

CONSERVATION FLOORING IN HILLWOOD'S RUSSIAN PORCELAIN ROOM

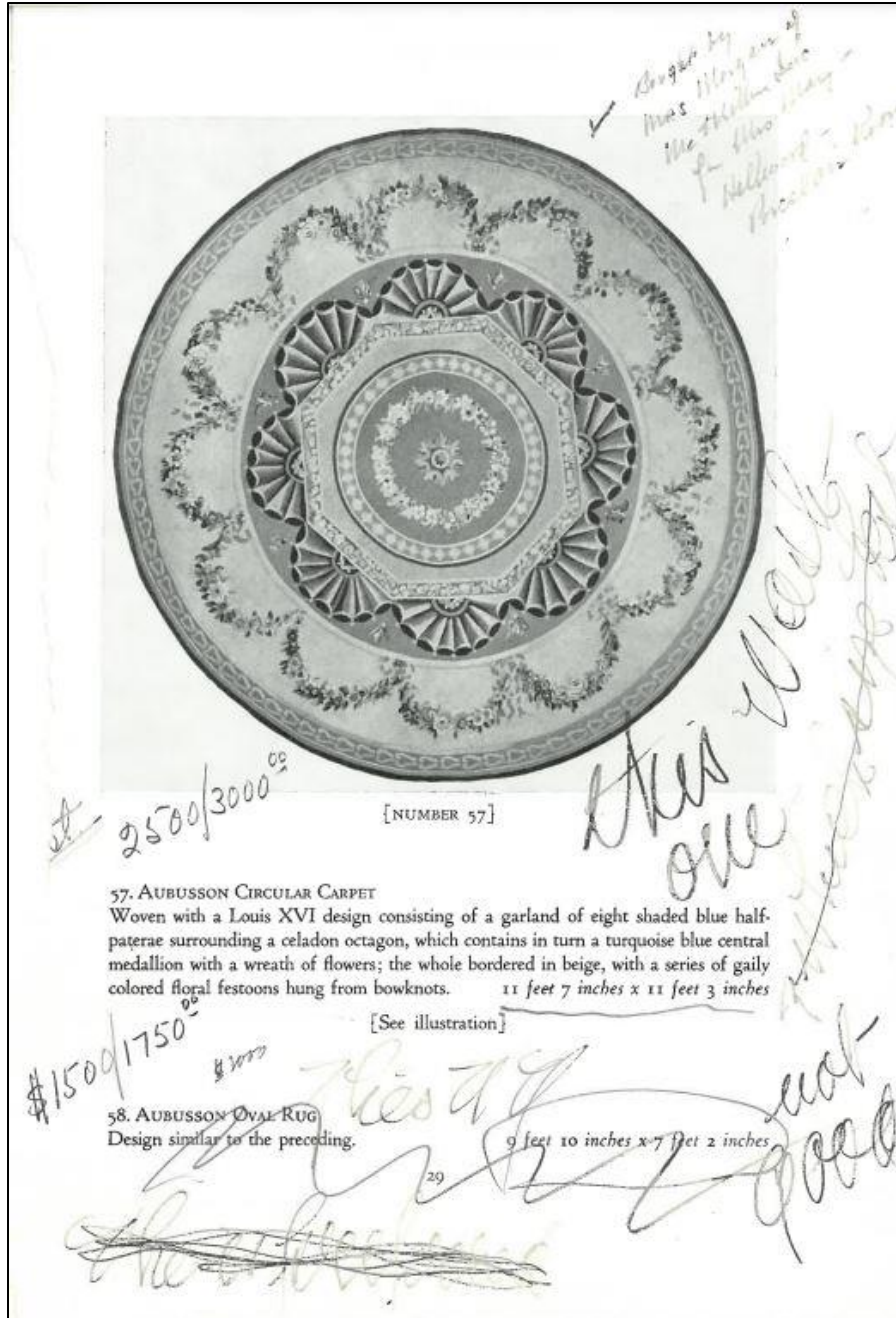
Megan Martinelli, Associate Curator of Textiles, Apparel, Jewelry and Accessories

Many of the bare-floored spaces at Hillwood were once covered with carpets during Marjorie Post's time including the Icon Room and the adjacent Russian porcelain room. In 1957, Post commissioned the central marquetry floor element at the center of her octagonal display room from Philipp Rimmler, a marqueteur based on the Upper East Side in New York City. To create the design, Rimmler used 25 types of wood and incorporated additional materials like zinc, brass, and mother-of-pearl. Perhaps Post recognized the delicacy of her new architectural element when she sourced a square-shaped carpet via her interior design firm, McMillen from the auction house, Parke-Bernet in January 1960 (42.5). Archival correspondence indicates that Post initiated a search for an appropriate floor covering for the space with McMillen as her liaison as early as 1955.



1 View of foyer (with carpet also!) looking into the Russian porcelain room and featuring 42.5, the first carpet acquired by Post for this space, 1960. Hillwood Archives & Special Collections.

It originated from the stock of esteemed carpet dealer Ohan Berberyan (1882-1970), who sold antique and modern carpets from his showrooms in New York and Palm Beach. Intriguingly, the carpet was replaced by Post a little less than two years later when she acquired a circular carpet from an additional liquidation sale of Berberyan's stock at Parke Bernet. The second carpet was purchased from the October 1961 sale and was reputedly woven from a Louis XVI design (42.4).



2 Annotated page from the Parke Bernet, New York, October 28, 1961 (lot 57) sale of Omaha Berbery's stock. Object files: 42.4, Curatorial Files, Hillwood Archives & Special Collections

It was probably selected because its shape complimented the space, and its predecessor was relegated to the English bedroom for a bit. Thanks to the technology of Eyemat, a company creating conservation flooring using digital images based in the UK, visitors will soon have the opportunity to experience the Russian porcelain room as they would have during a visit in Post's lifetime—stanchion free and with the freedom to step on the replica of the round carpet!



3 Edge of the round carpet, 42.4 acquired by Post in 1961 in the Russian porcelain room. Note the Icon Room carpet visible in the background. Hillwood Archives & Special Collections.

Volunteers will be notified when the conservation flooring is added to the Russian porcelain room. This project is ongoing with an expected completion date of late 2023.