

THE WATCHES

A. LANGE & SOHNE

LANGE 1

Marked by its patented oversize date and decentralized dial displays, the Lange 1 was fashioned after the five-minute clock at Germany's Semper Opera House in Dresden. It has a solid-silver dial and a 72-hour power reserve, and it is, mechanically at least, an example of classical Saxon watchmaking ingenuity. Aesthetically, says Julien Schaerer, watch director at New York's Antiquorum, "it's a beautiful, well-designed modern watch." While the company dates from the 1800s, it was relaunched in 1990, and the Lange 1 was part of the first new-era collection. *From \$27,800; alange-soehne.com*

AUDEMARS PIGUET

ROYAL OAK

This octagonal, oversize timepiece got off to a rocky start: In 1972 critics sneered at the use of stainless steel in a luxury sports watch and at its hefty price tag of \$12,600 (about \$65,000 today). Since then, however, attitudes have adjusted. Dramatically. "The Royal Oak exemplifies modern watch design and durability," says Sam Hines, head of watches at Christie's in New York. "It is a must-have for collectors." *From \$12,500; audemarspiguet.com*

BREGUET

CLASSIQUE

With its blued-steel pomme hands, guilloché and fired-enamel dials, and fluted case bands—all created by A. L. Breguet—the Classique assemblage is instantly recognizable. Whether complicated watches or extrathin models with manually wound or automatic movements, Classique timepieces, which were introduced less than 30 years ago, hark back to the late 1700s. "The Classique has that understated look Breguet is known for; it dates back to its pocket watches," says Aaron Rich, vice president and head of Sotheby's watch department. *From \$11,500; breguet.com*

CARTIER

TANK

"The Tank is one of the most remarkable watch stories of all time," says UK-based watch expert and

writer Nick Foulkes. "It's a true classic. You can wear the same one today as you wore eighty years ago." The list of Tank devotees is endless: Truman Capote, Andy Warhol, Frank Sinatra, Jackie Kennedy, Calvin Klein, Yves Saint Laurent. While clearly the beau idéal of an icon now, the piece started generating cachet even during its nascent post-World War I days. In 1918 the maison's first Tank prototype—its form inspired by the tread of armored tanks—was bestowed on General John Joseph Pershing, commanding officer of the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. This watch became the model for the rectilinear Art Deco-style Tanks that followed, among them the 1919 Normale, the round-edged Louis Cartier, and the more recent Tank Française. *From \$2,300; cartier.com*

CHANEL

J12

The brand may not have the horological pedigree of, say, Breguet, but the ceramic J12, says Aaron Rich of Sotheby's, "has had a tremendous aesthetic impact." And it has clearly earned considerable credibility in the often cultish world of watches: Last year Audemars Piguet partnered with Chanel on the J12 Calibre 3125, creating a movement that will also appear in a limited number of 2009 J12s. *From \$4,150; chanel.com*

CHOPARD

MILLE MIGLIA

Racing teams develop their competitive edge by using the tools of the timekeeping industry, while the timekeeping industry uses the sport to develop its watches. It's a mutual obsession based on precision timing and is the force behind Chopard's Mille Miglia collection. As a main sponsor of the 1,000-mile race between northern Italy's Brescia and Rome since 1988, Chopard has offered new non-limited and limited-edition variations on the original Mille Miglia every year. "It's not a collection that has been around for generations," says Nick Foulkes, a UK-based writer and watch expert. "But its design codes are quite simple, and simple things tend to weather time better than the complex ones." *From \$4,300; chopard.com*

GIRARD-PERREGAUX

TRIPLE BRIDGE TOURBILLON

Although Constant Girard-Perregaux introduced his tourbillon movement with three gold bridges to pocket watches in the late 1800s, the world had to wait more than a century for the company to develop a wristwatch with similarly exposed ingenuity. The result, the 1991 Tourbillon with Three Gold Bridges, says Philip Duffell, manager of Cellini in New York, is "a melding of horology and art." *From \$175,000; girard-perregaux.com*

IWC

PORTUGUESE

Created in 1939, this was one of the first oversize watches, developed for two Portuguese businessmen who wanted a high-precision timepiece as accurate as a marine chronometer. In 2008 IWC marked its 140th anniversary by issuing the Portuguese Hand-Wound (from \$9,900) as part of the Vintage collection, combining design and technical elements of the original with those of the current Portuguese line. *From \$6,800; iwc.com*

JAEGER-LECOULTRE

REVERSO

In 1930 a polo player showed an associate of Jacques-David LeCoultre the smashed glass of his watch after a game and dared him to design a timepiece that could withstand the rigors of the field. In 1931 Jaeger-LeCoultre released its patented swivel-system watch, the Reverso. Today's updated creations are thinner with slightly bigger cases and include complications like second time zones or celestial cycles. Plus, the blank back face of the classic models can be used to create a fully bespoke watch: Last year a British art collector personalized his Reverso with an enamel image of an oil painting from his private collection. *From \$3,800; jaeger-lecoultre.com*

PANERAI

RADIOMIR

"Today people love a big watch, but the Radiomir has always been big," says Aaron Rich of Sotheby's. Officine Panerai introduced its underwater watch for divers to the Royal Italian Navy's First Group of frogmen com-

mandos in 1938. It was rugged and robust, with a generous 47mm cushion-shaped case. Although modern Radiomirs take design cues from the 1938 model and now carry more complicated movements, it's the vintage ones that have become cult objects. At an Antiquorum auction in Hong Kong last June, a 1953 Rolex-Panerai Radiomir worn by an Italian lieutenant was one of the top lots sold, at \$93,000. *From \$5,100; panerai.com*

PATEK PHILIPPE

CALATRAVA

Introduced in 1932, the Calatrava model, ref. 96, has roots in the Bauhaus movement. "It was a time-only piece," says Michael Ashton, owner of a New York boutique specializing in important vintage watches. "The simplest Patek ever produced." Originating with the Spanish Order of Calatrava, a military arm of Cistercian monks and knights founded in the 1100s, the Calatrava cross became a Patek trademark in 1887, before its name was given to the classic, round timepiece in 1985. It is the watchmaker's signature model. In May 2008, at the Christie's Important Watches sale in Geneva, Ashton saw a rare stainless-steel 1935 Calatrava model, ref. 96, with sweep center seconds and a three-tone silvered dial, go for \$228,170—a world record for a stainless-steel ref. 96. *From \$17,400; patek.com*

VACHERON CONSTANTIN

PATRIMONY EXTRA-SLIM

"Vacheron was one of the few companies to realize the importance of elegant wristwatches," says Osvaldo Patrizzi, president and CEO of Patrizzi & Co. Auctioneers. "In the fifties they had the technology to develop one that was not only the world's flattest but also very elegant." Variations of the 1955 Ultra-Thin have remained in Vacheron's repertoire ever since. Today's Patrimony Extra-Slim features the same caliber 1003 movement from 1955. "Vacheron's pedigree dates back hundreds of years," says Andrew Block, Tourneau's executive vice president. "The Ultra-Thin, at first glance, looks like a piece that might have been designed centuries ago." *From \$14,800; vacheron-constantin.com* —MELISSA DENCHAK

ROLEX

COSMOGRAPH DAYTONA

"In the early seventies an Oyster Cosmograph Daytona was priced at around \$500. At an auction last spring one went for \$500,000. That's the mark of a classic," says Aaron Rich, vice president and head of Sotheby's watch department in New York. With its debut in 1960, the Cosmograph Daytona became the archetypal sports watch, popular with auto racers and outdoorsmen alike. "The idea that a man would wear a watch not in a business suit but when he was doing things like rock climbing was revolutionary," says Rich. *From \$9,925; rolex.com*

