

Galerie

Architecture

Newport's Rosecliff Mansion Opens Exhibition Focused on Gilded Age Architect Richard Morris Hunt

*The American visionary designed numerous Newport properties, as well as
Biltmore Estate and part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*

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"Richard Morris Hunt: In a New Light." Photo: Courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County

American architect Richard Morris Hunt was the visionary behind a plethora of Gilded Age mansions in Newport, Rhode Island, and beyond—and a new exhibit in the historic town highlights his influence and many accomplishments.

Titled “[Richard Morris Hunt: In a New Light](#),” the exhibit is on display at Rosecliff Mansion through November 2 and includes his personal sketchbooks, scrapbooks, architectural and interior drawings, and intimate family objects and collections. Hunt designed The Breakers, [Marble House](#), Biltmore Estate, and the Great Hall and façade of the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), among other architectural marvels. He was also the first American to be admitted to the École des Beaux-Arts.



Portrait of Richard Morris Hunt at age 22 by Thomas Couture. **Photo: Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution**



Hunt's 1893 drawing of a dining room chandelier in the Breakers. **Photo: Courtesy of The Hunt Collection in AIA/AAF Collection, Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC**



Hunt's sketch of the Tribune Building. Photo: Courtesy The Hunt Collection in AIA/AAF Collection, Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC

“As caretakers of Marble House, [The Breakers](#) and Chateau-sur-Mer, we are reminded every day of the impact Richard Morris Hunt made on American architecture,” said Trudy Coxe, CEO and Executive Director of the Preservation Society of Newport County. “But this exhibition promises to reveal another side of this complex man who did so much to shape our understanding of culture in this country.”

This exhibition marks the first time that Hunt’s materials from the collections of the Library of Congress, the Preservation Society of Newport County, the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, the Vermont Historical Society, and Vermont’s Bennington Museum are displayed in one location.



A 1874 sketchbook detailing Hunt’s observations on a trip to Cologne, which features buildings, churches, and landscapes. **Photo: Courtesy The Hunt Collection in AIA/AAF Collection, Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC**

Highlights include a circa-1874 sketchbook with Hunt’s drawings of buildings, churches, and landscapes he visited on a trip to Cologne, Germany; this item has never been exhibited before. Another highlight is a 55-inch plaster cast of Hunt dressed as a stone mason; the original cast was installed on the roof of the William K. Vanderbilt House, also

known as Petit Chateau, on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue. It served as a tribute to [Hunt](#) by his workmen.

“With a renewed focus on the Hunt Collection at the Library of Congress, new scholarship has provided greater insight into who Hunt was and who he wanted to be, along with his vision for America at a time of great transformation in both the built and cultural landscapes,” said Leslie Jones, the Preservation Society's Director of Museum Affairs and Chief Curator. “His ambition for identifying what American culture should be through public and private spaces, particularly his role in the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has been largely overlooked.



Installation view, “Richard Morris Hunt: In A New Light.” **Photo: Courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County**

“We are bringing together material selected by Hunt, which inspired his ability to influence America's impressionable cultural landscape during the Gilded Age,” added Jones. “In a way, while we know Hunt as an architect, we are presenting him as a man.”



Installation view, "Richard Morris Hunt: In A New Light."