

A New Attribution of Eighteenth-Century French Portraiture

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[*Portrait of a Lady*](#) (51.2) embodies Marjorie Post's taste for eighteenth-century French portraiture and traveled with her to many different residences during her lifetime. The nearly full-length portrait depicts a seated lady wearing a white and gold brocade dress with pearl buttons, edged with lace at the neckline and sleeves, topped by a blue velvet cape lined with a red, gold, and blue brocade. She holds a closed fan in her right hand while her left arm holds a small Italian greyhound sitting on her lap.

Following Marjorie Post's acquisition of the portrait in 1925, it was initially installed above the mantel piece in the dining room of her Manhattan apartment, located at 2 East 92nd Street. In 1941, it was transferred to Washington, D.C. and installed above the mantel piece in the drawing room at her Tregaron Estate, where it remained until 1955. It was finally installed in the entry hall at Hillwood in 1957 where it has remained ever since.



Portrait of a Seated Lady
Hyacinthe Rigaud (French, 1659-1743)
Paris, about 1710
Oil on canvas
Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post,
1973 (51.2)

From the time of its acquisition, the painting had been attributed to two French court painters, Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746) and François de Troy (1645-1730). In addition, the unknown subject of the painting had been associated with the Marquise de Lafayette, grandmother of the renowned General Lafayette (1759-1834).¹ These previous attributions are now refuted.



Archival photo showing "*Portrait of a Lady*" in Marjorie Post's Manhattan apartment dining room at 2 East 92nd Street, photographed between 1929-1935, Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens Archives



Archival photo showing "*Portrait of a Lady*" in Marjorie Post's Tregaron Estate drawing room, photographed during the 1940s, Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens Archives

Thanks to the recent scholarship of Ariane James-Sarazin, Adjunct Director of the Musée de l'Armée Invalides in Paris, Hillwood's *Portrait of a Lady* has been definitively attributed to the French Baroque painter, Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), official court painter to Louis XIV, and was completed about 1710. Rigaud established a style of formal court portraiture in France that served

as a model for future ceremonial portraits. While the exact identity of the female subject remains unknown, it is likely that she was a well-known actress or theatrical personality of the period, demonstrated by her accessories, including the fan, feathers in her hair, and open corsage.

The recent attribution of Hillwood's painting to Rigaud is due to comparable examples that depict a nearly identical pose, dress, dog, and backdrop, including the portrait of *Suzanne Henriette of Lorraine, Duchess of Mantua*, completed in 1709, presently conserved at Marble House in Newport, Rhode Island.² Additionally, the rare survival of Rigaud's drawing of the *Duchess of Mantua*, conserved in the Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria, and executed after the completed painting in 1709, confirms the date of Hillwood's portrait to about 1710.³



At left,
*Suzanne Henriette of Lorraine,
Duchess of Mantua*
Hyacinthe Rigaud (French,
1659-1743)
Paris, 1709
Oil on canvas
Marble House, Newport,
Rhode Island (inv. PSCN.871)



At right,
Duchess of Mantua
Hyacinthe Rigaud (French,
1659-1743)
Paris, about 1709
Black ink, chalk, and white
gouache on blue paper
Albertina Museum, Vienna,
Austria (inv. 11924)

Rigaud's *Portrait of a Lady* has recently been re-installed in the entry hall opposite Hillwood's latest acquisition, *Portrait of Pierre Hercule de Chastenay, Comte de Puysegur (1694-1759)* painted by Nicolas de Largillière (2018.1), which has returned home after nearly fifty years. For more information on this acquisition, see [The Post Serial Spring 2018, Volume 24, Issue 1](#) and view Rebecca Tilles' [A Homecoming for Hillwood lecture](#) to learn more.

¹Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Curatorial Archives (51.2).

²Portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Mantua were commissioned in 1705 and completed by Rigaud in 1709 following the Duke's death in 1708. This precise chronology establishes the chronology of Hillwood's painting, reinforcing the date to about 1710.

³For additional portraits by Rigaud depicting similar subjects from the same period, see Ariane James-Sarazin, *Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), Catalogue raisonné*, vol. 2 (Dijon: Éditions Faton, 2016), pp. 306; 331; 376.

Coming January 2019: New Look to the Volunteer Website

Lisa Horvath, Volunteer Services Supervisor

January will not only ring in a new year but also a new look to the [volunteer website](#). The resources and content housed on the current volunteer website will continue to be available to all Hillwood volunteers but on a sleeker and more user-friendly website. Stay tuned for more information.