

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S GENEVA OFFERS SIGNIFICANT AND RECENTLY DISCOVERED "FIRST TIME EVER ON THE MARKET"-TIMEPIECES IN ITS SELECTED SPRING SALE

Monday, 11 May, at 10.00am and 3.00pm
Geneva – Four Seasons, Hotel des Bergues

Geneva – Following the success of its Geneva watch sale in November last year, Christie's is delighted to announce its forthcoming spring sale, which offers a wide range of carefully selected watches that will appeal to the demanding taste of watch collectors around the world. Over 330 lots will be offered for sale, many of them completely fresh to the market and in some instances directly consigned by the families of the original owners, creating a unique opportunity for new and experienced watch connoisseurs to add rare and historical timepieces to their collections.

"We are very pleased to present this spring auction of which the three most important watches are, each in their own right, spectacular rediscoveries. None of these three top lots have been shown in public or described in any literature before. Consequently, these timepieces are of historical significance and a valuable addition to the scholarship of the manufactures Breguet and Patek Philippe", commented Aurel Bacs, International Co-Head of Christie's Watch Department.

ROYAL RARITY: LA « REINE DE NAPLES » - BREGUET'S *MONTRE DE CAROSSE* No. 2655

Between 1808 and 1814, Caroline Bonaparte, youngest sister of Napoleon, was one of Breguet's most demanding and important clients and she had the privilege of receiving the very best pieces produced by the firm. The present timepiece, a *Montre de Carosse* with full digital calendar, moon phases, repeating and alarm, was made on special request and sold to her (Queen of Naples from 1808) on 18 March 1812 for 4,000 Francs (estimate: SFr. 240,000-380,000).



For the last 197 years the timepiece has not left the family. It enters the market for the first time in this sale and has been consigned by a direct descendent of Caroline Murat Bonaparte. Consequently, for 7 generations this superb “hump back” travel clock has been in the possession of the same Royal Family.

Abraham Louis Breguet is said to have been the inventor of the carriage clock and created examples of the highest quality for his Royal clients by encasing them in silver

“hump-back” cases with multi-stranded silver chain carrying handles. These clocks, dating between 1812 and 1828, were made to exacting standards and included all the complications a traveller required. Research shows that this particular watch is one of the earliest models of *Montre de Carosse* ever made by Breguet and scholarship on Breguet’s involvement with this type of timekeeper needs to be rewritten accordingly.

**NEW TO THE MARKET - A COLLECTOR'S DREAM COME TRUE:
THE ROSE GOLD REFERENCE 2499 (2ND SERIES) BY PATEK PHILIPPE**

This watch has all the highly valued qualities to truly merit the description: “an extremely fine collector’s watch”. Made by one of the world’s most dignified watchmakers, Patek Philippe, it is the highly coveted version of the reference 2499, from the second series, cased in pink gold (estimate: SFr. 1,000,000-1,500,000). The watch has been retailed by the distinguished Italian house Gobbi and has been consigned by the family of the original owner.



The watch is in extraordinary condition and still retains the original certificates from both Patek Philippe and Gobbi in Milan. The rarity of this outstanding watch is further enhanced by the fact that only six examples of second series reference 2499 in pink gold are known to have appeared in public to date, consequently making this watch the seventh known example of this type.

Reference 2499, widely acknowledged to be one of the world's greatest watch models ever created, was introduced to the market in 1950, and replaced the legendary reference 1518, the world's first perpetual calendar wristwatch with a chronograph to be made in the series. Over a period of 35 years, reference 2499 was made in four series and totalled only 349 pieces, the majority cased in yellow gold. The rarity of this model becomes evident when one considers that on average only 9 watches left Patek Philippe's workbench each year.

RE-DISCOVERED: THE LARGEST SIZE PATEK PHILIPPE WRISTWATCH



This watch, the only example of a Patek Philippe oversized aviator's wristwatch with splittable centre seconds and hour angle dial known to have been made, is a sensational and significant discovery to the world of watch collecting and scholarship (estimate: SFr. 300,000-500,000). Until recently, there was no mention, discussion or illustration of such a watch in literature. The archives of Patek Philippe confirm that the present watch was completed and encased in the nickel-chromed case in 1936 and sold on 28 September that year.

This Patek Philippe masterpiece is understood to be a unique prototype, made upon special request in 1936. Such aviator watches were intended to be worn outside the pilot's suit, hence their impressive size. With a diameter of over 55mm, this is certainly the largest size wristwatch ever made by the world-famous manufacturer.

The watch is fitted with a superb black lacquered dial on which all scales and the signature are in 'negative', carved into the plate and filled with off-white varnish. This technique is

regarded as the ultimate 'state of the art' in dial manufacturing. Luminous material was used to highlight the Arabic numerals and the outer 60 degrees scale as well as the hands.

The "hour" hand rotates once in 24 hours, indicating the degrees of arc against the centre circle divided into 360. The "minute" hand rotates once every 4 hours and is read against the scale of 60. The two second hands revolve every 4 minutes, showing the angular minutes. Consequently, the time shown here reads 332° 8.5', translating into 22 hours, 8 minutes and 30 seconds, the very time that all watches show in books and catalogues.

Astronomical navigation, for the purpose of positioning, has always been essential work for the Navy. By using a sextant, precise chronometer (later deck watches), nautical tables and a spherical trigonometric calculation, a navigator can precisely define a vessel's or, later, an aircraft's position. However, such calculations (which were done manually until the 1930s) took up to 30 minutes. Among the first to launch a practical attempt to resolve this delay were US navy officials Philip Van Horn Weems and Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, supplying practical ideas and drawings to Longines.

ONE OF THE LARGEST SELECTIONS OF ROLEX WRISTWATCHES TO COME TO THE AUCTION MARKET

The sale will also offer one of the largest selections of Rolex watches seen on the auction market in recent years. 89 lots, mostly vintage sport models and chronographs, but also such iconic references like 6062 and 8171, the only Rolex models ever made with full calendar and phases of the moon, are united in this auction. Consigned by private collectors, these will be offered with estimates ranging from SFr. 2,000 to SFr. 200,000.

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Christie's had global auction and private sales in 2008 that totaled £2.8 billion/\$5.1 billion. 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 600 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 \$80 million. Christie's has 57 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.