

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S

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# THE FIRST WATCH SALE OF THE YEAR MORE THAN 420 TOP WATCHES RARITIES & RE-DISCOVERIES AT AUCTION AT CHRISTIE'S GENEVA

## IMPORTANT WATCHES

*Including*

A CONNOISSEUR'S VISION PART IV

Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues, Geneva

16 May 2011 - 9.30am & 2.30pm



**Geneva** - An extremely wide selection of the world's finest watches and wristwatches will be offered at Christie's Geneva on May 16, in the first auction of 2011 dedicated to this category.

With more than 420 lots, the sale is expected to fetch a total of SFr. 13-18 million / US\$14-19 million. The star lot is an extremely important, and most likely unique, Patek Philippe single button chronograph wristwatch manufactured in 1928, estimated at SFr.1,500,000-2,500,000 (*illustrated above.*)

**Aurel Bacs, International Head of Christie's Watch Department, comments:** *"Christie's achieved the best results of any auction house in fine and rare watches in 2010, bringing in total sales of US\$91.2 million globally and recording its highest annual results in this category. It is against this background of success that we proudly inaugurate our 2011 watch sales season with the Geneva Spring auction on May 16. An extraordinary varied catalogue offers our discerning clientele one of the richest and broadest selections ever presented at the Geneva saleroom, with impressive lots in virtually every collecting category."*

## A CULT FROM THE ERA OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

During the Great Depression, Swiss watch manufacturers suffered from the reduced demand that plagued other businesses around the world, causing their production to plummet to only a fraction of the pre-crisis output. Nonetheless, among an elite group of avid and demanding collectors, the appetite for unique, super-complicated, made-to-measure watches that had arisen during the boom years of the late 1920's continued into the 1930's, and even increased. Switzerland's most capable watch manufacturers, Patek Philippe in particular, produced some of their most beautiful and technically ingenious masterpieces during this decade. Created in 1928 on the eve of the crisis, the star lot of Christie's Geneva Spring sale is a superb example of this historic phenomenon. Most certainly made upon special request by one of Patek Philippe's most important patrons, this cushion-shaped wristwatch with vertically positioned registers and Breguet numerals is the only known example of a single-button chronograph by Patek Philippe cased in white gold. (*Illustrated on the previous page.*)



## FINAL SALE OF A CONNOISSEUR'S VISION

The fourth and final part of the unparalleled collection known as "*A Connoisseur's Vision*" will also be offered in the May auction. The sale will provide the last opportunity for distinguished collectors to purchase any of the remaining ten Patek Philippe wristwatches acquired 25 years ago by the vendor. Between 2009 and 2010, the watch team of Christie's Geneva dispersed the first three parts of the collection, which is already the most valuable private-owner collection of fine Patek Philippe wristwatches ever sold at auction, fetching a grand total of some US\$19 million to date. The group featured in this final sale is highlighted by an extremely fine, rare and important gold and platinum cushion-shaped single-button chronograph wristwatch, manufactured in 1936 (estimate: SFr. 350,000-550,000; *illustrated left*).

## REDISCOVERED TREASURES

Christie's is honoured to have been entrusted with the sale on May 16 of two exceptional wristwatches kept in a safe for decades and consigned directly from the families of their original owners. These rediscovered, hyper-rare wristwatches are in pink gold and perfectly represent today's most sought-after pieces: the vintage, complicated Patek Philippe wristwatches. The first of them is an exceptional perpetual calendar chronograph wristwatch with moon phases and pink dial, Ref. 1518, manufactured in 1948 and estimated at SFr. 700,000-1,000,000 (*illustrated right*.) The second is an extremely fine and rare perpetual calendar wristwatch with sweep centre seconds, moon phases, screw back and luminous hands and luminous baton numerals, Ref. 2438/1, manufactured in 1955 and estimated at SFr. 400,000-600,000 (*illustrated far right*.)



## A MOST IMPORTANT AVIATOR WRISTWATCH

Among the most fascinating lots of the sale is a very rare and historically important timepiece: an oversized silver hour angle aviator's wristwatch with indirect sweep centre seconds, manufactured in 1935, presumed to have been given to Italian Air Marshall Italo Balbo by Col. Charles Lindbergh (*illustrated left*.) Coming to market for the first time, it will be offered together with a silver openface keyless lever chronograph pocketwatch by Longines, a gift by Roger Williams and Lewis Yancey to Balbo (the lot estimated at SFr.30,000-50,000). Balbo, internationally renowned for leading two trans-Atlantic flights, was friends with an aviation elite that included Lindbergh and Hungarian Count Laszlo Almasy, the man who inspired the main character of the novel and film *The English Patient*.



### THE BEST OF ROLEX

Particularly broad and well-curated is the sale's selection of the popular Rolex sports watches. Almost all of the models of the Rolex family are featured, including the most famous—Submariner, Daytona, Explorer, Milgauss—dating from the 1950's to the present millennium. Estimates range from SFr.2,000 without reserve to SFr.100,000 for the most important and sought-after pieces. The highlight of the Rolex section is the legendary reference 4113, the ultra-rare, split-seconds chronograph that is the most important Rolex model in the world (estimate: SFr. 600,000-1,000,000; *illustrated left*). Rolex has made only 12 examples of this model, of which eight are known to have survived. All have been held in the most renowned watch collections in the world.

### EXCEPTIONAL ENAMEL, COMPLICATION AND AUTOMATONS

A particularly rich and appealing selection of decorative and technical pocket watches will be offered at the Christie's Geneva May sale. Included are fantastic enamels,



historical automatons and complicated pocket watches created by the most famous Swiss manufacturers, with all the functions that any aficionado might dream of. The Automaton section is highlighted by the world-famous gold-and-enamel open-face quarter repeating watch with varicoloured gold automaton depicting Moses striking the rock. This extraordinary example was produced by Charles Ducommun circa 1820 and is estimated at SFr.250,000-350,000 (*illustrated right*). The complicated pocket watches section is highlighted by a superb triple-complication



example: a fine and rare gold open-face minute repeating perpetual calendar split-seconds chronograph watch with moon phases, Ref. 658, movement manufactured in 1931 (estimate: SFr.150,000-250,000; *illustrated left*.)

### THE G. GARVIN BROWN III COLLECTION – PART I

The collector of contemporary timepieces will be spoiled at the May sale with an unusually broad and appealing group of watches, highlighted by a single-owner collection assembled by the late G. Garvin Brown III (1943-2010), great-grandson of the founder of Brown-Forman Corporation, the Kentucky distiller that owns brands including Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey. After a brief career in the family business, Garvin Brown struck out on his own to Los Angeles, where he was involved in media and entertainment and ultimately motor sports. Also a passionate watch connoisseur, he loved the craftsmanship of complicated movements and assembled an impressive collection of more than 100 pieces, including examples by Panerai, A. Lange & Söhne, Vacheron & Constantin, Jaeger-LeCoultre and Rolex, from the 1990s to date. Christie's has been entrusted with the sale of this outstanding collection, which will be offered as Part I in Geneva on May 16, Part II in Hong Kong on May 30 and Part III in New York on June 15.

### THE HILLARY TENZING EXPLORER, AN INITIATIVE BY PHILIPP STAHL

*Offered by Peter Hillary and Jamling Tenzing Norgay for the benefits of the Hillary and Tenzing Foundations*

Having paid tribute with *Single Red Deep Sea* to Swiss adventurer Jacques Piccard and his exploration of the deepest point in the ocean, the next logical step for Philipp Stahl was to go to highest point on earth, Mount Everest. The Hillary Tenzing Explorer Edition is Stahl's unique homage to Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, who in 1953 became the first humans to set foot on top of the world. Stahl is proud to create the Hillary Tenzing Explorer Limited Edition in close cooperation with Peter Hillary and Jamling Tenzing Norgay, sons of the famous mountaineers and acclaimed adventurers themselves. Rolex has always been in the forefront of exploration, and their watches proved to be valuable assets under the most extreme conditions. In fact the 1953 Everest team was equipped with Oyster Perpetual watches. The Hillary Tenzing Explorer Limited Edition is not associated with the Rolex organization; the international warranty will go through the watch atelier of Philipp Stahl (*illustrated right*).



## IMPORTANT WATCHES

*Including*

### A CONNOISSEUR'S VISION PART IV

**Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues**  
**33 quai des Bergues - Geneva**

#### AUCTION

Monday 16 May 9.30am & 2.30pm

#### VIEWINGS IN GENEVA

Friday 13 May 2pm-6pm

Saturday 14 May 10am-6pm

Sunday 15 May 10am-7pm

#### SPECIAL EVENT

On Saturday 14 May at 7 pm Christie's will host a conference related to the wonderful people who climbed the Everest for 1<sup>st</sup> time in 1953. This event is related to the charitable sale of the Hillary Tenzing Explorer Limited Edition and will take place in the Salle Des Nations at the Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues.

#### INTERNATIONAL PREVIEWS & EXHIBITIONS

**Christie's New York**, Rockefeller Center

9-10 April 10am-6pm

11-12 April 10am-5pm

**Christie's Hong Kong**, Alexandra House

18 Chater Road, Central

19-20 April 10.30am-6pm

21 April 10.30am-5pm

**Shanghai**, Shanghai Club Ballroom, 2/F Waldorf Astoria

No.2 Zhong Shan Dong Yi Road, Huang Pu District

23-24 April 10am-6pm

**Beijing**, Grand Hall, 2/F St. Regis Hotel

21 Jianguomenwai Dajie

26-27 April 10am-6pm

#### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2010 that totaled £3.3 billion/\$5.0 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*

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Images available on request  
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