

Curating Collections at a Small House Museum
Megan Martinelli
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Summary by Kristina DiMaria

The educational programs attended by fashion industry professionals influences their performance later on in their career. The faculty in the TMD department at the University of Rhode Island help guide their students in the path that best meets their interests while helping them reach their greatest potential. Megan Martinelli is one of many URI graduates who have used this influence to pursue their aspirations in textile and costume history.

After graduating, Megan was able to apply the knowledge she had gained from URI to her new position as a research assistant at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. During her time there, Megan had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects due to the size of not only the MET, but also the collection that the museum holds. Megan began as part of the Collections' Assessment Team that worked with then curator-in-chief Harold Koda, comparing objects in the Costume Institute's founding collection to the incoming costume collection from the Brooklyn Museum. This job not only had its benefits of working with historic garments that she had written and researched for her graduate thesis and making incredible friends, but she was able to attend special events held at the MET. Megan had the opportunity to attend a breakfast ceremony when the Anna Wintour Center first opened that had a guest list of many famous fashion designers and fashion icons. Although there were glamorous parts of this job, she still had to do some less alluring tasks such as using a lifting crane to clean storage cabinets with a Swiffer.

Megan hit a point in her career where she felt like she needed to refocus and look for a more research-orientated job. During this transition, she published research in *The Fashion Studies Journal* and the *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*. In January 2018, she began a new position as the Assistant Curator of Apparel, Accessories, and Jewelry at Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens in Washington D.C. This new position focused on the relationship between fashion and the founder rather than fashion as art. She became the co-chair of the Mansion Rotation Committee where she changes displays in the mansion twice a year and does two special exhibitions a year. Alongside the mansion gallery, there are two separate galleries, a small one that opens every February for three months and a larger one that opens in June for six months.

The estate that Megan works at is the former home of Marjorie Merriweather Post, who became an heiress to the Post Consumer Company when she was 27 in 1914. In the 1920s Marjorie Post lived a luxurious life in a NYC penthouse made up of three floors and 54 rooms. This apartment later inspired the layout and theme of this June's exhibition, *Roaring Twenties: The Life and Style of Marjorie Merriweather Post* which is composed of 20 costumes that Marjorie wore and a section that focuses on her husband E.F Hutton. This is one of three special exhibitions Megan has worked on. The first was on LIFE magazine photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt who had created a big profile on Marjorie in 1965. Since he did such a wonderful job profiling her, the museum wanted to research his life as a photographer. The final special exhibition, *Grace Kelly of Monaco: Princess in Dior* will be on display June 2021. This exhibition is greatly influenced by the exhibition on Grace Kelly and Christian Dior's family home in Normandy, France. This exhibition was influenced by Marjorie Post's daughter Dina Merrill who became a replacement for Grace Kelly in Hollywood. Although these special exhibitions have different themes, they all draw a personal connection to Marjorie Post.

