

*They engendered art and style on a wild coast. Now their Bonnet House preserves an island of wildness, a slice of Old Florida ... the perfect cinematic setting for their story — and our Bartlett-inspired preview of resortwear fashion. We could call it Frederic and Evelyn: An Artful Love. Or maybe just...*



# *Paradise found*

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PREVIOUS PAGE: Her dress by Jovovich-Hawk, \$1,026, from Flip Munich, or [jovovich-hawk.com](http://jovovich-hawk.com); Carolina Herrera eyewear, \$250, from Optical Spectrum, Fort Lauderdale; vintage gloves, \$28, from Jezebel, Fort Lauderdale. His khaki Theory jacket, \$425, and trousers, \$225, from Theory shops and select Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus stores; Lacoste oxford shirt, \$110, from the Lacoste boutique, Aventura Mall.

THIS PAGE: Her Chanel cocktail dress, \$6,435, and patent calf-skin shoes, \$775, from select Chanel boutiques.  
SHOPPING GUIDE, PG. 121



BY ELIZABETH RAHE

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t was a friendship that blossomed into a romance that grew into a legacy, all set in a sanctuary of art and quirky style on the untamed Fort Lauderdale coast. The life and times of Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett and their beloved Bonnet House seems made for the movies.

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he film would open, perhaps, with old Hugh Taylor Birch telling – via flashback – of the storm that blew him into the Port Everglades area in 1893 and, as fate would have it, resulted in his purchase of some land. Three miles of ocean-front property, to be exact, right in the middle of present-day Fort Lauderdale. He would tell of the marriage of his daughter, Helen, to artist Frederic Bartlett, his gift of a 35-acre “house lot” to the couple and Helen’s tragic death from cancer.



Her Derek Lam voile tunic, \$850, and ombre sequin skirt, \$2,990, from eluxury.com. His Coppley navy blazer, \$595, Pal Zileri shirt, \$225, Coppley super 150's trouser, \$225, Pal Zileri silk tie, \$150, all from Plattinni, Mizner Park, Boca Raton.



Her Lela Rose dress, \$1,395, from select Bloomingdale's stores. His Ted Baker shirt, \$245, Chiari cotton trouser, \$175, from Plattinni, Mizner Park, Boca Raton.

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he camera would then focus on a shy, soulful divorcée, Evelyn Fortune Lilly, listening intently. Taking cinematic license here, she would be cast younger than the real Evelyn, who was in her mid-40s when she married Frederic, himself pushing 60. He would be cast younger as well, say, a gaunt Orlando Bloom-type. After all, Evelyn had described him as “one of the kindest people I’ve ever known, great companion, great fun, handsome...everything perfectly delightful about him.”

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he two friends would marry in 1931, honeymoon in Europe, and winter in the plantation-style Bonnet House, which Frederic had designed himself. For his new wife, he would add a circular shell museum, displaying specimens from around the world, as well as an orchid house and bamboo bar. There the Bartletts would serve Rangpur lime cocktails before dinner in the courtyard, which would be adorned with his collection of carousel animals. She would add live tropical birds and monkeys to the mix. Together, they would travel and garden and entertain and collect. They would paint in the Bonnet House studio, where Frederic could be heard saying that he considered Evelyn to be his greatest artistic discovery.



Her Gucci dress, \$3,495, and peep-toe shoe, \$585, from select Gucci boutiques.  
His Plattinni suit, \$495, from Plattinni, Mizner Park, Boca Raton.



Her Sari Gueron silk-cotton dress, \$1,200, from Neiman Marcus, Bal Harbour Shops; cherry garnet necklace (top), \$750, from Daoud's Fine Jewelry, Fort Lauderdale. His Pal Zileri houndstooth jacket, \$1,195, and trouser, \$325, Forsyth shirt, \$135, and Dolcepunta seven-fold silk tie, \$175, all from Plattinni, Mizner Park, Boca Raton.

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Frederic's death in 1953 would be a somber scene. Remembering him, Evelyn would say, "My marriage to Frederic made the greatest change in my life...he encouraged my painting...gave me a show in New York...good criticisms...it was quite fun." Evelyn would have much more life in her, however. She would be seen gardening and enjoying friends and feeding her breakfast toast to the courtyard cranes for many more winters, nearly until her death in 1997 at age 109. Knowing that her estate was a precious jewel that could not be compromised, she had decided it to the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.



Her Jovovich-Hawk silk chiffon dress with beading detail, \$849, from Barneys New York. His Plattinni suit, \$495, Serica shirt, \$135, and Italo Ferretti silk tie, \$175, all from Plattinni, Mizner Park, Boca Raton.

CREDITS: Photographer Mateo Garcia from Blink  
Models: Holly from Michele Pommier, Alberto from Deco Models  
Hair & Make-Up: Fatima Olive from Ford-Miami  
Assistant Stylist: Marcia Ranart

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he film might close with an aerial shot panning the high-rise Fort Lauderdale coastline then settling on the oasis of lush tropical greenery between the Atlantic and the Intracoastal, with a palm-fringed manor at its heart. As a swan glides through the Bonnet House reflection on the lagoon, Evelyn Bartlett's voice could be heard saying, "I want it to stay like it was in the old days...I don't want it to change."

*The Bonnet House is located between the Atlantic Ocean and Intracoastal Waterway, just south of Sunrise Boulevard at 900 N. Birch Road, Fort Lauderdale, 954-563-5393, bonnethouse.org. Quotes from Bonnet House: The Life & Gift by Jayne Thomas Rice.*