



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17 , 2017

Media Contact Only:
Lynn Rossotti 202-243-3975
Or 202-641-0490
lrossotti@HillwoodMuseum.org

HILLWOOD MOURNS THE DEATH OF CHIEF CURATOR LIANA PAREDES

WASHINGTON—The staff and community of Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens is sad to report the death of our colleague, Liana Paredes, chief curator and director of collections, who died on March 16 at her home in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Paredes, who is a highly esteemed expert on French decorative arts and interiors, as well as historic and 20th-century jewelry, worked at Hillwood for over 25 years, having grown tremendously as a professional in her field over the course of her career while nurturing the growing stature of Hillwood’s collection.

“Liana’s death is a great loss, not only for Hillwood, but also for the field of European decorative art to which she contributed so much,” said Hillwood executive director Kate Markert. “The level of academic excellence and true passion she brought to the study of Hillwood’s collection cannot be overstated, nor can the professionalism, graciousness, and quiet authority with which she interacted with her colleagues at Hillwood and throughout the international community of French art scholars,” she added.

Longtime board president and granddaughter of Hillwood’s founder Marjorie Merriweather Post, Ellen MacNeille Charles, commented on Liana’s enduring commitment to her field and to Hillwood: “In over 25 years at Hillwood, Liana never stopped examining the collections. Constantly conducting new research, deepening her knowledge, and applying her astute point of view, Liana worked with great enthusiasm to raise awareness and appreciation for decorative arts in general and to place Hillwood’s collection among the pantheon of important decorative arts and furnishing collections.”

Paredes, who is known internationally as a scholar in the field of French decorative art, came to Hillwood in 1991. She started as an intern and quite quickly became assistant curator, then curator of western European art. In that position, Paredes worked alongside her co-worker and mentor, Anne C. Odom, to deeply study, catalogue, and publish on Hillwood’s collections. She has served as chief curator and director of collections since 2011.

In 1998, Paredes and Odom co-authored the book *A Taste for Splendor: Russian Imperial and European Treasures from the Hillwood Museum*, which was published in conjunction with the traveling exhibition of the same title. At the time, Hillwood was undergoing major renovations and some of the greatest works from its collection were traveling around the country. In this groundbreaking publication, Paredes mined her deep knowledge of French decorative arts and Hillwood’s collections to illustrate the importance of 18th-century France in the world of luxury arts. Together, their scholarship placed Russian objects in their European context in order to rediscover the interaction of creative design between Russia and Western Europe. Both the exhibition and publication were critical in elevating the appreciation of

Hillwood's collection and bringing to light the high level of discernment that collector Marjorie Merriweather Post applied to assembling it.

In 2009, Paredes concluded a long period of study into Sèvres porcelain with the publication and corresponding exhibition *Sèvres Then and Now: Tradition and Innovation in Porcelain, 1750-2000*. This was the first exhibition in America to examine the full range of the preeminent factory's work. Contributing outstanding new research about the manufactory and her exceptional understanding, Paredes made artistic and historic links to significant works from Hillwood's collection as a foundation, and brought together international loans of works from all periods of the factory's two and a half centuries of production to demonstrate its continued pursuit of originality. Both the exhibition and publication were highly praised for their scholarship and innovation, characteristics that Paredes brought to all areas of her work.

Paredes piloted a new initiative to present contemporary artwork at Hillwood when she worked closely with Belgian artist Isabelle de Borchgrave in 2012 to organize *Prêt-à-Papier: The Exquisite Art of Isabelle de Borchgrave*, the first exhibition of the artist's work to be presented in Washington D.C., which included six new works made for the exhibition, including one commissioned solely for Hillwood. In 2014, she curated one of the most popular exhibitions to be presented at Hillwood, *Cartier: Marjorie Merriweather Post's Dazzling Gems*, which offered a new perspective on the taste and refinement that characterized Post's style, her criteria for collecting, and her way of life through a remarkable exploration of some of Cartier's greatest pieces.

Paredes's untimely death preceded what may have been one of her most favorite endeavors and a great professional achievement. Having already conquered the field of French decorative arts, Paredes turned her acumen to another of Marjorie Post's collecting passions and an important area of Hillwood's collection—gems and jewelry. This spring will see the release of her latest publication, *Spectacular Gems and Jewelry from the Merriweather Post Collection*. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name that will open this June, *Spectacular* is the glorious result of years of research into the remarkable gems and historic jewelry pieces once owned by Marjorie Merriweather 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, including Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Verdura, Harry Winston, and others.

Prudent stewardship of the collection was also a major focus of Paredes's work at Hillwood, maintaining the active acquisitions policy by expanding the cultural and historic significance of the collection with meaningful additions and careful selection of objects to be removed. Recently, she discovered several important examples of jewelry that once belonged to Marjorie Merriweather Post and successfully acquired those, strengthening Hillwood's capacity to further Post's desire to educate and inspire future generations with her carefully selected assemblage of objects—both decorative and personal. These objects will be on view at Hillwood for the first time in the upcoming *Spectacular* exhibition.

In 2012, Paredes took on a challenging project when she de-accessioned a number of works from the C.W. and Marjorie Merriweather Post Collections. This was an elegant assemblage of furniture, decorative arts, paintings, and sculpture—primarily English, Revival, Victorian, Renaissance-style, and

Mission-style—that had been collected by Merriweather Post’s father, C.W. Not intended by Post to be part of the Hillwood collection, a portion of these pieces that were not relevant to Hillwood were sold, with the proceeds earmarked for future acquisitions.

She authored, edited, and contributed to numerous other publications and journals. At Hillwood, those include *French Furniture from the Collection of Hillwood Museum & Gardens* and *Sèvres at Hillwood*.

“I am very saddened by the untimely passing of Liana Paredes,” said Frederick Fisher, former Hillwood executive director, who worked with Paredes for almost twenty years. “She joined Hillwood’s curatorial staff early in my tenure as director and immediately infused the staff and trustees with her profound depth of knowledge relating to the museum’s vast collection of French and European decorative arts. Beyond the level of many scholars, Liana exuded brilliance and joyful enthusiasm when interpreting the collection to staff, visitors, and the academic world. She contributed to numerous museum publications and in each case transferred her depth of knowledge in studious yet approachable prose. Ms. Parade’s vast scholarly contributions to the museum significantly aided to its professional growth.”

Paredes received her *Licenciada en Historia del Art* (five-year degree, equivalent of MA) in art history from the Universidad Complutense, Madrid, Spain in 1985. She completed the Sotheby’s Graduate Works of Art Course and a student internship in London from 1985 to 1986. Before Hillwood, other professional experience includes the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She was selected to be a participant at the Museum Management Institute, the preeminent education program for museum executives at the Getty Leadership Institute. The American Friends of Attingham sponsored Paredes for a course of study at the Attingham Summer school, where she devoted 18 days of arduous work to examining the architectural history of the historic house in Britain and its gardens and landscapes, studying the contents of the buildings—including the paintings, sculpture, furniture, ceramics, and other applied arts—and debating problems relating to the conservation and presentation of the country house and its contents.

A memorial service at Hillwood will be held on a date to be determined.

#

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.