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Meet the Woman Behind 3000 Handbags!
Ilene Hochberg Wood to Offer Collector-led Tours of PURSEonality: A Stylish Handbag History at Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites

BETHLEHEM, PA, January 2020 – When Ilene Hochberg Wood’s mother gifted her a little red handbag as a child, there was no way to know that the bag would become the basis of a world-class collection. Now, years after the first bag that started it all, a portion of Hochberg Wood’s collection is being displayed across several museums. PURSEonality: A Stylish Handbag History, on view now, showcases over 500 handbags at Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites’ (HBMS) Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts and Moravian Museum of Bethlehem.

Special brunch and wine and cheese tours of the exhibit with collector Ilene Hochberg Wood will be held at the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts on Sunday, February 16 and April 26 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM and Thursday, March 19 and May 14 from 6:00 – 9:00 PM. Visitors are invited to enjoy light refreshments and drinks while shopping at the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts shop. After the tour, visitors can participate in a Q&A with Ms. Hochberg Wood. This is your chance to pick the brain of the largest private collector of handbags in the United States and possibly the world! Get answers to your burning questions about her collection such as: What is her favorite bag? How does she store them? Where does she find her purses? And more!

Two tours will be offered at each date and each tour will be limited to just 20 people. Tickets are $30 for HBMS members and $55 for future members. Space is very limited and pre-registration is required. Tickets can be purchased on the HBMS website. Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts is located at 427 N. New Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018.

New additions to the exhibit will be debuted Sunday, February 16 and include: 4 Anne Marie of Paris bags bringing the total number of Anne Marie bags on display to 24, 2 O.E.L. Graves handbags, a Lasage metallic silver teapot handbag, a Lederer alarm clock evening bag, and more than 40 additional bags from Ilene Hochberg Wood’s expansive collection.

Ilene Hochberg Wood is the author of several best-selling books including Dogue, a canine version of Vogue magazine, and Catmopolitan, a feline parody of Cosmopolitan magazine which spent nine weeks on The New York Times bestseller list. She is known for her wit and style, and has appeared on television, in newspapers, and magazines to promote her projects, both here and abroad. Ms. Hochberg Wood has the largest privately held handbag collection in the United States and plans to create The American Handbag Museum.

For more information, please contact LoriAnn Wukitsch at lwukitsch@historicbethlehem.org, or Lindsey Jancay, Director of Programming and Collections, at ljancay@historicbethlehem.org. The exhibit look book can be found online.
Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites is a not-for-profit institution that brings to life three centuries of American history. Historic Bethlehem tells the story of a small town of great influence, home to some of our nation’s early settlers, to the first pumped municipal water system in the American colonies, and to one of the world’s greatest industrial companies. Historic Bethlehem is located in eastern Pennsylvania, only an hour drive north from Philadelphia and 2 hours west of New York City. Historic Bethlehem is an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, part of a National Historic Landmark District, and a designated site on the US Tentative List.

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