Winterthur’s Follies

First garden exhibit designed to highlight estate’s architecture, changing landscape

Betsy Price | Photos by Jennifer Corbett

Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library organizers hope their new exhibit of garden structures will be the outdoor equivalent of itsragingly successful “Downton Abbey” costume exhibit. That Downton show, which crushed attendance records in 2014, en- twined the real-life story of Winterthur founder H.F. du Pont and his country estate with the fictional Crawley family and their estate from the popular PBS series.

The garden exhibit has its roots in the Downton one, says Chris Strand, Winterthur’s Brown Harrington director of garden and estate. The museum then surveyed people about what they liked, and many said they would come back for garden events. Winterthur Executive Director David Roselle asked Strand if he’d ever consid- ered a garden exhibit and sent him some ideas. They decided to focus on follies, which are structures such as gazebos placed in the garden to add visual order or interest. To up the ante, they created seven to add to the six that H.F. du Pont included in his gardens as he built them. “A story in a story,” Strand says.

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Montchanin financier buys into classic, timeless style

Eileen Smith Dallabrida


WHY: Brandywine in Black, a pop-up gala, in which Carol Mayhart has the most fun with her wardrobe, pulling together glamorous, all-black outfits. This year’s twist is adding a touch of gold. She will choose from these three stylish op- tions for the fifth annual event on April 14, her 51st birthday.

WEARING, at Buckley’s Tavern in Centreville:

FIRST OUTFIT — Sleeveless black cocktail dress with mesh detailing from White House Black Market; J. Renee black pumps with ankle straps; pearl lariat-style necklace; diamond stud earrings; and David Yurman diamond and sterling bracelet, a 50th birthday gift from her sister Sue.

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The Ottoman Tent, inspired by Turkish tents, is one of the new follies at Winterthur Museum. It’s part of the “Follies: Architectural Whimsy in the Garden” exhibit, which continues through 2020. PHOTOS BY JENNIFER CORBETT, THE NEWS JOURNAL

A pivotal tower that mimics the towers, sham castles and fake ruins popular in European landscapes in the 1700s and 1800s.

A Chinese Pavilion, inspired by the Chinese House at Stone Landscapes Garden in Buckinghamshire, England, but updated with illustrations taking from the wallpaper in Winterthur’s Chinese Parlor.

A Green Folly, built with Winterthur tree trunks, heath bog thatching and other woodland embellishments. Curator Carol Long is betting on the Neoclassical Folly to provide the best views, both to it and from it, providing a contrast from its formal design and the always evolving natural world.

A gothic tower that mimics the towers, sham castles and fake ruins historical to particular views. The estate is not built in a large garden or park.”

Winterthur has more structures that could be called follies, but they are away from the one-mile circuit. And they were careful not to install anything in what Strand calls the “sacred spaces” of places like the Marsh Bank Garden. Some of Winterthur’s existing follies, including a Gothic tower that mimics the towers, sham castles and fake ruins popular in European landscapes in the 1700s and 1800s.