

## Press Release

**Patek Philippe, Geneva**  
**May 29, 2013**

### **"Rare Handcrafts" timepieces by Patek Philippe: Artisanship beyond compare**

The Patek Philippe Salons on Rue du Rhône in Geneva are hosting an exhibition entitled "Rare Handcrafts" in which the focus is on the external elements of watches: cases, dials, and bracelets. It features an eclectic selection of 47 exclusive Patek Philippe timekeeping instruments – wristwatches, pocket watches, and table clocks – for which the most eminent masters of now rare artisanal talent were able to demonstrate their incomparable skills. It is probably the last time that this sublime collection can be admired in its entirety, because most pieces, many of them one-of-a-kind, have been sold and will be forwarded to their delighted owners after the exhibition ends.

The rare handcrafts encompass a number of fascinating decorative techniques that were used to adorn the dials and cases of clocks and watches for centuries. They helped establish the reputation of Geneva all over the world and the respective masterpieces were coveted by emperors, kings, tsars, and ruling families throughout Europe and Asia. Magnificent works of art were created and endowed with elaborate engravings, lavish enamel decorations, as well as unique goldsmithing and gemsetting artistry. They lived up to the precision, complexity, and exquisite finishing of famous Geneva-made movements in every respect. Some of these handcrafts are still flourishing, while others gradually faded away in the course of the past decades, reaching the brink of extinction – in danger of vanishing from the collective memory of human society. But over fifty years ago, under the auspices of the Stern family, Patek Philippe began to secure the future of these rare occupations.

### **Patek Philippe: the bastion of Genevan traditions**

As a manufacture with deep roots in Geneva's horological heritage and a strong affinity for related forms of craftsmanship, Patek Philippe spared no effort to preserve artisanal legacies about to be abandoned so that future generations of watch enthusiasts and watchmakers could continue to delight in this patrimony. But handcrafts such as these only have a future if they are pursued at the very highest level. This calls for prerequisites that allow current masters to hand down their knowledge and experience as well as their many pivotal secrets of the trade to young, aspiring successors.

For this reason, Patek Philippe never stopped commissioning Genevan enamel miniatures, the small works of art based on the extremely painstaking reproduction of portraits or famous paintings on the compact enamel "canvas" of a pocket watch. The incredible richness of detail is achieved in countless time-consuming steps. Every application of pigment has to be fired at 850°C before the next color is applied with a brush, which for particularly tiny picture elements typically consists of a single badger hair.

The same applies to cloisonné enamel, which has graced the dials of Patek Philippe's famous World Time wristwatches and the external facets of its dome table clocks for over fifty years. Champlévé



enameling requires recesses to be cut into the base metal – using a technique similar to relief engraving – that are then filled with enamel. Engraved wristwatch and pocket watch cases as well as intricately skeletonized movements are not merely prestigious one-off showpieces: they remain part of Patek Philippe's current collections. The motifs on marquetry dials often require the assembly of as many as 200 individual parts consisting of over 20 different types of wood. Haute Joaillerie watches are graced with superior-quality precious stones set in the dials, cases, bracelets, and clasps with elaborate setting techniques mastered only by the most experienced and talented jewelers. Some of the timepieces in the rare handcrafts category even combine several artisanal techniques such as manual guilloché beneath vibrantly translucent enamel.

All blueprints and designs for rare handcrafts watches are produced by the manufacture's in-house creation department, allowing Patek Philippe to preserve the know-how and assure that it is handed down to the next generation. Every year, more than forty such collector's items are completed, combining high-precision mechanical horology with the unique artistry of the few remaining specialists who still master these highly complex disciplines. Patek Philippe is determined to safeguard their skills.

#### **47 masterpieces of rare handcrafts**

The best proof of this resolve: the 47 timekeeping instruments that can currently be admired on the 4th floor of the Patek Philippe Salon on Rue du Rhône 41 in Geneva. Each of them is an absolutely unique and expressive manifestation of one or even several of these rare handcrafts.

