

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2022

Hi-res images available upon request

Media Contact Only:

Lynn Rossotti 202.243.3975
lrossotti@HillwoodMuseum.org

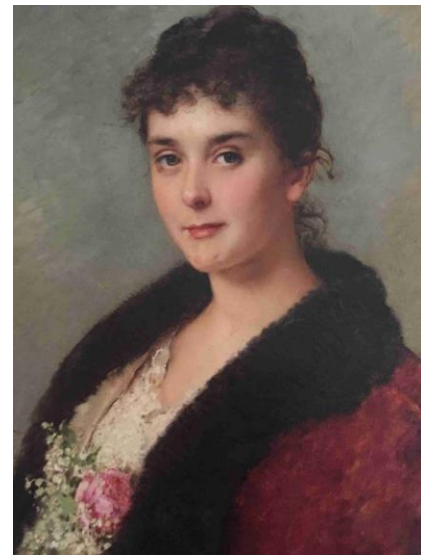
Lizzie Axelson 202.243.3906
eaxelson@HillwoodMuseum.org

Hillwood Acquires Pieces from the Paley-Romanov Collection to Enhance Russian Art and Library Collections

Imperial portraits, rare linens, and important archival documentation are significant additions to the museum.

WASHINGTON—[Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens](#)

recently purchased a collection of 335 items, ranging from the 1800s to 1900s, to add depth to the museum's Russian imperial and research collections. Acquired from a private collector and originally belonging to the family of Princess Olga Valerianovna Paley (1865-1929) and Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich (1860-1919), including their children Prince Vladimir Paley (1897-1918), Princess Irina Paley (1903-1990), and Princess Natalia Pavlovna Paley (1905-1981), the unique collection tells the story of five generations of the Russian imperial family, from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, while living in exile. The items include three imperial portraits; one lithograph; two family icons; a series of drawings and paintings by Nicholas II's sisters; twenty-eight groupings of objects and documents, including framed family photo portraits, some of which are signed; family silver; family linen; and various archives and documents.



This new collection fits in well at Hillwood, as founder Marjorie Merriweather Post had acquired, after the revolution, several objects once belonging to the Paley family, including Sèvres porcelain, Russian glassware, and Fabergé pieces. Post had a passion for works that were beautiful, finely crafted, and of royal provenance. She also recognized the European influence within many imperial Russian objects, and said, "as the influence of French artists and artisans was very strong in old Saint Petersburg and Moscow, it seems quite natural that the two artistic expressions should be brought together [at Hillwood]."

The additional objects enhance Hillwood's holdings from this family, and expands Hillwood's ability to continue Post's goal of preserving the memory of a vanished aristocratic culture. According to Chief Curator Wilfried Zeisler, "We see the acquisition as a great opportunity to add to Hillwood's collection, to reinforce the story we already have of Russia's imperial family within the current collection, and to open up the existing objects to new stories, projects, and

research. This follows Hillwood's acquisition plan, which includes the expansion of our art holdings to fill in gaps and strengthen the Russian collection, unique in the world outside Russia."

Zeisler's existing interest in Paley, resulting from his authorship of the book *Vivre la Belle Époque à Paris: Olga Paley et Paul de Russie* (2018), prompted and informed this acquisition. These objects tell the story not only of the five generations, from life at the imperial court to life in exile both pre- and post-revolution, but also of Olga Paley herself—her interesting love story and morganatic marriage to Duke Paul and her significant role in art and culture in France and Russia. Following the Russian revolution, Paley's heirs rescued some of the family's items and they have been held in a private collection in Paris ever since.

With such a large number and range of objects in the acquisition, there is much research to be done, particularly on the archival material and pieces that relate to Natalia and Vladimir Paley and on other documents that will need translation and study. A private collector has kept the objects carefully for decades, though there is still the need for conservation before display. A selection will go on view in the mansion when the process is complete.

Highlights of the Acquisition

The Paley-Romanov acquisition adds 335 pieces into the museum's holdings, divided between the object collection (195 items) and the archives and special collections library (approximately 140 items). Highlights include two imperial portraits, family linen, and archival documentation related to the Paley children.

The two paintings are a portrait of Olga Paley, then Olga von Pistolkors, by Konstantin Makovsky and a portrait of Alexander II by George Dawe. *Portrait of Countess Olga de Hohenfelsen* (1886) is the second Makovsky painting to enter the collection, joining *A Boyar Wedding Feast*, currently on view in the pavilion. *Portrait of Alexander II as a Child* (1820) is the first piece by George Dawe acquired by Hillwood and depicts the future emperor in his youth.

An unusual but very special addition is the family linen, which came to Hillwood in a large antique leather trunk. These French and Russian pieces, made of cotton and linen and dating to around 1905, a unique finding as these type of objects are typically not kept or well-conserved. Among the linen collection are rare sets of embroidered bedsheets, napkins, and tablecloths.

A particularly exciting aspect of the acquisition is the archival documentation primarily detailing the lives of young Prince Vladimir Paley, who was killed by the Bolsheviks in 1918, and his sister Princess Natalia Paley, who was a fashion model, socialite, film actor, and icon of the Hollywood era. The Natalia Paley materials highlight her intriguing connections to Jean Cocteau, Serge Lifar, Cecil Beaton, and many others. Some of the artists who took pictures of her also worked for Marjorie Post, an additional connection to Hillwood's existing collection.

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 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 & 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
[Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum](https://www.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 Café](#) is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Merriweather To Go, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages, is available Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Suggested Donation: \$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>

###