

The Post Serial

Volunteer Newsletter of Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

Volume 22, Issue 4

Fall 2016

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Jessica Bonilla, Head Gardener

As you may know, Jason Gedeik, who has designed and overseen our holiday display installation for several years now, has moved on to an exciting adventure with Brookside Gardens. Starting on October 31, we are pleased to welcome Ami Wilber to Hillwood as our new Floral and Event Decor Designer. For more about Ami, see "Horticultural Transitions" on page 8.

As I filled Jason's shoes during the interim, I was amazed with the amount of logistics involved. The entire process began nearly a year ago with the development of a theme. Our holiday décor is typically inspired by our exhibitions. This year, we are in a unique situation of having two: *Deco Japan* and *Four Seasons*. It became evident quite early that we could really expand on *Four Seasons* in the mansion. Outside of the obvious, four seasons equaling at least four trees, the rooms themselves call out for particular seasons. For example, what would be better for the dining room than a sumptuous autumn banquet? Or a spring tree to go with the cheery ambiance and bright rose-colored tones of the French drawing room? *Deco Japan* could then encompass the visitor center where it could take on a life of its own and really represent the large exhibition that it is.



*Arcimboldo's
Autumn*

Now you may be wondering, other than just being wonderfully organized, why is it so important to start the planning process so early? Actually, new holiday product lines are debuted in January or February and can be sold out by March! So it's really important to go into the purchasing process with a clear idea of what to buy because you have to act fast. For *Four Seasons*, Jason went back and looked at Giuseppe Arcimboldo's original paintings on which the Philip Haas sculptures are based. He found inspiration in the flowers, fruit and vegetables. These trees were especially challenging because not only did they have to represent a season but they still had to look like Christmas and fit with the style of the room. No small feat. For *Deco Japan*, he was moved by vivid, high contrast colors, geometric patterns and unique materials like lacquered wood and brass. Then he took these ideas, looked at our inventory, looked at what the vendors had to offer and began to design.

After the designs were ready and the vetting process complete, again came the realization that this year was slightly different. A lot of the components needed didn't have to be bought from the holiday product lines. Silk roses and foam apples could be acquired at any time of the year so the ordering deadline could be relaxed a little.

As I am writing this article, packages of pinecone laden garland and dried mushrooms have been arriving. Staff and volunteers will unpack these items, remove the tags, and organize all the new goodies by tree. Then when November 21 rolls around, our installation day, it will be easy for everyone to focus on creating a fabulous holiday display.

Here is a preview of some of the Christmas trees you will see starting the week of Thanksgiving:



Autumn tree decorations

Autumn in the dining room: A tree will grace one side of the room full of artichokes, pomegranates and other assorted fall bounty, accentuated with tufts of wheat, rye and millet and a grape leaf garland. The theme continues to the table where gold bowls and serving trays will overflow with gourds, grapes and flowers. The place settings will feature gilded monograms of C.W. Post's initials.

Spring will abound in the French drawing room: Here visitors will find a tree brimming with pink silk tulips, peonies and dried roses highlighted by blue hyacinths and delphiniums. Look for the green accents of maidenhair fern and cabbages.

Deco Japan in the visitor center: Guests will be greeted with a 12 foot show-stopping tree filled with black and metallic balls, glass ornaments with geometric shapes and gold-glittered sprays. The design includes a garland of black velvet and orange faux Dupion silk laid out in a diamond pattern. The display continues up the stairs where the bannister will be draped in greens, silk and ornaments complementing the tree.



Assorted Deco Japan ornaments

We don't want to give away all the surprises away but look for summer in the first floor library and winter in the pavilion. I hope you will all be able to come out and see our work and enjoy the festivities!

HILLWOOD HAPPENINGS

Special Note: In an effort to keep you informed on the latest workshops, lectures, trips and other educational activities, a monthly email will be sent to all active Hillwood volunteers from either Bill Johnson or Lisa Leyh with details on the month's educational offerings.

All Hillwood volunteers are invited to take advantage of the educational offerings listed below. Please register in advance on the sign-up sheets on the clipboard in the Horticulture building hallway or contact Bill Johnson at 202.243.3927 or bjohnson@HillwoodMuseum.org.

Plant ID Walk

November 3 (Thursday), 9 a.m.

In this session, we will focus on the plants that have fall color, fruit and interesting bark for the winter. Meet in the Horticulture break room.

Plant ID Walk

November 15 (Tuesday), 9 a.m.

We will focus on some of the conifers and plants that have winter interest. Meet in the Horticulture break room.

Volunteer Wreath-Making Workshops

November 25, 26 & December 6

Join Horticulturist Bill Johnson to create a handmade wreath for your home, suitable for hanging outdoors. A \$25 fee covers all materials; contact Bill to schedule a time and day at bjohnson@hillwoodmuseum.org or

202.243.3927. He will schedule small groups on these days.

Holiday Tree Tour

December 8 (Thursday) 10:30 a.m.

Join Head Gardener Jessica Bonilla for a walk through Hillwood's holiday display. Discussion will include the design and installation processes and an in-depth look at the ornaments. Meet in the Horticulture break room.



Holiday tree from 2015 displays

Greens Workshop

December 8 (Thursday), 10:30 a.m.

Just in time for the holidays! Bill Johnson will help participants create a swag or a table top tree (choose one). We will be using fragrant evergreens and other seasonal materials. The \$10 fee will cover materials. The workshop is limited to 12 persons and will be held in the Horticulture break room.

Holiday Centerpiece Workshop

December 20 (Tuesday), 10:30 a.m.

Bill Johnson will help participants create a long centerpiece for their mantel or a round centerpiece for their dining room table, using evergreens, other seasonal materials, and fresh flowers. Materials fee is \$20

January 2017 Hours

To meet the ever-increasing demand from audiences, Hillwood will be open from Sunday, January 1 to Sunday, January 22. We'll close to the public from Monday, January 23 to Friday, February 3 to clean and keep the mansion maintained to the pristine standards for which it is known. Hillwood will reopen to the public on Saturday, February 4.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

There are a number of exciting public programs offered throughout the year at Hillwood. The best way to keep up-to-date on upcoming programs is to visit the [Calendar page](#) on Hillwood's website.

VISITOR CENTER UPDATE

Lisa Leyh, Head of Volunteer Management

Visitor Center Information Desk

Please refrain from entering the area directly behind the visitor center information desk during open hours. This does not affect volunteer access to the audio tour charging units, large credenza housing the extra brochures, or the visitor center kitchen. As always, we appreciate your understanding and assistance with this new practice. Please feel free to direct any questions regarding this change to a Visitor Services team member.

Museum Shop Entrance

Construction is underway on the visitor center conservatory, enclosing the outdoor space adjacent to the second floor of the visitor center. A temporary ramp has been built that connects the new shop door to the new walkway adjacent to the road. **For the next few months, the temporary ramp will be the only egress into and out of the visitor center second floor between 10 am -5 pm.** To access the visitor center before 10 am or after 5 pm, please walk around and use the main entrance on the first floor.

Orientation Film

Due to the noise, the orientation film has been moved to the mansion staff dining room for as long as the loud construction is in progress, potentially several months. The orientation film and "Living Artfully" film will be available on a loop -- it takes about 30 minutes to view both films. We will keep you apprised as the work progresses.

MUSEUM SHOP NEWS

Lauren Salazar, Head of Merchandising

The museum shop has been preparing for the busy fall and holiday season and we are stocked up with exciting new items for you to gift or keep!

Some finds that I'm most excited about:

- *Polonova Cut Velvet Gloves*



- *Zenzii jewelry*



- And more of Grace Chuang's latest jackets!

Upcoming Events:

- **Strathmore's Museum Shop Around, November 10-13, Strathmore Mansion, North Bethesda, MD**
The Hillwood museum shop joins 17 other local museum stores. Free parking.

- **Volunteer & Staff Holiday Discount, December 1-31**

Receive 30% off merchandise and books. Select merchandise and sale items are excluded.

THE NEW RUSSIAN PORCELAIN INSTALLATION

Wilfried Zeisler,

Curator of Russian & 19th Century Art

The Russian porcelain re-installation at Hillwood was one of the Curatorial department's projects for summer 2016. The goals of this project were to:

- enhance the interpretation of the collection
- incorporate important acquisitions as well as long-term loans to the museum
- follow the vision of Marjorie Merriweather Post

The new display required several weeks of research. The porcelain took three days to be re-installed; this concluded on August 29, 2016. This would not have been possible without the help of our Collections Manager & Registrar, MJ Hagan, and Conservation Technician, Manuel Rouco. The new display is primarily concentrated in the Russian porcelain room, pavilion, and second floor hall.

I first examined the archival documentation available on the different exhibition areas to understand how the display of the Russian porcelain has evolved since Marjorie Post acquired Hillwood in the 1950s. Black and white photographs demonstrate how quickly the Russian porcelain holdings grew. For example, in the 1950s, the Russian porcelain room looked quite empty, with only a few objects on each shelf. With the growth of the collection during the 1960s, a few additions were made. By the 1970s, the cases became much more crowded. The latter 1970s displays may have been arranged by Marvin Ross, Marjorie Post's first curator, to coincide with the museum opening to the public. Do these reflect Marjorie Post's taste or are they the result of Ross's curatorial vision, or

a blend of both? Marjorie Post clearly had some concerns about the growth of the collection and how the displays were curated by Marvin Ross. In a note she wrote to him in 1963 about the possible addition of cases in the pavilion she stated: "I think you have heard me hold forth quite a number of times about not getting HILLWOOD too crowded and too full."¹



Historical image of the Russian porcelain room during Marjorie Post's residence

The Russian porcelain room is one of the spaces at Hillwood where the display from Marjorie's time seems to have been particularly well preserved. The porcelain cases in the pavilion were later additions—appearing in the 1970s—and had different arrangements over the years. The elaborate French case on the second floor, taken from Post's New York apartment, contained Chinese porcelain in the 1950s. The Orlov service appears to have been displayed in this case only in the 1970s. Right after its acquisition in 1937, the service was displayed by the Davieses in the large mirrored case which is now on the second floor. The display in this case always focused on Russian porcelain, in particular tea and coffee services.

Photographs of historical displays at Hillwood and in Marjorie Post's former homes reflect a consistent trait. Post liked to present works of art in symmetrical arrangements. This served as a guide for the reinstallation of the porcelain in the

mansion. The cases in the Russian porcelain room were reorganized with a focus on porcelain services from the Imperial Porcelain Factory, the Order Services produced by the Gardner Factory, and military plates and services from the reigns of Alexander I and Nicholas I. The symmetry of the original presentation was brought back, especially in the cases with pieces from the Order Services (cases I, III, IV to IX).

A new display was developed for the pavilion. The four cases present pieces from important services produced by the Imperial Porcelain Factory during the reigns of Catherine the Great and her son Paul I: the Yacht and Arabesque Services, the Cabinet Service, and the Dowry Services (cases II to IV). The last case (case I) is dedicated to early Soviet porcelain created prior to and during the time Marjorie Post was *en poste* in Moscow.

On the second floor, the case alongside the wall, which used to contain the Orlov service, now presents part of a service produced by the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory between 1769 and 1771. It is known as the Morgan Service. It was formerly part of the famous collection of J.P. Morgan (partially sold in 1944).

The large mirrored case is dedicated to Russian porcelain with a chronological display focusing on tea and coffee services. Since the 17th century, tea has become an important beverage in Russia and can today be considered part of Russian culture. An important aspect of Russian tea culture is the hot water container known as a *samovar*. This has become a Russian national symbol—a teapot from the Soviet period in the shape of a samovar can be found on the bottom right shelf. The tradition of coffee drinking in Russia began during the reign of Peter the Great in the early 18th century. Coffee was one of the consumption models imported from the West by the Russian ruler.

A detailed list of the changes to the Russian porcelain displays will be available in the mansion volunteer lounge and posted on the volunteer website.

¹ Memo from Mrs. Herbert A. May to Marvin Ross, August 1, 1963. Hillwood Archives & Special Collections.

FOUR SEASONS OVERVIEW

Angie Dodson, Director of Learning & Engagement, Co-Chair Exhibitions

Tucked into Hillwood's gardens, four monumental and fanciful sculptures emerge from the ellipse lawn, their myriad and intricate details enticing viewers to examine every fruit and flower, vegetable and vine...

American artist and filmmaker Philip Haas created these spectacular fifteen-foot high portrait busts, taking inspiration from Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526-93), an Italian Renaissance painter best remembered for his series of imaginative profile portraits symbolizing the four seasons. Haas transformed the complex imagery of these celebrated paintings into a contemporary sculptural group to be enjoyed outdoors—from every angle and in every season.



Guests exploring the Four Seasons during the member opening celebration

In the visitor center: An exhibition exploring Haas's creative process, including a short film and models for each of the outdoor sculptures, offers an introduction to the outdoor exhibition.

Haas's Process:

Whether I'm working in painting, sculpture, or film, what fascinates me is the idea of metamorphosis. Through *Four Seasons*, I am re-contextualizing the world of classical Renaissance portraiture using the transformative elements of scale, material, and dimensionality, thereby altering the viewer's perspective.

--Philip Haas

The creative process began with Haas sharing his vision with the two dozen or so collaborators who helped realize the work. The details of each form were worked out during the model making process. Artisans set off to create molds for each of the hundreds of pieces that constitute each colossal head. Other craftsmen skillfully cast them in fiberglass, injected them with pigment, and painted the final details. Welders created steel infrastructures to hold the parts together into each gigantic form. Site installations take about a week and require heavy equipment, riggers, and expert coordination. Throughout the process, Haas calls on his background in filmmaking—always on set, directing, from start to finish.

Please help us spread the word about this fantastic art installation! Exhibition racks cards are available to share with your friends, family, book clubs, etc. in the visitor center and mansion volunteer lounge.

EXPANDING VISITOR ACCESS IN THE MANSION

Lisa Leyh, Head of Volunteer Management

Over the years, Hillwood's collections and interpretation staff have analyzed the mansion with an eye to increasing accessibility, and thus allowing visitors to look more closely at the objects and rooms. In 2010, more access was given for visitors in the mansion kitchen, Marjorie Post's bedroom suite, English bedroom, and the pavilion and French drawing room.

In that same spirit, we are pleased to offer two previously closed spaces that will now be open on a regular basis to the public: the ladies' powder room and massage room.

Ladies' Powder Room

The ladies' powder room (on the first floor adjacent to the entry hall staircase) will be open starting this week or next. A rope will be installed inside the door jam, to prevent visitors from walking into the room, but still with good visual access. This room will periodically close throughout the year when collections need

additional storage space. We will keep volunteers posted of those future closures.



Ladies' Powder Room

Massage Room

The massage room (adjacent to the stairs leading to Marjorie Post's bedroom suite on the second floor of the mansion) will open starting in the coming weeks. Again, a rope will be installed inside the door jam, to prevent visitors from walking into the room, but still with good visual access.



Massage Room

Additional information on both spaces will be available in the mansion volunteer lounge and posted on the volunteer website.

PLANT PROFILE: BLACK JETBEAD RHODOTYPOS SCANDENS

Jane Berger, Special Projects Volunteer

If you're looking for something unusual for the shade border, then this is the plant for you. A member of the rose family, black jetbead is a deciduous shrub with pure white flowers in spring that resemble single roses. In fall, the flowers give way to persistent, pea-sized, shiny black fruits that appear in clusters and are unlike almost anything else you'll encounter in the garden. The fruits are also sometimes favored by birds.



Black jetbead

Native to China, Japan, and Korea, the shrub has an open, bushy habit with bright green leaves that are reminiscent of arrowwood viburnum leaves. The foliage turns a greenish-yellow in autumn and lasts well into the early winter season.

Black jetbead tolerates sun or shade, drought and urban pollution and is resistant to pests and diseases. It's also fast-growing, and its size is about four to six feet high and four to eight feet wide. Jetbead is a suckering plant, so give it room to grow and spread. When massed in the shade border, it can be particularly effective, most notably in autumn when the yellow leaves are most noticeable.

The plant is potentially invasive in some parts of the country, so do watch where you site it. The berries are also highly toxic, so make sure the plant is out of range of small children.

At Hillwood, black jetbead was once grown in front of the dacha. Now, they're found at the edge of the woods behind the dacha and along the service road near the main gate.

HORTICULTURAL TRANSITIONS

Brian Barr, Director of Horticulture

As gardeners we transition the seasons by removing the spent flowers and planting a fresh seasonal display, we try to make this transition as smooth as possible. When it comes to our staff transitioning, I am not sure this will be as easy.

Bill Johnson

Bill Johnson, Horticulturist/Volunteer Coordinator, is retiring at the end of the year with over thirty-three years of amazing dedication to Hillwood. In addition to starting the volunteer program well over twenty years ago, he seems to have held or contributed to every title and position in the Horticulture department. His enthusiasm and spirit has been the guiding force for Horticulture since he walked through our gates on February 28, 1983.

Drew Asbury

Drew Asbury, Head Grower, will assume most of Bill's volunteer management responsibilities. In addition, Drew will be overseeing the greenhouse complex including the orchids with the departure of Jason Geideik, Head of Design Operations. Jason's contributions elevated all aspects of floral, event and holiday designs during his five year tenure.

Ami Wilber

We are pleased to welcome Ami Wilber to Hillwood as our new Floral and Event Decor Designer. Ami will be responsible for designing, creating and producing floral designs in support of the museum's beautification and event décor requirements. In addition, she will conduct classes, demonstrations, workshops, and tours on a variety of floral and holiday décor topics.

Ami's professional work experience includes serving as a designer at several premier professional florists, visual display coordinator for Anthropologie, and as

a dance teacher and choreographer. Not only does Ami bring 16 years of floral design experience to Hillwood, but she is as comfortable shaping a block of oasis as she is with taking a pneumatic hammer to a block of stone! As an accomplished artist working in the areas of metalsmithing and sculpture, Ami has 13 gallery shows to her credit including having shown at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Ami holds an MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology and a BFA from Miami University.

Ami will report to Brian Barr, Director of Horticulture, and begins work on Monday October 31, 2016 although you may have already noticed her work last week on display in the visitor center. Please join us in welcoming Ami to Hillwood.

NEW STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

We are delighted to welcome 15 new volunteers and eight new staff members! Please join us in welcoming our newest members to Hillwood:

Joining the Hillwood staff:

- Freddy Mancilla, Development Assistant
- Josephine Wiacek, Accounting Assistant
- Christine Ann Reilly, Museum Shop Sales Associate
- Diedra Yates, Museum Shop Sales Associate
- Tiffany Fitzgerald, Special Police Officer
- James Gormly-Rack, Security Officer
- Jerry Soesbee, Security Officer
- Adrienne Archer, Security Officer

Joining the Interpretation volunteer corps:

- Qudsia Amjad
- Joan Gervino
- Marlene Hartzman
- Randa Kayyali
- Betsey Kuhn
- Irene Ligo
- Clarke Manley
- Linda Predovsky
- Inna Tsimbler
- Janice "Jan" Yatsko

Joining the Horticulture volunteer corps:

- Susan Helm
- Elizabeth "Betsy" Holleman Burke
- Mary Hurlbut
- Sharon Natanblut
- Michael Seith

IN MEMORIAM: CHRISTIANE DEROCHE AND BILL STEFFECK

Lisa Leyh, Head of Volunteer Management

It is with a heavy heart that I write to inform you that we have lost two beloved Hillwood volunteers this fall.

Christiane Deroche

At the age of 92, Christiane Deroche passed away on September 26 at St. Anne's Retirement Home in Columbia, PA. Born in Dijon, France, she moved to Washington DC in 1955 with her husband Louis Deroche, a correspondent for Agence France Presse. Christiane was a Visitor Services Volunteer with Hillwood from 2008-2015.



Christiane Deroche

A talented pianist and gifted teacher, she was beloved by friends, colleagues and family. She leaves behind her daughter and son-in-law, Gentine and Geoff Clark, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

A memorial service followed by a reception will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday October 29, 2016

at Saint Louis de France Parish House, 4125 Garrison St., NW, Washington, DC 20016. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the St. Louis de France Parish House.

Bill Steffek

On Tuesday, October 18, William "Bill" Steffek passed away after a short stay in the hospital. He had been a mansion docent with Hillwood for the past 16+ years. Always eager to help, Bill was a friendly presence in the volunteer cohort – sharing his time picking up extra tours or bringing books to share with fellow volunteers in the volunteer library. Bill's family is currently making arrangements. We will notify the volunteers once services have been finalized.



Bill Steffek

We were very proud to have Christiane and Bill on our volunteer team -- they will be greatly missed.

The *Post Serial* is published quarterly for Hillwood volunteers by Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, 4155 Linnean Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008. It is edited under the direction of the volunteer management team of Bill Johnson, Lisa Leyh, and other Hillwood staff members. Copyright 2016 by Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens.

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