Patek Philippe has long-standing ties with America. The U.S. has played an important part in the growth and prosperity of the company, and, in turn, Patek Philippe has earned a place in the hearts of Americans.

In a country with a population of close to 353 million, it is inevitable that only a tiny percentage will experience, close-up, the remarkable craftsmanship for which this family-owned business based nearly 4,000 miles away on another continent has become renowned.

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The Dubai exhibition clearly proved that there was an appetite for such an event – it led to calls from collectors for something similar in mainland Europe. Munich was chosen as the location, and in 2013 a remarkable 22,000 visitors poured through the doors to see more than 450 horological pieces, mind-boggling grand complications, and current collection pieces.

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The event was a tremendous success, but it was to be more than 25 years before the first exhibition of contemporary Patek Philippe pieces took place outside of Geneva – again in Texas, but this time at the Sid Richardson Museum in Fort Worth, in association with the retailer Haltom’s. Publicized with the title The Legendary Watches of Patek Philippe, the 1995 event featured a number of specially made pieces, including engraved and enamelled pocket watches depicting artwork housed in the Fort Worth museum. Fast forward 17 years and the concept of the Patek Philippe Grand Exhibition – in which the fascinating history of the company is told, some of its great patrons are revealed, and the extent of its mastery of watchmaking skills is explained – finally comes into being with the Patek Philippe Grand Exhibition of 2012.

Comprising four hundred exhibits (including a limited edition “Merica” version of the World Time Ref. 5519), the show attracted 3,500 visitors, who marveled at the array of models that spanned rarities from the Patek Philippe Museum, limited editions, mind-boggling grand complications, and current collection pieces.

The Dubai exhibition clearly proved that there was an appetite for such an event – it led to calls from collectors for something similar in mainland Europe. Munich was chosen as the location, and in 2013 a remarkable 22,000 visitors poured through the doors to see more than 450 horological exhibits, including two limited edition watches, and nine rare handcraft models that demonstrated the skill of Patek Philippe’s craftspeople in areas such as enamelling, engraving, and marquetry. The company created a special Munich edition of the
2017 New York Rare Handcrafts

Ref. 5089-077
Imagery by traditional leather carving and engravings originates in Shanghai. Depicting the 38.6 mm white gold “Sheridan Style” Calatrava features a gold dial hand-engraved and painted with transparent golden-brown enamel. Fitted with a sapphire crystal display back, the case measures 44.1 mm in diameter.

Ref. 5089-056
The 38.6 mm “Grand Cygnus” Calatrava features a dial with a highly detailed scene in wood marquetry, using 10 pieces of wood and 46 elements. Each of the 10 pieces in unique due to the handwriting of handcraft of any piece of a unique creation, fitted with the calibre 240.

Ref. 5089-070
The white gold “Budder” Calatrava features a dial with a highly detailed scene in wood marquetry, using 18 pieces of wood and 59 elements. Each of the 18 pieces in this limited edition is unique. The case, with bettled edges made as a negative crystal display back, which can admit the calibre 240.

Ref. 5089-119
Two members of the Crow nation are depicted on a watch at the man’s edge, in miniature marquetry painting inspired by the work of artist Charlie, on the case of this unique “American Indians” pocket watch. The unique 44.1 mm yellow gold piece also features a design that pays homage to early American people. The marquetry maker used 300 pieces of wood and 66 elements cut from 20 different woods to create the highly detailed image. The border and border of the case back is hand-engraved with a geometric pattern that is engraved with turquoise inlay and set with 35 triangular cut diamonds.

Ref. 5089-1/06
The unique white gold 44.1 mm “Wild Horses” pocket watch is inspired by clear drawing of horses, using chiseled engraving, the artist captures key details of the horse’s hooves, coat, and expression by building up visible layers of color. The case’s border is hand-engraved with triangles.

Ref. 5089/104
The 38.6 mm “Manhattan-Brinkly” pocket watch features the famous skyline created using chiseled engraving and an engraved with fine details using miniature painting on steel. The 44.1 mm white gold case features an art deco motif engraved on the bow, enhanced by handchasing.

Ref. 5089/122
The unique 44.1 mm “Lone Star” pocket watch is inspired by clear drawing of horses, using chiseled engraving for the portraits. The marquetry maker cut out the 44.1 mm yellow gold piece also features a design that pays homage to the strength and majesty of the bald eagle represents the strength and majesty of the U.S.A. and is a one-off piece. The unique “Manhattan-Brinkly” pocket watch features the famous skyline created using chiseled engraving and an engraved with fine details using miniature painting on steel. The 44.1 mm white gold case features an art deco motif engraved on the bow, enhanced by handchasing.
World Time Ref. 5530 for the occasion, as well as a cloisonné enamel dome clock celebrating the city’s annual Oktoberfest.

By now, word of Patek Philippe’s truly grand Grand Exhibitions had spread among the watch community and the wider public, and they were becoming much-anticipated events. In 2015, London’s celebrated Saatchi Gallery threw open its doors, inviting visitors into an 18,000-square-foot space spread across themed areas in which 450 exceptional timepieces were displayed.

Every one of Patek Philippe’s current movements was on show, alongside watches with royal connections and the company’s 175th anniversary collection from 2014, with its towering marble columns, soaring ceilings, magnificent inlaid floors, and sparkling chandeliers; the New York Grand Exhibition was a masterpiece in planning, design, and content. “The challenge was to rebuild the Patek Philippe world within the space of two years, with the people who knew Cipriani could not believe what they had walked in to – no one had seen anything like it,” said Patek Philippe’s president, Thierry Stern.

“When you host such an event, you have to do it from the heart. For that reason, there was no admission fee. Everyone should be given the chance to enjoy culture, and an exhibition like this enables people who might not otherwise learn about us to get to know this family-owned company in Switzerland that makes beautiful watches.”

Take two years to organize, the show featured to separate rooms, including a Rare Handcrafts Gallery as well as a Current Collection Room showcasing the entire 2017 catalog, a room dedicated to Patek Philippe’s movements, one filled with Grand Complications; and a Museum Room, featuring 104 timepieces from the antique collection – watches from the sixteenth to the twentieth century – and Patek Philippe models made between 1853 and 1969.

However, what seemed to delight visitors most were the Napoleon Room – designed as a replica of the Napoleon salon in Geneva, complete with a view onto a virtual Lac Léman and the landmark Jet d’Eau – and the U.S. Historic Room.

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The latter displayed 24 timepieces from the Patek Philippe Museum collection with ties to America’s great and good (taking the Patek Philippe Museum collection with ties to America’s great and good). In 2015, London’s celebrated Saatchi Gallery placed a cloisonné enamel dome clock, decorated in cloisonné enamel with a scene that celebrates the annual Oktoberfest originating in that city. Before any other firm made a limited edition of the piece to commemorate the London show in 2015, this white gold Officer’s-style Calatrava Ref. 5355 has a leged cloisonné dome clock engrossed with “Patek Philippe London” in gold, its lacquered blue opaline dial in monochrome colors. “Pittsburgh” depicts a combination of wood marquetry and miniature enameling, the image is so detailed that, if one looks closely enough, it is possible to see Neil Armstrong reflected in the visor of Aldrin’s helmet...and few of the exhibition’s visitors failed to spot him.

For more on this subject, visit Patek Philippe Magazine Extra at patek.com/owners