



SPECTACULAR

GEMS AND JEWELRY FROM THE
MERRIWEATHER POST COLLECTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[Hi res images available upon request](#)

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Spectacular ***Gems and Jewelry from the Merriweather Post Collection***

Opening June 10 at Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

**Features exquisite examples of historic gems and the most beautiful jewelry
of the 20th century**

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 2, 2017—The special exhibition *Spectacular Gems and Jewelry from the Merriweather Post Collection*, on view at Hillwood from June 10, 2017 through January 1, 2018, will offer an enthralling glimpse into one of the most remarkable collections of jewelry ever amassed.

The first exhibition at Hillwood to display more than 50 pieces of jewelry that once belonged to Marjorie Merriweather Post, *Spectacular Gems and Jewelry* will tell the story behind the remarkable stones and the pieces of jewelry into which they were transformed, weaving in seminal moments of Post's life as one of the greatest jewelry collectors of the 20th century.

After World War I, industrialists joined the ranks of the wealthy, and began to acquire exquisite jewels. Post was among the new elite and she acquired jewelry with the same discrimination that she applied to her acclaimed collections of fine objects from imperial Russia and 18th-century France.

"Post was not just interested in wearing jewels, but was a connoisseur," explained Kate Markert, Hillwood's executive director. "Her resulting collection represented the finest assembly of gems, historic jewels, and 20th-century jewelry in America. She commissioned great pieces from the most important jewelry firms of her time, including Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Harry Winston, and Verdura, among many others."

Spectacular Gems and Jewelry will display the greatest examples from Hillwood's collection, left by Post for the benefit of future generations, along with important loans of pieces once owned by Post but currently housed in other museums or private collections.

Sadly, *Spectacular* exhibition curator, who was also Hillwood's chief curator and director of collections, Liana Paredes, died on March 16, 2017, after an illness. Having been with Hillwood for over 26 years, Paredes was a highly esteemed expert on French decorative arts, who turned her deep knowledge of and passion for Hillwood's collection to an important area of the collection—gems and jewelry—for this momentous project. *Spectacular* is the glorious result of years of her research into the remarkable gems and historic jewelry pieces once owned by Post. Paredes combed archives to locate lost pieces of jewelry, to trace the remarkable stories behind many of the gems that are the jewelry's centerpieces, and to understand the process that Post undertook in working with the greatest jewelry houses of the 20th century.

Exhibition Highlights

One of the most significant and well-known jewels in Marjorie's collection, still housed at Hillwood, is an emerald and diamond pendant brooch made by the London branch of Cartier in the 1920s. This iconic piece, emblematic of the marriage of historic gems with innovative design, features more than 250 carats of carved Indian emeralds from the Mughal period, including a large emerald carved with a 17th-century Mughal motif of a flower, with a Persian inscription on one side.



Historical pieces, dispersed through wars and revolutions, were an integral part of Post's jewelry collection. One example is the vintage ruby and diamond parure (jewelry ensemble) that was reputedly owned in the early 19th century by the Duchess of Oldenburg, a daughter of Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna and the granddaughter of Tsar Nicholas I. In contrast, the exhibition also features significant modern pieces, such as a rare 31-carat emerald ring that Post purchased from Harry Winston in 1966 and a stylish ruby and diamond floral brooch made by Van Cleef & Arpels, featuring its famous invisible setting, in 1969.

New and previously unseen pieces from the Merriweather Post collection will be an added highlight of this exhibition. The Van Cleef & Arpels ballerina pin inspired by the painting of Marie Camargo by Lancret is one of the first of this subject ever created by the firm in 1943. A peridot, gold, and diamond brooch by David Webb and a pear shaped amethyst ring by Verdura, both bold in design and strong in color, are typical of the casual inventiveness of jewelry boutique firms that Post patronized alongside the large jewelry houses.

"Despite the sumptuousness of Post's jewelry, her collection conveys a thoughtful and nuanced message that goes beyond mere dazzle and glitz," explained Paredes in the

accompanying publication. "In addition to being spectacular, Post's collection is unique. Her vision was novel in that she saw jewelry not only as objects for personal adornment, but also as works of art worthy of display. She recognized the importance of jewelry in the world of artistic design and purposely retained many of her pieces for the public's future enjoyment and access."

Thanks to Post's insightfulness, the exhibition will give visitors the opportunity to examine the great quality and beauty of the gems in the collection, their historical significance, and the evolution of 20th-century jewelry design from the 1900s through the 1960s.

Publication

A full-color 200-page companion publication also titled *Spectacular Gems and Jewelry from the Merriweather Post Collection* has been published by GILES in conjunction with the exhibition. The lavishly illustrated book, authored by Liana Paredes, provides a critical perspective on developments in changing jewelry styles in America and Europe through one woman's unique collection. Fascinating essays contributed by experts in the field highlight special details of the gems and jewels, as well as their sometimes scandalous history. Full of fabulous images and interesting facts this new volume will appeal to anybody who wants to know the story behind some of the most amazing jewels ever created.

Press Preview

A press breakfast and preview will be held on Tuesday, June 6, 2017 from 9-11 a.m.

Exhibition Programs and Events

Spectacular Gems and Jewelry from the Merriweather Post Collection will be the inspiration for an array of programs and events throughout the presentation of the exhibition.

An opening celebration will be held on Tuesday, June 6, 2017. Inspired by Post's grand affairs at Hillwood, the evening will include cocktails and a glamorous dinner on the Lunar Lawn in honor of Post's singular style and in support of Hillwood's mission to share her cultural treasure with future generations. A four-part lecture series, outdoor film, and additional programming will provide deeper exploration into the remarkable assemblage and the stories behind the gems.

In October, a four-part lecture series will explore how gems and jewelry captivated diverse cultures through history and continue to enthrall contemporary audiences. Speakers include Liana Paredes, exhibition curator and director of collections and chief curator at Hillwood; Dr. Jeffrey Edward Post, chairman of the Department of Mineral Sciences and curator of the U.S. National Gem and Mineral Collection; Dr. Emily Stoehrer, the Rita J. Kaplan and Susan B. Kaplan curator of jewelry at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and Aja Raden, author of the New York Times bestseller *Stoned: Jewelry, Obsession, and How Desire Shapes the World*.

Sponsors

Spectacular Gems and Jewelry from the Merriweather Post Collection is supported by Ellen MacNeille Charles, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Davison, Dina Merrill Hartley, Janice and Ralph Shrader, Sotheby's, The Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, and Diane B. Wilsey. All exhibitions and programs are funded in part by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts through the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs program. The exhibition is sponsored by Northern Trust.

About Hillwood

When art collector, businesswoman, 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 & 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 jewelry. Thirteen acres of enchanting formal gardens include a [Japanese-style garden](#), [rose garden](#), [French parterre](#), and a [greenhouse](#) full of orchids.

General Information

Location: 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC
Metro: VanNess/UDC, Red Line (20 minute walk)

Information/Tickets: 202.686.5807 for information or www.HillwoodMuseum.org
Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum

Hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mondays, most holidays, and for several weeks in January.

Café: The Hillwood café serves lunch Tuesday through Saturday from 11a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Afternoon tea is served on Sundays only from 11a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Express dining, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages, is available Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call 202.686.5807 for café reservations.

Suggested Donation: \$18, \$15 seniors, \$10 college students, \$5 for visitors age 6 to 18.
No donation is suggested for children under 6.
Adults and seniors receive \$3 off the suggested donation for weekday visits and \$1 for weekend visits when reservations are made online.

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