

For Immediate Release  
4 November, 2010

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## CHRISTIE'S HONG KONG SALE OF IMPORTANT WATCHES OFFERS COLLECTORS THE FINEST AND RAREST TIMEPIECES OFFERED IN THE REGION

**Hong Kong** – Christie's Autumn sale of *Important Watches* in Hong Kong will take place on 2 December at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre. Offering more than 570 rare and collectible timepieces valued in excess of HK\$70 million (US\$9 million) from renowned manufacturers such as **Audemars Piguet, Breguet, Cartier, Patek Philippe, Rolex, Ulysse Nardin, and Vacheron Constantin**, this sale offers something for watch collectors across a spectrum of taste and price. The breadth of makers, styles and time periods offered this season signals the growth and strength of the watch market in Asia and the continued fascination of this region's top collectors for the finest timepieces.

### The Timeless Appeal of Patek Philippe

Founded in 1845, Patek Philippe is one of the most reputable and desired watchmakers. The company first drew the attention of European elite with their horological advances when they exhibited the first keyless watches at the Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace in 1851. Since this time, these prestigious timepieces have never wavered in their appeal, due in part to the Swiss manufacture's philosophy of perfection and commitment to scholarship, craftsmanship and innovation. At Christie's, close to a third of worldwide watch auctions comprise of Patek Philippe lots, ranging from US\$2,000 Calatravas to US\$6.2 million for the wonderful and unique Reference 1527, and the majority of our record prices at auction are held by Patek Philippe timepieces. Since 2005, Asia has overtaken the United States as the biggest collector's market for modern Patek Philippe timepieces.

Leading the Patek Philippe selection this season is the **Reference 3974, one of the most desirable minute repeaters in modern production** (*image right*, estimate: HK\$4,000,000 – 5,500,000 / US\$515,000 – 700,000). Produced in 1989 to celebrate Patek Philippe's 150th anniversary, the ingenious reference 3974 is exceptional in that it combines micro-rotor, minute-repeating and perpetual calendar mechanisms in a proportionally small 12 ½" movement containing a tremendous 467 individual parts. Any true connoisseur of watches will undoubtedly appreciate the sonorous charms of the cathedral gong chimes, enhanced by the platinum case. This sought after reference, which ceased production in 2002, was manufactured in very small numbers, with less than twenty examples made in precious platinum. **This present lot offers a rare opportunity to acquire an exceptional reference that has only appeared at auction on three occasions previously.**



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The **Reference 5029** was produced to commemorate the opening of the new Patek Philippe factory in Geneva and only 30 examples were produced - 10 each in platinum, pink and yellow gold respectively (*image left*, estimate: HK\$3,200,000 – 4,500,000 / US\$410,000 – 580,000). The subtle and elegant appearance of Ref. 5029 with its gently curved case and straight screw-set lugs pays homage to the design traditions of Patek Philippe. The case of this present lot was made by the **renowned case maker Jean-Pierre Hagmann**, whose mark, JHP, is stamped on the inside of the hinged case back. At Patek Philippe, more than a hundred special components are required to create a minute repeating mechanism. A great deal of attention is taken to produce the precise tone and cadence of the strike from the choice of alloy material that the components are made from to the proportional tuning between hammer and corresponding gong. **This reference is lauded for its particularly clear and crisp chime within a hinged Officer's-style case** and the present lot is an excellent opportunity to acquire a rare and important reference by Patek Philippe.

Also of note is the **Reference 2499** (*image right*, estimate: HK\$2,300,000 – 3,300,000 / US\$290,000 – 420,000), the heir to the legendary Patek Philippe reference 1518, the world's first perpetual calendar wristwatch with chronograph function. Introduced to the market in 1950, **the reference 2499 is one of the most coveted wristwatches of all time and is undisputedly an icon of horological artistry**. Over a period of 35 years, reference 2499 was made in four series with a total production of only 349 pieces, the majority cased in yellow gold. The rarity of this model becomes evident when considering that an annual average of only 9 watches left Patek Philippe's workshops at the time.



An additional Patek highlight of note is **the Reference 1436** (estimate: HK\$1,600,000 – 2,400,000 / US\$200,000 – 300,000), a split seconds chronograph wristwatch manufactured in 1968 and originally retailed by Cartier. Vintage Pateks have been rarely offered in Hong Kong previously, and the presence of such a highly-desirable vintage example at auction is a further sign of the growing market for important watches in this region.

## Exquisite Enamel Timepieces



This season Christie's will present a variety of timepieces that combine the artistic precision of the finest enameling work with the technical virtuosity of high horological innovation. Leading the selection is the **Mercator from Vacheron Constantin** (*image left*, estimate: HK\$120,000 – 180,000 / US\$15,000 – 23,000), part of a limited series, launched in 1994 to honour the memory of the famous Dutch cartographer and humanist Gerardus Mercator, who conceived the first projections of the globe. When launched, the Vacheron Constantin series was regarded as horologically innovative for its retrograde hours and minutes as well as hand-painted enamel dial. **Each dial of the Mercator is meticulously enamelled using the champlevé technique** in a process that involves the carving of cells into 18k gold and each layered application of vitreous enamel requiring a carefully firing in the kiln at a temperature of 700 to 800 degrees.

Once the last firing is completed, the finest of details is hand painted with the aid of a binocular microscope. This present lot, featuring the **twelve Chinese zodiac signs**, bears great significance in Chinese culture.

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Legend has it that the Lord Buddha invited all the animals to join him to celebrate the new year and to honour the dozen animals that attended, a year was named after each animal in order of arrival and people born in that year would possess the personality traits of that particular animal.

One of the many strengths of Patek Philippe is its beautiful enamelling and this is underlined by its legacy - the firm has its roots in a dial factory that actually produced enamel dials. **Two gilt brass cloisonné enamel solar-powered table clocks from Patek will be offered this season** (*image right*).

The first domed photoelectric clocks appeared around 1957. Revolutionary for their time, they were exhibited at the 1955 World Symposium and displayed at the Museum of Science in Boston. Their significance continues to the present day, demonstrating Patek Philippe's unwavering commitment to innovation and research.

Never before offered at auction and originally retailed by Cartier, the first lot depicts **a lively hunting scene in glorious autumnal palette and is signed by eminent enameller Madame Luce Chappaz** (estimate: HK\$320,000 – 480,000 / US\$40,000 – 60,000). The second, also appearing at auction for the first time, features **an enchanting 'en travesti' operatic scene with harlequins, musicians and masked ladies and is signed 'MFM' for Marie Françoise Martin**, who was an enamel artist for Patek Philippe from the 1970s to the 1990s (estimate: HK\$400,000 – 550,000 / US\$50,000 – 70,000).



## Greubel Forsey: Gravity-Defying Vanguard of Contemporary Horology

Robert Greubel and Stephen Forsey have been working together for nearly two decades in a relationship founded on their shared technical creativity. In 1999, they began working on a new generation of tourbillon specifically designed to improve the timekeeping of the mechanical watch. Four years later they unveiled Greubel Forsey and stunned horological aficionados with their innovative timepieces which clearly demonstrate their twin goals of innovation and excellence. This season Christie's is pleased to offer collectors two connoisseur pieces from this famed maker.



The duo's "first fundamental invention", the **Double Tourbillon 30° Vision** is a creation that undertook more than four years of research and development and features a double tourbillon movement comprising an auspicious 128 parts and weighing an astoundingly light 1.17 grams (*image left*, HK\$1,400,000 – 2,000,000 / US\$180,000 – 250,000). Its tourbillon within a tourbillon (dubbed the 'tourbillon of the third millennium' by its creators), stands as a unique **new complication that permanently compensates for the rate of gravity-related errors in all positions, and as such, results in more precise time than a classic tourbillon regardless of position.**

Also from Greubel Forsey is the Quadruple Tourbillon (*image right*, estimate: HK\$2,200,000 – 3,000,000 / US\$280,000 – 380,000). The groundbreaking Quadruple Tourbillon à Differential encapsulates the pioneering advances of the brand, boasting an impressive four separate tourbillons that are separated into two regulating organs, connected by a spherical differential which calculates median precision for the time display. This horological masterpiece is equipped with a 50 hour power reserve via two fast-rotating barrels that transmit their energy via the spherical differential. The construction and adjustment of these three-dimensional multi-axis whirlwinds is pure artistry in the realm of high complications.



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## Premier Pocket Watches



Since Queen Victoria purchased a Patek Philippe pocket watch at the Great Exhibition of 1851 for the princely sum of CHF600, the pocket watch has held great appeal amongst collector who appreciate the wondrous beauty of traditional watchmaking. Among the many pocket watch highlights offered this season is the **Patek Philippe Reference 881** (*image left*, estimate: HK\$550,000 – 800,000 / US\$70,000 – 100,000) which exemplifies the exceptional craftsmanship of the famous Swiss manufacture and features a host of grand complications – a moonphase display, minute repeating on two polished hammers with two gongs and perpetual calendar.

Vintage pocket watch collectors will be drawn to an **18<sup>th</sup> century gilt and agate-set openface pendant watch with matching châtelaine from Pet Duten** (*image right*, estimate: HK\$120,000 – 180,000 / US\$15,000 – 23,000). The use of the châtelaine chain originates from the Middle Ages when ornamental hooks were suspended from skirts and everyday items such as watches, purses and thimbles were attached. Serving dual purposes as utilitarian accessories and decorative ornaments, this particular chatelaine is a superb example with its beautiful agate panels and ornate hand engraved yellow gilt detailing.



Each season Christie's presents a **range of timepieces made especially for the Chinese market in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**. Among this season's highlights is this **5-automaton pocket watch depicting three Cupid angels** (*image left*, estimate: HK\$320,000 – 480,000 / US\$40,000 – 62,000). The first automatons appeared in Geneva in the late 18th century. These small technical marvels imitated the movements of living creatures, ranging from simpler "Bras en l'air" figures whose arms would indicate the time, to incredibly complex works such as this "forge of love" scene where three adorable cherubs are making and sharpening their arrows of love. The figure on the left is moving his arm and leg at the treadle wheel grinder, the central figure is hammering and the figure on the right is activating the bellows to the roaring furnace.

## Magical Music Boxes

This season Christie's Hong Kong will present a rare selection of music boxes that are sure to delight collectors. Leading the group is a **tour-de-force by the renowned French Jeweler Mauboussin and the music box specialist Reuge** (*image right*, estimate: HK\$550,000 – 800,000 / US\$70,000 – 100,000). Inspired by a clown musician from the Italian impromptu comedies from the 17th century, the present automaton is strikingly encrusted with precious stones and gold. The Harlequin himself weighs 1.6kg of 18k gold, is set with 16 carats of diamonds, 8.8 carats of emeralds, 28.6 carats of rubies, 18.7 carats of sapphires and mother-of-pearl set over the Harlequin chest. The Harlequin moves his hands, legs and head in gestures of expression whilst playing the mandolin over melodies taken from the operatic compositions of Jacques Offenbach.





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Property of a highly important private collector, another leading highlights is a **singing bird box made by the celebrated Charles Bruguier** that is distinguished by the fine quality of the mechanism, the enamel decoration and the "taille-douce" engraving to the side panels (*image left*, estimate: HK\$200,000 – 300,000 /US\$25,000 – 35,000). Born in Geneva in 1788, Charles-Abraham Bruguier worked for a number of different manufacturers both in London and Geneva before setting up his own workshop in Geneva. His works are considered amongst the most beautiful singing bird mechanism of small size ever made with their astoundingly beautiful and realistic sound.

For more information in English and Chinese about Christie's Hong Kong Fall 2010 Season Highlights go to [www.christies.com/chinese](http://www.christies.com/chinese)

## IMAGES OF SALE HIGHLIGHTS CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE:

<http://cshk.myftp.org/Fall%202010%20Christie's%20Hong%20Kong%20Auctions/Watches/Images/>

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| <b>Auction:</b><br><i>Important Watches</i>                             | <b>Thursday, 2 December</b><br>10am & 2.30pm             |
| <b>Viewing:</b><br>Grand Hall, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre | <b>Thursday, 25 November -<br/>Wednesday, 1 December</b> |

### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2009 that totaled £2.1 billion/\$3.3 billion. For the first half of 2010, art sales totaled £1.7 billion/\$2.57 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium