



VACHERON & CONSTANTIN  
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The Institute for  
— DIGITAL —  
ARCHAEOLOGY

The Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA)  
and Vacheron Constantin celebrate time

## The Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA) and Vacheron Constantin celebrate time

  
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Summary

- Vacheron Constantin joins the Oxford-based Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA) for a major exhibition on time and time-keeping entitled *“The Heartbeat of the City: 500 Years of Personal Time”*.
- A selection of watches from the Maison’s private collection will be presented.
- Founded in 2012, the IDA aims to place the power of digital technologies at the service of traditional archaeological techniques

Geneva, October 2020 – from October 26<sup>th</sup> to December 14<sup>th</sup> 2020, Oxford’s History of Science (United Kingdom) museum will be hosting the exhibition on time and time-keeping created by the Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA): *“The Heartbeat of the City: 500 Years of Personal Time”*. For this major event celebrating 1,000 years of mechanical horology and 500 years of Swiss watchmaking, the Maison Vacheron Constantin is making available a selection of historical timepieces from its private collection. This travelling exhibition will kick off with a first stop in New York in spring 2021.

The Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA) is due to open its exhibition on time and time-keeping on October 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 at the History of Science Museum in Oxford. Vacheron Constantin, in collaboration with IDA experts, is presenting a selection of 12 models from its heritage collection. These include one of the very first chiming pocket watches from the Maison, a quarter-repeater dating from 1816, and an extremely rare distinctively shaped watch for the visually impaired, made in 1964.

*“The history of timekeeping is punctuated by inventions and discoveries that make it one of the most amazing human adventures,”* said Louis Ferla, CEO Vacheron Constantin. *“Our Maison and its 265 years of history have fully participated in this adventure thanks to the genius of our watchmaking ancestors, whose excellence is one of our key motivations to excel. This exhibition, in which we are particularly proud to be taking part, is a recognition of watchmaking’s true stature in society.”*



- Yellow gold pocket watch, caseback adorned with an enamel miniature reproducing *The Smoker* by Adriaen Brouwer – 1964



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As IDA founder Roger Michel explained: *“Without methods for measuring and tracking time, we lose the ability to appreciate its passage. Simply put, unless measured, time loses its meaning. A clock or calendar, therefore, is not just a device for measuring time, it is an expression of the human conception of time.”*

The IDA suggests exploring the intimate ties between the notion of time and the ingenuity devoted to its measurement through successive eras. The exhibition stages a variety of artefacts steeped in history and emotion, some of them testifying to epoch-making events. Alongside a retrospective of the historical timepieces on display is a monumental kinetic sculpture depicting one of the most cunning mechanical devices ever produced, the lever watch escapement. The programme also includes a series of lectures, a retrospective of historical timepieces including Vacheron Constantin watches, along with virtual reality experiments reflecting IDA’s mission to place digital technologies in the service of history. Unveiled at the Oxford’s History of Science Museum, the exhibition will then travel the world, making a first stop in New York in spring 2021.



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## Watches exhibited

- **Pink gold pocket watch, musical quarter-repeater, *guilloché* gold dial – 1816**

The history of musical mechanisms built into timepieces gives the dates 1796 for the invention of the comb made of steel elastic prongs, and 1811 for the first mention of musical repetition. This 1816 pocket watch, equipped with a musical quarter-repeater mechanism, thus represents one of the very first models of this type of timepiece. It bears the signature Vacheron Chossat & Cie – a reference to Charles-François Chossat, a Geneva steel merchant who was a partner of Jacques-Barthélemy Vacheron for several years before the latter's alliance with François Constantin in 1819. This meticulously crafted watch features a pink gold case and dial, a *guilloché* engraved dial bearing enamelled cartouches for the hours.

- **Silver and red gold pomander-shaped ladies' chain-bracelet wristwatch – 1885**

This Vacheron Constantin chain-bracelet watch made for Boucheron in 1885 illustrates the creativity surrounding the creation of feminine timepieces at a time when women's watches were regarded as jewellery and accessories, as opposed to the rigorous nature of men's pocket watches. Shaped like a pomander – a small perfume bottle – adorned with a watch mechanism, this delicately engraved silver model with gold inlays features a finely openworked dial and a cut-out clasp enhanced with a monogram.

- **Yellow gold "oeil-de-boeuf" hunter-type watch, minute repeater chronograph, enamel dial with 30-minute and small seconds counters – 1900**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vacheron Constantin was a renowned Manufacture particularly appreciated by artists, business magnates and royal families. Among them was Prince Napoleon (1864-1932), grandson of Jérôme Bonaparte, placed an order for this "oeil-de-boeuf" pocket watch, thus known because of the distinctively rounded opening in the hinged protective cover serving to read the time indications. This watch is a single-pusher minute repeater chronograph with a crown positioned at 3 o'clock to facilitate handling of the chronograph functions.



- Silver and red gold pomander-shaped ladies' chain-bracelet wristwatch – 1885
- Pink gold pocket watch, musical quarter-repeater, *guilloché* gold dial – 1816
- Yellow gold "oeil-de-boeuf" hunter-type watch, minute repeater chronograph, enamel dial with 30-minute and small seconds counters – 1900



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### • **Steel aviator's watch, enamel dial – 1903**

The history of wristwatches often refers to watches worn by aviation pioneers and meeting their need for particularly prominent time indications. Vacheron Constantin played an important part in this evolution, particularly with this model of steel wristwatch with an extremely long leather strap serving to attach it to the thigh. As a result, this model with a white enamel dial bearing a generously sized small seconds hand for the sake of legibility features laterally positioned lugs and a 12 o'clock crown.

### • **Yellow gold pocket watch, cloisonné enamel case-back in Art Nouveau style, silver dial – 1905**

At the Milan International Exhibition in 1906, Vacheron Constantin presented a collection of highly elegant watches that won it the Jury's Grand Prize. The collection included this yellow gold pocket watch. The caseback of the timepiece is adorned with a remarkable Art Nouveau-style thistle motif in cloisonné enamel, while the two-tone silvered dial displays a meticulously hand-crafted *guilloché* pattern in the centre. This watch is a perfect illustration of the Artistic Crafts models created by Vacheron Constantin at that time.

### • **Rectangular yellow gold shutter wristwatch – 1929**

The history of the Manufacture in its ongoing aesthetic quest is punctuated by various landmark collaborations, including with Verger Frères, a Parisian jeweller founded in 1872 with whom the Maison maintained close relations for several decades. Vacheron Constantin created models entirely in tune with the spirit of the times, such as this distinctively shaped yellow gold watch protected by narrow slats opening like Venetian blinds. A slide-bolt positioned at 6 o'clock served to activate the shutters and reveal the finely brushed dial with its applied gold Arabic numerals.



- Yellow gold pocket watch, cloisonné enamel case-back in Art Nouveau style, silver dial – 1905
- Rectangular yellow gold shutter wristwatch – 1929
- Steel aviator's watch, enamel dial – 1903



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- **Yellow gold ultra-thin men's wristwatch with minute repeater, silvered dial – 1943**  
Striking watches occupy a special place among horological complications. For more than two centuries, these complex mechanisms were given pride of place by the Maison, whose archives reveal a first mention of a striking watch in 1806. These miniaturised masterpieces represented a real challenge with the advent of the wristwatch – as magnificently epitomised in this extremely refined yellow gold minute repeater model with its two-tone silvered dial, radiating a rare elegance due to its extreme slimness enhanced by drop-shaped lugs.
- **Yellow gold World Time pocket watch, silver dial with day/night and 24-hour indication – 1949**  
Thanks to its collaboration with Louis Cottier, whose father was the inventor of the "World Time" system still in force today, Vacheron Constantin was the first Manufacture to integrate the World Time complication into its timepieces as early as 1932. This gold pocket watch from 1949 is a magnificent example of this function, with its silver dial bearing a two-tone rotating outer disc for the 24-hour indication and the city disc with 41 locations. This new complication kept step with the developments taking place in the fields of transport and communication.
- **Square pink gold wristwatch for the visually impaired, gold-plated dial – 1964**  
This extremely rare timepiece – despite being produced in the second half of the 20th century – illustrates the variety of fields of expression explored by Vacheron Constantin over its 265-year history. With this square pink gold watch, featuring a gold-plated dial with raised applied hour-markers, the Maison developed a timepiece model specifically intended for the visually impaired. A pusher on the case middle releases the bezel and crystal, which pivot on a hinge to release the gold-plated dial enabling tactile reading of the time indications.



- Yellow gold ultra-thin men's wristwatch with minute repeater, silvered dial – 1943
- Square pink gold wristwatch for the visually impaired, gold-plated dial – 1964
- Yellow gold World Time pocket watch, silver dial with day/night and 24-hour indication – 1949



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- **Yellow gold pocket watch, caseback adorned with an enamel miniature reproducing *The Smoker* by Adriaen Brouwer – 1964**

Enamel miniature painting is an art for which Geneva became famous from the 17th century onwards. This tradition has been perpetuated through the ages to the present day, in particular with the artist Carlo Poluzzi (1899–1778), miniaturist and enamel painter, whose work was much appreciated by the great watch manufacturers. One of his magnificent creations can be admired on the caseback of this yellow gold pocket watch reproducing *The Smoker*, a work painted in 1637 by Flemish artist Adriaen Brouwer.

- **Bi-retrograde platinum "Mercator" wristwatches with *champlevé* enamel dial – 2001**

An art form with a longstanding tradition in Geneva, enamelling has always been a speciality of Vacheron Constantin, associated with prestigious models such as this platinum timepiece dedicated to Mercator (1512–1594). The illustrious Flemish mathematician and geographer was the first to design flat-plane map projections. To honour the cartographer, the dial of this watch features a *champlevé* enamel depiction of the map of Europe taken from his drawings, with two hand-shaped compasses providing a retrograde indication of the minutes and hours.

- **Platinum Traditionnelle Calibre 2755 wristwatch with tourbillon, minute repeater and perpetual calendar, slate grey dial – 2010**

This watch is a masterpiece among horological Grand Complications. Its 44 mm platinum case combines three major Haute Horlogerie complications: a tourbillon, a perpetual calendar and a minute repeater with a centripetal striking regulator ensuring a smooth and noiseless musical sequence. Designed and developed within the Manufacture, Calibre 2755 and its 602 components took three years to develop.



- Bi-retrograde platinum "Mercator" wristwatches with *champlevé* enamel dial – 2001
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Yellow gold pocket watch, cloisonné enamel case-back in Art Nouveau style, silver dial – 1905

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Founded in 1755, Vacheron Constantin is the world's oldest watch Manufacture in continuous production for over 265 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 unique and bespoke timepieces by means of its "Les Cabinotiers" department.

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