

Horologica

Contributor this issue Bob Frishman and Fortunat Mueller-Maerki

Share reviews and announcements of new and interesting books, websites, periodicals, exhibits, and all else pertaining to horology. Send contributions to Editor Therese Umerlik at tumerlik@nawcc.org or NAWCC, Inc., 514 Poplar St., Columbia, PA 17512-2130, c/o Publications Department.

Met exhibit showcases brilliance of French watchmaking and clock making

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* exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City emphasizes their external beauty. This selection of sixteenth- through nineteenth-century treasures graces the Wrightsman Galleries through March 27.

An elegant new book accompanies the show. (A review of this publication by Fortunat Mueller-Maerski can be found in the Horologica feature on page 181 of the March/April 2016 issue of the *Watch & Clock Bulletin*.) Together, the book and the 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 coauthored the book with her late husband, Jan Hendrick Leopold; associate research curator Elizabeth Sullivan, a co-organizer of the exhibition, contributed to the book.

Sullivan recently led Jonathan Snellenburg, clock expert at Bonhams in New York City, and me on a tour of the exhibit, 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 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 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.

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 1735-1740 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 clock-making 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-lb. centerpiece is a massive figural clock depicting the allegorical theme of the triumph of love over time (Figure 1). The clock’s surfaces are an unusual combination of gloss and matte gold, and

Figure 1. The centerpiece of the exhibit, this gilt-bronze, marble, and enamel mantel clock weighs nearly 400 pounds and is more than 3' across. Father Time clearly was dejected in this depiction of eternal love’s triumph over him. The arrow tip points to the minutes and hours on an annular dial. COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.





Figure 2, left. 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. COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (3).

copper. 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 was a mathematician whose work on lunar eclipses was connected to the “Avril/1764” chart on the case (Figure 2). 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. At least one longcase is kept running: the circa 1680-1685 walnut veneered British example by Joseph Knibb. A nearby video shows the clock being wound. Another longcase clock usually stands in the adjacent galleries of the Jack and Belle Linsky Collection. Ferdinand Berthoud’s astronomical regulator, circa 1768-1770, is an outstanding example of that famous French maker’s output. Moved to a spot under bright lights, Sul-

Figure 3, below. The 1748 movement by Swiss maker Johann G. Racine was fit into a ca. 1688 gold case made by Swiss enamelist Jean-Pierre Hnaud. The original movement probably was broken or unreliable. The bewigged gentleman is the great elector, Friedrich Wilhelm, duke of Prussia.



Figure 4. The rear cover of this 1832 pocket watch by Abraham Vacheron Girod provides details about 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.



livan 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.

Many of the exhibit objects are pocket watches (Figures 3 and 4), 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 with gold, gemstones, and painted enamel. Their hinged covers show colorful portraits, classical and biblical scenes, and complex patterns. Another exhibit video provides close-ups, inside and out, of a Daniel Delander pair-case watch, circa 1715-1719, 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 several technicians.

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 1645-1650 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."

Editor's note: This article was originally printed in the January 22, 2016, issue of the Antiques and The Arts Weekly.

—Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

First Reasonably Comprehensive Catalog of the Best Museum Collection of Early European Timekeepers in America

No museum in the United States owns as many absolutely superb and historically important European clocks and watches as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Its collection of about 600 timekeepers includes many pocket watches and more than 100 spectacular clocks. This treasure trove of artifacts goes back to several ma-

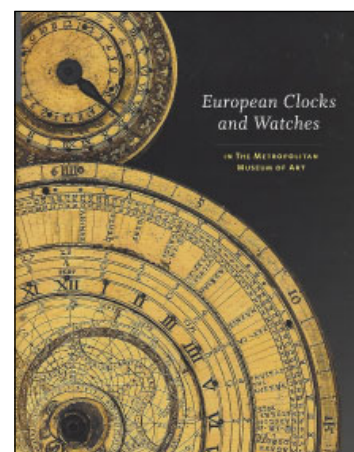
lor gifts in the early twentieth century, particularly, the watch and clock collection of J. P. Morgan—mainly based on the legendary late nineteenth-century Marfels watch collection in Germany—and of Laura Francis Hearn, both of whom made the largest donations. The Metropolitan Museum is organized into 17 departments, and time-keeping instruments are split between The American Wing and European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. For more than the past four decades Clare Vincent, a diligent and well-respected horological scholar, has been in charge of the European horological treasures.

Over the decades special exhibitions were rare. In 1972 the public was treated to Northern European Clocks in New York Collections, not from the Met storerooms but from the collections of Winthrop Edey and Abbot-Guggenheim. In 2007-08 the public saw some of the treasures from the Met's storerooms in the temporary exhibit titled *The Art of Time*.

For most of those decades about 30 clocks were on public display, some in cases in the medieval arts section, but most as part of gallery settings (i.e., the furniture of the European decorative arts period rooms), where it often was impossible to get a close look at the individual object. Two or three display cases showed a few dozen of the several hundred pocket watches in the museum's huge collection, which is full of splendid examples. Furthermore, its horological storerooms reportedly are so tightly packed that often dozens of objects have to be moved before a single object can be retrieved for study. This makes it difficult even for the museum's staff, let alone amateur scholars who cannot be accommodated.

Fortunately, around the turn of the millennium Jan Hendrik Leopold, the well-known author, researcher, and longtime grand old man of early European horology, retired from his job at the British Museum. Leopold moved to New York and married Vincent, and that relationship rekindled the stagnant effort to document more of the horological treasures dormant in the New York storerooms. The book under review is the result of this collaboration, which was cut short by Leopold's untimely death in 2010.

The core of the book under review—246 of its 259 pages—consists of a detailed scholarly catalog of 54 separate timekeepers of the Met collection, 30 clocks and 24 watches. A small number of these 54 horological masterpieces (i.e., the well-known Celestial Globe on the Wings of Pegasus 1574) have been described or documented in



scholarly articles in various publications, but most have never been documented in detail. Forty-two of the 54 entries resulted from Leopold and Vincent's effort, but Vincent is the sole author of the six entries written after Leopold's death, and two entries were a collaboration of Vincent with Elizabeth Sullivan, associate research curator at the Met.

Each of the 54 catalog sections is four or six pages long and has several illustrations, typically color photographs. Each entry has between two and nine photographs with most items having between three and five images. The items include an overall image—some full page—and shots of noteworthy details of the case or dial.

Descriptions of each item give the aesthetic and technical details of the piece, unique features, and the creator of the movement, case, or both. Each catalog entry is thoroughly footnoted, in some cases with more than 20 notes in a six-page article. Incidentally, nearly half of the 54 entries were part of the numerous Morgan gifts to the Met.

Although the book was published on the occasion of the 2015-16 temporary exhibit titled *The Luxury of Time* at the Metropolitan Museum, it is not a catalog of that exhibit. Many of the objects cataloged in the book are expected to be in the temporary exhibit.

It may seem ungrateful to mention the obvious shortcomings of the book. It is not the much anticipated publication listing of all the wonderful timepieces the Met owns, or even just the ones it customarily displays. I would rather have the carefully researched findings of Vincent and Leopold on 54 additional extraordinary horological objects—all gorgeously illustrated—than a computer printout listing the many hundred objects languishing in the storerooms.

Nevertheless, one can dream that one day the Met will have the funding, space, and staff that enabled the American Wing of the Met some years ago to move most of its artifacts to an on-site accessible storage facility.

Both the authors and the Metropolitan Museum deserve the gratitude of the horological community and the public to have published this book. Let us hope there will be more of them.

European Clocks and Watches: In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by Clare Vincent and Jan Hendrik Leopold, with contributions by Elisabeth Sullivan. Photography by Juan Trujillo. ISBN 978-1-58839-579-5. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (November 2015). 278 pages, 12.5" x 9", hardcover. Numerous illustrations, mostly in color; dust jacket; illustrated glossary (91 terms); bibliography; index. Available at <http://store.metmuseum.org/exhibition-catalogues/european-clocks+watches/invt/80028962> for \$65 plus postage, or at http://www.amazon.com/European-Clocks-Watches-Metropolitan-Museum/dp/1588395790/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1449757563&sr=8-1&keywords=vincent+european+and+watches.

—Fortunat Mueller-Maerki, FNAWCC (NJ)

2016 Symposium “Clocks at Winterthur”

This year's Ward Francillon Time Symposium will be held October 6-8 at the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library in Wilmington, DE. Winterthur boasts a premier collection of 90,000 decorative and fine arts objects made or used in America between 1640 and 1860. Created by Henry Francis du Pont, this top-rated 175-room museum presides over a beautiful 1,000-acre estate in Delaware's Brandywine Valley.

Du Pont (1880-1969) had a special interest in clocks, and he acquired fine examples. Since his passing, more clocks have been added to the collection, which now numbers more than 100. This educational symposium will be the first at Winterthur to focus exclusively on its horological holdings, many of which may be viewed during guided tours. Other clocks not usually on display will be shown in a special exhibit.

Figure 1. Mahogany longcase clock by Peter Stretch, Philadelphia.





Figure 2. Winterthur Museum entrance.

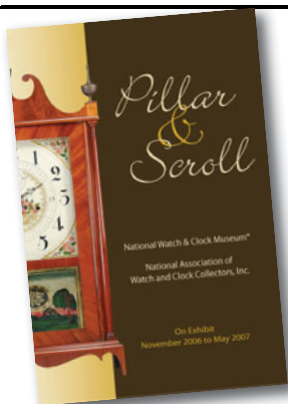
Eminent speakers will describe Winterthur's important clocks and watches, highlighting makers, regions, craftsmanship, and cultural significance. These horological scholars include Robert Cheney, Philip Morris, Gary Sullivan, Donald Fennimore, Jonathan Snellenburg, Richard Ketchen, Philip Poniz, David Wood, and Philip Zimmerman.

The James Arthur Lecture, which opens each annual Symposium, will be presented by Thomas Allen, author of the 2008 book titled *A Republic in Time*. The concluding banquet speaker will be Morrison Hecksher, curator emeritus of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. A complete list of speakers can be viewed at www.clocksatwinterthur.com.

The Symposium website offers details on the museum collection, conference registration, daily schedule, lodging, nearby museums, gardens, and cultural attractions, and an optional add-on day of programs at the NAWCC's National Clock and Watch Museum, less than an hour's drive from Winterthur in Columbia, PA.

Space is limited in the museum auditorium and at the Saturday evening dinner hosted by the Wilmington Country Club, so early signups are recommended. For more information, contact Symposium Chairman Bob Frishman at bell-time@comcast.net or 978.475.5001 or visit www.clocksatwinterthur.com.

—Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)



Pillar & Scroll

This project was conceived by guest curators George Goolsby and Terry Brotherton and its realization ultimately resulted in the array of clocks that the NAWCC is pleased to document in this book, which accompanied the National Watch and Clock Museum exhibit from November 2006 to May 2007. The book highlights 43 pillar and scroll clocks from many states.

Order at www.nawccstore.org, or call the NAWCC Museum Store at 717.684.8261, ext. 211. \$6 per book S&H (\$2.95 for each additional book).

**NOW
AVAILABLE
\$26.95**
(Member price)