




VACHERON CONSTANTIN
GENÈVE

Les Cabinotiers
**RÉCITS
DE
VOYAGES**

A watchmaking odyssey honouring arts
and cultures of the world

Les Cabinotiers Armillary tourbillon
Tribute to Art Deco style

Embargo lifted on 27 November 2023 - 9:00 AM CET

Les Cabinotiers Armillary tourbillon – Tribute to Art Deco style

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- Les Cabinotiers – Récits de Voyages sets off to discover the world and its wonders in the spirit of openness that has characterised Vacheron Constantin since its origins: among the various destinations, the North American leg focuses on the United States, where the Maison has been active since 1832.
- A masterpiece of engraving and guilloché work, this single-piece edition reflects a period of prosperity coupled with extraordinary artistic and cultural dynamism.
- Emblematic of the Maison's technical mastery, and protected by four patents, in-house Calibre 1990 combines a bi-axial tourbillon with an instantaneous bi-retrograde display.

The single-piece editions in the new Les Cabinotiers – Récits de Voyages collection reflect Vacheron Constantin's geographical expansion, of which the Americas were a major milestone. These new territories became part of the Vacheron Constantin world at a very early stage, with the first contacts made in the United States in 1832, followed by Brazil in 1835 and Mexico ten years later. In the U.S., the turn of the century was marked by an intense period reflecting the principles of Art Deco, which quickly became a comprehensive art form. The new Les Cabinotiers Armillary tourbillon – Tribute to Art Deco style watch, bearing the Hallmark of Geneva, is driven by in-house Calibre 1990 featuring a bi-axial tourbillon regulator with instantaneous bi-retrograde hours and minutes display.



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Setting up its first representative office in New York as early as 1832, Vacheron Constantin was quick to identify the United States as a key market. The Maison's watches soon met with success in booming cities such as Philadelphia and New Orleans. Within the space of just a few decades, it found its place among the country's social and cultural personalities, with a clientele including leading lights and captains of industry.

Among the timepieces of historical importance to Vacheron Constantin, many were made for American clients.

Aviation pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright placed an order in 1890 for a pilot's watch to be strapped to the thigh, the very first of its kind. Three decades later, at a time when the Maison became a shareholder in the American Watch Case Co case manufacturer, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordered several thousand watches. The cushion-shaped American 1921 watch, specifically created for the United States, in turn testifies to the buoyant mood of the Roaring Twenties, which brought a breath of fresh air to the nation. Art Deco was the dominant style at the time, perfectly in keeping with this optimistic, modern vision of a world in the grip of tremendous cultural effervescence. This style imposed new architectural solutions that soon reached dizzying heights in New York, before taking over the fields of furniture, interior design, clothing and cars to the point of becoming a comprehensive art form in the United States.

It was also a time when the wristwatch was beginning to establish itself as the new horological standard, accompanied by the fanciful touches typical of the spirit of the age. This period notably featured the aesthetic of the American 1921, designed by Vacheron Constantin during these years of intense creativity and now celebrated with the new Les Cabinotiers Armillary tourbillon – Tribute to Art Deco style.



Pocket watch, chronograph, Corps of engineers" - 1918



American 1921 - 1921

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With its highly architectural design, generous armillary tourbillon and openworked dial featuring a bi-retrograde display, the watch offers an ideal creative space for combining aesthetics with Art Deco style codes. Entrusted to the Maison's master engravers, this task not only involves reworking the bridges and plate of Calibre 1990, but also adorning the case middle with a frieze extending over the lugs.

The master engraver juggled several techniques between the case and the rear movement bridges.

Bas-relief serves to obtain a more accentuated motif than drypoint work; the surfaces are hand-chased point by point; while rounding off consists of gently rocking the intaglio tool, whose rounded bevel is fitted with thin sharp steel tips.

The *guilloché* work complements the engraving techniques applied to the case in 18K 3N yellow gold and to the movement machined from a nickel-silver alloy chosen for its rigidity. On the front, the calibre is entirely hand-*guilloché* in a perfectly geometrical, purely Art Deco-inspired radiating pattern. The metal has been given a black DLC surface treatment to accentuate the contrast with the colour of the case and bridges, again recalling the combination of brass and wrought iron typical of Art Deco ornamentation.



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On the back, the three engraved bridges feature a motif reminiscent of the decorations on New York skyscrapers at the turn of the 20th century, with the added challenge of creating an uninterrupted pattern despite the break between the bridges.

It took one month to complete these three components, not counting the bas-relief engraving on the case middle done by the master artisan and extending to the motif created on the back of the movement through a striking play of light and shade accentuated by the depth of the relief. The technique used consists of removing material to bring out the contours of the engraving. After drawing the motifs with a scribe, the master artisan uses the pounced ornament technique, which involves intricate chasing using a scorper, a kind of wider-tipped burin. As the sculpture becomes progressively slimmer, the tool itself becomes thinner. Particularly suited to three-dimensional creations where volumes have little depth, this technique provides scope for breathtakingly accurate details, further enhanced by the finishing. This is the first time that the bridges of Calibre 1990 have been engraved.

Finally, the folding clasp securing the black alligator leather strap of this 45 mm-diameter model was also engraved with Art Deco motifs.





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Calibre 1990, a movement featuring historical references

Protected by four patents, Calibre 1990 has benefited from the technical developments made on the Les Cabinotiers Reference 57260 watch, the world's most complex timepiece to date with its 57 complications.

A manual-winding movement with a 58-hour power reserve, Calibre 1990 features an instantaneous bi-retrograde display of the time indications and a bi-axial armillary tourbillon with spherical balance-spring. The time can be read on the right-hand side thanks to a retrograde display with grade 5 titanium hands moving over a semi-circular track punctuated by Roman numerals for the hours and Arabic numerals for the minutes. Confined to a wide flange, this track reveals part of the movement, reinforcing the technical appearance of the timepiece already accentuated by the construction of the regulator. beating ensures greater isochronism and therefore enhanced precision, in addition to the beneficial effect of the regulator's rotation, which neutralises the effects of Earth's gravity.



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The configuration of Calibre 1990 frees up the left-hand part of the dial, which is exclusively occupied by the bi-axial armillary tourbillon positioned at 9 o'clock beneath a bubble formed by the sapphire crystal. The distinctive feature of this regulator – oscillating at a rate of 18,000 vibrations per hour and bearing the small seconds hand – is its dual-axis construction with two interlocking aluminium carriages, each rotating at a speed of 60 seconds.

At the heart of the tourbillon is a cylindrical balance-spring with no terminal curve, whose perfectly concentric beating ensures greater isochronism and therefore enhanced precision, in addition to the beneficial effect of the regulator's rotation, which neutralises the effects of Earth's gravity.

Each of these two technical developments has its own historical reference. The tourbillon owes its name 'armillary' to Antide Janvier, astronomer and watchmaker by appointment to King Louis XVI, one of whose greatest masterpieces was a moving sphere with a planetary wheel known as an armillary. The cylindrical balance-spring dates back to Jacques-Frédéric Houriet's invention in 1814 and is coupled here with an escapement featuring an escape-wheel in silicon with diamond-polished pallets, materials boasting a very low friction coefficient and requiring no lubrication.

Four patents mark the technical innovations of Calibre 1990. These relate firstly to the instantaneous retrograde system, controlled by a single minutes cam that perfectly synchronises the jump of the two hands at midnight or noon. The patented escapement collet – a component securing the inner end of the balance-spring – is made of titanium. This material matches that of the regulating organ, resulting in improved regulatory performance. The third patent concerns the architecture of the tourbillon carriage, which rotates every 15 seconds to form the Vacheron Constantin Maltese cross emblem. The final patent covers the silicon escape-wheel, with its diamond-polished pallets offering greater resistance to wear and friction.



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Les Cabinotiers Récits de Voyages series

Vacheron Constantin's vocation has always been to perfect the art of watchmaking in Geneva while remaining open to the world. The founder's grandson Jacques-Barthélemy Vacheron (1787-1864) was the first to criss-cross the roads of France and Italy, followed by his partner François Constantin (1788-1854), a tireless traveller who oversaw the commercial development of the Maison. He established commercial relations with Central Europe, South America, Scandinavia and Asia, during a period in time when Vacheron Constantin was also gaining a foothold in the United States and China, as well as in Brazil, Hong Kong and Cuba.

François Constantin's correspondence stretching over a quarter of a century paints the portrait of a Manufacture that was open to a Europe undergoing major restructuring in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna. This scope and reach continued to expand as the Vacheron Constantin name crossed borders and conquered new markets. Since that time, the very notion of travel has been inherent to the values of the Maison, an integral part of the human adventure characterising its nearly 270-year history. Following in its founders' footsteps, the Maison offers these Récits de Voyages series as a watchmaking odyssey through the world and its wonders, applying craftsmanship and mechanical art as its means of expression.





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The single-piece edition Les Cabinotiers Armillary tourbillon – Tribute to Art Deco style watch represents the Americas within the Les Cabinotiers – Récits de Voyages collection, which symbolises Vacheron Constantin's spirit of openness to the world since the dawn of the 19th century. This highly technical timepiece, measuring 45 mm in diameter and bearing the Hallmark of Geneva, is powered by Calibre 1990. This in-house movement features an open architecture conducive to the finishing, engraving and *guilloché* work. Several engraving techniques are used on this timepiece: the case middle and lugs, along with the movement components, mainplate and bridges, have been delicately sculpted in

bas-relief, as well as *guilloché*-worked chased and rounded off by hand. The motifs are Art Deco-inspired, reminiscent of the ornamentation on the New York skyscrapers built at the dawn of the 20th century. Manual-winding Calibre 1990 benefits from the developments made on Vacheron Constantin's single-piece edition Reference 57260 – the world's most complicated watch to date – to display the hours and minutes by means of bi-retrograde instant-return hands and the small seconds on the dual-axis armillary tourbillon. This is the first time that Vacheron Constantin has performed engraving work of this kind on this movement.



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Interview with Sandrine Donguy, Product & Innovation Director

To symbolise the Americas in the new Les Cabinotiers Récits de Voyages collection, you are presenting a timepiece that reflects technical sophistication. Why not opt for a solid dial that is eminently conducive to artistic crafts?

In the range of single-piece editions representing the American leg focuses on our Récits de Voyages, we wanted to include a highly technical, highly structured watch. The intention was to draw architectural inspiration from the early 20th century Art Deco-style New York skyscrapers. The choice was therefore for a watch with an openworked dial that would provide a chance to admire the structure of its movement. With this in mind, the ornamentation of the timepiece could only be done by drawing on the dexterity and creativity of our master artisans. The approach is similar to the one that led us to choose a Malte Tourbillon skeleton model to reflect Baron Haussmann's urban planning projects in Paris. As the artisans' work on this armillary tourbillon timepiece is performed directly in the material, we also had to play on the tones and colours to bring out the power of the decoration. We therefore accentuated the contrasts between the case and bridges and the deep black of the openworked mainplate on the front, obtained by galvanic treatment. To avoid disturbing this vision which is at once subtle when it comes to the engraved dial motifs and powerful in terms of the movement's highly technical nature, we opted for a bevelled bezel that was perfectly smooth and polished. The engraver's art is expressed on the case middle by a bas-relief frieze that extends to the lugs and is then repeated on the bridges at the back.

You mentioned the armillary tourbillon in this model. Could you be more specific?

Calibre 1990 is a movement that has benefited from certain developments made for the Reference 57260 – the world's most complicated watch to date presented in 2015 to mark the Manufacture's 260th anniversary – and these include this spherical armillary tourbillon. It is a dual-axis tourbillon with carriages rotating at a rate of one turn per minute so as to provide a small seconds indication. The name 'armillary' refers to astronomical spheres used to model the celestial sphere in order to display the apparent movement of the stars, the sun and the ecliptic within the geocentric theory of the universe. Antide Janvier, one of the most eminent 19th century horologists, produced several examples that made their mark on history. Without going into all the astronomical details of these constructions, it was above all the appearance of these spheres that caught our attention, with the highly complex assembly of several rotating 'armillare' rings used for the various astronomical indications, similar to our dual-axis tourbillon. In terms of technical developments, it should also be noted that Calibre 1990 has been the subject of four patent applications relating to the instantaneous retrograde system, the attachment of the balance-spring, the diamond-polished pallet-lever and the multi-carriage tourbillon system.



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Do you have any other 'American' references in terms of complicated watches?

Definitely and they are among Vacheron Constantin's most prestigious. By the early 20th century, Vacheron Constantin had built a solid reputation for producing ultra-complicated pocket watches. At that time, manufacturer James Ward Packard and banker Henry Graves Jr, both great American timepiece collectors, were engaged in a perfectly friendly joust to see who would own the most complicated watch. As part of this competition, Vacheron Constantin created a watch for James Packard, completed in 1919, incorporating a unique combination of complications including a chronograph, Grande and Petite Sonneries along with quarter and half-quarter repeater. The movement was housed in a finely chased gold case with a personalised rock crystal glass. At the same time, Vacheron Constant developed the American 1921 watch, a timepiece that set new standards with its offbeat style. Through this timepiece, Vacheron Constantin was no longer targeting only the great American families of industrialists and financiers, but all those who were prepared to break the rules at the height of the Prohibition era.



Pocket watch created for James
Ward Packard – 1918

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TECHNICAL DATA

References	9860C/000J-090C Hallmark of Geneva certified timepiece
Caliber	1990 Developed and manufactured by Vacheron Constantin Mechanical manual-winding 35.50 mm diameter, 10 mm thick Movement power reserve: approximately 58 hours 2.5 Hz (18'000 vibrations/hour) 299 components 45 jewels Front bridges: Black hand-guilloché radiant pattern Back bridges: hand-engraved geometric pattern
Indications	Retrograde hours and minutes Small seconds on tourbillon Armillary tourbillon
Case	18K 3N hand-engraved yellow gold 45 mm diameter, 20.10 mm thick Transparent sapphire crystal caseback
Dial	Black
Strap	Black <i>Mississippiensis</i> alligator leather with alligator leather inner shell, hand-stitched, saddle-finish, large square scales
Clasp	18K 3N hand-engraved yellow gold folding clasp
Presentation box & accessory	Les Cabinotiers model
Unique timepiece	« Pièce unique », « Les Cabinotiers » and « AC » hallmark engraved on the back of the timepiece



Founded in 1755, Vacheron Constantin is the world's oldest watch Manufacture in continuous production for nearly 270 years, faithfully perpetuating a proud heritage of watchmaking excellence and stylistic sophistication through generations of master craftsmen.

At the pinnacle of Haute Horlogerie and understated elegance, the Maison creates timepieces with unique technical and aesthetic signatures, and an extremely high level of finishing touches.

Vacheron Constantin brings to life unparalleled heritage and a spirit of innovation through its collections: Patrimony, Traditionnelle, Métiers d'Art, Overseas, Fiftysix, Historiques and Égérie. It also offers its discerning clientele of connoisseurs the rare opportunity to acquire vintage pieces within the Les Collectionneurs assortment, as well as unique and bespoke timepieces by means of its Les Cabinotiers department.

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