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PRESS RELEASE

Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo Announces an Important Highlight from the Fall Sale

A Rolex “Deep Sea Special” to be Offered in The Geneva Watch Auction: XIV in November 2021

Made in 1965, the Model has Never Before been Publicly Available for Purchase



Rolex

Deep Sea Special

Estimate: CHF 1,200,000 to 2,400,000

GENEVA – 14 SEPTEMBER 2021 – Following the recent announcements of four extraordinary [Philippe Dufour timepieces](#) and five [F.P. Journe's "Souscription" wristwatches](#) numbered #1 each, Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo is pleased to reveal an additional highlight from The Geneva Watch Auction: XIV – the **Rolex “Deep Sea Special”**.

The sale, taking place at la Réserve in Geneva on November 5 and 7, will include this historically important, museum quality Rolex “Deep Sea Special” in stainless steel and gold ultra-deep dive wristwatch with centre seconds. The model was made in 1965 and has never before been publicly available for purchase (estimate: CHF 1,200,000-2,400,000).

Alexandre Ghotbi, Head of Watches, Continental Europe and Middle East, said: *“The Deep Sea Special fully deserves the Special in its name, the sheer idea of a watch that can withstand a dive of 10,000 meters (that is 10 km) is simply mind boggling! However, more than the technical aspects and sheer rarity of this piece, it is its historical significance that needs to be highlighted. The DSS is the watch that defined what Rolex is today, it is the philosophy behind its creation that led Rolex to focus on tool watches in general and dive watches in particular. Without the Deep Sea Special there would be no Submariner or Sea Dweller as we know it. The DSS is a watch that was never available for public purchase and the arrival on the market of an example is a once in a decade event for collectors and watch aficionados to celebrate. We are humbled to have been entrusted with such an incredible piece of horological history.”*

The “Deep Sea Special” can be likened to a Formula One race car in the world of watchmaking – always pushing the boundaries of what is technically possible to achieve feats that no other watch has ever done before. Like a Formula One race car, the model tests technologies to later benefit serially produced models for commercial use. It is a groundbreaking model that paved the foundation for dive watches that we know and appreciate so well today. It is the “Big Bang” of Rolex’s unparalleled development in the last seven decades in their exploration of the depths of the sea.

The term “Rolex Oyster” is today most likely the world’s most famous trademark, it is a household name, known not just in the inner circles of watch aficionados. It is thanks to three seminal events that Rolex is today at the forefront of deep dive exploration. The very first is the concept of the Oyster case, which was created in the early 1920s. Rolex’s invention of the Oyster case was groundbreaking – with a hermetic case, watches were now water resistant and could be worn during a number of physical and professional activities. In 1927, Rolex English swimmer Mercedes Gleitze wore a Rolex Oyster and crossed the English Channel, establishing the Oyster name. The second was the creation of the “Deep Sea Special” in 1953 and its subsequent dive to 10,000 meters below sea level. Finally, the James Cameron Deep Sea Challenge, where he wore a Rolex Deepsea while embarking on a record-breaking solo dive to the Mariana Trench.

The present watch, the “Deep Sea Special”, thus represents a key moment in Rolex’s history. In the 1950s, in response to the increasing demand for waterproof watches – whether it be for recreational, professional or military use, Rolex decided to further the concept of an Oyster case. Not just content with making watches waterproof, Rolex sought to further develop their line of underwater professional watches to withstand incredibly high pressure from the depths of the ocean – further than any of its previous models. Most notably, this decision to innovate coincided with the launch of the Submariner in 1953 – the underwater tool watch for divers. Thus, Rolex contacted Professor Piccard, renowned Swiss oceanographer and engineer, to test watches during his diving experiments. Piccard accepted and Rolex engineers developed a watch fitted with a special case and a domed crystal to hold up against extreme pressure.

In 1953, Rolex tested the first prototype by strapping it on to the outside of the Bathyscaphe Trieste Submersible. The watch was first tested at 1,080 meters, then submerged to 3,150 meters that same year. Having completed initial tests, Rolex embarked on a second mission in 1960 with a second prototype, pre-testing the new model with a high pressure chamber, tweaking and constantly updating details to improve the watch. This time, the new “Deep Sea Special” was created to withstand the most extreme conditions, having submerged to over 10,000 meters below sea level, having completed its test in the Marina Trench, the deepest known point on Earth, with Jacques Piccard and Don Walsh. It is Phillips’ understanding that the first batch of a handful of pieces were used for professional testing with some being entrusted to Piccard. Following the successful deep dive in 1960, Rolex produced in the subsequent years a commemorative series such as the present watch, numbered 35, in celebration

of this incredible achievement and offered to only the most distinguished science, technology and watch museums, along with the most trusted, longstanding retailers and high profile partners and executives who contributed to the development of the model. Most notably, the “Deep Sea Special” numbered 3, which was strapped to the Bathyscaphe, is currently on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. Other museums include the Beyer Museum, London Science Museum and Piccard Museum Nyon (Switzerland), to name a few.

So rare is this timepiece that it joins the extremely exclusive club, of which 5 of its kind have been sold in the public sphere, with other publicly known examples owned and displayed by storied institutions. As such, it has been 12 years since the last example has appeared on the market, underscoring its absolute rarity. Considering that the majority of examples are in institutions, there is no telling when another will grace the market.

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The team of specialists at Phillips Watches is dedicated to an uncompromised approach to quality, transparency, and client service, achieving a sale total of \$133 million in 2020.

A selection of our recent record-breaking prices:

1. Paul Newman's Rolex “Paul Newman” Daytona reference 6239 (CHF 17,709,894 / US\$17,752,500) – New York Auction: Winning Icons – 26 October 2017 – Highest result ever achieved for any vintage wristwatch at auction.
2. Patek Philippe reference 1518 in stainless steel (CHF 11,020,000 / US\$11,112,020) – Geneva Watch Auction: FOUR – 12 November 2016 – Highest result ever achieved for a vintage Patek Philippe wristwatch at auction.

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium; prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium.*

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