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The photo does not portray the massive scale of this gilt-bronze, marble and enamel mantel clock. The centerpiece of the exhibit, it weighs nearly 400 pounds and is more than 3 feet across. Jean-Baptiste Lepaute (1717-1802) was the Paris maker. Father Time clearly was dejected in this depiction of eternal love's triumph over him. The arrow tip points to the current minutes and hours on an annular dial. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.



Known as the Great Ruby Watch, this circa 1670 Augsburg single-hand watch with 85 clear rubies on its front cover has an equally impressive painted enamel dial, shown here. The movement was signed by Nicolaus Rugendas the Younger. The intrinsic value of the gold and gemstones resulted in most watches of this caliber being destroyed during hard times. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.

The Luxury Of Time

European Clocks And Watches

BY BOB FRISHMAN

NEW YORK CITY — Art and science combined, that is the special attraction of antique timekeepers. While many collectors focus on the insides of intricate machines, “The Luxury of Time: European Clocks and Watches” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art emphasizes their external beauty. This selection of Sixteenth through Nineteenth Century treasures graces the first-floor Wrightsman Galleries through March 27.

An elegant new book accompanies the show. Together, book and exhibition represent the culmination of 40-plus years of related work by associate curator Clare Vincent, called “the female pope of clocks and watches” in a recent Christie’s auction catalog. Vincent, who arrived at the Met in 1962, co-authored the 278-page hardcover volume with her late husband, Jan Hendrick Leopold, and associate research curator Elizabeth Sullivan, a co-organizer of the exhibition.

Sullivan recently led Jonathan Snellenburg, clock expert at Bonhams in New York, and me on a tour of the show, which consists of 46 objects from the Met’s collection of around 600 European timepieces, most acquired decades ago and rarely out of storage, plus one clock, a circa 1610 automaton from Augsburg, Germany, loaned by Yale University Art Gallery.

In 1917, John Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) donated about 250 watches and clocks, most of them swept up in his purchases of collections painstakingly built by Carl Heinrich Marfels, Frederick George Hilton Price and others. The American financier gave a total of around 7,000 works of art to the Met during and after his lifetime. Other early donors include Laura Frances Hearn, Mrs Simon Guggenheim, Irwin Untermyer and an anonymous benefactor who, in 1926, bequeathed more than a hundred watches in honor of Lady May Fletcher-Moulton. Mr and Mrs Charles Wrightsman gave clocks and funds for acquisitions.

Vincent organized the 1972 exhibit, “Northern European Clocks in New York Collections,” featuring Met-owned examples, plus others from the collections of Winthrop “Kelly” Edey and Peter Guggenheim. At Christie’s in January 2015, the Met purchased an automaton clock in the form of Urania from the Guggenheim collection for \$50,000 hammer. After the Met acquired four major timepieces last year, Sullivan and her colleagues dubbed 2015 “the year of the clock.”

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Perhaps the rarest and most priceless piece in the exhibit, this 1579 silver celestial globe with clockwork, carried on the back of Pegasus, showed the apparent motion of the heavens. The maker is Gerhard Emmoser. Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612) owned and probably proudly displayed this technological marvel in his *kunstkammer*. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Jean-Andre Lepaute included this design in his 1766 price list, calling it "Pendule Uranie." The standing figure, the Muse of Astronomy, reflected another treatment by sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. The chart and scale at the bottom referred to an April 1764 lunar eclipse. Bequest of Ogden Mills.



The earliest pendulum-regulated clocks in England appeared in the 1660s, offered by Ahasuerus Fromanteel of London. The innovation provided a great leap forward in timekeeping accuracy. This example, in a hooded ebony case possibly inspired by architect Christopher Wren, includes a calendar indicator and is from that famed clockmaker and period. Bequest of Irwin Untermyer.



The English East India Company commissioned this 1766 gold automaton for presentation to the emperor of China, where such prized mechanical articles were called "sing-songs." James Cox of London made this and many such lavish items for the luxury Asian market. Not only did the clock indicate the time, but the chariot rolled, the whirlingig twirled and the bird flapped its wings. Jack and Belle Linsky Collection.



This object demonstrates the close connection among science, religion and art. Made in the mid-Sixteenth Century, this monstrosity or mirror clock is from Nurnberg. Multiple indicators of temporal and astronomical data are a testimony to the technical ability of the clockmaker who signed his work "CR." Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.

The Luxury Of Time

European Clocks And Watches

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The Met acquired four important clocks last year. One was this, made in Nurnberg circa 1620–30 by Paulius Schiller and auctioned by Christie's in 2015. With no fusee or balance spring in its rudimentary movement, it would have been a poor timekeeper. Purchase, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Acquisitions Fund.



Beyond the two automata already mentioned, there are other clocks in the gallery with moving eyes, body parts and more. Usually from Seventeenth Century Germany, they represented the pinnacle of mechanical and artistic creativity, and were produced for show in aristocratic *kunstkammer* cabinets of curiosities. Sneltenburg termed these demonstrations of Renaissance metalworking "the technology of decorative arts," requiring amazing artisan skills. Interest in their aesthetic appeal sparked collecting in later centuries, he said, while attention to the hidden mechanical aspects was secondary.

In France, the source of many exhibit highlights, the makers of cases, who frequently signed their work, were more highly respected and better paid than the makers of the geared movements, often unsigned or engraved on the inside.

Incredible skills were also needed to produce porcelain clock cases. Sullivan's other specialty is ceramics, so she was particularly attentive to these pieces. She noted that, ironically, Europeans struggled to obtain porcelain-making technology from Asia at the same time that Western-made clocks were highly coveted by Chinese and Japanese nobility.

The circa 1735–40 Chantilly Manufactory clock signed "Etienne Le Noir a Paris" boasts intricate and colorful soft-paste porcelain Japanese figures and asymmetric floral motifs along with gilded brass. Two rare features are its wall-hanging, rather than mantel, form and a human figure actually holding the clock bezel. In this instance, the movement carries the same name as the white enamel dial. Le Noir, who became a master clockmaker in 1698, represented one generation of a French clockmaking family.

Exotic French clocks with marble, bronze and gilded cases outnumber porcelain examples, both in the exhibit and in the world. The room's 379-pound centerpiece is a massive figural clock depicting the allegorical theme of the triumph of love over time. The clock's surfaces are an unusual combination of gloss and matte gold, and copper. I cannot envision a mantel that could support the clock, although perhaps Mr Morgan had one. Jean-Baptiste Lepaute (1727–1802) made this clock and another, donated in 1929 by Ogden Mills, featuring the standing figure of Urania, the muse of astronomy. Lepaute's wife also played a part. She was an able mathematician whose work on lunar eclipses was connected to the "Avril/1764" chart on the case. Unlike British clocks of the same period with more restrained cases but higher-precision movements, French clocks usually had standardized movements of good quality,

with much greater emphasis placed on the case's decorative appeal.

One French clock — by Jean-Baptiste-André Furet, circa 1784 — is musical. The last-minute addition to the show allows visitors to view from the rear the miniature organ in its base. From the front, the dark bronze bust of a smiling African woman tells the time.

The gallery has limited wall space, so only a small group of longcase clocks are shown. These floor-standing timekeepers became known as "grandfather" clocks only late in the Nineteenth Century. At least one longcase is kept running: the circa 1680–85 walnut veneered British example by Joseph Knibb. A nearby video shows the clock being wound. Most of the clocks and watches are inside display cases and cannot easily be wound, but few museums regularly run their timekeepers anyway. They rightly fear the risks of damage and wear, and they preserve the objects as historical artifacts rather than functioning antique machines. Vincent was featured in an August 6, 2014, *Wall Street Journal* article recounting her clock-winding rituals at the Met.

Another longcase clock usually stands in the adjacent galleries of the Jack and Belle Linsky Collection. Ferdinand Berthoud's astronomical regulator, circa 1768–70, is an outstanding example of that famous French maker's output. Moved to a spot under bright lights, Sullivan saw that polishing its ebony, brass and gilt-bronze case by Balthazar Lieutaud would enhance some old glory. It is one of the few pieces that needed light conservation treatment for the show.

Another 2105 acquisition was a David Roentgen longcase. Its obelisk form and Ben Franklin-inspired movement and dial are rare and distinctive. It needed no conservation, having stood in another recent exhibit, "Extravagant Inventions: The Princely Furniture of the Roentgens."

Though not in the exhibit, one iconic longcase clock from the Met's collection may be viewed in Gallery 518. Known as the Graves Tompion, it was donated in 1999 by Marilyn Preston Graves, granddaughter of Henry Graves Jr, whose collection included a Patek Philippe chronograph watch likely to be the most complicated mechanical watch ever produced. Thomas Tompion (1639–1713) is called the father of English clockmaking. The Graves clock is one of his earliest surviving longcases, made before he began numbering them after 1685. The exhibit does include a circa 1696 Tompion ebony-veneered bracket clock, a 1964 Untermyer gift.

Many of the exhibit objects are pocket watches. They are artfully mounted in innovative, four-sided cases allowing close but uncrowded scrutiny. These Met watches are not typical, gold-filled Walthams or Elgins, but much earlier European ornaments made and decorated

This watch is a marriage — case and movement not originally associated — but a good marriage that did not prevent J. Pierpont Morgan from acquiring it. The 1748 movement by Swiss maker Johann G. Racine was fit into a circa 1688 gold case made by Swiss enamellist Jean-Pierre Huaud. The original movement probably was broken or unreliable. The bewigged gentleman is the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm, Duke of Prussia. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.

The rear cover of this 1832 pocket watch by Abraham Vacheron Girod provides details on what is inside. Many Nineteenth Century Swiss watches had similar engraved information, noting, as this does, the tiny drilled jewels used as low-friction bearings. The Swiss firm Vacheron & Constantin still produces fine watches. Anonymous gift in memory of Lady May Fletcher-Moulton.



This early example of a circa 1580-85 spring-driven British table clock features a case of engraved, chased and gilded brass housing a movement signed by Bartholomew Newsam. Remarkably, the clock survives with its leather travel case, probably original. The hours strike on a bell under the pierced brass cap. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.



Exhibition co-curator Elizabeth Sullivan and Jonathan Snellenburg, director of fine watches and clocks at Bonhams New York. Between them is a mid-Seventeenth Century German astronomical table clock whose architectural case and complicated movement most likely were produced as a masterpiece for admission into the Augsburg clockmakers' guild. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.

with gold, gemstones and painted enamel. Their hinged covers show colorful portraits, classical and Biblical scenes, and complex patterns. Another exhibit video provides closeups, inside and out, of a Daniel Delander pair-case watch, circa 1715-19, portraying the maker's astounding ability to fabricate perfect, tiny parts. Our attention is drawn to the pink-diamond end stone on the balance cock, an innovation applied to reduce friction and wear.

As Snellenburg, Sullivan and I admired the old watches, we hoped that these would be the "gateway" for affluent young collectors of later wristwatches to begin appreciating their predecessors. Swiss wristwatches by Rolex, Patek Philippe, Jaeger LeCoultre and many other modern firms deserve great respect and the astronomical prices they sometimes reach. Watches made centuries earlier, also to satisfy conspicuous consumption urges, are equally deserving, perhaps more so because they were created over long hours by individual craftsmen, not by modern machinery and technicians working in warm, well-illuminated factories.

For those who cannot attend the exhibit, the new hardcover volume is a fine alternative. It opens with a history of the collection and an excellent overview of horology by Leopold, formerly an assistant keeper at the British Museum. Most of its subsequent pages describe and illustrate 54 Met clocks and watches in great detail, supplying related historical information, known provenance,

similar examples, and condition issues.

Even the fine-print sections are extremely useful. Vincent's two pages of acknowledgments list an entire world of important contacts. The glossary by famed English horologist David Penney covers nearly all relevant terms. The eight-page bibliography represents a lifetime of reading on the subject. Finally, the index appears to be remarkably exhaustive. Overall, the book is a model for any institution seeking to properly document its collections. I can only wish that others with fine timepiece holdings would follow suit. The Met's collection of American clocks and watches merits a similar effort.

As I was taking a last look around the gallery, a couple, thinking I was a museum employee, motioned me to look at a circa 1645-50 French watch by Jacques Goullons that they assumed was incorrectly labeled. Not realizing that the painted enamel case had two decorated sides, they wondered why a figure described as the Virgin Mary had a beard and mustache. I pointed out that they were looking at St Joseph and that Mary's image, on the reverse, was not visible. Then they asked the question not welcomed by museums but in many visitors' minds. "What clock in the room is the most valuable?" As the museum would have perhaps wished, I answered, "They all are priceless."

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is at 1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street. For information, 212-535-7710 or www.metmuseum.org.

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All clocks and watches are from the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Etienne Le Noir of Paris produced this wall clock circa 1735-40. Only two other such examples in Chantilly soft-paste porcelain are known. Unlike this one, which only tells time, those two have two-train movements that also strike the hours. Jack and Belle Linsky Collection.

Only a few longcase clocks could be fit into the exhibit room. Temporarily moved from a nearby gallery, this Ferdinand Berthoud astronomical example, circa 1768-70, is decorated with ebony, brass and gilt-bronze, and is signed by one of France's most eminent horologists. A high-precision regulator, it displayed solar and clock times, and was kept accurate by a temperature-compensating pendulum. The Jack and Belle Linsky Collection.



Three and four centuries ago, chatelaines, which often included a watch, hung from the belts of elegant ladies. This extravagant showpiece, decorated in the Sixteenth Century "grotesque" style, was displayed at the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle. Hippolyte Teterger crafted it from gold, platinum and diamonds. The movement is unsigned. Gift of Cele H. and William B. Rubin.



Few Nineteenth Century clocks are in the exhibit, but this enameled table clock with calendar deserves its spot, particularly because it was acquired with funds provided by the namesake of the room. Designed by Lucien Falize and fabricated in Paris in 1881 by the prestigious firm of Le Roy et Fils, it was specially made for Englishman Alfred Morrison and represents a gemstone-decorated Gothic church tower. Co-curator Sullivan decided to pair it in its display case with a contemporaneous English clock designed for the middle market by Bruce Talbert. Purchase, Mrs Charles Wrightsman Gift.

