

## NEW ACQUISITIONS OF SILVER AND CERAMICS AT HILLWOOD

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Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens is fortunate to have made several recent acquisitions of silver and ceramics over the past year.

In December 2020, Hillwood purchased a set of twelve silver-gilt dinner forks and spoons from the Service of Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich (1798-1849) from the Parisian Auctioneers Couteau-Bégarie & Associés (acc. nos. 2021.1.1-24). The set provided a rare opportunity to purchase pieces of French silver with a strong Russian connection. Each piece bears the maker's mark of the French silversmith, François-Dominique Naudin (1778-1841), and the French hallmarks from the period 1819-38. The flatware was part of a large set produced for Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich (1798-1849), brother of Emperor Nicholas I of Russia, and is adorned with the monogram of the Grand Duke (MP in Cyrillic). Mikhail Pavlovich commissioned the set in Paris in the late 1810s and the most talented and renowned French silversmiths of the period were involved with this special commission, including Biennais, Cahier, Odier, and Naudin. Specialized in flatware, Naudin was active in Paris from 1800 and often collaborated with silversmith Martin-Guillaume Biennais (1764-1843), supplier to Emperor Napoleon and his family, as well as other European courts.

New pieces were added to the service around 1824 in celebration of Grand Duke Mikhail's marriage to the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (1807-1873). After the death of the Grand Duke, the service remained in the family and was inherited by his daughter, Grand Duchess Ekaterina (1827-1894), and later by her children, Princess Elena of Saxe-Altenburg (1857-1936) and Dukes George (1857-1909) and Mikhail (1863-1934) of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Following the Russian Revolution, the Soviet Government confiscated a substantial part of their collection and sold pieces abroad.



**Fig. 1: Pieces from the Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich Service (dessert flatware), François-Dominique Naudin, Silversmith (French, 1778-1841), about 1824, silver gilt. Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post, 1973 (12.289.1-96)**

The set is a valuable addition to Hillwood's collection of French silver made for the Russian court, particularly silver from the Meklenburg-Strelitz/Saxe-Altenburg family collection, and objects with this provenance are well-represented in Hillwood's collection. Hillwood is fortunate to conserve pieces from the Service of Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich (acc. no. 12.289) (Figure 1), as well as a silver kettle and tray by Froment-Meurice, acquired last year (acc. no. 2020.1), and a silver-gilt dressing table set by Aucoc (acc. no. 12.188). The Aucoc set was one of Marjorie Post's earliest acquisitions of French silver made for this branch of the Russian Imperial family. In addition, Hillwood also conserves two portraits of Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna

(acc. nos. 53.28 and 51.117), a presentation plate with a portrait of Elena Pavlovna and Mikhail Pavlovich (acc. no. 25.335), and the Imperial Porcelain service presented to Grand Duchess Ekaterina in honor of her wedding to Duke George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1824-1876) in 1851 (acc. no. 25.303-25.310).

### Ceramics

Hillwood recently acquired seven pieces from the "Sea Cloud Service" from Eldred's Auctioneers, including covered tureen, covered vegetable dish, and three plates (all Haviland, Limoges), and a pair of plates (Lenox, Inc.) from the mid-twentieth century. (Figure 2) The set is decorated in white and cream, with blue and gilt-banded borders and crossed burgess above "Sea Cloud," and two plates feature images of the Sea Cloud in transfer printed decoration. The service was designed for Marjorie Merriweather Post's private 360-foot yacht, the "Sea Cloud," completed in 1931, and complements seven existing plates from the service, as well as glassware, napkins, and table linens, used on the yacht from Hillwood's collection. Several Sea Cloud plates were donated in 1975 by Dina Merrill Robertson, who inherited pieces from the service, and another was acquired by the Museum in 2004 from the estate of Gus Modig, Post's head butler. (Figure 3) Marjorie Post ordered the service from the New York retailers Black, Starr, Frost and Gorham (founded 1810) and Brenning's Own.<sup>1</sup> (Figure 4)

Hillwood also recently acquired a pair of covered leaf-shaped dishes made by the Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur (known as the KPM Porcelain Factory – Royal Porcelain Manufacture) in Berlin, made between 1778-1789, from the dealer Michele Beiny, Inc. in New York. (Figure 5) These dishes were likely part of the 'Potemkin' and 'Dohna-Schlobitten' services, both inspired by the "cauliflower decoration" design first used on the 'Berlin Service,' given to Empress Catherine II by King Frederick II (Frederick the Great) of Prussia in 1772. In 1778, Frederick the Great offered Count Grigory Potemkin (1739-1791) a service with green leaf decoration as a diplomatic gift to secure favor with the empress.<sup>2</sup> In 1789, following the visit of Frederick the Great's successor, King Frederick William II, to Schlobitten Castle, he presented his host, Prussian politician, Frederick Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten (1741-1810), with a Berlin dinner and dessert service, also inspired by the Potemkin service.<sup>3</sup>

Hillwood does not currently conserve any examples from these two services and they successfully expand the museum's strength in diplomatic gifts of porcelain. They also complement existing examples of KPM porcelain in the collection, including two cups and a leaf-shaped dish from the 'Berlin Service,' pieces of which are on loan from a private collector. (Figure 6) The 'Berlin' and 'Potemkin' services were also used as design inspiration for the Russian Order services in the collection at Hillwood. The recently-acquired covered dishes will be prominently featured in the upcoming exhibition [\*The Luxury of Clay: Porcelain Past and Present\*](#), followed by displays in the mansion.

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<sup>1</sup> Black, Starr and Frost specialized in the retail of silver and jewelry and made headlines at the London Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. Mary Todd Lincoln was also a client. For more information, see <https://blackstarrfrost.com/timeline-2/>

<sup>2</sup> The Potemkin service contains covers designed from overlapping leaves (perhaps the first use of this design). The majority of pieces from the service are conserved today at the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

<sup>3</sup> The Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten in Berlin conserves several covered bowls of various sizes from the Dohna-Schlobitten' service.



Fig. 2: Pieces from the Sea Cloud Service, including covered tureen, three plates, oval vegetable dish with handles (Haviland & Company, Limoges), and a pair of plates with transferware printing (Lenox, Inc.), French and American, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, hard-paste porcelain. Museum Purchase, 2021 (2021.2.1-7) Photo courtesy of Eldred's



Fig. 3: Two Sea Cloud plates, Lenox, Inc. (American, founded 1889), American, 1935-1955, hard-paste porcelain. Gift of Dina Merrill Robertson, 1975 (26.201.1; 26.202.1)



Fig. 4: Marjorie Merriweather Post using the Sea Cloud service on the yacht with guests, including the Duke of Windsor, about 1948. Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Archives and Special Collections



Fig. 5: Pair of covered leaf-shaped dishes, probably from the 'Potemkin' and 'Dohna-Schlobitten' services, KPM Porcelain Manufactory (founded 1763), Germany (Berlin), about 1778-1789, hard-paste porcelain. Museum Purchase, 2021 (2021.3.1-2.1-2)



Fig. 6: Ice Cup from the 'Berlin Service,' KPM Porcelain Manufactory (founded 1763), Germany (Berlin), 1772, hard-paste porcelain. Gift of Kathleen Durdin, 2007 (2007.8)



Leaf dish from the 'Berlin Service,' KPM Porcelain Manufactory (founded 1763), Germany (Berlin), 1772, hard-paste porcelain. On loan from private collector