

LIVING
at home with Marjorie Merriweather Post
ARTFULLY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2013

Images available on request

Media Contact Only:

Lynn Rossotti

(202) 243-3975

lrossotti@HillwoodMuseum.org

**Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens presents
LIVING ARTFULLY: AT HOME WITH MARJORIE MERRIWEATHER POST
June 8, 2013–January 12, 2014**

Special exhibition explores personal stories of family, guests, and staff to reveal the inner workings of Post's grand homes and perfectly coordinated way of life

WASHINGTON—From Palm Beach, to the Adirondacks, to Washington, D.C., Marjorie Merriweather Post brought to her multiple residences a flawless style of living and entertaining that was made possible only through the gracious management of loyal staff. For the first time, personal stories of family, staff, and former guests will echo throughout transformed spaces at Hillwood to bring to life the formal dinners, charity events, garden parties, and weekend retreats that made an invitation from Marjorie Post the most sought after in her time, for the special exhibition [Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merriweather Post](#) from June 8, 2013 to January 12, 2014 at Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens.



When she purchased her grand estate in northwest Washington, D.C., [Marjorie Post](#) intended for Hillwood to serve not only as a museum for sharing her decorative arts collections, but also as evidence of, in her own words, “the best way of life that is fast disappearing.” By the time she moved into the 1920s [neo-Georgian mansion](#) set upon 25 acres in 1957, Post was in her seventies and highly experienced in managing multiple residences. ***Living Artfully*** will employ the detailed documentation that Post left about the management of her homes; interviews with [family](#) members, guests, and former staff; archival materials; and the wealth of furnishings and [decorative art objects](#) that Post collected and incorporated into her everyday life, to reveal the inner workings of her perfectly coordinated way of living.

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202) 686-5807 www.HillwoodMuseum.org

“Marjorie Post brought an incredible acumen for organization and planning to her every effort, from overseeing a business, to furnishing and managing her homes, to entertaining, to charitable giving, to collecting the most prominent collection of Russian imperial art in the United States,” explained Hillwood executive director Kate Markert. “And the gracious style in which she managed it all was perceptible, especially to her staff and inner circle. This exhibition will explore their perspective for the first time.”

As the only child of Post Cereal founder C.W. Post, Marjorie Post was taught from an early age how to manage her affairs with efficiency. Fifty years before Hillwood was her home, Post was initiated into estate management with her first grand residence, *The Boulders*, in Greenwich, Connecticut. A wedding gift from C.W. in 1905, *The Boulders* had a house staff of 14, plus 60 more keeping the grounds, and Post was mentored by C.W. in the practicalities of properly administering the estate. By the 1930s, she was concurrently managing a triplex apartment in New York, a Long Island estate, a Palm Beach mansion, a camp in the Adirondacks, and a surprisingly well-appointed four-masted sailing yacht. And an invitation to join Marjorie Post at any of these residences for one of her legendary dinners or house party weekends was most fashionable.

“People often ask who most closely compares to Marjorie Merriweather Post today,” said Estella Chung, exhibition curator and author of the forthcoming book *Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merriweather Post*. “The answer is, she’s incomparable. She was at once a businesswoman—one of only a small handful of women to serve on the board of a public company—a philanthropist, an art collector, and a legendary hostess who entertained at the level of heads of state. It’s hard to identify any woman today who so effortlessly combines the skills, political stature, impeccable taste, and farsighted practicality in the manner of Marjorie Post.”

The Exhibition

Visitors to Hillwood for the special exhibition *Living Artfully* will experience the seasonal rotations of a year in the life of Marjorie Post during the late 1950s and 1960s, when she moved from residence to residence—winter in Palm Beach, spring at Hillwood, summer in the Adirondacks, and a return to Hillwood in the fall—with perfectly managed planning and precision.

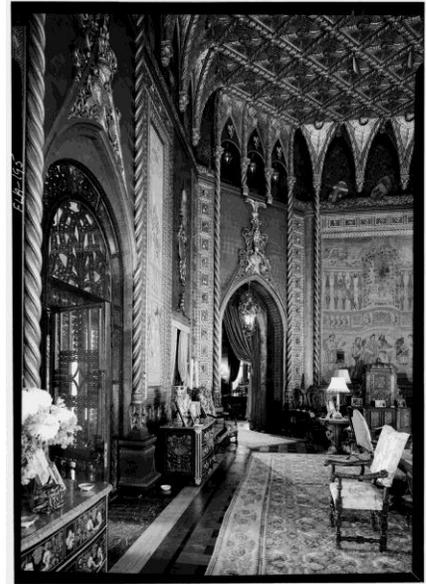
Every year for Post began with the social season in Palm Beach. In the 1920s, Post and then-husband E.F. Hutton built *Mar-A-Lago*, their grand estate, which served as the venue for many glamorous events. Later, Post began the International Red Cross Ball, which established Post as a legendary Palm Beach hostess. Currently home to the original centerpiece of Post’s Mar-A-Lago dining room—the remarkable Florentine hard-stone mosaic table—the [Dining Room](#) at Hillwood will be transformed with special installations to reflect both the Hispano-Moresque design and the lively spirit of Post’s Mar-A-Lago for this special exhibition. When Post was in residence, Mar-A-Lago employed over 70 staff members and weekly arrivals of Post’s private plane, the *Merriweather*, brought to her Palm

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202) 686-5807 www.HillwoodMuseum.org

Beach residence family, guests, and even flowers and plants from Hillwood's [greenhouse](#). Multimedia displays, archival images, and table settings in the Dining and Breakfast Rooms will reveal not just the splendor of life at Mar-A-Lago, but also the behind-the-scenes efforts necessary to make it all happen.

In the spring, Post's routine brought her to Hillwood, where her carefully planned garden design, timed to her seasons in residence there, welcomed her with thousands of flowers and shrubs [blooming](#) across the estate. During this season, she famously hosted formal dinner parties, luncheons both large and intimate, and delightful garden parties. From the first impression made at the [Motor Court](#), *Living Artfully* will resonate with all the fine details that



characterized a guest's experience at Post's Hillwood in the 1950s and 60s. The perfectly orchestrated welcome that met visitors is revealed through archival images and special tour stops in the social spaces at Hillwood, as visitors move from the [Entry Hall](#) to the [French Drawing Room](#) to glimpse the era of the 1960s against the backdrop of 18th-century French décor. On their way to the [Pavilion](#), the grand room in which Post famously hosted receptions and presented first-run movies to her dinner guests, visitors will pass by the newly refurbished wet bar. While Post had dinner served on her remarkable French and Russian porcelain, a set of vintage highballs, cocktails glasses, and martini glasses like the ones used for after dinner drinks at Hillwood are on view in this classic mid-century space.

Post's grand yacht, the *Sea Cloud*, was run with very much the same precision as her residences and a display of the décor that furnished it is on view in the [First Floor Library](#) at Hillwood for the exhibition. Alongside an intricately-detailed model of the ship itself, on loan from Post's youngest daughter Dina Merrill, these surprising details will convey the enduring fondness that Post had for the *Sea Cloud*, even years after she sold it.

When the busy spring social season in Washington, D.C. came to an end, the *Merriweather* turned its flight schedule to the Adirondacks, taking Post, her staff, and guests to Post's Camp Topridge on Upper St. Regis Lake in upstate New York, for a summer of weekend house parties and retreats, featuring formal dinners, luncheons, picnics, games, and movies. *For Living Artfully*, the Adirondack Building at Hillwood will be transformed to reflect the rustic whimsy of life at Camp Topridge. Archival photography will document the perfectly-choreographed arrival of staff and guests, from the landing of *Merriweather*, to the boat ride across the lake, to the funicular that transported guests and luggage from the water to the main camp. Now a private residence, Topridge still houses many of the original furnishings and items that Post chose for her distinctive camp, and many of these are on loan for the special exhibition.

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202) 686-5807 www.HillwoodMuseum.org

Additional transformed spaces at Hillwood, some offering exclusive opportunities to see areas never before open to the public, will reveal the efforts that happened behind-the-scenes to achieve Post's flawless style of living and entertaining during the fall season at Hillwood. Downstairs, the mid-century modern [Kitchen](#) and [Butler's Pantry](#) will shed light on the work of preparing Washington's most memorable meals. Hillwood's staff of 30 to 35 people, including three cooks, had at their disposal a kitchen and pantry that were fully equipped with what were once described as "up-to-the-minute" appliances, including multiple Hobart standing mixers, a Globe Gravity Feed meat slicer, an Oster Touch-a-Matic combination can opener and juicer, and a 55-cup capacity West Bend coffee percolator, which still line the heavy-duty stainless steel counters of this once working kitchen. The large state-of-the-art appliances include a nine-burner Magic Chef stove and an enormous Sta-Kold freezer—a nod to Post's frozen foods heritage.

The Butler's Pantry and other areas will focus on the people and the roles they played in carrying out Post's meticulously managed affairs. Archival images of staff and their private spaces, including the staff dining room and lounge, organizational charts, and personal recollections reveal the important part that her staff played in every aspect of Post's life.

Moving upstairs, visitors will experience the hub of Post's private life, where she spent the mornings coordinating every detail. Post began the day in her [dressing room](#), which was set up for light exercising and stretching, grooming, and meetings with staff and consultants. Here, photos, guest lists, menus, and correspondence will be on view as evidence of the important work that occurred in this intimate space. A peek into her closets uncovers the coordination that took place between Post and her staff to outfit her for the variety of business meetings, luncheons, and dinner parties that she attended. Visitors will learn that these roomy closets were designed to hold just one week's worth of [ensembles](#), brought down from the larger third-floor closets at the beginning of each week.

Visitors with special access to additional behind-the-scenes spaces will be reminded that this truly was a home from the 1950s and 60s. A recently-renovated fall-out shelter, one of four that Post had built across the estate, complete with pink walls and a supply of goods from General Foods, will be open for special access on a limited basis. Above the Pavilion, the projection booth is still furnished with what was then state-of-the-art equipment, and limited access will also be granted throughout the run of the exhibition.

Publication

Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merriweather Post is being presented in time with a publication of the same title by Hillwood curator Estella Chung. Fully illustrated with an abundance of photographs, hand-written and typed notes, menus, invitation cards, and other ephemera, much being published for the first time, the book follows Post's yearly calendar and offers a vibrant and intimate picture of life in each residence—for Post, her guests, and her staff.

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202) 686-5807 www.HillwoodMuseum.org

144 pp.

Published by D Giles Ltd. June 2013

Programs and Events

Through an audio tour, visitors will hear the voices of Post's family, former guests, and staff to hear firsthand about Post's long-lost art of living and entertaining with precision and grace. Programs, lectures, and other events will bring in experts from across a host of disciplines, such as interior design, entertaining, art collecting, and etiquette, to explore what can be learned from the social mores of Marjorie Post's 1950s and 1960s and how Post's tastes, habits, style, and standards can inspire a gracious way of living in today's world.

An [opening night celebration](#) will be held on Tuesday, June 4. Inspired by Post's grand affairs, the evening will feature cocktails and dinner on the [Lunar Lawn](#) at Hillwood, cloaked in the retro-vintage flair of the 1950s and 1960s.

Visit www.HillwoodMuseum.org/living-artfully-gala or call (202) 243-3974 for tickets and more information.

Hillwood Background

When Post cereal heiress, art collector, social figure, and philanthropist Marjorie Merriweather Post left to the public her northwest Washington, D.C. estate, she endowed the country with the most comprehensive collection of [Russian imperial art](#) outside of Russia, an [exquisite 18th-century French decorative art collection](#), and 25 acres of serene landscaped gardens and natural woodlands. Opened as a public institution in 1977, today Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens offers a gracious and immersive experience unlike any other. Highlights of the collection include Fabergé eggs, Russian porcelain, Russian orthodox icons, Beauvais tapestries, and Sèvres porcelain, and Post's personal collection of apparel, accessories, and exquisite jewelry. Thirteen acres of enchanting formal gardens include the [Japanese-style Garden](#), [Rose Garden](#), [French Parterre](#), and working greenhouses full of exotic orchids.

Hillwood thanks the Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, Anonymous, Ms. Patricia Bauman and Hon. John Landrum Bryant, Ellen MacNeille Charles, Kathy and Harlan Crow, Dina Merrill Hartley, Mr. Julio E. Heurtematte, Jr., Gordon and Jocelyn Linke, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Pohanka, Susan and David Thoms, and Douglas Reid Weimer, Esq. for their support of the exhibition. Funded in part by the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202) 686-5807 www.HillwoodMuseum.org

What: *Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merriweather Post*
When: June 8, 2013–January 12, 2014
Where: 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC
Metro: VanNess/UDC, Red Line (20 minute walk)
Information: 202.686.5807 or www.HillwoodMuseum.org
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter
Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm. Closed Mondays, most national holidays, and for two weeks in January. Open on Select Sundays throughout the year.
Café: The [Café](#) serves lunch Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm. Afternoon Tea is served on Sundays only from 1 to 3:30 pm. Express Dining, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages (cash only) is available Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday from 1 to 4 pm. Call (202) 686-5807 for café reservations
Suggested Donation: \$15; \$12 for seniors (65 and older); \$10 for college students; \$5 for visitors age 6 to 18. Donation waived for visitors under age 6.

#