The Cartier Collection includes more than 1,500 pieces, cataloged according to Cartier’s own archives, illustrating the progression of design styles and techniques in Cartier’s creations.

In 1847, Cartier opened its first jewelry store in a small workshop in Paris. A few relocations later, in 1899, Cartier moved to Rue de la Paix, a few steps from Place Vendôme, in the most elegant part of Paris. Cartier established a branch in London in 1902 and a New York branch in 1909.

Influenced by the Belle Époque at the turn of the 20th century, the Cartier name established its fame with airy and dazzling creations, which were the most sought-after jewels of the European aristocracy and the American bourgeoisie. Customers traveled to the three locations to buy jewels, watches and precious objects around which a legend was born. After the Second World War, in a changed political, social and economic climate, Cartier felt the need to emerge from its sanctuaries and travel about the world to offer its creations. It is not by chance that within those years the Cartier boutiques started to spread around several continents and the first idea of what is now called the Cartier Collection was born—a collection that has never been exhibited in a permanent place, a collection that has never wanted to be a museum but rather a travelling art exhibition.

The emphasis is once again travelling—travelling about the continents to show its treasures to the world but also to travel through time, back to the roots of the Maison that coincide mainly with the history of the European decorative arts of the 20th century, in order to give impetus to the future. In order to enlarge its own customer base from a restricted privileged class to a potentially broader public of women and men of taste, Cartier became its own customer. From auctions and private collections, it bought back the chefs-d’œuvre of its historical production, thus creating a trove of pieces rich and varied enough to be a witness of each phase of its creative evolution over its 160 years of existence.

Éric Nussbaum, the initiator of the Collection, described the genesis of it, its objectives and the reasons of its importance: “The first idea of a Cartier Collection came in 1973, as the President of Cartier Paris at that time, Robert Hocq, bought at an auction in Geneva the first of six “Portico” mysterious pendulum-clocks, manufactured back in 1923. This precious watch had been originally acquired by H.F. McCormick, husband of the famous Polish singer Ganna Walska. It was part of a series of “miracles of watch making,” as the Gazette du Bon Ton called
them in 1925: 'hardly real but precious, almost coming out of a dream and surrounded by moonbeams, these pendulum-clocks reveal minute after minute the mystery of time’…"

Buying back this piece, fifty years after its creation, meant the start of a collection that had gone through an important evolution. Thanks to Cartier’s accurate filing, the Collection has been enriched year after year and now represents an exceptional artistic and cultural heritage.

Over the course of more than twenty years, the Collection acquired an extremely large and varied range of pieces, representing all the aspects of Cartier Jewelry. The Cartier Collection has allowed an international public to discover not only the balance between tradition and innovation that has long distinguished the production of the Maison, but also the constant, incessant evolution of Cartier's creativity, in the fields of jewelry and watchmaking, but also in the imaginative fields of accessories and other precious objects.

Source: Cartier

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