

Jewelry and Costume Collections Notes

December 2022

The Jewelry and Costume Collections: By the Numbers

- Hillwood's collection holds over 175 pieces of jewelry ranging from sentimental family treasures to fine and extraordinary wonders of craftsmanship, over 175 garments from the Post family, and over 400 accessories. Its textile collection includes antique lace and needlework collected by Post, fine linens used at her residences, and of course, the Russian liturgical textile collection (about 130 objects).
- In the mansion, the jewelry panels and the garments on display in each of Marjorie Post's two closets rotate 2x a year during our mansion rotations that correspond to our special exhibition calendar.
- The virtual volunteer lecture presented on December 12, 2022, focused on jewelry and costumes represented in portraiture.

Jewelry

- 2nd Floor Hallway: 1929 portrait of MMP and Dina by Giulio de Blaas, Italian-American, 1888 – 1934 (51.146)
 - Mughal Emerald Pendant Brooch, Cartier (French, 1847-present), London, 1923; purchased in New York, 1925, remounted in 1928; emeralds, diamonds, platinum (17.75)
- Adam Bedroom: 1946 portrait of MMP by Frank Salisbury, British, 1874-1962 (51.143)
 - Sapphire and Diamond Necklace, Cartier (French, 1847-present), New York, 1937; sapphires, diamonds, platinum (17.68)
- 2nd Floor Library: Circa 1943 portrait of MMP by Frank Salisbury, British, 1874-1962 (51.142)
 - Five Strand Pearl Necklace, Cartier (French, 1847-present), New York, 1936, present strands of pearls added by Caro Yamaoka in 1963; cultured pearls, diamonds, platinum (17.68)
- Apart from Cartier New York, Marjorie Post enjoyed working with smaller dealers and boutique designers like David Webb and Harry Winston. She was also a serious Van Cleef & Arpels client, especially as that firm opened in New York during the 1940s.
- There are about 10 examples of Post's fine jewelry held at the Smithsonian Institution. Hillwood still actively acquires jewelry formerly in Post's collection when possible and available; most recently received gifts from the Rumbough family.

Costumes

- 1st Floor Library: 1934 portrait of MMP by Frank Salisbury, British, 1874-1962 (51.140)
 - Evening dress, Probably French, ca. 1929, silk crepe backed satin (48.75)
- 1st Floor Library: Posthumous, 1913 portrait of Ella Letitia Merriweather Post by Alphaeus Philemon Cole, American, 1876 – 1988 (51.150)
 - Ella Letitia Post's Portrait Gown, DV McGrath, (Probably American, active 1900s) New York, ca. 1908-1912, silk satin, taffeta, crepe, cotton lace and net, metallic embroidery, glass and jet beads (48.4.1-2)
- French Drawing Room: Miniature portrait of Marjorie Post in her Marie Antoinette costume by Harriet Jane Putnam (American, life dates unknown) in a E. Caldwell frame, circa 1926, New York (14.103)
 - Marie Antoinette costume, Gustave Beer, (German, active, 1890-1910) Paris, 1904, modified in NY, 1924 silk taffeta, charmeuse, tulle, ribbons, lace (48.136.1-3)

- 2nd Floor Library: Circa 1943 portrait of MMP by Frank Salisbury, British, 1874-1962 (51.142)
 - Portrait Gown, Orry-Kelly, (Australian-American, 1897-1964) Los Angeles, ca. 1942, silk velvet, cotton taffeta, faux pearls, metallic embroidery (48.95)
- Post's Bedroom: 1952 Portrait of MMP by Douglas Chandor British, 1897-1953, (51.156)
 - Portrait Gown, Attributed to Ann Lowe (American, 1898-1981) New York, 1952, silk waffle-weave, cotton, horsehair (48.106)
- The costume collection also features examples of 20th century French couture from Callot Soeurs (48.22), Madeleine et Madeleine (48.42), Robert Piguet (48.76,77) and several others.
- When Marjorie Post liked a specific silhouette or style, she ordered a few versions in varied colorways and slightly different ornamentation.
- Hillwood has the largest collection of garments from the Czech-born designer Oldric Royce (1896-1991). Post first began working with Royce a few years after he fled German occupation of Prague as a Jewish man.
- Besides Ann Lowe, the Callot sisters, and Jeanne Paquin, Hillwood holds costumes made by other women designers and dressmakers in the 20th century including the Baker sisters of Washington DC, Lucile, Madame Frances, and Eleanora Garnett.
- Today, four generations of Post's family, from her mother to her granddaughters are represented in the costume collection. Special occasion ensembles, specifically wedding dresses, best represent other members of the family.

At Hillwood

- During Post's residence, the two closets in her bedroom suite would have only displayed her clothes for that week. The rest of her Hillwood wardrobe (i.e.: those articles not being worn that week) was stored on the third floor of the mansion (staff offices now).
- The clothes hangers sometimes displayed in the closets in Post's bedroom suite date to her residence. They have long poles for a reason. The clothes were hung from the ceiling on the third floor (before they would be moved to Post's bedroom suite closets for use that week), and the pole facilitated staff reaching up to unhook a hanger off the rod on which it hung. Since the ceiling sloped (matching the contours of the eaves of the roofline), the length of the long pole varies.
- Personal maid Eva assisted Post with her clothing, including its care and planning what to wear.
- The current volunteer lounge on the mansion's second floor was used during Post's residence by her staff for pressing and steaming clothes, table, and bed linens.
- Post's clothes were laundered in DC at Rhode Island Cleaners (no longer in business) on Wisconsin Avenue NW.
- Post sometimes gifted clothing items (like dresses or furs) to friends and acquaintances. She hoped that they would be further used by those individuals. Sometimes those gifted articles of clothing are given to Hillwood and accessioned into the collection.
- Post preserved her clothing quite carefully and, in some cases, pinned handwritten notes to the fabric to document the occasion on which the dress was worn.
- Trunks transported Post's clothes when she traveled. (Examples of those trunks are often displayed in the staff dining room in the mansion.) The boxes displayed in the Post's bedroom suite closets were used for storage in the trunks. When the boxes were not packed in trunks, they were placed on the closet shelves (as they are displayed today at Hillwood). Some boxes still have paper labels on the outside that date from Post's time and describe the contents. The color of the boxes matched the decor of the closets in each residence (pink/purple boxes were intended for use at Hillwood, for instance).
- Fabrics are sensitive to light and therefore must be kept on public display for relatively short periods of time to conserve and protect them. That is why these displays in the mansion change at least twice

during the year, and the textiles and costumes spend most of their time off-view carefully stored flat in boxes.

- The free-standing three-drawer case in the closet with the window in Post's bedroom suite is not original to Post's residence. Through a donation from the Chesapeake Region Lace Guild, it was installed in 2013 and displays delicate items like lace.

Exhibitions featuring Hillwood's Fashion Collection

- 2021: *Roaring Twenties: The Life and Style of Marjorie Merriweather Post*
 - Featured 17 pieces from the costume collection.
- 2015: *Ingenue to Icon: 70 Years of Fashion from the Collection of Marjorie Merriweather Post*
 - A companion publication (with the same title of the exhibition) was authored by Howard Vincent Kurtz and Trish Donnally.
- 2011: *Wedding Belles: Bridal Fashions from the Marjorie Merriweather Post Family, 1875-1958*
- 2009: *An Invitation to the Ball: Marjorie Post's Fancy Dress Costumes of the 1920s*
 - This exhibition traveled to Alabama's Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts in 2015 and Palm Beach's Society of the Four Arts in 2016.