsors**

*Roaring Twenties: The Life and Style of Marjorie Merriweather Post* is supported by The Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, Janice and Ralph Shrader, Northern Trust, Ellen MacNeille Charles, Ms. Nedenia Rumbough and Mr. Jan Roosenburg, Diane B. Wilsey, and Elizabeth Elser Doolittle Charitable Trusts. All exhibitions and programs are funded in part by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts through the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs program. This project is supported by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

### **About Hillwood**

When art collector, businesswoman, 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, an [exquisite 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 & 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 jewelry. Thirteen acres of enchanting formal gardens include a [japanese-style garden](#), [rose garden](#), [French parterre](#), and an orchid-filled [greenhouse](#).

### **General Information**

Location: 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC  
Metro: Van Ness/UDC, Red Line (20 minute walk)

Information/Tickets: 202-686-5807 for information or [www.HillwoodMuseum.org](http://www.HillwoodMuseum.org)  
[Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum](https://Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum)

Hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mondays, most holidays, and for several weeks in January.

- Café: Merriweather To Go, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages, is available Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Ticketing: Advanced reservations are required to minimize physical contact and practice social distancing. No reservations will be taken on site. Reservations are by timed entry and are limited in order to manage safe capacity.  
\$18, \$15 seniors, \$10 college students, \$5 for visitors age 6 to 18.  
No donation is suggested for children under 6.  
Adults and seniors receive \$3 off the suggested donation for weekday visits and \$1 off for weekend visits when reservations are made online.  
Members receive free admission to visit the estate during regular operating hours. To join visit <http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/join>  
For more information visit <http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/hours-and-tickets>

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