

**HILLWOOD MUSEUM & GARDENS BREAKS GROUND ON MAJOR
\$2 MILLION JAPANESE-STYLE GARDEN RESTORATION**

Progress of One-Year Project will be Broadcast Daily on Museum's Website

Washington, D.C. (March 26, 2001)— Hillwood Museum & Gardens, the former estate of visionary collector, philanthropist and businesswoman Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973), will begin a \$2 million restoration project later this month of its Japanese-style Garden. The one-year project, which is one of the elements in an extensive renovation and restoration campaign of the museum and grounds, will be documented by web cam and broadcast daily on the museum's website at www.hillwoodmuseum.org.

As one of the country's premier house museums, Hillwood has the most comprehensive collection of 18th- and 19th-century Russian imperial art outside Russia, as well as one of the world's most important collections of 18th-century French decorative arts. In addition to the Japanese-style Garden, the estate features 13 acres of natural woodlands and 12 acres of formal landscaped gardens including a circular rose garden; an expansive crescent-shaped lunar lawn; a large cutting garden; a pet cemetery with small inscribed tombstones; and a recently restored formal French Parterre. All of the gardens at Hillwood were conceived during Mrs. Post's lifetime to serve as outdoor extensions of the mansion's interiors and to function as essential areas for entertaining and philanthropic events.

The Japanese-style Garden, which was designed by Shogo J. Myaida (1897-1989), a garden designer from Long Island, New York, originated in 1957, two years after Mrs. Post's purchase of Hillwood. The symbolic garden was conceived as a representation of a mountain landscape in miniature. Throughout the garden are a mix of ornaments and sculpture, as well as a large lily pond, footbridges, and hundreds of plant and tree specimens. Over the last few decades, overgrowth, natural erosion and weather-inflicted damage have compromised the garden's original design, while outdated irrigation and water filtration systems have contributed to the deterioration of the grounds, waterfalls and pond.

“Fully restoring Mrs. Post’s Japanese-style Garden to its original condition is a fascinating challenge for Hillwood’s board and staff. As with the recently restored French Parterre, we are committed to bringing the landscape back to its former appearance—as it was originally designed for Mrs. Post,” said Frederick Fisher, executive director, Hillwood Museum & Gardens. “We are very fortunate to have assembled a superb team of consultants to help us with this transformation.”

ZEN Associates, Inc., an environmental design firm based in Sudbury, Massachusetts, was commissioned to research and analyze the conditions of the Japanese-style Garden and then produce a restoration plan for its disassembly and reconstruction. The firm’s partners Shinichiro Abe and Peter White have earned a reputation for excellence in the design and construction of contemporary and traditional Japanese-style landscapes.

“ZEN Associates’ design philosophy is a careful integration of artistic decisions, technical execution and respect for the naturally occurring elements in the landscape,” said Shinichiro Abe, president and founder of ZEN Associates.

“The Hillwood project is a unique assignment because we have shifted our approach to be more objective. Through research, analysis and a cultivated understanding of Mrs. Post’s vision, we determined a methodology for restoring the garden to its original splendor, as it was seen in the early 1960s,” added ZEN Associates partner Peter White.

ZEN Associates began its archival research and analysis of the garden in 1997. The goal was to compile information for restoring the garden to its prime condition. Years of alterations were examined and every element in the garden was documented. The most critical problem was determined to be the deterioration of the large lower pond, which is the focal point of the garden. Findings from this preliminary phase determined ZEN Associates strategy for developing a master plan for the garden’s restoration, which entails three phases—assessment, disassembly, and reconstruction. The entire project is expected to be completed by the spring of 2002.

Denis Gray, horticulture consultant for the Japanese-style Garden Restoration at Hillwood Museum & Gardens, will work with ZEN Associates throughout all phases of the project. Gray

most recently served as Horticulturist at Gunston Hall Plantation, in Mason Neck, Virginia, overseeing 550 acres of plantation grounds and formal gardens.

During the first phase of implementation, ZEN Associates analyzed and catalogued the condition of the entire garden including all plant and tree specimens and more than 1500 garden ornaments such as lanterns, boulders, bridges and gateways.

The second phase, which begins later this month, includes the removal of existing vegetation and dismantling of the extensive arrangement of boulders. Many of the plantings will be temporarily relocated on Hillwood's property. Throughout this phase, special attention also will be given to the precise arrangement of the stones and plant material prior to their removal, ensuring the faithful reconstruction of the original design.

After the garden has been disassembled, the structural shell and outdated irrigation systems will be replaced, marking the beginning of the third and final phase. With the structural system in place, ZEN Associates will then replace the boulders and stone arrangements to the exact specifications recorded in their research and extensive photo documentation. After this two-month process, ZEN Associates will reinstall the numerous garden ornaments, sculptures and footbridges with a fresh layer of soil, and restore the preserved plantings and tree specimens to their original locations.

ZEN Associates

ZEN Associates was founded in 1980 by Shiniciro Abe, who earned a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Agriculture from Tokyo University. Prior to his arrival in the U.S., Mr. Abe served as an apprentice, restoring and reconstructing prominent temple gardens in Kyoto and throughout Japan. Partner Peter White, who joined ZEN Associates in 1990, previously worked for The Architects Collaborative (TAC) in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Environmental Design and Research (EDR) in Syracuse, New York, where he also received his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Syracuse University.

Current and recent projects for the firm include the Peace Bell Garden (1998-2000) at the United Nations, a traditional Japanese Garden promoting world peace that represents the mythological universe, physical world and the United Nation's flag; a major five-acre Japanese Garden at the

Omaha Botanical Gardens in Nebraska, which was commissioned by Omaha's sister city of Shizuoka, Japan, in celebration of 30 years of cross cultural exchange; as well as a residential and corporate landscape design projects in Spain, Stockholm and along the eastern seaboard.

Public Programs

In addition to broadcasting the progress of the Japanese-style Garden restoration through a live feed to the museum's website, Hillwood will be offering a series of public programs to inform the public about the technical and aesthetic decisions involved in a restoration project.

Hillwood

Hillwood Museum & Gardens is located on 4155 Linnean Avenue, in Northwest Washington, D.C., overlooking Rock Creek Park. The museum is open in January and from March through December on Tuesdays through Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on select evenings and Sundays. Hillwood is closed on all national holidays except Veteran's Day. Admission is by reservation only. For general information call (202) 686-8500 or visit the museum website at www.hillwoodmuseum.org. For reservations call (202) 686-5807. Hillwood Museum & Gardens is an accredited museum with the American Association of Museums.

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