

# Portrait of Lloyd Patterson

In 2022 Hillwood secured the long-term loan of this beautiful portrait of Lloyd Patterson (1910–42), an artist who settled in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s.

In 1932, during the Great Depression and the height of the Harlem Renaissance, a twenty-two-year-old Patterson traveled to Soviet Russia to participate in *Black and White*, a Soviet-German film to highlight racism in the United States.

The project attracted a number of Black American actors, students, activists, and cultural figures of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes (1901–67), Louise Thompson (1901–99), and Dorothy West (1907–98).

While most of the group returned to the United States after the film project's cancellation, Patterson stayed on in Moscow, marrying the Ukrainian theater artist and fashion designer Vera Aralova (1911–2001) and working as a designer and newsreader for Soviet radio. The couple became a staple of influential art circles. Their son, James Patterson, born in 1933, rose to stardom as a child actor, performing in *The Circus*, the beloved musical comedy directed by Grigori Aleksandrov (1903–83) in 1936, the year prior to Marjorie Post's arrival in Moscow as the U.S. ambassador's wife. Lloyd died during the war in 1942. James later became a poet, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, moved to Washington, DC, with his mother.

This portrait and other works from Post's collection displayed in this room bring a new dimension to Hillwood's collection of Russian art, illustrating the diverse stories and experiences of Black people in imperial and Soviet Russia.



Lloyd Patterson, *front*, and his son James, *above*, during a parade in Red Square, Moscow, 1936.

Courtesy of James Lloydovich Patterson

## Portrait of Lloyd Patterson (1910–42)

Soviet Russia, 1960s

Oil on canvas

*On loan from Andrew Leddy*

# Portrait of Countess Julia Samoilova with foster daughter Giovannina and Black servant

The portrait by the prominent Russian artist Karl Briullov features Countess Julia Samoilova (1803–75) with her foster daughter, Giovannina Pacini, and a young Black page in a richly decorated Italian villa. Briullov began featuring a Black servant in some of his paintings in 1828, likely inspired by a young model whose identity and status remain unknown. Briullov probably met him while in Italy, where by the time of this painting, slavery had been abolished in most states. The model may have been in the countess's household, as her family is known to have had Black pages in their service from the late 1700s into the 1840s.

In Briullov's portrait, the Black page's subservient physicality adds an element of orientalism to the dynamic composition, dramatizing exoticism and race in his presentation, both in stark contrast to the lavishness of Samoilova's depiction. The presence of the page, and especially his gold collar, allude to the slave trade in Western Europe and the fashion in aristocratic circles of having Black servants. The young boy also speaks to the presence of so-called Moors as pages in Russian imperial and aristocratic households since the late 1600s and to the experience of some Black people in imperial Russia.

## Portrait of Countess Julia Samoilova with foster daughter Giovannina and Black servant

Karl Briullov (Russian 1799–1852)

Italy, 1832–34

Oil on canvas

*Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post, 1973 (51.73)*

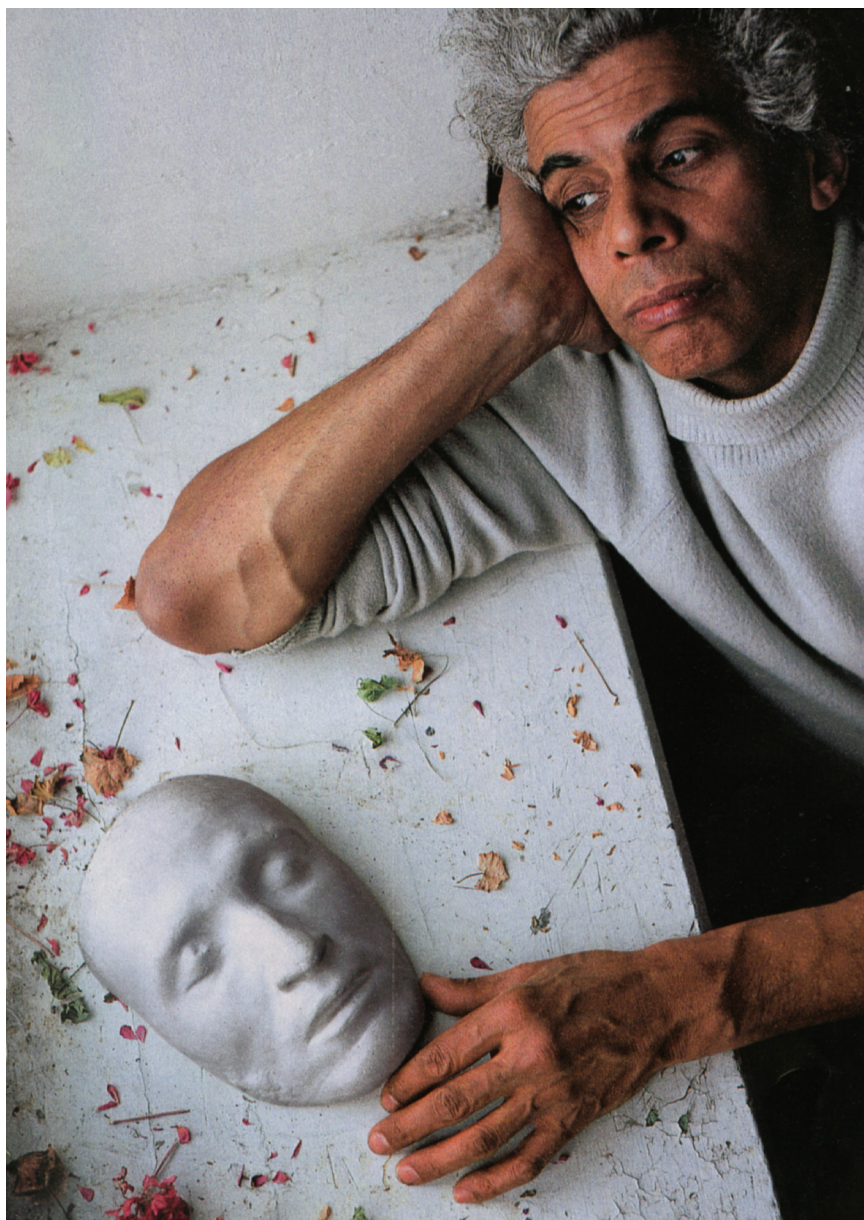


# Alexander Pushkin, a Russian literary giant of African descent

The objects displayed on the two top shelves in the nearby case relate to the novelist, playwright, and poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), the towering Russian cultural figure of Black African descent. Renowned in Russia and abroad, Pushkin is considered the founder of modern Russian literature.

Pushkin’s great grandfather Abram Petrovich Gannibal (1696–1781) was born in modern-day Cameroon, where he was kidnapped, enslaved, and taken to Russia. Emancipated by Emperor Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725), Gannibal would become the sovereign’s godson and grow up in imperial circles. As an adult, he emerged as an influential member of the court and married into the Russian aristocracy. Pushkin often referenced his Black heritage in his works, in particular in the unfinished novel *The Moor of Peter the Great*, which is inspired by his great grandfather’s life.

Shortly after Hillwood founder Marjorie Post arrived in the Soviet Union as the U.S. ambassador’s wife in 1937, the Soviet government presented her with a set of porcelain dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Pushkin’s tragic death, in a duel in 1837. As a collector of Russian art, Post went on to acquire several objects related to Pushkin, including this miniature portrait bust and porcelain tumbler commemorating the 100th anniversary of Pushkin’s birth, in 1899. The tumbler bears an excerpt from his work on the reverse that begins, “No, all of me will not die!”



Courtesy of Lynn Johnson and National Geographic Society Library + Archives

James Patterson, son of Lloyd Patterson, whose portrait is featured nearby, poses with the death mask of Alexander Pushkin, alluding to their cultural, racial, and perhaps experiential connection, 1992.

## Pieces from a tea and coffee set

Nikolai Mikhailovich Suetin, designer  
(Russian, 1897–1954)

Lomonosov Porcelain Factory  
(Russian, 1925–93)

Leningrad, 1937

Porcelain

*Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post, 1973  
(25.407)*

## Commemorative Tumbler

Kornilov Brothers Factory  
(Russian, 1835–2003)

St. Petersburg, 1899–1900

Porcelain

*Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post, 1973  
(25.162)*

## Bust-shaped desk seal

Russia, about 1899

Smoky quartz

*Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post, 1973  
(21.31)*

## Box

Sergei Ivanovich Khazov  
(Russian, 1883–1936)

Palekh, 1936

Lacquer, papier mâché

*Gift of Gertrude Rient Mansfield, 2010  
(2010.23)*