

Book reviews

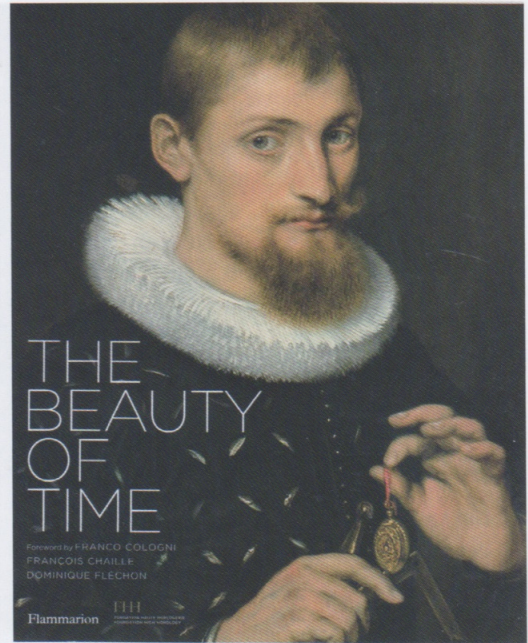
THE BEAUTY OF TIME, by François Chaille and Dominique Flechon, Flammarion and FHH, 2018, 280 pages, hardcover, \$85 / € 75. ISBN: 978-2-08-020341-0

There is no doubt that I would quickly discover and purchase *The Beauty of Time*. The entire front cover of Flammarion's new book on the history of mechanical horology – and more – presents Peter Paul Rubens's 1597 *Portrait of a Gentleman*. I chose this same compelling image, available for free use from The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for the brochures, programmes, posters and advertisements for the NAWCC 'Horology in Art' symposium I organized in 2017 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

One of Rubens's earliest known works, this small oil-on-copper painting portrays an unknown Dutchman staring directly at the viewer. From the thumb of his raised left hand dangles an ornate gold pocket watch. The portrait joins countless other artworks where visible timekeepers metaphorically warned of life's swift passage and which now illustrate for horological historians some fine examples of clocks and watches from the past. Many other 'Golden Age' Dutch *vanitas* paintings, in particular, offer finely detailed timekeepers where even fusee chains sometimes can be discerned in exposed movements.

The Beauty of Time may be considered a sequel to the even thicker and more comprehensive *The Mastery of Time* published in 2011 by Flammarion [reviewed in AH December 2012; ed.] That tome's author, French horological historian Dominique Flechon, contributed approximately half of the new book's text for each of the nine chapters beginning with 'The Time of the Cathedrals' and concluding with 'Time And Beyond'. Although the titles of his sections all begin with 'Watchmaking', far more of his technical descriptions are focused on clocks and clockmaking from the historical periods described.

Leading each chapter, however, and perhaps more enlightening to our readers than Flechon's professional summaries of familiar material, are longer essays by



François Chaille. A writer of more than a dozen Flammarion titles, Chaille provides the art and cultural histories of each era. These richly informative lessons are the 'and more' cited at this review's opening. With frequent tips of his hat to those era's timekeepers, he provides the context and backdrop for them. Grand clocks in medieval towers and church interiors, domestic clocks for kings and nobles, affordable and accurate clocks for the swelling middle classes, electric clocks designed by Gilbert Rohde, pocket and wrist watches for millionaires and teenagers, all are woven into broader economic, social, and political themes.

We learn, for example, that when the Black Death struck Florence in 1348, more than 100,000 residents perished inside the city's walls, reinforcing warnings of life's rapid passing and certain end. We read that Philip II of Spain had a collection of 104 automata and clocks at the time of his death, and Emperor Rudolph II of Habsburg more than 200. Centuries later, in 1904, Alberto Santos-Dumont commissioned Louis Cartier to make a watch for the wrist, easier to view as the wealthy young dandy piloted his cigar-shaped 98-foot airship around the Eiffel Tower. That watch prototype is lost, but Cartier four years later went on to design his classic Santos model still selling today.

AH readers may note that there is a heavier emphasis on Continental European horology than we perhaps are used to with English-language publications. English and American examples are scarce, and French clocks seem to predominate, even in the skeleton clock category and with precision regulators by Janvier and Berthoud, not Graham or Frodsham. Voltaire, Napoleon, Rousseau, and Madame de Pompadour all make appearances. Understandably, the authors are French, and this book also was published in a French-language version.

But this is no textbook of dense academic prose. More than half of the glossy pages are images, wonderful high-quality full-page full-color images of clocks, watches, and artworks portraying them. Some are two-page spreads, such as the 1496–1500 *Procession of the Cross* in Saint Mark's Square by Gentile Bellini. As a collector of digital 'Horology in Art' images (1,629 at last count), I recognize most of the paintings. Edgar Degas's *The Bellelli Family*, Diego Velazquez's *Queen Mariana of Austria*, and Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon in His Study* are among my earliest and favourite acquisitions. Several others were new to me and were happily welcomed into my collection. These include Henri Testelin's *Colbert Presenting the Members of the Royal Academy of Sciences to Louis XIV*, François-André Vincent's *Portrait of Comte de La Forest with his Wife and Daughter*, and twentieth-century art by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

I lodge no complaint on the absence of Salvador Dali. His melting and drooping dials are well-known and overexposed, and offer nothing to horology researchers. I can be disappointed, however, that the number of eye-grabbing full-page images is equalled by tiny ones, often smaller than their captions. A watchmaking plate from Diderot's encyclopedia, for example, is reproduced at postage-stamp size. These miniatures may add visual interest to pages of black type, but they can be frustrating for people interested in examining what was depicted.

The authors have deeply mined the French-clock inventory of Swiss dealer Richard Redding Antiques for a substantial number of their clock images including a Claude Mathieu

c. 1775 'Pendule A Cercles Tournants' and a c. 1745 'Pendule Au Magot' with signed dial and movement by Roquelon a Paris. Many other high-resolution images, however, display timepieces from important European museum collections including Beyer Zurich, Musée International d'Horlogerie in La Chaux-de-Fonds, and Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Reproduced artworks also derive from top world museums.

Both the new book and the 2011 predecessor were co-produced by the FHH (Foundation High Horology) which actively promotes contemporary Swiss watchmaking. Concluding chapters feature modern wristwatches, some that today can be seen and purchased at auctions and in shops. Richard Mille's 2015 RM19-02 Tourbillon Fleur, for example, gets a full page. This, too, is no complaint, but a recognition that the story of horology is ongoing.

The Beauty of Time greatly contributes to stimulating public appreciation, collecting, scholarship, and enjoyment of horology. Peter Paul Rubens's unnamed gentleman still challenges us to behold his watch and ponder its eternal significance.

Bob Frishman

MUSICAL CLOCKS OF EARLY AMERICA 1730–1830. A CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ by Gary R. Sullivan and Kate Van Winkle Keller
THE MUSIC OF EARLY AMERICAN CLOCKS 1730–1830 by Kate Van Winkle Keller and Gary R. Sullivan

Both published by The Willard House & Clock Museum, 2017.

Hardcover 389 pages, 9.5" x 12.25", \$65 and 259 pages, 6.25" x 9.25", \$25, plus shipping. www.willardhouse.org or (508) 839-3500.

For five weeks in the fall of 2013, visitors to the Willard House and Clock Museum in rural North Grafton, Massachusetts, had an authentic antique musical clock experience. Thirty-eight musical clocks, about a fourth of all America-related examples known still to exist, were gathered together, mostly restored to working condition, and on visual and audio display. The exhibition was brief because many of the clocks were on loan and soon returning to their private owners before the