

PRESS RELEASE

Phillips to Offer Four Unique, Museum-Quality Art Deco Cartier Clocks Hailing from a Prestigious Private Collection Across Auctions in Hong Kong and New York

The Hong Kong Watch Auction: XVIII on 24-25 May to Feature the Most Precious Pendule Magnétique “Water Clock” Known from the Late 1920s, and a Unique Jade Panel Table Clock with Carved Chinese Landscape and a Poem by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty

The New York Watch Auction: X on 8-9 June to Feature an Extraordinary Gold, Jade, Onyx, and Diamond-Set Single Axle Mystery Clock Created in 1926, and an Extremely Rare Desk Clock Displaying a Jade Bangle with Enamel and Diamond Accents



HONG KONG/ NEW YORK – 29 April 2024 – Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo is honoured to present four historically important and unique clocks created by Cartier in the late 1920s from a prestigious private collection this Spring across live auctions in Hong Kong and New York. Included in [The Hong Kong Watch Auction: XVIII](#) on 24-25 May are an extremely rare magnetic “Water Clock” and a unique jade panel table clock. Featured in [The New York Watch Auction: X](#) on 8-9 June are an exceptional Single Axle Mystery Clock, or Pendule Mystérieuse and a

fine jade bangle desk clock of Asian inspiration. All four museum-quality masterworks have not been seen in the market for over three decades, marking a monumental and exhilarating event in recent auction history.

Thomas Perazzi and **Paul Boutros**, Deputy Chairmen and Head of Watches for Asia and Americas, respectively, said, “We are incredibly excited to offer these remarkable clocks showcasing Cartier’s highest level of craftsmanship, sophistication, and refined beauty. The Art Deco period was one of the most creative in Cartier’s history, which was a time when the Maison built upon its prominent reputation for producing the world’s finest clocks. Without any doubt, they are not only exquisite and beautiful pieces of horological history, but also historically significant works imbued with the values of Asian culture combined with the very best of fine watchmaking, artisanal craftsmanship, and gem setting. The appearance of these clock in our upcoming Hong Kong and New York flagship auctions, after having been cherished for over 30 years in an important private collection, presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for collectors to acquire what are amongst the most important objects ever created by Cartier. We look forward to welcoming horological enthusiasts and beyond to our previews in Geneva, Hong Kong and New York to see these extraordinary works of decorative art.”

Cartier, A unique and historically important marble, silver, lapis lazuli, nephrite, coral, mother-of-pearl, enamel and jade “water clock” with original presentation box, Circa 1929

Estimate: In excess of HK\$ 2,000,000 / US\$ 250,000

To be offered in The Hong Kong Watch Auction: XVIII

The present museum-worthy treasure offered this season is one of the four magnetic clocks known that was ever made by Cartier’s most talented horologist Maurice Couët, with one example existing with the Cartier Collection. It is considered the most lavish and complicated example, and the only one with a Chimera that works through magnetism. Furthermore, the importance of this clock is confirmed by Cartier in its official tome *The Cartier Collection: Timepieces* by Franco Cologni and François Chaille, describing it as the most precious of all the magnetic floating table clocks designed and fabricated in the 20th Century. It is further repeated in Hans Nadelhoffer’s classic book on Cartier, depicting this very piece as “the version most refined”. Last but not least, its design drawings from the Cartier Archives is also illustrated in *Asia Imagined: In the Baur and Cartier Collections*.

The mechanism of this clock operates on the same principle as the “South Pointing Fish” compass invented by the Chinese in 1040 AD. The base is crafted of marble, while lapis lazuli and aventurine accents stud the base. The basin itself is a Chinese creation from the 17th century. Crafted out of jade, a Chimera, an auspicious creature in Far Eastern Mythology, coils around the basin, showing the meaning of good luck, fortune and wisdom. In Chinese imagery, the dragon and fish are often depicted together, symbolizing potent and auspicious powers, particularly with control over water.



Cartier, A historically significant and unique jade panel and yellow gold table clock set with emeralds, pearls, rubies and sapphires, engraved landscape after Dong Bang Da’s landscape painting with a poem written by Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong, 8-day movement by European Watch & Clock Co. Inc and engraved wooden stand, Circa 1930

Estimate: In excess of HK\$500,000/ US\$ 65,000

To be offered in The Hong Kong Watch Auction: XVIII

The jade panel table clock on offer is another exquisite piece of horological art by Cartier, showcasing a beautifully carved landscape inspired by a small ink and brush painting by the painter Dong Bang Da, who was Emperor Qianlong's imperial court painter in the Qing Dynasty. The artist's oeuvre was much treasured by the emperor who frequently showed his appreciation by composing poems inspired by the subject of his paintings. While in the painting, the poem by Emperor Qianlong was inscribed in the calligraphy, here, the same poem is carved on the jade panel:

阜平水簾洞，路遙未遊目。(Fu Ping Water Curtain Cave, the road is far away before you can see it.)

石壁善爭長，雨後都懸瀑。(The towering height of the stone wall, and waterfalls hanging after the rain.)



The highly decorated jade panel serves as the backdrop, with the carved sapphires and emeralds representing the leaves, and the rubies are part of the willow trees. Pearls are sprinkled throughout the landscape, conjuring flowers on the trees. Even a small pagoda is featured, with the top made of yellow gold. On the upper left of the panel is an 8-day open face watch, powered by European Watch & Clock Co. Inc that is encircled by a dragon, symbolizing fortune and prosperity. The panel itself is intricately carved, showcasing Cartier's unparalleled eye for detail and precision. Even the wooden stand has been finished to perfection, with chimera figures holding up the jade plaque. According to Phillips' research, the present jade plaque is an original table screen possibly from the 18th or 19th century, with the engravings done during this period. The carved gemstones were added in the Art Deco period by Cartier. In Chinese culture, table screens were placed on desks of officials and scholars as a means of contemplation, therefore one can only imagine that the client who had commissioned this unique timepiece and his or her link to the Chinese history.

Cartier, An extremely rare and museum quality Single Axle rock crystal, jade, diamond, onyx, coral, pearl, and enamel mystery clock with original key and presentation box, Circa 1926

Estimate: US\$300,000 - 600,000

To be offered in The New York Watch Auction: X

An important part of Cartier's illustrious legacy includes the creation of exquisite Mystery Clocks, beginning with Maurice Couët's Model A in 1912. French fashion magazine La Gazette du Bon Ton hailed them as "miracles of horology" in 1925, underscoring their unprecedented design. Couët continued crafting these unique timepieces by hand throughout the 1920s, each adorned with opulent materials and intricate designs. Notably, the first Mystery Clock was acquired by banker John Pierpont Morgan. Its illusionary effect, featuring suspended hands, was achieved through innovative optical engineering, inspired by French clockmaker and illusionist Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin's techniques from the 1830s.

Made by Cartier France, but sold by Cartier London, the present Single Axle Clock, measuring approximately 27.5cm in height and 13.5cm in width, is made with rock crystal, jade, diamond, onyx, coral, pearl, turquoise, and enamel. It uses a single central axle where it goes through the base, rather than the earlier double axle system introduced in 1920. Its design is influenced by Far Eastern design motifs, especially seen in the hands rendered in diamonds and onyx in the shape of a dragon. The dragon, deeply symbolic in Chinese



culture as a representation of imperial power and prosperity, adds a layer of significance with it being the Year of the Dragon in 2024. This auspicious symbolism intertwines with the mystique of the mystery clock, which retains its original presentation box and numbered key, linking it to its storied past.

Having first appeared on the market three decades ago, its public sale at Phillips New York offers an extremely rare opportunity to acquire not only an intricate and beautiful piece of horological history, but also a historically significant museum-quality Art Deco piece.

Cartier, A fine and rare jade, rock crystal, and black enamel desk clock with black lacquer indices and diamond-set numerals, Circa 1930

Estimate: US\$80,000 - 160,000

To be offered in The New York Watch Auction: X

First created in the early 1900s, the desk clock was Cartier's perfect canvas to showcase its unbridled creativity. Created by Cartier Paris, the present clock also known as the *Pendulette à Chevalet*, is from the 1920s and inspired by the Far East. It is fitted with a striking jade bangle around the dial, a nod to the Asian influence on design, and made to look like an easel. Lotus motifs, symbolizing purity, rebirth, and divinity, further adorn the rock crystal. Rock crystal is further suspended outside the dial, with diamond-set Roman numerals, providing for a very striking and impressive appearance.

Most interestingly, a similar clock also displaying a jade bangle with enamel and diamond accents is housed within the Cartier collection and illustrated in *The Cartier Collection: Timepieces* by Franco Cologni and François Chaille. Both the present lot and the one in Cartier's collection bear movements made by Longines. Indeed, the Longines Extract that accompanied this clock states that the present movement was delivered to Longines' former agent for France in 1920, destined to fit a "Pendulette".



The panels provide the perfect canvas for an artisan to showcase his or her ability to create exquisite motifs and showcase a variety of gem-setting. To apply lacquer or enamel on the panels requires extreme delicate handling, technical virtuosity, and artistic sensibility. To fit panels of hard stone like lapis lazuli, rock crystal requires extreme dexterity and know-how. The unparalleled condition and quality of the present desk clock further underlies its importance.

[The Hong Kong Watch Auction: XVIII](#)

Auctions: Session I, 24 May 2 pm HKT | Session II, 25 May 2 pm HKT

Viewing: 17 – 25 May 2024

Location: GF&1/F, WKCD Tower, West Kowloon Cultural District, No. 8 Austin Road West, Kowloon, Hong Kong

[The New York Watch Auction: X](#)

Auctions: Session I, 8 June 10am ET | Session II, 9 June 10am ET

Viewing: 5-7 June 2024

Location: 432 Park Avenue, New York, NY, United States

Geneva Preview: 8–12 May 2024 | Hotel President, Quai Wilson 47, Geneva

Images are available for download [here](#)

ABOUT PHILLIPS IN ASSOCIATION WITH BACS & RUSSO

The team of specialists at Phillips Watches is dedicated to an uncompromised approach to quality, transparency, and client service. Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo holds the world record for the most successful watch auction, with its Geneva Watch Auction: XIV having realized \$74.5 million in 2021. Over the course of 2021 and 2022, the company sold 100% of the watches offered, a first in the industry, resulting in the highest annual total in history across all the auction houses at \$227 million.

Record-breaking prices include:

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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.

ABOUT PHILLIPS

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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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