

SAA PERFORMING ARTS SECTION MEET & GREET #4
Tuesday, January 9, 2025 @ 3:00 PM EST / 12:00 PM PST

Women Artists of the Ballet Russes: Designing the Legacy
A Discussion with Exhibition Curator, Dr. Caroline Hamilton

Please register at: <https://forms.gle/7iivBOWzgy6VSs5MA>



In 2022, Caroline Hamilton was approached by former Tobin Theatre Collection of Theatre Arts, Scott Blackshire, to offer a new perspective to the extensive Ballets Russes holdings at the McNay. The resulting exhibition, *Women Artists of the Ballets Russes: Designing the Legacy*, on display now through January 12th, highlights some of the extraordinary women involved in the company, including designers, artists, dancers, costume makers, and financial patrons. It centers on the career and work of Bronislava Nijinska, the company's only female choreographer, and Russian avant-garde artist, Natalia Gontcharova. Also featured are the works of Sonia Delaunay, as well as Alexandra Exter, who did not work directly with the Ballets Russes, but collaborated with Nijinska throughout the 1920s. Finally, the exhibition explores the legacy of these women and the influence of the Ballets Russes company on ballet's development in the United States.

The exhibition includes costumes, an original set piece, costume and set designs, ephemera, as well as artworks inspired by the ballets. The exhibition brings together items from the McNay's own collection as well as loans from six institutions. The driving force was to reunite objects--in some cases, for the first time since the last performance--as well as highlight the makers, and wearers.

In this talk I will discuss my research and curation process as well as some of discoveries made along the way and the challenges of mounting historic ballet costumes. For more information: <https://www.mcnayart.org/exhibition/women-artists-of-the-ballets-russes/>.

Dr. Caroline Hamilton is a dance and costume historian and curator specializing in the evolution and construction of early twentieth-century ballet costume. In 2018 Caroline led a project to catalogue and rehouse the Jacob's Pillow historic costume collection and has continued to work with the collection as costume curator since 2021. Caroline has written extensively on dance and costume including as a contributing writer for *Anna Pavlova: Twentieth Century Ballerina* (2012), *Ballet: The Definitive Illustrated Story* (2018), and *Dance We Must: The Art and Costumes of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, 1906-1940*, (2022). She holds an MA in World History and Cultures from Kings College London and a PhD from the University of Brighton in collaboration with the Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust. Her doctoral thesis examined the design and impact of Balanchine's short-lived ballet company Les Ballets 1933 through the surviving costume and material culture.