

**Press release**

**Patek Philippe, Geneva  
November 2021**

**THE PATEK PHILIPPE MUSEUM CELEBRATES ITS 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

**Inaugurated in November 2001, the Patek Philippe Museum in Geneva houses one of the world's most important and prestigious horological collections. Some 2,500 watches, automata, precious objects and portrait miniatures on enamel invite the visitor on a fabulous voyage through five centuries of Genevan, Swiss and European horological art, as well as proposing a panoramic view of Patek Philippe's production since 1839. The recent introduction of a new museology makes the experience particularly vivid and engaging. This internationally renowned jewel in Geneva enables experts, devotees and the general public to make closer acquaintance with the exceptional cultural heritage that horology and the related arts represent.**

**An extraordinary private collection**

The Patek Philippe Museum was born of a man's passion for horology. That man is Philippe Stern, who was president of the Geneva manufacture at the time and is now its honorary president. Mr. Stern began assembling the collection well before thinking in terms of a museum. He concentrated at first on Patek Philippe watches, particularly the complicated models. In 1980 he enlarged the scope of his search to take in all timepieces that had left their mark on watchmaking history since the sixteenth century, together with the greatest treasures of the enameller's art, that sublime Genevan specialty. Little by little he built up one of today's most extraordinary horological collections. But his aim in bringing together all these technical and aesthetic masterworks was not solely to satisfy his personal tastes. He also intended to share his love of the watchmaking art and his joy of discovery with the public at large. And in doing so, to communicate the splendor of Geneva's high-watchmaking tradition and ensure that this cultural heritage would be handed down to future generations. And so the idea of a museum began to take shape.

**A building in the grand style**

An extraordinary collection calls for an exceptional setting. The Patek Philippe Museum finally greeted the world in a magnificent industrial building dating from 1919–1920 and restored with great restraint. Located at number 7 rue des Vieux-Grenadiers, in the Plainpalais district of Geneva, this building had been occupied by watchmakers and artisans in the related trades throughout its history. Patek Philippe acquired it in 1975 to house Ateliers Réunis, a production unit making cases, bracelets and chains. In 1996 these activities moved to the new manufacturing premises in Plan-les-Ouates, leaving the building vacant. Philippe Stern decided that this was where he would present his collection. Between 1999 and 2001 the structure was fully restored, adding an additional floor, with strict respect for the original architecture. Mr. Stern's wife Gerdi oversaw the interior decoration, her aim being to give the rooms the warmth and intimacy of a private residence. In November 2001, the Patek Philippe Museum collections were at last unveiled, in surroundings worthy of their technical, artistic, aesthetic, historical and scientific value.



## **500 years of horological history**

Rather than a museum devoted to a single brand, the Patek Philippe Museum is unique in that it offers the chance to discover five centuries of horological heritage, as well as the significance for all the decorative arts traditionally associated with watchmaking – engraving, enameling, gemsetting, guilloché work etc. The collections are divided into two complementary sections: on the second floor, a tour through the history of the portable mechanical timepiece, from its origins in the sixteenth century down to the early nineteenth century; on the first floor, a survey of Patek Philippe's most beautiful creations, from 1839 to 2000. On the third floor, a library of more than 8,000 works on horology and related subjects underlines the museum's educational role.

## **A treat not to be missed**

In the space of two decades, the Patek Philippe Museum has made its mark as one of Geneva's finest museums and cultural highlights. Besides attracting visitors from all around the world, it also draws the inhabitants of the surrounding region, keen to know more about Geneva's cultural heritage. The number of visitors testifies to its success, with more than 600,000 admissions in twenty years. Along with the permanent collections, the museum has held temporary exhibitions showcasing particular treasures: "Timepieces for Royalty" in 2005, "The Mirror of Seduction: Prestigious Pairs of Chinese Watches" in 2010 and "Timepieces Signed Rousseau" in 2012. Public guided tours take place every Saturday in French and English or may be booked in advance in seven languages (French, English, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese and Russian). Themed tours are also on offer. The themes range from enameling or the magic of automata to a children's tour or a discovery tour of the old watchmakers' Geneva. These too may be reserved. And not forgetting the open-door weekends with their special attractions. Some of the objects also travel the world for Patek Philippe's Grand Exhibitions, which are open to the public and devoted to the art of watchmaking.

## **A new experience for the visitor**

Under the leadership of Philippe Stern and Peter Friess, director and curator of the museum since 2014, new acquisitions have continued to enrich the collections. The layouts of the two main collections have been reorganized, each now comprising twenty themed areas reflecting particular aspects of the watch's history or the world of Patek Philippe. To complement the wide choice of guided tours, the museum has also introduced an audio guide, accessed via a tablet. This device makes it possible both to provide all the required information on the exhibits and to illustrate the context in which they were created and worn, highlighting the close links between watchmaking and science, fashion, artistic movements and social change. The audio guide currently offers some twenty hours of accompaniment in English, French or German. Other languages will be available as from 2023. Users may compose their own itinerary or choose a pre-set route, such as the one suggested by Philippe Stern himself. About 10,000 photographs complete this application, enabling the user to zoom in on details or examine features that may not be visible in the display cases. Modern, interactive and dynamic, this à la carte means of discovery gives visitors the freedom to tailor their visit to their particular interests.

## **Reference books**

For experts and watch lovers, the Patek Philippe Museum has produced two comprehensive catalogues – one on the Patek Philippe collection, published in 2013, the other on the antique collection, published in 2016. As the latter is out of stock, a new edition including the recent acquisitions will come out in 2023.

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On the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, the museum will issue two new 100-page publications conceived for a wide readership. One is devoted to the antique collection, the other to the Patek Philippe collection. These works, available in English as from 2022, will each have a print run of 10,000 copies and will be sold together in a presentation box, or separately.

**Patek Philippe Museum**

Rue des Vieux-Grenadiers 7  
1205 Geneva

[www.patekmuseum.com](http://www.patekmuseum.com)

[www.patek.com/museum](http://www.patek.com/museum)

Opening hours:

Tuesday-Friday: 2 pm – 6 pm

Saturday: 10 am – 6 pm

Closed Sunday, Monday and public holidays





## PATEK PHILIPPE MUSEUM

### A visit in brief

The Patek Philippe Museum suggests a tour on four levels, according to an itinerary that begins on the ground floor and continues on the third, second and first floors.

1. **Ground floor:** the collection of workbenches and antique tools, and the restoration workshop
2. **Third floor:** Patek Philippe's historical archives, together with the library and the collection of portraits and snuffboxes in miniature painting on enamel
3. **Second floor:** the antique collection, from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century
4. **First floor:** the Patek Philippe collection, from 1839 to 2000.

### Ground floor

#### COLLECTION OF WORKBENCHES AND ANTIQUE TOOLS, AND THE RESTORATION WORKSHOP

The ground floor displays a number of antique benches used by watchmakers and jewelers in bygone days, conjuring up the atmosphere of their workshops. A collection of tools and machines dating from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century illustrate each step in the manufacture of a timepiece and the range of procedures involved in its decoration.

To complete this tableau honoring tradition, a workshop with large windows, reminiscent of those once occupied by Geneva's renowned *cabinotiers* (artisans employed by a *cabinet*, or small workshop), allows the visitor to admire the work of the restoration watchmakers, who specialize in restoring the watches on display. This delicate task calls for outstanding dexterity as well as a thorough command of traditional know-how and technical skills; in order, perhaps, to recreate a part identically, using the same tools as the master watchmakers of the past.

### Third floor

#### THE PATEK PHILIPPE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES, THE LIBRARY AND THE COLLECTION OF PORTRAITS AND SNUFFBOXES IN MINIATURE PAINTING ON ENAMEL

The third floor recounts the history of Patek Philippe, with a selection from the historic archives representing great events in the life of the manufacture, including hand-written documents evoking its founders, Antoine Norbert de Patek and Jean Adrien Philippe.

Visitors will discover a faithful reconstruction of the office of Henri Stern, father of Philippe Stern and grandfather of the current president, Thierry Stern – reminding us that Patek Philippe, the last of Geneva's great independent manufactures, is still family-owned.

The third floor also houses an extraordinary library devoted to horology and related subjects, as well as a collection of portraits and other miniature paintings on enamel. Among some 8,000 books spanning the period from the sixteenth century to the present day are numerous rare and precious works, including

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writings by Galileo (1564–1642) and the inventor of the balance spring, Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695).

At the center of this library are four wall-mounted display cases presenting a priceless collection of 141 portrait miniatures on enamel, some bearing the signatures of the greatest masters. A table-mounted case displays sixteen snuffboxes decorated by means of the same ancestral technique and further embellished with pearls and guilloché motifs. These wonders of artistry and skill date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are sublime examples of a highly complex art; one that became a great Genevan specialty and contributed significantly to the city's international renown.

They are joined in the library by several extraordinary horological and astronomical pieces, including a table clock made in about 1810 by the French master clockmaker Antide Janvier. The base is surmounted by three nude Atlas figures in patinated bronze supporting a celestial globe in engraved glass, within which an orrery reproduces the motions of the planets around the Sun.

## **Second floor**

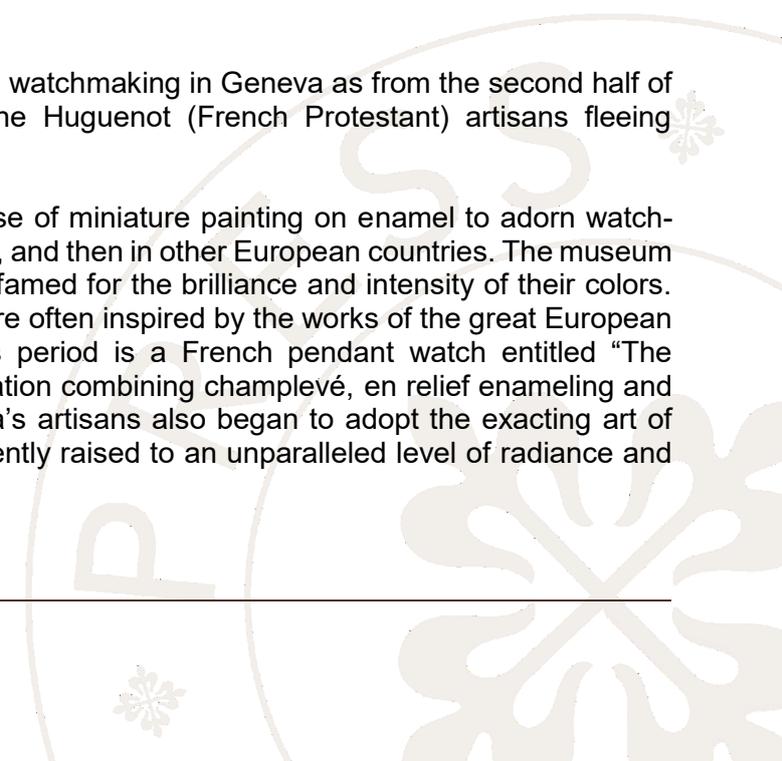
### **THE ANTIQUE COLLECTION, FROM THE SIXTEENTH TO THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY**

The second floor of the museum, with its 1,200 splendid exhibits, presents a panoramic view of the history of the portable watch and the decorative arts with which it was embellished. This discovery tour takes in twenty themed areas (see the attached floor plan) each focusing on a specific aspect of the technical and aesthetic developments in horology.

The tour begins with the emergence of the first portable watches in the early sixteenth century. Among the examples on show is one of the oldest timepieces of this kind, a German drum-watch made in about 1530, which its owner would have displayed by wearing it as a pendant. Up until about 1675, the watch –still scarcely accurate– was primarily a mark of prestige, an object conveying wealth and refinement. Hence the importance placed on its decoration, with lavish engraving, precious stones or cloisonné or champlevé enameling, and highly inventive case shapes. Those on show include square, oval and spherical watches and, more curiously, others in the shape of a cross or a human skull (a “memento mori”) or even a dolphin.

Visitors will also discover the rapid developments in watchmaking in Geneva as from the second half of the sixteenth century, fuelled by the arrival of the Huguenot (French Protestant) artisans fleeing persecution.

Around 1630 the first examples appeared of the use of miniature painting on enamel to adorn watch-cases and dials, initially in the Blois region of France, and then in other European countries. The museum presents an array of these exquisite masterworks, famed for the brilliance and intensity of their colors. Depicting religious or mythological scenes, they were often inspired by the works of the great European artists. One of the museum's treasures from this period is a French pendant watch entitled “The Theological Virtues”, remarkable for its case decoration combining champlevé, en relief enameling and camaïeu painting with diamonds (S-1054). Geneva's artisans also began to adopt the exacting art of miniature painting on enamel, which they subsequently raised to an unparalleled level of radiance and finesse.





In 1675, the invention of the balance spring by the Dutch physicist Christiaan Huygens ushered watchmaking into a new era. Formerly worn mainly for show, the timepiece now became a precision instrument with a rate accuracy of within one or two minutes per day. This technical breakthrough fuelled other scientific discoveries that contributed in their turn to progress in watchmaking. The Patek Philippe Museum testifies to the advance of this scientific horology with a fine collection of sophisticated timepieces demonstrating a dual objective –horological complication and accuracy.

The Enlightenment was also a time of great aesthetic creativity. Women's watches acquired all the refinement of jewelry and were worn as delicate pendants or dangling from the waist on a fashionable chatelaine. They offered a wide variety of dials, some of them highly original. Geneva's famous *Fabrique*, the collective term for all the workshops engaged in the creation of watches and jewelry, was renowned worldwide for the quality of its production. In particular it was known for its decorations in miniature painting on enamel, with the celebrated "Geneva flux" that lent an incomparable radiance.

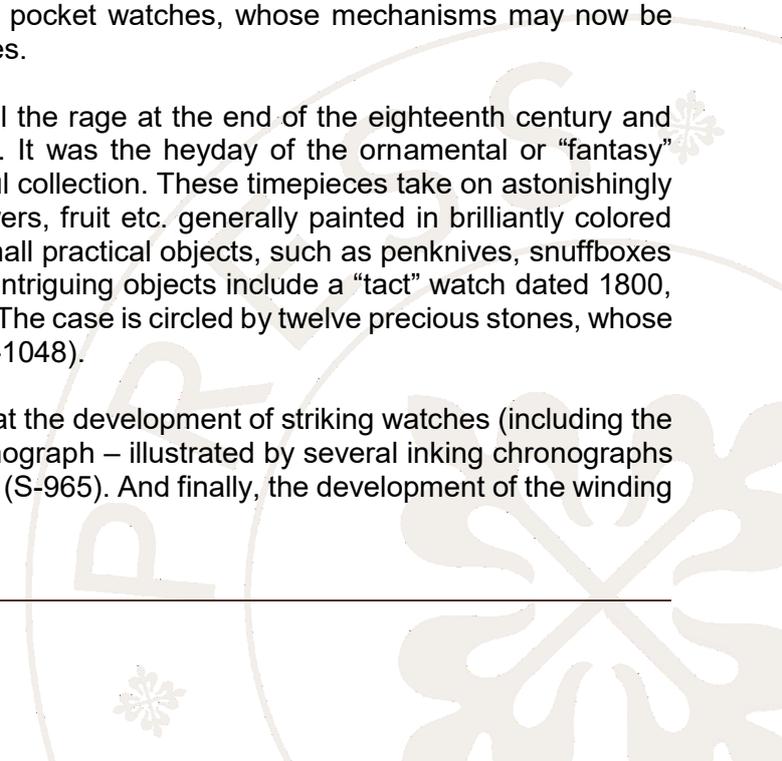
Notable among the creations destined for export are the watches that were made for the Chinese market. They were usually created in pairs –sometimes even reversing the same decoration so that the subjects mirrored each other. One example is the pocket watches depicting "Venus Binding the Wings of Cupid" in miniature painting on enamel with pearls and turquoise, made in Geneva circa 1815 (S-133A and B). Other unusual pieces include the lavishly adorned watches produced for the Ottoman market, recognizable by their Turkish numerals and predominantly floral decorations.

As the epitome of mechanical virtuosity, the art of creating automata flourished during this period. The Patek Philippe Museum presents a veritable anthology on the subject, from timepieces presenting genuine *tableaux vivants* to singing birds trilling their melody while beating their wings or tiny figures moving their arms to indicate the hours and minutes, along with a wealth of musical mechanisms.

Technology was also advancing apace, as demonstrated by a watch from the English watchmaker Thomas Mudge, dated 1762 and considered the earliest perpetual calendar pocket watch (S-1033). Among the forerunners of the modern horologist the great Abraham-Louis Breguet (1747-1823) certainly stands out, and the museum owns several of his pioneering creations, including two superb "Sympathique" clocks (S-970A). Another distinguished figure is Jean-Antoine Lépine (1720–1814) whose invention of a new movement architecture meant that much thinner watches could be made. Other exhibits of note include the first self-winding pocket watches, whose mechanisms may now be viewed at the museum outside their respective cases.

As regards watches for women, eccentricity was all the rage at the end of the eighteenth century and watch design reflected that trend until about 1830. It was the heyday of the ornamental or "fantasy" watch, of which the museum possesses a wonderful collection. These timepieces take on astonishingly diverse shapes: musical instruments, animals, flowers, fruit etc. generally painted in brilliantly colored enamels. Accompanying them is a vast range of small practical objects, such as penknives, snuffboxes and small cases for a lady's personal items. Other intriguing objects include a "tact" watch dated 1800, enabling its owner to tell the time with her fingertips. The case is circled by twelve precious stones, whose initials form an acrostic saying "heures d'amour" (S-1048).

The tour of this second floor ends with a close look at the development of striking watches (including the famous minute repeaters) and the birth of the chronograph – illustrated by several inking chronographs designed by Nicolas Mathieu Rieussec in the 1820s (S-965). And finally, the development of the winding





system; particularly the successive attempts to free watches of the need for a key for winding and setting, prior to Jean Adrien Philippe's major invention.

## First floor

### THE PATEK PHILIPPE COLLECTION, 1839–2000

The first floor is devoted entirely to Patek Philippe's creations from 1839 to 2000, with the addition of some commemorative watches issued later. About 1,150 timepieces – pocket watches, pendant watches, wristwatches, small table clocks – forming twenty themed areas, compose a portrait of one of the most creative watch manufactures (see the attached floor plan). Today this legacy is a rich source of inspiration for the Geneva firm.

In 1839, a Polish gentleman, Antoine Norbert de Patek, and his fellow countryman François Czapek founded a watchmaking firm in Geneva. At first they produced mainly for export to Poland, as evidenced by a number of watches adorned with religious or patriotic motifs.

In 1845, Patek decided to join forces with Jean Adrien Philippe, a young French watchmaker and inventor of the dual system for winding and setting watches by means of a crown; in other words, he invented the first keyless watches. This revolutionary patented system rapidly became the norm for all watch brands and remains so today.

The manufacture was soon renowned for the technical and aesthetic quality of its timepieces. A wide variety of pocket watches and pendant watches bear witness to its success, displaying all manner of refined decoration: engraving, enameling, gemsetting and more.

In 1851, Patek Philippe received a gold medal at the Great Exhibition in London. Queen Victoria acquired a blue pendant watch and also admired another model, adorned with enamel and diamonds (P-24). Both are now on display in the museum. Numerous members of royal families and the aristocracy followed the young queen's example, acquiring watches from the manufacture. These pieces were sometimes personalized with a monogram or royal coat of arms, a famous example being the minute-repeating clock-watch of 1910 known as the "Duke of Regla" (P-534).

Accuracy was a cornerstone of Patek Philippe's approach from the start. This quest is illustrated by a selection of the countless specially designed watches and movements – some of them never commercialized – that dominated the observatory chronometer competitions from 1873 to 1968. And not forgetting the numerous awards and medals won by the manufacture and now exhibited on the third floor of the museum.

From its earliest days, Patek Philippe has been recognized for its supreme mastery of complications: all the functions or indications other than the hour, minutes and seconds. Several dedicated areas offer ample proof, each showcasing a particularly emblematic type of watch: the **perpetual calendar**, including the earliest known perpetual calendar wristwatch, built by Patek Philippe in 1925 (P-72); the **travel watches**, with the dual-time-zone models and the famous World Time watches; and the **striking watches**, with numerous minute repeaters and the earliest Patek Philippe striking wristwatch, a five-minute repeater created in 1916 for feminine wrists (P-594). They are joined by the **chronographs**, notably the first wristwatch endowed with a split-seconds chronograph (1923, P-1505), along with the

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tourbillons, the astronomical watches and the equations of time, and all the Grand Complications uniting several of these functions in a single timepiece.

To accompany these technical feats, Patek Philippe has always excelled by the creativity of its designs. The museum offers a stunning panorama of the aesthetic developments in the wristwatch from the earliest models in the “Officer” style, with an accent on art nouveau and art deco (the latter a golden age for the manufacture) represented by pieces in an astonishing range of shapes. Watches for women also feature prominently, from the first Swiss wristwatch, made by Patek Philippe for a countess in 1868 (P-49), to the highly imaginative and brightly colored jewelry watches of the 1970s.

During their tour, visitors will discover several other fascinating aspects of Patek Philippe’s history and production. A large display case recalls the era of Gondolo & Labouriau, a Brazilian distributor in Rio de Janeiro for whom the manufacture produced a huge range of pocket watches and wristwatches from 1872 to 1936.

The great American collectors of the early twentieth century are also well represented, notably by the numerous pieces made for James Ward Packard (P-704) and Henry Graves Jr. (P-1497).

Patek Philippe’s passion for the rare handcrafts is illustrated by an array of watches and table clocks decorated with *cloisonné* enamel or miniature painting on enamel.

A feature recently introduced enables the visitor to see the original models of the main watch families in the current product range, namely the Calatrava (1932), the Golden Ellipse (1968), the Nautilus (1976), the Aquanaut (1997) and the Twenty~4 ladies’ watch (1999).

The last section shines the spotlight on the flagship models that Patek Philippe unveiled in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century to mark important dates, such as the famous Calibre 89 (33 complications) launched in 1989 for the manufacture’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and recognized for more than twenty-five years as the world’s most complicated portable timepiece (P-1989); and the Star Caliber 2000 (21 complications), created to welcome the new millennium.

This amazing voyage ends with the Grandmaster Chime, the most complicated Patek Philippe wristwatch (20 complications, including 5 striking modes), launched as a limited edition in 2014 for the manufacture’s 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary and now in the current collection.

