



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

## **Vacheron Constantin and the lady's watch A new chapter in a story of devotion**

- Vacheron Constantin's expertise in watches for women dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- In 2013, Vacheron Constantin dedicated most of its new watches to women.
- Three major collections, Patrimony, Malte and Métiers d'Art, encompass creations that have been entirely conceived and designed for women.

Vacheron Constantin's tradition as a producer of women's watches started with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the first pocket-watches especially made for women appeared. Although smaller than men's watches they were much more lavishly decorated and thus demanded skills in miniaturisation and decoration that only a few of the watchmakers of the time possessed. Vacheron Constantin was one of them. One of the first of the manufacture's women's watches was a quarter-repeater produced in around 1810 and which proves that watchmaking complications were not only for men.

It was an age when a lady was not expected to know the exact time, still less enquire of it in society. Vacheron Constantin therefore embarked on the creation of watches as real jewellery that came to symbolise the status of their owners. They were soon to become the indispensable accessory, worn chest high on a sautoir, hung on a chatelaine of keys, pinned to the dress or disguised as a brooch. Such objects stretched the imaginative capacities of the manufacture's craftsmen and women, not only the elite watchmakers but also the engravers, enamellists, engine-turners, jewellers and gem-setters as they strived to meet the expectations of their wealthy clients.

Diamonds, turquoises, rubies, pearls, onyx, garnets and many other precious stones were mustered to frame eye-glasses, create the petals and pistils of flowers, or bring glory to a miniature in enamels or a finely chased and engraved scene. The Vacheron Constantin manufacture, attentive to the slightest detail, then attached as much importance to the case and mechanism as to ensuring the perfection of the chains, sautoirs or brooches accessory to the watch. Gradually the precious and semi-precious stones were no longer confined to frames and outlines, but constituted a decoration in themselves, progressively covering the entire precious metal of the case or bracelet and bringing jewellery to the peak of sophistication. When platinum started replacing silver, even finer monograms and other engraved motifs became possible.



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

## **A creative profusion of ladies' watches**

The widows of Vacheron and Constantin took over control of the business in the 1870s. Although it was a critical period marked by economic crisis, the two women made an undoubted contribution to the development of the firm.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the wristwatch started to assert its claim as a legitimate and practical style. History tells us that it was initially designed for women before being adopted by men. Vacheron Constantin immediately appreciated the potential of the market for women's wristwatches. In 1889, it brought out a wristwatch for ladies that vindicated the manufacture's reputation for workmanship. It featured a revolutionary way of winding the watch and setting the time by simply turning the bezel, thus avoiding the need for a winding crown.

While it was launching its first wristwatches, Vacheron Constantin embraced the talents of one Ferdinand Verger, casemaker at the Place des Victoires in Paris. The partnership's multitude of designs combining mechanisms with gemstones helped revive the jewellery watch. Then the 20<sup>th</sup> century introduced a new style that set an even higher level of miniaturisation. The baguette watch, based on a calibre that Vacheron Constantin introduced in 1914, widened the artistic scope for jewellery watches while meeting the standard of precision promised by the brand. Even today, some models in the Kalla collection are fitted with Vacheron Constantin's calibre 1005 baguette movement, a direct descendant of those first baguette movements.

The Geneva style of watchmaking, ornate yet refined has never left the Maison. Contemporary fashions and artistic trends inspired a plethora of watches that today bear witness to women's emancipation and the scale of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's creative output. Some took the shape of the cameos that were fashionable from around 1900 to 1920; others came in a variety of forms: oval, octagonal or even a bowed rectangle. Vacheron Constantin's creations for women rejoiced in the freedom to astonish as the years went by, from sinuous Art Nouveau to geometrical Art Deco with watches that hung from cuff-links, bracelets in woven chain, linked rods or that wrapped thrice around the wrist, and straps of satin ribbon or leather.

Their pre-eminence is manifest from the numerous advertising campaigns featuring women from the 1940s to the 1980s.



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

## **Dedicated collections**

Today, Vacheron Constantin pays a new tribute to women. The 2013 vintage, presented at the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) in Geneva, shows the brand's determination to dedicate their best work to women by combining the beauty intrinsic in artistic craftsmanship with the technical mastery of the mechanisms of time.

Three major collections each offer their own interpretation of time in the feminine gender. The Malte collection extends the celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a seductive emphasis of its curvaceous case. Patrimony is home to original creations in the Contemporary and Tradition styles that extol the jewellery-making skills of the manufacture's gem-setters. Finally the latest opus of the Métiers d'Art collection, called *Florilège*, draws from ancient knowledge to steal a woman's heart with three outstanding models.



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

## **The Métiers d'Art *Florilège* collection**

Since it was founded in 1755, Vacheron Constantin has built its identity on the craft tradition and the pursuit of excellence. Behind the skills handed down from generation to generation lie human endeavours, undertaken daily by the manufacture's craftsmen and women as they combine their talents. Beyond being an instrument to measure and indicate the time, a Vacheron Constantin watch mirrors the culture of its era and its history. The intense relationship forged between the watch manufacturer and artistic crafts – *métiers d'art* – is fully expressed in the eponymous collection, which aims to put the fundamental values of Vacheron Constantin in their true perspective.

This year, and for the first time in this exceptional collection, a new opus called Métiers d'Art *Florilège* has been created exclusively for women. This trilogy pays a vibrant tribute to the delicacy of English botanical illustration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The plants, taken from Robert John Thornton's *The Temple of Flora*, published in 1799, grow over the dials of watches that combine the artistic crafts of enamelling, *guillochage* and gem-setting.

*The Temple of Flora* remains a work of reference more than two centuries after it was published. Consisting of almost 90 plates, his ambitious project surpassed anything that had been published before. Thornton, a physician, had a passionate interest in botany, elevated to a science a few decades earlier by Carl Linnaeus's taxonomy based on plant morphology. As a follower of Linnaeus, Thornton created his own work in tribute to the great Swedish scientist. He spared no pains in the production of his book, commissioning the top botanical illustrators and painters of the time, such as Peter Henderson, Philip Reinagle and Abraham Pether, as well as the best plate engravers in London. The coloured engravings are not only of interest to historians of botany but to art historians as well. Mezzotint prints that achieve variable tonal intensities of colour, and aquatints, a type of acid etching, are sometimes coloured by hand. Drawn in great detail, the plants flourish against exotic or European landscapes, or in the ordered calm of the pre-romantic English countryside of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The result is intriguing. The meticulous drawing has a certain innocence and the harmony of colour retains a freshness that continues to draw the eye today.

To celebrate the cultural legacy of this work, Vacheron Constantin drew upon the unique expertise of its craftsmen and of Anita Porchet, an independent artist specialising in miniatures in fired enamels, Geneva style. The artwork, reproduced in *guilloché* engravings and *Grand Feu* cloisonné enamels, comes to life in a profusion of colour. Each dial gives an illusion of amazing depth and perspective, highlighted by a bezel set with diamonds.

The realism is equally amazing. The craftsmen have brought together their skills to reproduce the flowers in their smallest detail. In a first stage, the engine-turner cuts lines a tenth of a millimetre



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

apart to create an expanding symmetrical pattern, combining an artist's sensitivity with a delicacy of touch. Then the enameller outlines the shapes in thin enclosures of gold that separate the different fields of coloured enamels, according to the *cloisonné* technique. The enamels are then fired in an oven at around 800°. This is a delicate operation that the enameller repeats several times to deepen to colour and to let the light play through the translucent enamel. The final step is a last layer of colourless enamel, similarly vitrified and polished to preserve the flower in brilliant definition.

The three Métiers d'Art *Florilège* models are fitted with mechanical manual-winding calibre 4400, developed and manufactured by Vacheron Constantin. The time they record with such dependable regularity is one of poetic reflection. The big mainspring barrel gives the movement a power reserve of around 65 hours. One distinctive feature is its 12½-*ligne* diameter (28.5mm), suited to today's watchcases. Light moves the *Côtes de Genève* in waves across the bridges to show off the workmanship that goes into this outstanding calibre. The bridges, baseplate and other components are bevelled and decorated by hand on all their surfaces even if they are assembled out of sight. Leather straps in feminine colours bring the watches to graceful perfection.

The Métiers d'Art *Florilège* is a limited series of 20 collector's watches with the bezel set with round-cut diamonds and 5 more with the bezel set with baguette-cut diamonds for the Vacheron Constantin Boutiques. They all bear the Hallmark of Geneva. Institutionalised by the parliament of the Republic and Canton of Geneva in 1886, the hallmark is an umbrella guarantee of provenance, workmanship, durability and skill. Once independent, this unmatched label of quality was thoroughly overhauled in 2011. The certification no longer applies to just the movement, but now to the watch as a whole. This is a major milestone for this hallmark of authenticity that has long had Vacheron Constantin's support.



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

### **Métiers d'Art *Florilège* – Queen watch**

The strelitzia plant from South Africa reached the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in 1773. The director of these famous English gardens, Sir Joseph Banks – to whom Francis Masson, having sailed with James Cook, brought back the flower – named it thus in tribute to the queen of England who came from the Mecklenburg-Strelitz ducal family. A symbol of loyalty and good luck, the strelitzia gracefully alights on the dial of the Métiers d'Art *Florilège* watch. The different *guilloché* patterns attest to the artistic sensibilities of the artisan. The brilliant enamel colours add depth to the dial to achieve an uncanny realism.

### **Métiers d'Art *Florilège* – White Lily watch**

The Virgin's lily, to which Thornton devotes the 20<sup>th</sup> plate of his work, is one of those flowers that people have always appreciated. Symbols of purity and virtue, these radiantly white large trumpet-shaped blooms have accompanied the most wonderful stories, from the Byzantine empire to French royalty. To accentuate the splendour of the flower, the artist who worked on Thornton's plate chose a dark background, a feature reproduced on the dial of the watch. The pistils, depicted in the minutest detail, seem to be about to move, while the soft lustre of the petals, highlighted by the finely *guilloché* pattern, draws light into the enamel.

### **Métiers d'Art *Florilège* – China Limodoron watch**

In China, it symbolises wealth and refinement. As soon as it arrived in England in 1778, its extravagant nature, its originality and its exotic origins immediately aroused exceptional interest among botanical enthusiasts who jostled to be among the first to own such a gem. People have always been fascinated by the distinctive shape and the intense colour of this orchid with its evergreen leaves. A soft tranquillity emanates from this dial, stemming from the exquisite delicacy of the fiery red flowers that create a striking contrast with the creamy tints and make a strong match for the bright green hue of the stalk.



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

## T ECHNICAL DATA

Reference	82550/000G-9854 – Queen 82550/000G-9853 – White Lily 82550/000G-9855- China Limodoron Hallmark of Geneva certified timepieces
Calibre	4400, developed and crafted by Vacheron Constantin
Energy	Manual-winding
Movement diameter	28.60 mm (12'' <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )
Movement thickness	2.80 mm
Jewelling	21
Number of parts	127
Frequency	4Hz (28'800 vibrations per hour)
Indications	Hours, minutes
Power reserve	Approximately 65 hours
Case	18K white gold Diamond-set bezel (85 round-cut diamonds, approx. 1.10 carats) Transparent sapphire crystal caseback 37 mm diameter
Water Resistance	Tested at a pressure of 3 bar (approx. 30 metres)
Dial	18K white gold Hand-guilloch� and Grand Feu cloisonn� translucent enamelling 18K white gold leaf-shaped hands
Strap	Colored shiny <i>Mississippiensis</i> alligator leather, large square scales, stitched-tip
Clasp	Diamond-set 18K white gold buckle (21 round-cut diamonds, approx. 0.22 carat)

Limited edition of 20 numbered pieces per model



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

## T ECHNICAL DATA

Métiers d'Art *Florilège* - Haute Joaillerie

Reference	82650/000G-9854 – Queen 82650/000G-9853 – White Lily 82650/000G-9855- China Limodoron Hallmark of Geneva certified timepieces
Calibre	4400, developed and crafted by Vacheron Constantin
Energy	Manual-winding
Movement diameter	28.60 mm (12'' <sup>1/2</sup> )
Movement thickness	2.80 mm
Jewelling	21
Number of parts	127
Frequency	4Hz (28'800 vibrations per hour)
Indications	Hours, minutes
Power reserve	Approximately 65 hours
Case	18K white gold Diamond-set bezel (72 baguette-cut diamonds, approx. 1.90 carats) Transparent sapphire crystal caseback
Water Resistance	Tested at a pressure of 3 bar (approx. 30 metres)
Dial	18K white gold Hand-guilloché and Grand Feu cloisonné transluscent 18K white gold leaf-shaped hands 37 mm diameter
Strap	Colored shiny <i>Mississippiensis</i> alligator leather, large square scales, stitched-tip
Clasp	Diamond-set 18K white gold buckle (12 baguette-cut diamonds, approx. 0.52 carat)

Limited edition of 5 numbered pieces per model,  
Available only at Vacheron Constantin Boutiques