

HEIRLOOMS *with* A TWIST

NEW YORK'S FINANCIAL WHIZZES ARE DISCOVERING
A NEW GENERATION OF POCKET WATCHES.

BY ROBERTA NAAS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF CRAWFORD/BIGTOP STUDIO

A few months ago, at the Christie's Important Watches auction in Midtown, a fine 18k pink gold Patek Philippe pocket watch manufactured in 1898 sold for just over \$2.25 million. While this was no ordinary pocket watch—it offered a minute repeater, perpetual calendar, split-second chronograph, grande and petite sonneries, and a moon phase indicator—the high sales figure also reflected the new interest collectors and watch aficionados have for vintage and newly released pocket watches.

“We’ve seen a renewed interest in wearing pocket watches for special events, such as weddings or anniversaries,” explains John Reardon, senior vice president and specialist head of the watch department at Christie’s, citing the appeal of their fine workmanship and classic beauty. “It is a way to honor the past, the present, and the future because pocket watches bought today can be tomorrow’s heirlooms.”

Further evidence of this new allure comes from heritage brands, like Patek Philippe, Vacheron Constantin, Audemars Piguet, Chopard, and Piaget, that are now including pocket watches in their collections. Companies with a younger history, such as Parmigiani Fleurier, Bell & Ross, and Bovet have also embraced the trend. Some brands are creating new renditions of vintage designs in their archives, and updating them with modern twists. Instead of chains, pocket watches are suspended from leather fobs, and new clasps and closures are being added to traditional chains.

But the biggest news is how brands are building a remarkable new versatility into these watches, so that they can change from pocket to wristwatch or even become a table clock. These interchangeable pieces are cleverly engineered with wristwatch cradles or fold-down partial-hunter casebacks that let the wearer convert them as needed.

From **Vacheron Constantin**, this Patrimony Contemporaine Pocket Watch (\$69,900) is crafted in platinum and sold with a leather cord. 729 Madison Ave., 212-317-8964; vacheron-constantin.com

OPPOSITE PAGE: The **Officine Panerai** PAM 446 Pocket Watch Tourbillon GMT Ceramica (\$223,400) features a 59mm ceramic case, housing a highly skeletonized mechanical movement with tourbillon escapement. 545 Madison Ave., 212-223-1562; panerai.com. Charcoal wool suit with burgundy stripe (\$2,330) and white cotton button-down shirt (\$280), **Salvatore Ferragamo**. 655 Fifth Ave., 212-759-3822; ferragamo.com





“Many of our New York customers are CEOs who wear suits; the pocket watch adds a touch of elegance.” —HUGUES DE PINS

“Pocket watches that can be worn as wristwatches offer men more choices, and that’s led to the new interest in them,” says New York-based Jack Forster, editor-in-chief of *Revolution*, a watch industry publication. Forster is the owner of several pocket watches and considers them a private pleasure because they remain hidden until the wearer chooses to check the time. He also attributes their current popularity to “sartorially minded men enjoying their elegant and classic appeal.”

The use of new materials has helped to bolster pocket watches with consumers. While many heritage-inspired pieces continue to be made in precious metals like platinum and rose gold, newer interpretations are crafted in stainless steel, or with such high-tech materials as ceramic, titanium, or DLC (diamondlike coating). Tradition meets modernity when brands add fine details like skeletonized movements, tourbillon escapements, and other functions.

Price is also a consideration when it comes to marketing contemporary pocket watches. Stainless steel versions cost a few thousand dollars; younger customers have responded to these price points. Higher numbers, of course, come with luxury brands that offer precious metals and complex mechanics. “Today we see people wearing pocket watches on a single or double chain with jeans, often with the chain attached to the belt loop and with the pocket watch in the

pants pocket, instead of a traditional waistcoat pocket,” says Hugues de Pins, president of Vacheron Constantin North America.

De Pins is quick to add that pants pockets are not the ideal place for delicate pocket watches, particularly when sharing space with coins and keys. Keeping in mind today’s wearer preferences, Vacheron Constantin offers a classic, archive-inspired platinum pocket watch with leather fob and holding pouch for added protection. But not all wearers go the jeans route. “Many of our New York customers are in finance or are CEOs, so they tend to wear suits and waistcoats, and the watch adds a touch of elegance,” de Pins adds.

Ruediger Albers, president of American Wempe jewelers, says his pocket watch line, ranging from \$1,830 for a steel watch to \$2,230 for a gold-plated version with hunter case, resonates with younger customers. “We see couples looking to commemorate an important occasion with a piece that has heirloom character,” says Albers. “We won’t sell a lot of them because there are not a lot on the market, but pocket watches have a certain sentimental appeal that people appreciate.” **G**

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This **Parmigiani Fleurier** Transforma CBF watch (\$66,500) is part of a set of two interchangeable watches. This one is the chronograph; the other an annual calendar. The set is sold with a chain for the pocket watch and a leather strap for the wristwatch. *Cellini, 509 Madison Ave., 212-751-9824; parmigiani.com*

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: This **Bell & Ross** PW1 pocket watch (\$3,000), part of the WW1 collection, has a 49mm PVD polished steel case, which houses a manual-wind movement. *Tourneau Time Machine, 12 E. 57th St., 212-758-7300; bellross.com*

This **Chopard** L.U.C. Louis-Ulysse—The Tribute pocket watch (\$54,240) is a COSC-certified chronometer that can be worn as a pocket watch or fitted into a cradle on a leather strap and styled as a wristwatch. It is a limited edition of 150 pieces. *709 Madison Ave., 212-223-2304; chopard.com*

This **Bovet** Amadeo Fleurier 43 (\$41,500) is a convertible self-winding pocket watch sold with a leather strap and gold-plated chain, so it can be worn either as a pocket watch or a wristwatch. Its flip-down caseback also converts to a small table clock. *50 Central Park South, 212-257-5015; bovet.com*

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