

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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

On Time: Giving Form to the Fleeting
On view February 14 through June 14, 2026

Travel through time via the instruments and decorated objects created to measure it.

Washington, D.C.—Discover the fascinating stories of timepieces throughout history from antiquity and the Renaissance to present day in the special exhibition [*On Time: Giving Form to the Fleeting*](#) on view at [Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens](#) from February 14 through June 14, 2026.

For millennia, human civilizations have devised methods and systems of quantifying and measuring time. For the first time, Hillwood will present the museum's robust collection of lavish 18th, 19th, and 20th-century timepieces, displaying these opulent objects alongside historic and contemporary loans to explore horology's place in society, both culturally and stylistically.

"Hillwood maintains an impressive collection of extravagant clocks and watches, representing an incredible range of styles, materials, and technological mechanisms," said Kate Markert, Hillwood's executive director. "We are thrilled to bring these fascinating objects into the spotlight, exploring the broader notion of time and placing these time-telling instruments into their historical and cultural contexts."



The History of Horology

Humans have long created instruments to measure time, from hourglasses, sundials, and clocks, to pocket and wrist watches, which became essential parts of daily life. In Hillwood's collection, the 18th and 19th centuries reveal the rise of rococo, neoclassical, and revival styles in timepieces designed to complement interiors, as well as finely crafted watches made from precious materials. In Marjorie Post's lifetime, more modern examples with minimal aesthetics became popular, particularly as functional clocks made of more lavish materials were more widely owned and the digital clock was created in the 20th century. The exhibition will trace these timepieces throughout history, offering insight into how these complex objects were made, how mechanisms function, and how they were displayed or worn.

Exhibition Organization and Highlights

On Time: Giving Form to the Fleeting will present an array of clocks, watches, paintings, decorative art objects and more, from antiquity to the present. Organized into seven sections, the exhibition will move chronologically, opening with an overview of horology before exploring the perception of time, its measurement, and individual timepieces, particularly those from Hillwood's collection.

The first section will set the stage for the exhibition by delving into humans' perception of time—the way we interpret it and how it gives our lives meaning. With prime examples exploring aging, day to night, and the seasons, it will feature decorative objects, accessories, paintings, and more.

Section two will focus on the measurement of time, from celestial to decimal to mechanical. A numerical system of measuring time evolved in the ancient Mediterranean world, based partly on astronomical movements. This later predominated in Europe and is used worldwide today. Universal Time emerged with the 1884 International Meridian Conference, establishing a global standardization which led to the creation of numerous instruments. From an ancient Egyptian shadow clock to a gilded brass and silver *Clock Supported by Hercules*, visitors will continue a visual journey through the development of new devices.

The crux of the exhibition, in the third and fourth sections, titled *Clocks and the Built Interior* and *Watches: Portable Time and Personal Adornment*, respectively, will feature the most extravagant clocks and watches from Hillwood's collection, including: a long case clock, minutely detailed bejeweled watches, a rare French clock depicting the female personification of Africa, and a range of examples from Fabergé, Cartier, and Tiffany & Co. Technological advancements in the 1600s contributed to the evolution of clocks and watches within Western cultures as they became objects that were not only functional but also decorative. Long-case, mantel, presentation, table, and desk clocks became important elements of designed interior spaces.

From these decorative pieces emerged adaptations for personal adornment, such as pocket, chatelaine, and wrist watches. Pocket watches became the most common portable timepiece over the course of the 1600s and remained a symbol of extreme luxury until the 1800s when they were produced on a larger scale. Detailed elements of these pieces—the watch cases, dials, and backs—were often richly decorated, illustrating the design trends of their respective time. Wristwatches,



which were more practical than precious and fragile pocket watches, progressively grew in popularity after World War I.

The next section will explore European horology and time telling in the non-Western World, presenting alternative methods of time telling. Intriguing pieces will include exported German mechanic clocks and those that featured appropriated Far Eastern motifs.

The exhibition will conclude with the appropriately titled *The End of Time*, investigating how different religions, myths, and legends relating to this topic have inspired literature, art, and movies, from the apocalypse to climate change.

Curator

Dr. Wilfried Zeisler is Hillwood's deputy director and chief curator. He is a graduate of Sorbonne University and the Ecole du Louvre, Paris. Wilfried has written extensively on French and Russian decorative arts, including several articles and contributions to books. Wilfried's dissertation, *L'Objet d'art et de luxe française en Russie (1881-1917)* [French Objects d'art and Luxury Goods in Russia], was published in Paris in 2014. Since 2009, he has participated in and curated exhibitions in Paris, Monaco, and Washington, D.C. At Hillwood, his most recent exhibitions were *Fabergé Rediscovered* (2018), *Bouke de Vries: War and Pieces* (2019), *Natural Beauties: Exquisite Works of Minerals and Gems* (2020), *The Porcelain Flowers of Vladimir Kanevsky* (2021), *Determined Women: Collectors, Artists, and Designers at Hillwood* (2023), *Glass: Art. Beauty. Design.* (2023), *Fragile Beauty: Art of the Ocean* (2024), and *From Exile to Avant-Garde: The Life of Princess Natalie Paley* (2025), which he co-curated. Wilfried co-authored *Konstantin Makovsky: The Tsar's Painter in America and Paris* (2015) and *The Houses and Collections of Marjorie Merriweather Post: The Joy of It* (2022). He is the author of *Fabergé Rediscovered* (2018), *Les Youssoupoff—Un Siècle de Collections Françaises* (2023), and *The Belle Époque Life in Paris: Olga Paley and Paul of Russia* (2025).

Events and Programs

On Time: Giving Form to the Fleeting will inspire an array of programs and events throughout the presentation of the exhibition. A special event timed to Valentine's Day, on Thursday, February 12, 2026, will celebrate the opening of the exhibition. A spring lecture series will feature a rich array of speakers exploring a variety of topics related to the exhibition.

Exhibition Sponsors

On Time: Giving Form to the Fleeting is supported by The Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, Ellen MacNeille Charles, Martha R. Johnston, Jess and Clayton Kratz, The Cheremeteff Richardson Philanthropic Fund, and Ms. Nedenia Rumbough and Mr. Jan Roosenburg. 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 was 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 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
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 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Merriweather To Go, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages, is available Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Ticketing:	\$20, \$17 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/membership For more information visit http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/hours-and-tickets

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