



LOUVRE

Press kit

Exhibition

The Louvre
Sully Wing, salle de La Chapelle

25 June - 7 september 2009

Breguet at the Louvre

An Apogee of European Watchmaking

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Press release

Exhibition

**25 June –
7 September 2009**

Sully Wing
salle de la Chapelle



Breguet No. 5
Quarter-repeating, self-winding watch.
1789-94. Sold to Count Journiac Saint-Méard
in March 1794. Collection Montres Breguet
S.A. © Montres Breguet S.A.

This exhibition was mounted with the
generous support of Montres Breguet S.A.



In a media partnership with *Le Monde*.

Exhibition curators

Marc Bascou, curator, Department
of Decorative Arts, at the musée du
Louvre and Emmanuel Breguet,
historian, specializing in the works
of Breguet, at Montres Breguet
S.A.

Breguet and the Louvre

An Apogee of European Watchmaking

Through this retrospective of the works of Abraham-Louis Breguet (1747-1823), visitors to the Louvre will discover the art of watchmaking at its apogee, evidenced by these unique precision timepieces, combining genius, virtuoso techniques and avant-garde aesthetics. Assembled in the exhibition are exceptional loans – watches, clocks and measuring instruments – alongside portraits, archival documents and patents that span the entire production of the House of Breguet.

An inventor at the court of Louis XVI

Born in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Breguet completed his apprenticeship and studies in France from 1762 onwards. In 1775, at the age of 28, he married and managed to establish his own business on the Quai de l'Horloge, Paris. Watchmakers of the French capital then competed with Geneva and London in the field of scientific and artistic innovation. Breguet explored and perfected these inventions and complications. But he was not recognized as a Master Watchmaker until 1784.

These intervening years saw the gradual development of the automatic (or self-winding) watch and a timepiece with a repeater (or chiming mechanism). The first self-winding watches were purchased by Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and several high-ranking personalities at the court of Versailles. This led, in 1783, to Breguet receiving a commission for an extraordinary watch incorporating all the innovations and complications known at the time. The end result would be one of the most famous of all Breguet watches, No. 160, also called the "Marie-Antoinette", which, after several lengthy interruptions, was eventually finished in 1827, i.e. four years after Abraham-Louis Breguet's death.

These watches immediately reveal the originality of his style, characterized by functional simplicity, technical mastery and flawless craftsmanship. His flat watchcases, easily legible numerals, rectilinear hands and guilloché dials made Breguet watches both unique works of art and discreet, practical, everyday objects, unlike the ornate, ostentatious timepieces made in the last quarter of the 18th century.

The Revolutionary interlude

During the Revolutionary period, Breguet made regular trips to England, where he shared the fruit of his research with the watchmaker John Arnold, while enlarging his clientele, which already included the Prince of Wales. In 1793, fearing the consequences of his former relationship with members of the Court and his moderate ideas, Breguet returned to Switzerland. He pursued his research, while striving to run what was left of his Parisian workshops from across the Alps.

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Breguet No. 611
Face of the small medallion “tact watch”.
Sold to Josephine Bonaparte on 18 February 1800.
Collection Montres Breguet S.A.
© Montres Breguet S.A.



Breguet No. 4009
Observation chronometer
Forerunner of the modern chronograph.
Sold in 1825 to Mr Whaley
Collection Montres Breguet S.A.
© Montres Breguet S.A.

Visitor information

Opening times: daily except Tuesdays, 9am-6pm. Late-night opening until 10 pm on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Admission: access to the exhibition is included in the admission to the permanent collections of the museum: €; € after 6pm on Wednesdays and Fridays. Free admission for under-26s from the European Union, under-18s, the unemployed, card-holders (Louvre jeunes, Louvre professionnels, Louvre enseignants and Louvre étudiants partenaires) and Friends of the Louvre. Free admission for everybody on the first Sunday of the month.

Further information

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On his return to Paris in May 1795, Breguet started up business again with new models, notably a simple watch with one hand, known as the “subscription watch” (an advance deposit of a quarter of the price was paid when the order was placed), launched with the aid of an advertising leaflet. This revealed the subtle balance between the researcher and the entrepreneur, who combined constantly updated unique models with functional timepieces. In 1796, Breguet invented a new type of travel clock that went on functioning during transportation. General Bonaparte purchased the first one to take on his Egyptian campaign.

A European reputation under the Consulate and Empire

Thus began a thriving period for the House of Breguet, in terms of both sales and inventions, which seemed to spur one another on. Pure research and applied art always fused in Breguet’s work. The first patent he registered for one of his inventions was in 1798 for constant force escapement (the mechanism of the watch is driven by a rigorous constant force). Shown at France’s First Exhibition of Industrial Products (1798), in a travel clock and a metronome, it won Breguet a gold medal. The following year his “tact watch”, which enabled the wearer to tell the time by touching the watch face, was launched on the market. At France’s Third Exhibition (1802), the House of Breguet attracted a military clientele on presenting its “deck watch” and “Longitude watch”, while in 1806, the public were introduced to the “tourbillon regulator” (device that neutralizes the effects of gravity on the workings of watch movements).

Although kept in the background by Napoleon I, Breguet received orders from the imperial court and his entourage. Always ahead of its time, the company also exported its timepieces through a network in and outside of Europe, having understood at an early date that its survival depended on becoming international. England, Spain and Russia were its principal foreign markets, but the political situation at the end of the Empire slowed down Breguet’s activity considerably. To compensate for the markets it lost, the company developed its sales in the Ottoman Empire by adapting its models to Turkish tastes.

Ultimate recognition during the Restoration

When the Bourbons returned to power, the House of Breguet saw a spectacular turnaround in its activity. Its European clientele reburgeoned and included loyal customers such as Tsar Alexander I of Russia and King George IV of England. Prestigious timepieces once owned by them will be on display in this exhibition. In France, Louis XVIII publicly displayed his respect for Breguet by appointing him Watchmaker to the Royal Navy in 1815 and awarding him a seat in the Academy of Sciences in 1816. At the Exhibition of 1819, as member of the jury, Breguet presented a retrospective of his clockmaking career, during which he had raised this precision craft to a degree of unprecedented excellence. The reliability and streamlined designs of his timepieces were far ahead of his era and already belonged to modernity. This tradition lives on at Breguet today in innovative timepieces, thus confirming their precursory status that bears witness to European culture and history.

Preface by Henri Loyrette

People often forget that the Louvre owes its splendid collection of watches, designed and perfected in Europe since the 16th century, to the generosity of great connoisseurs. Abraham-Louis Breguet, who had the honour of presenting his finest timepieces here at the second National Exhibition of Industrial Products (1802) rightfully features prominently among them.

It is thus only natural that the Louvre pays homage this summer to such an outstanding personality, who illustrates the apogee of European watchmaking at the crucial turning of the 18th and 19th centuries. Always on the cutting edge of innovation, Breguet took this high-precision art to an unparalleled degree of craftsmanship and aesthetic refinement. A tireless researcher and bold entrepreneur, he aroused the admiration and earned the confidence of European sovereigns and high society. European watches, which had previously been regarded as curios, fashion items or sentimental trinkets, became timepieces of exemplary precision and rare simplicity.

This retrospective, which has assembled a collection of unique works on an unprecedented scale, would not have been possible without the close collaboration and generous participation of the company Montres Breguet S.A., which today perpetuates this tradition of excellence. My warm thanks are especially addressed to its CEO, Mr Nicolas G. Hayek, whose energetic support helped bring this magnificent project to fruition.

Henri Loyrette,
Director of the Louvre



Breguet watches in European culture and history

The name Breguet today stands for exceptional craftsmanship in the minds of connoisseurs and the general public alike. This prestigious brand asserts its identity and philosophy through its constant capacity for innovation, the beauty of its watches and the strong cultural message expressed in diverse sponsorship activities. Its partnerships with the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, the Château of Versailles, the Lucerne Festival and various philharmonic orchestras across the globe, to mention just a few, illustrate President and CEO of Montres Breguet Nicolas G. Hayek's commitment to promoting art and culture. This is the spirit in which Nicolas G. Hayek has today invested his efforts in the exhibition of Breguet watches at the Louvre. Bringing together an extraordinary variety of antique and period watches, including items from the Louvre's own collection and from the Breguet Museum, this exhibition will also display masterpieces on loan from private collections and other prestigious institutions, such as the British Royal Collections, the Musée des Arts et Métiers, Paris, the Kremlin Museum, Moscow, and the Swiss National Museum, Zurich. Very keen to protect Europe's rich historical and cultural heritage, Nicolas G. Hayek has decided to further support the Louvre by funding restoration work on the Louis XIV Wing – namely the Council of State Rooms and Salon Beauvais. In this manner, Breguet is pursuing its policy of support for European culture in line with the message conveyed by the brand and its CEO: "Preserving world cultural heritage is an investment for all of us, for our children and for our grandchildren. It is our duty to do so, as much for the future as for the past. We are responsible for caring for and preserving the beauty of Europe."

Breguet, a brand steeped in history

Shortly after its establishment in 1775, the Breguet brand became the leading reference in the world of luxury watchmaking. Throughout its history, it has upheld the essential values laid down by its founder: beauty, elegance and mastery of "grand complications". In terms of history and current vitality, Breguet is exceptional in the world of watchmaking. Its heritage is without doubt the richest and its corporate history the envy of the industry.

As soon as Breguet joined the Swatch Group, efforts were made to rebuild and assemble the brand's exceptional heritage in its museum in Paris and Switzerland. A living showcase for this heritage, the Breguet Museum now owns some of the most magnificent timepieces ever made by the brand. It highlights great moments in Breguet's history, represented not only by precious watches that once belonged to Napoleon, the Empress Josephine, Tsar Alexander I and other famous clients, but also landmarks in the history of watchmaking, such as one of the first tourbillon regulators, a self-winding or "perpetual" watch, alongside subscription and tact watches.

Breguet within the Swatch Group

Since the purchase of the Breguet brand in September 1999 by Nicolas G. Hayek, founder of the Swatch Group and chairman of the board, the company has benefited from the Group's solid industrial base and its vocation as the defender of traditional craftsmanship in the world of watchmaking, together with its spirit of innovation and entrepreneurial ability. In 2000, Nicolas G. Hayek took over as managing director of the company. He was then in a position to broaden Breguet's vision, confer an emotional and cultural dimension on the brand, and improve both the aesthetics and quality of its products.

Investments were made in the Vallée de Joux (Jura mountains, Switzerland), the cradle of luxury horology, where Breguet watches are made. Its factory was modernized in 2003, and has since been enlarged several times. Improvements have focused on developing manufacturing facilities and preserving traditional savoir-faire. One example of this was the opening of a large workshop reserved for "guillochage", or engine-turning, the art of delicately engraving on dials to improve their legibility, where new operatives are trained. Ever more innovative and technically sophisticated, Breguet watches owe their renown to a close-knit team of specialized engineers, master watchmakers, craftsmen and designers, who spare no effort to develop new standards of aesthetic excellence. Their talent has given rise to the Double Tourbillon, the Reine de Naples Cammea, the Marine tourbillon with silicon escapement and a host of other world firsts.

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A level-headed man with a big heart

Swiss-born, French at heart, with European reputation, clientele and professional partnerships, Abraham-Louis Breguet was an outstanding protagonist of and witness to a period of great upheaval. Given his youth, training and promising early career, he was a true child of the Age of Enlightenment. His oeuvre was the combination of an art form at its apogee and technical expertise continually updated at the dawn of the industrial era, in the privileged world of precision watchmaking, at a time when Paris competed with Geneva and London in the field of scientific and artistic innovation.

The modest, introspective image captured in the rare portraits of this man belie his extraordinary character. He was an insatiable researcher, a demanding craftsman, refined aesthete, bold entrepreneur and determined, generous watchmaker-manager all wrapped into one. He was neither a scientist nor a man well-versed in classical culture. No matter! He established himself as the most brilliant European watchmaker of his generation, the only one capable of mixing inventiveness, virtuoso technique and applied art to such an unprecedented degree. [...]

The inventor

In Paris, luxury watchmaking was at its height, owing to scientific progress – notably in the field of marine instruments – and to the multifaceted skills of jeweller-goldsmiths. Lépine had already launched the idea of slim, pared-down, “classic” timepieces. In London, where precision watchmaking was the most advanced, Breguet introduced himself and managed to procure mechanisms unobtainable in France. Breguet perfected these fragile inventions. The automatic, self-winding watch and the repeater watch, launched in the 1780s, immediately revealed the originality of his style. His timepieces appealed to a clientele in the upper echelons of society, at the courts of both Versailles and England.

When the French Revolution broke out, he was 42 years old. Although this Revolutionary interlude was eventful and uncertain, it was also a remarkably fruitful period. Several of Breguet’s inventions were developed in the 1790s, when he reached his prime. His inventiveness was initially shown in the research he undertook to perfect the most elaborate functions, which made each of his watches or travel clocks unique. Yet the modernity of his production was perhaps even more evident in the way he developed and distributed quality timepieces distinguished by their simplicity; or in the enterprising idea of creating, through the skills of his compatriot, Jean-Pierre Droz, a barely perceptible engraved signature which marked the exclusive nature of his watches.

The entrepreneur

In 1787, Breguet sought to expand his business and signed a six-year agreement with Xavier Gide, a clock and watch merchant. In the stormy Revolutionary period, this experimental partnership was cut short. Breguet however managed to keep his premises on the Quai de l’Horloge until August 1793, when, realizing that he was in danger, he fled Paris and returned to Switzerland. What a vast amount of energy and steadfastness it took to run his Parisian workshops from afar during these troubled years, to remain calm and cope with disputes, while maintaining a limited activity and pursuing his research in Le Locle, where he had temporarily taken refuge!

Back in Paris, in May 1795, he once again had to fight to recover his premises on the Quai de l’Horloge, to relaunch his workshops and survive legal proceedings on two occasions... But this time success was within his reach, because his proficiency as a researcher melded with his practical expertise. He knew how to exploit and capitalize on his inventions. Making unique timepieces went hand in hand with the small-scale manufacture of standardized watches, sold by subscription. The production of other types of watches was never excluded. For example, when it was a matter of attracting wealthy Middle-Eastern clients, his timepieces became more colourful!

From 1798, the year he won an award and a reputation at France’s National Exhibition of Industrial Products, his fame continued to grow. The registration of patents for the constant-force escapement and the tourbillon regulator and the launch of tact watches date from this prosperous period. Under the Empire, despite wars and blockades, Breguet succeeded in expanding his business, while remaining independent and honouring his commitments.

The watchmaker-manager

The ingenuity of the designer and the acumen of the company manager compelled admiration. But the characteristic of Breguet's personality that charmed people most of all was his humanity, which revealed itself in his need to share his passion, to make what he created bear fruit and to transmit his savoir-faire.

A visit to the Quai de l'Horloge workshop must have been an unforgettable experience for those who had the chance. So high a degree of fusion between pure research and applied art and so great a sense of teamwork and continuity would seldom be found again. It is not hard to imagine the constant attention and discipline needed in such a meticulous, precise production process, when no less than fifteen specialist craftsmen were required to make a single watch. In the early Empire period, the assembly line numbered up to one hundred specialized employees.

For Breguet's true skill lay in the way he maintained a subtle balance between the ongoing elaboration of unique timepieces and a pre-industrial manufacturing process that called upon sub-contractors for rough movements. To this end, he built up a network of contacts in the watchmaking worlds of London, Paris and Geneva. He initially established close links with his English counterparts, notably forming a friendship with John Arnold, which grew stronger on his visits to London in the crucial period 1789 to 1791, and which continued in his friendship with Arnold's son, John Roger. He also kept in touch with his family, friends and partners in Switzerland, attesting to his attachment to his native land and roots.

“Harmonious work, reliable effects”

Breguet watches evolved into lightweight, perfectly designed, reliable objects pleasant to touch: they were personal items, no longer ostentatious fashion items, which therefore had no further need of fancy watch cases. Their bare form resembled a protective skin covering the mechanism. Instead of the overt preciousness of previous timepieces, a subtle sense of harmony emanated from this counterpoise between the calibre and its “cladding”.

This functional simplicity was initially governed by the rules of elementary geometry, employing infinite variations on the circle and the diagonal. From the size of the case, the shape of the fillet and the rounded profiles to the design of the dial and the beauty of the visible mechanism, nothing was left to chance. The dials themselves were constantly redesigned, varying the off-centre or asymmetric layouts and functions, modifying the design of the numerals and hands. The range of metals employed, in alternating warm and cold tones, was limited to gold and brass, silver and steel. The elegant script formed by the numerals and hands stood out in black or blue against the opaque white or guilloché metal of the dial. This concern for aestheticism was apparent even in details such as the blued steel screws used to assemble the mechanism.

Breaking away from the Genevan tradition of ornamental timepieces, Breguet soon abandoned using scintillating enamels. On his simple watches, enamel was purely functional, basically limited to the white circle of the dial. The rare concessions he made to the use of decorative enamel were for prestigious commissions or to please foreign clients. His watches may have lost their flamboyance but they gained a new status, that of useful, everyday objects.

To achieve this, Breguet systematized the most discreet use of guilloché on his metal surfaces. Inspired by a technique employed by goldsmiths since the 1740s, he developed a new aesthetic, abandoning deeply engraved lines for the most delicate ornamentation: barley patterns, latticework, lozenges and straight lines. On a practical level, this decorative approach had other advantages: there was no longer any risk of leaving fingerprints on the surface or of damaging the enamel coating! [...]

Marc Bascou,
Curator, Department of Decorative Arts, Louvre

This and the following texts are translations of extracts from the exhibition catalogue, except when mentioned otherwise.

Breguet's relationship with the ruling powers

Breguet first came into contact with those in high places through his protector, Abbot Joseph-François Marie (1738-1801), who had detected his genius when teaching him mathematics at the Collège Mazarin, and who, in 1782, became private tutor to the children of the king's brother, the Count of Artois. In 1782, Breguet made the self-winding, quarter-repeating watch, No. 2 10/82 (the inscription 10/82 indicates that it was completed in October 1782) for Queen Marie-Antoinette. Breguet was possibly introduced to the king and queen at this time. Louis XVI's love of locksmithing, watchmaking and small mechanisms in general is well known. He purchased a watch from Breguet in December 1784 for the sum of 1,680 livres. The queen was also fond of exceptionally beautiful watches, as is evidenced by her lifelong loyalty to the House of Breguet. She purchased other Breguets, including the self-winding No. 46. She also wanted Axel de Fersen to own a model of this watch. One of the very first timepieces to have a guilloché dial, No. 46 was delivered in early 1787. [...]

In the 1780s, who better than the queen could launch a fashion or promote a little-known name? At the French court, Mme Elisabeth, the king's sister, and the Countess of Provence, the king's sister-in-law, were soon wearing Breguet watches, just like the Spanish ambassador. In Paris, the Duke of Orleans, the king's cousin, had placed an order in 1780. As the archives show, some of the greatest names in France appeared on the watchmaker's order books: La Rochefoucauld, Noailles, Montesquiou... [...]

In the early days of September 1792, after the Revolution had overturned the established order, Breguet made a deeply moving sale. The splendours of Versailles and the carefree lifestyle of the Petit Trianon were long past, when Marie-Antoinette placed an order for a timepiece from prison. Held captive at Le Temple since 13 August, the queen asked Breguet to make her a repeater watch far more modest than the ones she had previously owned, which had been stolen or confiscated during the looting of the Tuileries Palace on 10 August. This watch, No. 179, was delivered on 4 September and would mark out the hours of the royal family's ultimate downfall.

In these troubled times, Breguet could remain neither neutral nor inactive. Sympathetic to the Revolution in its early stages, he fully participated in the life of the nation. Having joined the Jacobin Club in 1790, he also had close ties with the Girondin group, whose ideas were indeed republican yet moderate compared to those of the sans-culottes and other radical Montagnards. Friendly with Jacques-Pierre Brissot, who had conducted a prospective market survey in the burgeoning United States of America for him, and Étienne Clavière, Breguet felt his life was at risk when they were arrested in June 1793. The Girondins were unable to resist the uprisings of 31 May and 2 June 1793, led by the Montagnards and Maximilien de Robespierre, the extreme left-wing elements of the National Convention. Even greater suspicion hung over Breguet because of his former relations with the aristocracy. However the services he had rendered over the years to his compatriot Jean-Paul Marat, the famous Montagnard, saved him from a perilous situation and enabled him to obtain an official passport. He therefore organized his return to Switzerland, a sojourn that would last almost two years, from August 1793 to May 1795. He thus saved his life and was able to continue his creative production. During his exile, he received regular letters from France and managed to run what was left of his Parisian workshops from the other side of the Alps. [...]

In the aftermath of the Revolution, Breguet returned to the French capital, started up his business again and sought to establish a network of relations across and even beyond Europe, a network he had commenced at the end of the Ancien Régime. Immersed in Parisian life, he realized how drastically France had changed and witnessed the meteoric rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to supreme power. In this respect, the archives provide very accurate insight into the chronology and nature of the House of Breguet's relationship with the numerous members of the Bonaparte family, or more generally with the Napoleonic regime, before and during the Empire period.

The first member of the family to own a Breguet watch was General Charles-Victor-Emmanuel Leclerc. Promoted brigadier general on 6 May 1797, he purchased a repeater watch a few days later, before his marriage to Pauline Bonaparte on 14 June. General Bonaparte, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army in Italy, probably heard about the watchmaker's establishment on the Quai de l'Horloge from him, if not from his companions-in-arms Louis-Alexandre Berthier and Jean-Joseph Dessolle, who were also clients of the House of Breguet in 1797.

At any rate, the following year, in April 1798, a month before embarking on his Egyptian campaign, General Bonaparte bought three items particularly representative of the master watchmaker's production: No. 38, a repeater watch, or a "timepiece with insulated escapement"; No. 178, a quarter-repeating travel clock with almanac, the first of its kind; and No. 216, a self-winding repeater watch. These purchases, amounting to a sum of 7,000 francs, fulfilled a twofold objective: first, Bonaparte, a rising political figure in French society, sought to become the owner of sophisticated objects, the symbols of power and status; secondly, for practical reasons, he needed to take sturdy, reliable timepieces on his expedition. He thought he had made the right choice by going to Breguet. But was he really satisfied? This is difficult to ascertain when he is known to have never purchased anything else from Breguet after these three items in 1798. Worse still, the self-winding watch was returned in June 1801. Rumour has it that the sands of Egypt got the better of it, much to the annoyance of Bonaparte. Did the repeater watch and travel clock function correctly? If so, it is hard to explain why the owner didn't feel the need to make further purchases or to show his gratitude for the next eighteen years.

The fact is that the First Consul – and later Emperor – showed a total lack of interest in Europe's most famous watchmaker, whose premises were just a few hundred metres from the Louvre, on the Île de la Cité. Napoleon obviously held a grudge against Breguet. He did nothing to facilitate his election to the Académie des Sciences, when a mere word would have been enough; he did not award him the Legion of Honour, despite Breguet's success at national exhibitions, at a time when numerous businessmen were being decorated, even knighted; he did not appoint him official supplier to the imperial court, preferring to give that honour to Mugnier, a watchmaker who set up his own shop after being trained at the Quai de l'Horloge premises; he refused to make Breguet Watchmaker to the French Navy, choosing Louis Berthoud instead.

It is unlikely that Napoleon held the watchmaker's foreign origins against him or the fact that he previously supplied the court of Louis XVI. However, he may possibly have resented him either for his hypothetical links with royalist circles or his privileged relations with England, or even, quite simply, his desire to conduct business with the whole of Europe. Breguet could have asked Talleyrand, Napoleon's trusted advisor until 1807, to plead his cause with the Emperor, but, knowing the watchmaker, he almost certainly preferred his freedom of initiative to the rank of official supplier to Napoleon's court.

Yet up until 1801, when the First Consul returned his self-winding watch and began to "boycott" Breguet, the Bonaparte family were regular customers. Not counting Napoleon's purchases in 1798, they bought a total of nineteen timepieces between them: Josephine in 1798 and 1800, Louis and Lucien Bonaparte in 1800 and 1801, Joseph Bonaparte in 1800 and Leclerc, Pauline's husband, in 1798 and 1801.

Then nothing was purchased from Breguet in 1802, 1803 or 1804, the year of the Emperor's coronation, which was highly significant. Not one sale was made to a member of the family; not one national commission was awarded to him that year, when the coffers of the Treasury were overflowing and every talented person in France in the field of the arts, decorative arts, jewellery and industry was inundated with orders and working around the clock for the widespread celebrations on 2 December. Breguet was not part of the regime and the regime made that clear to him. Disappointed, naturally, the master watchmaker nevertheless found consolation in his rising sales figures, especially on the international market. Since he was at the height of his fame and his products were unparalleled, the boycott of the ruling power could hardly last forever.

The following year, in fact, the Bonaparte family reappeared in the company's order books. Two of its members purchased their first Breguet watch: Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia in 1807, would buy twelve timepieces between 1805 and 1809; and his sister Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples in 1808, who, by 1814, had bought thirty-four items from the watchmaker, and who commissioned, amongst other timepieces, the celebrated first-ever wristwatch. [...]

Emmanuel Breguet,
historian, specializing in the works of Breguet, at Montres Breguet, S.A.

Chronology and Glossary

1747-1774. Youth and training

1747, 10 January: birth of Abraham-Louis Breguet in Neuchâtel (today in Switzerland). Introduced to watchmaking in the Neuchâtel area.

1762. Moves to France. Apprenticeship in Versailles and Paris.

1775-1788. Early career in Paris during the reign of Louis XVI

1775. Marries Cécile L'Huillier, member of the Parisian bourgeoisie. Opens his own business on the Quai de l'Horloge, situated on the Île de la Cité.

1780. Sells his first so-called “perpetual” self-winding watches. Devises a number of innovations, both technical (gong spring, escapements) and aesthetic (hands, numerals, guillochage).

1787. Breguet and watch merchant Xavier Gide form a partnership called *Société Breguet et Compagnie*.

1789-1797. Survival of the venture during the Revolutionary years

1789, 1790 and 1791. Travels to England to drum up business and collect money from debtors. Considers transplanting the company to London.

Invention of the “pare-chute” shock-protection device. Conducts a study on the shape of calibers.

1791. Break-up of the partnership with Gide.

1793. Seeking shelter from Revolutionary turmoil, Breguet and his family leave Paris for Neuchâtel, then Le Locle, where he resumes his activities and research.

1794. Evicted from his Quai de l'Horloge workshop, Breguet temporarily occupies premises on the far side of Rue du Harlay.

1795. Breguet returns to Paris. Organization of an exhibition of his inventions.

1796. Production of the first travel clock. Sale of the first subscription watch.

1798-1813. European celebrity under the French Consulate and Empire

1798. Patent registered for the Breguet constant-force escapement. Presentation of the first *sympathique* clock designed to reset and synchronize to its own time a watch placed in a special recess. Breguet awarded a gold medal at France's first National Exhibition of Industrial Products.

1799. Sale of the first “touch reading” or tact watch.

1801. Patent registered for the tourbillon regulator.

1802. Gold medal at the National Exhibition of Industrial Products. Growing success for the Breguet company with exports to many countries.

1808. Breguet opens *La Maison de Russie* in St Petersburg.

1810. Production of the very first wristwatch, ordered by Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples.

1814-1823. Official recognition during the French Restoration

1814, 1815 and 1816. King Louis XVI appoints Breguet to the Board of Longitudes, names him Watchmaker to the Royal Navy and makes him a member of the Académie des Sciences.

1819. Now a member of the jury of the National Exhibition of Industrial Products, Breguet is awarded the insignia of *chevalier* of the Legion of Honour.

A new series of his inventions appears: watch and clock with double movement, pedometer, timer to 1/10th of a second, chronograph with double seconds hand.

1823. Death of Breguet on 17 September.

1824-1850. The successors

Antoine-Louis Breguet, born in 1776, takes over management of the company.

1827. Gold medal at the National Exhibition of Industrial Products.

1830. Invention of the keyless winding system.

1833. Louis-Clément Breguet, born in 1804, now heads the company.

1834. A patent is registered for a *sympathique* clock featuring a mechanism that winds the watch after setting and synchronization.

1836. Wristwatches go on sale.

1840. Alongside watchmaking, the Breguet company enters the field of applications of electricity.

1843. Louis-Clément Breguet is appointed to the Bureau of Longitudes.

Sold by the founding family in 1870, the Breguet company would continue to operate successfully over the centuries. Purchased by the Swatch Group in 1999, and since presided over by Mr Nicolas G. Hayek, the House of Breguet is still famed for its capacity for innovation, technical mastery and international development.

GLOSSARY

Calibre. The shape of a movement.

Chronograph. A watch capable of displaying a period of elapsed time by means of a seconds hand that is started and stopped at will.

Complication. Applied to a various functions including the phase and age of the moon, simple or perpetual date calendar, repeating strike, power reserve indication, equation of time indication, chronograph function, and others.

Date calendar. Watches and small clocks display more or less complete versions of the date and may include the day of the week, the month and the year along with the proper date. A date calendar is called “perpetual” when it accommodates the extra day of leap years.

Equation of time. It expresses the difference between mean time, or civil time, conventionally divided into twenty-four-hour periods, and true solar time, which varies in keeping with the Earth’s irregular orbit around the sun.

Escapement. Mechanism regulating the rotational speed of gearwheels and hence of the hands of a watch or clock.

Gong spring. Spring curved around a repeater movement and struck by the hammer of the repeater mechanism. Replaces the bell-like traditional gong, enables slimmer watches to be made.

Guillochage. A type of hand-guided mechanical engraving used to decorate watch cases and dials. Many such patterns engraved on the same dial improve the legibility of its various displays.

Keyless winding watch. Watch fitted with a knurled knob turned both to reset the hands to the correct time and to rewind the mainspring.

Marine chronometer. Precision timepiece designed for shipboard use. Placed in the middle of the ship, its many practical uses include the determination of longitude at sea.

Parachute or pare-chute. The shock-protection device that remains one of Breguet's best-known inventions.

Pedometer or military counter. Watch-like metronome serving to regulate the marching pace of military units.

Perpetual watch. Term used to designate a Breguet watch fitted with a self-winding mechanism featuring an oscillating weight.

Power reserve. Auxiliary hand sweeping over a graduated portion of a dial to show the energy available to a watch movement.

Repeater watch. Watch fitted with a striking mechanism, triggered by a retractable button activated at will and marking hours and fractions of hours, i.e. quarters, half-quarters and minutes.

Simple watch. Term referring to any watch devoid of a striking mechanism.

Subscription watch. Large (61 mm Ø) diameter cased watch with single hand driven by a simple movement. It was sold by subscription: with a down payment for a quarter of its price.

Tact watch. A watch fitted with a device allowing the time to be read by touch only; an arrow on the case corresponding to the position of the hands on the dial could be felt and its position, hence the time, determined with the aid of studs marking the hours on the dial.

Timekeeper or deck watch. A term used especially for high-precision watches.

Tourbillon regulator. A device designed to offset rate variations induced by shifts in the physical position of watches. The tourbillon's ceaseless rotation counteracts the pull of gravity.

Close-up of a work

Breguet No. B1160 replica of the “Marie-Antoinette”

In 1783, Breguet received an extraordinary commission: an officer of the Queen’s Guards ordered a watch incorporating all the innovations and complications known at the time, i.e. all the complex functions possible. No expense was to be spared; no deadline had to be respected; and gold had to replace any other metal wherever possible. Several questions have been raised about who really placed the order for such a timepiece. Was it the king? Possibly. Was it an admirer or a lover? Many believe so. Was it a group of adversaries who wanted to embarrass the queen and highlight her extravagance – as the Affair of the Diamond Necklace would do not long afterwards? This hypothesis cannot be excluded. The reason why Breguet was chosen is easier to explain. Although he was still in the early stages of his career (he had had his own business for ten years), he already had some remarkable inventions to his credit, notably the self-winding watch, and he was the repeater watch specialist. He had modern ideas and no qualms about breathing new life into the watchmaking world. He was also discreet. The watch would therefore be automatic, at the time a mechanism mastered only by Breguet. [...] “All the complex functions possible” above all meant astronomical and calendar features, displaying the day, date, month, four-year cycle, equation of time... In short, Breguet was asked to produce a cathedral clock on a few square centimetres. The master watchmaker set to work and the end result would be the fabulous “Marie-Antoinette” watch No. 160, which the queen never actually saw, because work was interrupted for long periods several times and the watch was not completed until 1827, when Breguet’s son was running the business. It was certainly not finished when the French Revolution broke out and Breguet had far more pressing things to worry about. However, watch No. 160 was a masterpiece in the making, a masterpiece that outlived its creator and kept going; a milestone that marked his career and that of the company he founded, right up to the



present day.

The timepiece listed in the company books as a “gold watch”, or as a “minute-repeating, self-winding watch with full perpetual calendar, equation of time and independent seconds hand”, survived the Revolution, which was extremely fortunate since the workshops had been pillaged and Breguet had had to take refuge in his native Switzerland. In 1809, he decided to recommence working on the unfinished timepiece, but most progress was made in 1812, 1813 and 1814 [...]. Admittedly, in the final years of the Napoleonic Empire, the House of Breguet was unable to export anything; France was at war with all its neighbours, and its watchmakers had too much time on their hands! It was a perfect opportunity to take up such a technical challenge again with so many memories attached to it. After 1814, work was interrupted once more, although the watch was almost ready. Then, in August 1823, Breguet applied himself to the task again; he wanted to complete his masterpiece. He spent the last month of his life working on it, and died in September. Four years later, in 1827, the Breguet team put the finishing touches to it, under the guiding hand of Antoine-Louis Breguet.

It was a perpetual watch, i.e. a watch fitted with a self-winding mechanism featuring an oscillating platinum weight, with the following functions and complications: minute-repeating, full perpetual calendar indicating the day, date and month, equation of time, indicator of power reserve, metallic thermometer, independent large seconds hand (which made the watch the first-ever chronometer), small seconds dial, anchor escapement, gold hairspring, double parachute (shock-protection device). All the jewels used to reduce friction, in the jewel holes and roller pins were sapphires. The watch had a gold case with a white enamel dial and another rock crystal dial. The superposition and synchronization of these different complications, with all their relevant calculations, represented true cutting-edge technology. The terms of the initial contract had been more than adequately fulfilled. It was the most complex watch ever made and it would remain the most complex watch in the world for nearly a century. In 1827, the finished item left the workshop; the cost of the craftsmanship and labour involved amounted to the astronomical sum of 17,000 gold francs.

The rest of the story could have been straightforward, but proved otherwise. Although no indication of a sale is mentioned in the archives, the watch left the House of Breguet, only to return in 1838, when the Marquis de La Groye brought it in to be serviced. He was apparently the owner at the time. When and at what price did he purchase the watch? Did he actually buy it? Or did Breguet give it to him? It's a mystery. The Marquis de La Groye, a very elderly man in 1838, is known to have served as a page to Marie-Antoinette in his youth and met Breguet before the Revolution. The fact that he never came back for the watch and died without an heir is another mystery. Since nobody claimed the "gold watch", it remained amongst the House of Breguet's stock until 1887, when it was sold to an English collector, Sir Spencer Brunton, and then passed into the hands of his brother. It subsequently became the property of Mr Murray Mark, before entering the prestigious collection of Sir David Salomons. [...]

In 1925, on Salomons' death, his daughter Vera inherited the "Marie-Antoinette", and the adventure continued. [...] The years went by and Vera Salomons decided to found a museum of Islamic art as a tribute to her friend and mentor, Professor Leo Arie Mayer. She donated all her own collections of Islamic art and included the collections of Western clocks and watches that she had inherited from her father. [...]

Nine years later, art lovers and horology connoisseurs were shocked to hear that the museum, the L. A. Mayer Museum for Islamic Art, in Jerusalem, had been burgled on Saturday, 16 April 1983 owing to poor security. The entire watch and clock collections had been stolen; the "Marie-Antoinette" watch had, naturally, disappeared. Years passed and, despite Interpol's efforts, the stolen treasures were never recovered. [...]

In 2005, Nicolas G. Hayek, CEO of the Breguet brand since 1999, arrived on the scene and decided to build a replica of the masterpiece. The art of watchmaking, bereft of watch No. 160, accepted the challenge; on its way to economic recovery, the House of Breguet felt duty-bound to tackle the complex task. A sound technical team was put together and gathered all existent documentation. The project made steady progress and the replica of the watch was unveiled at a press conference in spring 2008. It was presented in a sumptuous inlaid casket made from the wood of Marie-Antoinette's favourite oak tree.

Meanwhile, on 14 November 2007, media across the globe picked up on a story: the items snatched from the museum on 16 April 1983 had resurfaced! Foremost among them, of course, was the "Marie-Antoinette" watch, 24 years after being stolen, 224 years after being commissioned.



Exhibition layout

SECTION I

1775

Breguet completed his apprenticeship and studies in France from 1762 onwards. In 1775, at the age of 28, he married and managed to establish his own business on the Quai de l'Horloge, Paris. But he was not recognized as a Master Watchmaker until 1784.

The watchmaker asserted his style combining pure aesthetics, functional excellence and flawless craftsmanship in the finishing touches. Instead of the bulky, highly ornate timepieces prevalent in the last quarter of the 18th century, Breguet proposed flat watch cases, easily legible numerals and rectilinear hands.

From 1783, he fitted his chiming watches with gong springs. He improved anchor escapements and perfected cylinder escapements by introducing the use of rubies.

In 1786, the government invited him to study a project for establishing a royal watchmaking factory in Paris.

Breguet No. 92

The years 1771-80 saw a series of experiments and the gradual development of the “perpetual” or automatic watch: the movement of the wearer alone was enough to wind the timepiece; keys were no longer necessary.

The first self-winding watches were purchased by Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, the Duke of Orleans and several high-ranking personalities at the court of Versailles.

In 1783-85, for the Duke of Praslin, Breguet designed one of his most complex timepieces, No. 92, with full perpetual calendar displaying the phase and age of the moon, equation of time and independent seconds hand.

The “Marie-Antoinette”

In 1783, Breguet received a commission for an extraordinary watch incorporating all the innovations and complications known at the time. No expense was to be spared and gold had to replace any other metal wherever possible.

The end result would be the most famous of all Breguet watches, No. 160, also called the “Marie-Antoinette”, which the queen would never actually see, since, after several lengthy interruptions, this unique item was only completed in 1827! The cost of the workmanship on this supremely complex timepiece requiring the combined efforts of about twenty watchmakers amounted to 17,000 gold francs.

This exceptional pocket watch returned to the workshops on the Quai de l'Horloge in 1838, when the Marquis de la Groye – who had been Marie-Antoinette's page in his youth – brought it in to be serviced. But he never came back for it. The House of Breguet kept it until 1887, the year it passed into the hands of English collectors, Sir Spencer Brunton and Murray Mark, in turn, before joining the prestigious collection of Sir David Salomons in the early 20th century. Inherited by his daughter, Vera, in 1925, the “Marie-Antoinette” watch is now in the L.A. Mayer Memorial Institute for Islamic Art, Jerusalem, to which Vera Salomons donated the collection of Western clocks and watches assembled by her father.

SECTION II

1789

To expand his business, Breguet formed a partnership with watch and clock merchant, Xavier Gide, in 1787. As a result of various disagreements, this association came to an end in 1791.

On three occasions, in 1789, 1790 and 1791, Breguet visited England, where he met the watchmaker John Arnold, with whom he became friends and shared the fruits of his research. In tandem, he explored new commercial outlets and sought to collect outstanding sums of money from numerous clients, including the Prince of Wales. Informed of the unstable political situation in Paris, Breguet envisaged settling in London.

In 1793, Breguet feared for his life. His previous relationships with the court and aristocracy and his moderate ideas were held against him. He then had the idea of contacting Jean-Paul Marat, a friend he had known since his youth, to ask him to help obtain a passport for him so that he could leave France and return to Switzerland legally. He left the country in August 1793 to stay, in turn, in Geneva, Neuchâtel and Le Locle.

There he pursued his research, while striving to run what was left of his Parisian workshops from across the Alps. Boulanger, who had stayed behind in Paris to manage the business, sent him weekly reports. On 10 October 1793, Boulanger told his employer about a development that was sending shock waves through the profession: a new calendar replacing the Gregorian calendar had been officially adopted. In France, this Republican calendar would, however, only remain a legal obligation for twelve years. Watchmakers would adapt their timepieces to display a perpetual calendar (day, date, month). Only a few clocks and watches would actually have a decimal dial (a day divided into ten hours of one hundred minutes).

SECTION III

1795

In May 1795, after Robespierre's downfall, Breguet returned to Paris. He reorganized his business and developed new models, notably a simple watch with one hand, known as the "subscription watch". This was launched with the aid of an advertising leaflet which announced that an advance deposit of a quarter of the price was to be paid on placing the order.

In June 1796, Breguet applied for membership of the Académie des Sciences, in the mechanical arts section. His candidature was rejected in favour of his rival, Lazare Carnot.

In 1798, Breguet won a gold medal at France's First Exhibition of Industrial Products.

Clocks

In 1796, Breguet designed a new type of travel clock, in the form of a small gilt bronze case, glazed on four sides. Fitted with an eight-day hairspring movement, unlike previous clocks with a balance staff, this timepiece could function during transportation.

In spring 1798, General Bonaparte was one of the first people to buy this type of clock to take on his Egyptian campaign.

Over the years, the Empress Josephine, and the entire Bonaparte family Bonaparte - Louis, Lucien and Joseph, Caroline and Elisa – made numerous purchases from Breguet.

SECTION IV

1802

Owing to the economic upturn under the Consulate, the House of Breguet's annual sales continued to rise until 1803, when a record number of 196 timepieces were sold.

Sales remained high until 1810. During the prosperous Empire period, Breguet exported much of his production.

Despite not being an official supplier, he received orders from the imperial court and several of the regime's high-ranking personalities.

In 1802, Breguet won a gold medal at the National Exhibition of Industrial Products. As one of the prizewinners, he was invited by Bonaparte to a celebratory banquet held at the Tuileries Palace in honour of all the award-winning manufacturers.

The 1806 Exhibition marked the high point of Empire: 1,422 participants came from all the European regions under Napoleon's authority. The square courtyard of the Louvre was no longer large enough to host the event, which was held on the Invalides esplanade.

In accordance with the rules, Breguet was only entitled to another gold medal. On display on his stand were some remarkable items, such as the tourbillon regulator, presented to the public for the first time, and a musical metronome, made following the instructions of the Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello.

SECTION V

1807

In the early years of the 19th century, England, Spain and Russia were the company's principal foreign markets.

Tsar Alexander I of Russia became a loyal client and appointed the House of Breguet "Watchmaker to his Majesty and the Imperial Navy". Given the high demand from his Russian clientele, Breguet opened an establishment in St Petersburg, called the Maison de Russie, in 1808.

The difficult political situation in the late Empire period had an adverse effect on the company's exports. In 1811, Breguet complained to the emperor in person.

To compensate for the markets he lost, Breguet developed sales in the Ottoman Empire.

SECTION VI

1814

The Bourbons' return to power brought about a spectacular turnaround in the House of Breguet's activity. Among its growing prestigious English clientele were the Prince Regent, the future King George IV, two of his brothers, the Duke of York and the Duke of Cambridge, and the Duke of Wellington.

Its Russian clientele, following in the footsteps of Tsar Alexander I, who paid a visit to the House of Breguet in 1814, reburgeoned.

For the Turkish market, Breguet adapted its models to the clientele's tastes: double watch cases elaborately enamelled in dominant reds and golds; dials with Turkish numerals.

From 1811, there was an official Breguet representative in Istanbul.

At the Exhibition of 1819, as member of the jury, Breguet presented a retrospective of his clockmaking career.

SECTION VII

1820

Louis XVIII publicly displayed his respect for Breguet by appointing him Watchmaker to the Royal Navy.

Between 1815 and 1823, the company sold 78 items described as marine watches or clocks. Some timepieces were sent to retailers that Breguet had selected in the ports of Bordeaux, Le Havre and Brest.

In 1817, in Brest, Breguet published a booklet entitled *Instructions for the Use of Marine Watches made by Mr Breguet*, a knowledgeable and informative guide, full of advice on the use of timekeepers at sea for navigation and on how to keep them running well.

In 1816, Breguet was finally awarded a seat in the Academy of Sciences.

SECTION VIII

1824

On the death of its founder in 1823, the company was run by Antoine-Louis Breguet for the following ten years or so.

This period saw the sales of ultra-flat watches, timepieces with complex functions, off-centre dials, and the invention of keyless winding systems.

In 1833, Louis-Clément Breguet took over the business from his father, Antoine-Louis.

While keeping the traditional workshop running for the manufacture of unique timepieces, in 1835-40 Louis-Clément Breguet decided to standardize the majority of the company's clock and watch production.

By the end of the Second Empire, annual sales exceeded 350 items. Members of European aristocracy still formed part of its clientele. The company then diversified into the fields of scientific instruments and electricity.

CENTRAL SHOWCASE

Tourbillon regulator

On 26 June 1801, Breguet registered a patent for his invention, the tourbillon regulator, for ten years. The ceaseless rotation of this device neutralizes the effects of gravity and offsets rate variations induced by shifts in the physical position of watches.

The idea behind the invention was simple but putting it into practice was very complex. The first tourbillon regulator watch did not go on the market until 1805. The following year, it was displayed at the National Exhibition of Industrial Products and Breguet won a gold medal. Only 35 models with this device, now inextricably linked to the name of its inventor, were sold between 1805 and 1823.

Constant-force escapement

The first patent registered by Breguet on 9 March 1798 was for the constant-force escapement.

The basic principle of this invention consists in exchanging the driving force controlling the movement of a watch, whose action may be irregular, for a rigorously constant force. This mechanism uses the variable force of the parts to rewind a spring or weight which transmits a constant impulse to the regulating organ.

A remarkable concept, yet very delicate to apply, constant-force escapement was only used by Breguet for rare, prestigious commissions.

Clocks

Breguet also took an interest in designing and manufacturing clocks of various sorts. Between 1791 and 1823, the company sold nearly 230: simple or chiming clocks in mahogany cases, pyramid-shaped clocks, ornamental clocks adorned with gilded or patinated bronze, laboratory clocks, experimental clocks, travelling clocks and *sympathique* clocks.

King George IV of England's purchases

In the 1780s, Breguet became known in England, where the Prince of Wales was one of his earliest clients and admirers.

Breguet visited London several times in 1789, 1790 and 1791 to collect payment for the purchases made by the prince and to obtain new orders.

Over the years, the prince and future king remained one of the watchmaker's most loyal customers. In 1814, he purchased two highly emblematic timepieces: the tourbillon regulator No. 1252 and the *sympathique* clock No. 666, together with Breguet watch No. 721, which had an extremely sophisticated mechanism. In 1818, he also purchased a remarkable "watch with two movements".

Watches with keyless winding mechanisms

In 1830, the House of Breguet, run by Antoine-Louis, invented the keyless winding mechanism, an easy-to-use feature, much appreciated by non-professionals. All one had to do to wind the pocket watch or reset the hands to the correct time was take the knurled knob or winding button, fixed to the pendant, between two fingers and turn it.

This revolutionary new device was not patented, yet other watchmaking firms waited ten years or so before adopting it themselves.

Breguet and Thomire

The mantelpiece clock with constant-force escapement and the figures of Genius and Prudence supporting the pendulum is a fine example of the collaboration between Breguet and an internationally famous Parisian ornamental bronze founder, Pierre-Philippe Thomire, in the 1800s.

These extracts are based on the exhibition wall texts.

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Breguet

An Apogee of European Watchmaking

Under the direction of Nicolas G. Hayek, Arlette-Elsa Emch, Marc Bascou, Emmanuel Breguet, Rodolphe De Pierri.

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43. Breguet No. 295
Minute-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Sommariwa on 3 October 1801
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

44. Breguet No. 1369
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Chaudoir (Breguet's
representative
in Warsaw) on 28 November 1803
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

45. Breguet No. 1407
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Delarouquette on 5 March 1804
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

46. Breguet No. 1391
Medium-sized subscription watch
Sold to Mssrs Meyer and Tues on 21 August
1805
Department of Decorative Arts, Louvre, Paris

47. Breguet No. 960
Large tact watch
Sent to Mr de Betancourt on 2 October 1802
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

48. Breguet No. 947
Subscription watch
Sold to Count Gevowsky in July-August
1802
Department of Decorative Arts, Louvre, Paris

49. Breguet No. 1235
Simple watch, new calibre
Sold to James Watt, delivered
by Lady Elgin on 4 May 1804
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

50. Breguet No. 1287
Subscription watch
Sold to "a young man from St Petersburg"
on 5 August 1803
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

51. Breguet No. 942
Simple watch, new calibre
Sold to James Watt, in early 1805
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

52. Breguet No. 1790
Minute-repeating watch, with grand and
small strike mechanism
Sold to Mr Castaneda on 23 October 1805
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

53. Breguet No. 1805
"Four-part" quarter-repeating clock,
with grand and small strike mechanism and
alarm
Sold to Mr André Becker on 15 June 1805
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

54. Breguet No. 1587
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Jerome Bonaparte on 14 January 1806
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

55. Breguet No. 1320
Quarter-repeating watch made for
the Turkish market
Sold to Mr Esseid Ali Effendi
for the Sultan of Beykan
on 31 August 1804
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

56. Breguet No. 1794
Simple watch with a second hand
made for the Turkish market
Sold to Mr Mehamet, Ottoman ambassador
to France on 25 January 1806
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

57. Breguet No. 45
Simple timekeeper with case in two different
styles
Sold to the Duke of Praslin on 7 February
1806
Kremlin Museum, Moscow

58. Breguet No. 2008
Subscription watch, known as the medallion
watch
Sold to Prince Grassalkowics
on 12 November 1806
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

59. Breguet No. 418/1811
Medallion tact watch
Sold to Caroline Murat on 5 February 1806
ETA S.A. Manufacture Horlogère Suisse,
Granges
ETA S.A. Collection

60. Napoleon I and Abraham-Louis Breguet
visiting the 1806 Exhibition of Industrial
Products
Engraving from a book by Camille
Desfontaines, *Les Grands Ouvriers français*,
c.1880
Private collection

1807

61. Breguet No. 1717
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland
on 7 June 1808
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

62. Breguet No. 2603
Quarter-repeating medallion watch with
regulator dial
Sold to Éliisa Bonaparte, grand duchess of
Tuscany
and sister of Napoleon Bonaparte,
on 20 November 1813
Swiss National Museum, Zurich

63. Breguet No. 2173
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Louis Bonaparte
Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison
et de Bois-Préau, Rueil-Malmaison

64. Breguet No. 2585
Half-quarter repeating watch with complica-
tions
Sold to Prince Camille Borghese
on 28 June 1811
Musée National du Château de Fontaine-
bleau,
Fontainebleau

65. Letter sent to Abraham-Louis Breguet
from the Italian Crown treasurer, Milan,
on 4 December 1812
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives

66. Commission book (special orders)
10 April 1808-11 Octobre 1817
Page listing the order placed in 1810 for the
first wristwatch for Caroline Murat, Queen of
Naples
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives

67. Breguet No. 2727
Simple watch, known as a medallion watch
Sold to the Empress Marie-Louise
on 27 December 1813
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

68. Breguet No. 2784
Simple watch, known as a medallion watch
Sold to the Empress Marie-Louise
on 27 September 1813
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

69. Breguet No. 1702/407
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to General Lauriston on 21 March 1811
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

70. Breguet Chronometer No. 224
Simple watch based on the principles of a
timekeeper
Sold to Mr Varuhelle on 28 July 1809,
then to Alexandre de Humboldt on 31 July
1819
Beyer Watch & Clock Museum, Zurich

71. Breguet No. 2053
Subscription watch, known as a medallion
watch
Sold to Mr Aufresne on 25 August 1807
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

72. Breguet No. 2292
Medallion tact watch
Sold to Mr Labouchère of Amsterdam
on 28 October 1809
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

73. Breguet No. 2627
Medallion tact watch
Sold to Mr Titon on 22 October 1810
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

74. Breguet No. 2114
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Recordon on 29 June 1808
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
75. Breguet No. 2248
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Davin Leleu on 10 December 1807
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
76. Breguet No. 2434
Half-quarter repeating watch
Sold to Mr Galin on 8 October 1810
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
77. Breguet No. 2121
Half-quarter repeating watch
based on the principles of a timekeeper
Sold to Marshal Ney on 10 February 1813
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
78. Breguet No. 153/4570
Simple watch based on the principles of a timekeeper
Sold to Mr Barillon on 29 November 1810, then to Count Pozzo di Borgo on 25 July 1826
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
79. Montre Breguet No. 2336
Quarter-repeating hunter case watch
Sent to Mr de Betancourt for Tsar Alexander I of Russia in 1811
Private collection
80. Breguet No. 3825
Military counter to regulate the marching pace of army units
Delivered to General Brosin for Tsar Alexander I of Russia on 15 May 1822
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
81. Breguet No. 423/5
Marine clock
Sold to Tsar Alexander I of Russia in 1808 or 1809
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
82. Breguet No. 2173
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Louis Bonaparte on 7 June 1808
Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et de Bois-Préau, Rueil-Malmaison
- 1814-1819**
- 83 (a). *Tsar Alexander I of Russia*
Anonymous
Miniature oil painting
Department of Graphic Arts, Louvre, Paris
- (b)
Repair register Rh No. 19
18 September 1813-29 August 1814
Visit of Tsar Alexander I of Russia to Abraham-Louis Breguet on 3 April 1814
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives
84. Breguet No. 168/4718
Quarter-repeating watch
inscribed with *Donné à M. le baron Albert de Pichon-Longueville par Son Altesse Royale Mgr le Duc d'Angoulême, 1814*
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
85. Breguet No. 2200
Half-quarter repeating watch, with Turkish calibre,
based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Count Flahaut on 21 August 1814
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
86. Breguet No. 2686
Extra-flat, simple watch, based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Mr de Mondrond on 14 October 1815
Beyer Watch & Clock Museum, Zurich
87. Breguet No. 2901
Half-quarter repeating watch,
based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to the Duke of Frias on 12 January 1815 (?)
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
88. Breguet No. 3066
Half-quarter repeating watch
Sent to the Duke of Frias on 18 June 1818
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
89. Jean-Baptiste Jacques Augustin (1759-1832)
Louis XVIII, King of France
Miniature on ivory
Department of Graphic Arts, Louvre, Paris
90. Breguet No. 2919
Small simple watch made for the Turkish market
Sent to Mr Leroy (Breguet's representative in Istanbul) on 2 September 1816
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
91. Breguet No. 2952
Quarter-repeating watch,
made for the Turkish market
Sent to Mr Leroy (Breguet's representative in Istanbul) on 4 March 1817
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
92. Breguet No. 3001
Repeater watch, made for the Turkish market
Sold to Mr Codja Djami on 1 October 1817
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
93. Breguet No. 2890
Half-quarter repeating watch, Turkish calibre,
based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Mr Doazan on 11 April 1817
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
94. Breguet No. 3206
Quarter-repeating watch,
based on the principles of a timekeeper
Sold to Mr Rich on 14 April 1819
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
95. Breguet No. 2826
Hunter case tact watch
Sold to Colonel Harvey on 28 August 1816
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
96. Breguet No. 3322
Simple watch
Sold to Lord John Campbell on 30 September 1819
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
97. Breguet No. 3369
Quarter-repeating hunter case watch
Sold to Mr Henry Philip Hope (through James Fatton, Breguet's London representative) on 11 October 1819
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
98. Breguet No. 3023
Small quarter-repeating watch
Sold to the Duchess of Wellington on 1 August 1817
Department of Decorative Arts, Louvre, Paris
99. Breguet No. 3306
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Lady Maitland on 16 August 1819
Department of Decorative Arts, Louvre, Paris
100. Breguet No. 2910
Simple watch
Sent to Mr Wenham on 12 June 1816
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
101. Breguet No. 3048/680
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Count Apraxin on 1 April 1818
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
102. Breguet No. 3106
Watch marking the seconds,
based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Count Leon Rasumovsky on 30 April 1818
ETA S.A. Manufacture Horlogère Suisse, Granges,
ETA S.A. Collection
103. Breguet clock No. 3344
Small "four-part" quarter-repeating clock,
with grand and small strike mechanism and alarm
Sold to Prince Scherbatoff on 20 August 1819
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
104.
(a) Document describing the astronomical counter permitting the measurement of tenths of a second 1819, Paris.
(b) Report by Abraham-Louis Breguet, member of the jury at France's Exhibition of Industrial Products, 1819, Paris
Montres Breguet S.A. (a and b) Archives
- 1820**
105. Breguet No. 3424
Subscription watch
Sold to Mr Withingham on 8 January 1820
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
106. Breguet No. 3455
Half-quarter repeating watch
Sold to Mr Fouché, Count of Otrante, on 1 July 1820
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
107. Breguet No. 3535
Small simple medallion watch with off-centre dial
Sold to Count Malicoff on 11 April 1820
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
108. Breguet No. 2995/1085
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Rowse on 18 August 1821
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
109. Breguet No. 3643
Quarter-repeating watch
Sold to Mr Coriolis on 23 November 1821
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

110. Breguet No. 3537
Simple watch
Sold to the Countess of Laval on 17 July 1821
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
111. Letter ordering marine chronometers, dated 18 September 1820
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives
112. Breguet No. 3196
Twin barrel marine chronometer
Sold to the Minister of Marine on 14 January 1822
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
113. Breguet No. 4806
Twin barrel marine chronometer, small model
Sold to Mr Quesnel on 27 May 1830
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
114. Breguet No. 5107
Twin barrel marine chronometer, small model
Sold to the Minister of Marine on 9 January 1841
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
115. Breguet No. 3787
Pocket timekeeper based on a twin barrel marine chronometer
Sold to Count Schouvaloff on 27 December 1823
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
116. Breguet No. 1328
Experimental timekeeper
Made between 1804 and 1817, this precision instrument was the personal watch of Antoine-Louis Breguet (1776-1858)
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
117. Breguet No. 3519
Half-quarter repeating watch marking the seconds
Sold to General Davidoff on 8 March 1822
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
118. Breguet No. 3724
Simple watch
Sold to Mr Lansky on 5 September 1822
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
119. Breguet No. 3893
Medallion tact watch
Sold to Colonel Cooke on 22 March 1822
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
120. Breguet No. 4270
Quarter-repeating watch, based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Mr Suzanne de Bréauté senior on 9 July 1825
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
121. Breguet No. 3984
Flat, twin barrel watch, based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Prince Scherbatoff on 16 November 1823
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
122. Breguet No. 3833
Slim, half-quarter repeating watch, based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Mr Thomas Hawley on 12 May 1823
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
123. Marie-Louise Lassieur, née Breguet (1759- ?)
Abraham-Louis Breguet
Miniature on ivory
c.1820
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives
124. Workshop notebook written in the hand of Abraham-Louis Breguet, describing the installation of a marine chronometer aboard a ship.
c.1820
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives
- Central showcase**
125. Watercolour drawing of Breguet's pyramid-shaped clock No. 449
c.1830
Montres Breguet S.A. Archives
126. Breguet No. 449
Pyramid-shaped clock, brown patinated bronzes
by Pierre-Philippe Thomire and Nicolas Delafontaine,
adorned with gilded bronze appliqué motifs
Sold to Mr Follope on 10 March 1827
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
127. Breguet No. 666
Sympathique clock
Sold to the Prince Regent of England (the future King George IV) in August 1814
Lent by Her Majesty the Queen
128. Henry Bone (1755-1834)
Georges IV, King of England
Miniature on enamel
Department of Graphic Arts, Louvre, Paris
129. Breguet No. 686
Simple watch
Sold to Count P. de Diakoff on 19 August 1852
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
130. Breguet No. 4288
Half-quarter repeating watch, based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Théodore de Yermoloff on 31 October 1836
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
131. Breguet No. 5008
Half-quarter repeating watch
Sold to Count Leopold Le Hon on 19 September 1856
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
132. Breguet No. 5038
Simple wristwatch, based on the principle of a timekeeper
Sold to Count A. Demidoff on 13 October 1832
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
133. Breguet No. 180
Gold ring watch; winding and setting by means of a crown (right); alarm function set by a smaller crown (left) and, when it goes off, releases a small pin into the back of the finger
Sold to Prince Alexandre Demidoff on 18 October 1836
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
134. Plate showing the patent for the constant-force escapement mechanism
Watercolour drawing. 1798
Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle, Paris
135. Plate showing the patent for the tourbillon regulator
Watercolour drawing
1801
Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle, Paris
136. Breguet No. 1252
Timekeeper with tourbillon regulator and eight-day power reserve
Sold to the Prince Regent of England (the future King George IV) in August 1814
Private collection
137. Breguet No. 2567
Simple timekeeper with tourbillon regulator
Sold to Mr Bigot on 21 March 1812
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
138. Breguet No. 1188
Simple timekeeper with tourbillon regulator
Sold to Don Antonio of Spain on 1 August 1808
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
139. Breguet No. 4009
Observation chronometer
Gold case, guilloché silver dial, anchor escapement
Sold to Mr Whaley on 6 January 1825
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
140. Breguet No. 453
Decorative precision clock
Brown patinated bronzes by Pierre-Philippe Thomire representing *Genius* and *Prudence*,
Sold to Mr de Pourtalès on 22 October 1806
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
141. Book of watercolour drawings illustrating Breguet watch No. 1978
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
- Works on the walls**
142. Breguet No. 2150
Decorative clock striking hours and half hours
Brown patinated bronzes representing *Marius on the Ruins of Carthage*
Sold to Mlle de Walckiers on 10 July 1827
Private collection
143. Anonymous
Abraham-Louis Breguet
Oil on canvas
Before 1800
Private collection
144. Sales register No. II
Page listing the Breguet double regulator No. 3177
Sold to Louis XVIII on 11 May 1821
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
145. Breguet Regulator No. 3144
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
146. Breguet No. 3778
Travel clock
24 x 15.5 x 9.5 cm.
Bronze box, silver guilloché dial, indicating the day and date.
Sold in 1842 to Princess Demidoff
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

Illustrations available to the press

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Perpetual or self-winding watches



Breguet No. 5 watch face

Quarter-repeating, self-winding watch.

D. 0.54 cm. Gold guilloché case, silver guilloché dial with Roman numerals and small seconds dial at VI, Breguet blued steel hands, phase of the moon indication, 60-hour power reserve indication and anchor escapement.

Sold to Count Journiac Saint-Méard on 14 March 1794.

Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

© Montres Breguet SA

Face



Breguet No. B1160

Minute-repeating, self-winding watch

Replica of the Breguet watch No. 160, known as the "Marie-Antoinette", made by Montres Breguet S.A. 2005-2008

D. 0.62 cm. Gold case, rock crystal dial, gold and steel hands, full perpetual calendar, equation of time, indicator of power reserve, metallic thermometer, independent large seconds hand and small seconds dial

Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

© Montres Breguet S.A.

Mechanism



Repeater watch



Face

Back

Breguet No. 3066
 Half-quarter repeating watch.
 D. 4.8 cm. Guilloché gold case, guilloché silver dial, large aperture for phases of the moon, ruby cylinder escapement. Sent to the Duke of Frias on 18 June 1818.
 Montres Breguet S.A. Collection

Subscription watch



Face



Back

Breguet No. 947
 Subscription watch
 D. 6 cm. Guilloché silver case with gold fillets, fluted caseband, dial with two-way legibility, ruby cylinder escapement.
 Sold to Count Gevowsky in July-August 1802
 Department of Decorative Arts, Louvre, Paris, inv. OA 10092
 © Montres Breguet S.A.

Clocks



Breguet No. 3778
Travel clock
24 x 15.5 x 9.5 cm. Bronze box,
guilloché silver dial, indication
of the day and date
Sold to Princess Demidoff in 1842
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance



Breguet No. 666 and No. 721
Sympathique clock and watch
Box: H. 25.4 cm; Mahogany box with four
glass sides, silver dial
Simple watch Breguet No. 721,
D. 6 cm. Gold case, enamel dial. Sold to the
Prince Regent of England
(the future King George IV) in August 1814
Lent by Her Majesty the Queen
The Royal Collection Trust, London
© 2009 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Tact watch



Back



Face



Open

Breguet No. 611
Small medallion tact watch
D. 5.2 cm. Blue enamelled gold case, arrow inlaid
with diamonds, tactile parts comprising round
diamonds, silver dial, ruby cylinder escapement.
Sold to Josephine Bonaparte on 18 February 1800.
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
© Montres Breguet S.A.

Military watches and clocks



Face

Mechanism



Breguet No. 45

Simple watch, timekeeper “in two styles”, perpetual Gregorian and Republican calendars
 D. 6.5 cm. Gold case, silver body, dustproof case in gilded metal engraved with the corresponding months of the Gregorian and Republican calendars, annular dial displaying Revolutionary decimal time, detent escapement.
 Sold to the Duke of Praslin on 7 February 1806.
 Kremlin Museum, Moscow
 © Kremlin Museum, Moscow

Mechanism



Face



Breguet No. 4009

“Double seconds” watch or observation chronometer.
 Foreunner of the modern chronograph.
 Gold case, guilloché silver dial, anchor escapement
 Sold to Mr Whaley on 6 January 1825
 Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
 © Montres Breguet S.A.

Breguet No. 3196
Twin barrel marine chronometer
17.5 x 22 x 19 cm.

Mahogany box with brass hinges and handles; brass gimbal and bowl; silvered metal dial with small sub-dials indicating the hours and minutes above the seconds dial, Earnshaw detent escapement.

Sold to the Minister of Marine on 14 January 1822.
Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
© Montres Breguet S.A.



Back



Movement



Open

Breguet No. 2585

Half-quarter repeating watch with complications, engraved, on the back, with a map of Piedmont and the Milanese region

Maison Breguet and P.B. Tavernier

D. 5 x 5 x 0.5 cm. Winder : L. 7 cm.

Gold hunter case, silvered back engraved with a map of nine Italian counties, guilloché silver dial, three off-centre dials indicating the seconds, days of the week and calendar, ruby cylinder escapement.

Sold to Prince Camille Borghese on 28 June 1811.

Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau, Fontainebleau

© RMN / Gérard Blot

Turkish watch



Case Back



Case Face



Back

Breguet No. 1320

Quarter-repeating watch made for the Turkish market.
 D. 5.2 cm. Double enamelled gold case, enamel dial with Turkish numerals,
 Breguet blued steel hands, ruby cylinder escapement.
 Sold to Mr Esseid Ali Effendi for the Sultan of Beykan on 31 August 1804.
 Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
 © Montres Breguet S.A.

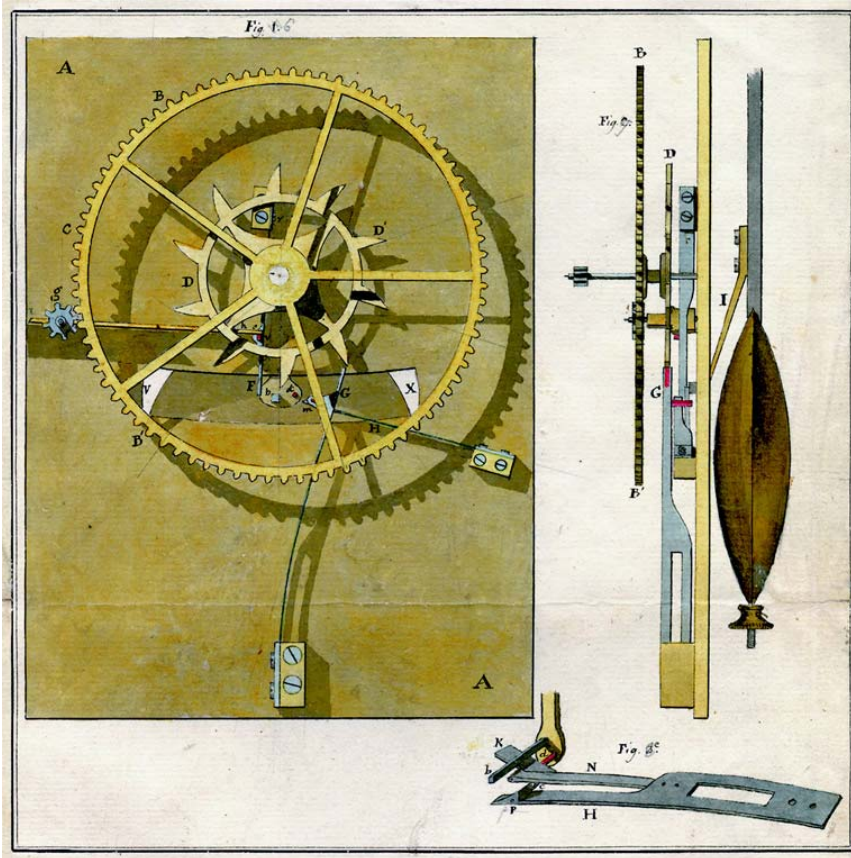
Ring watch



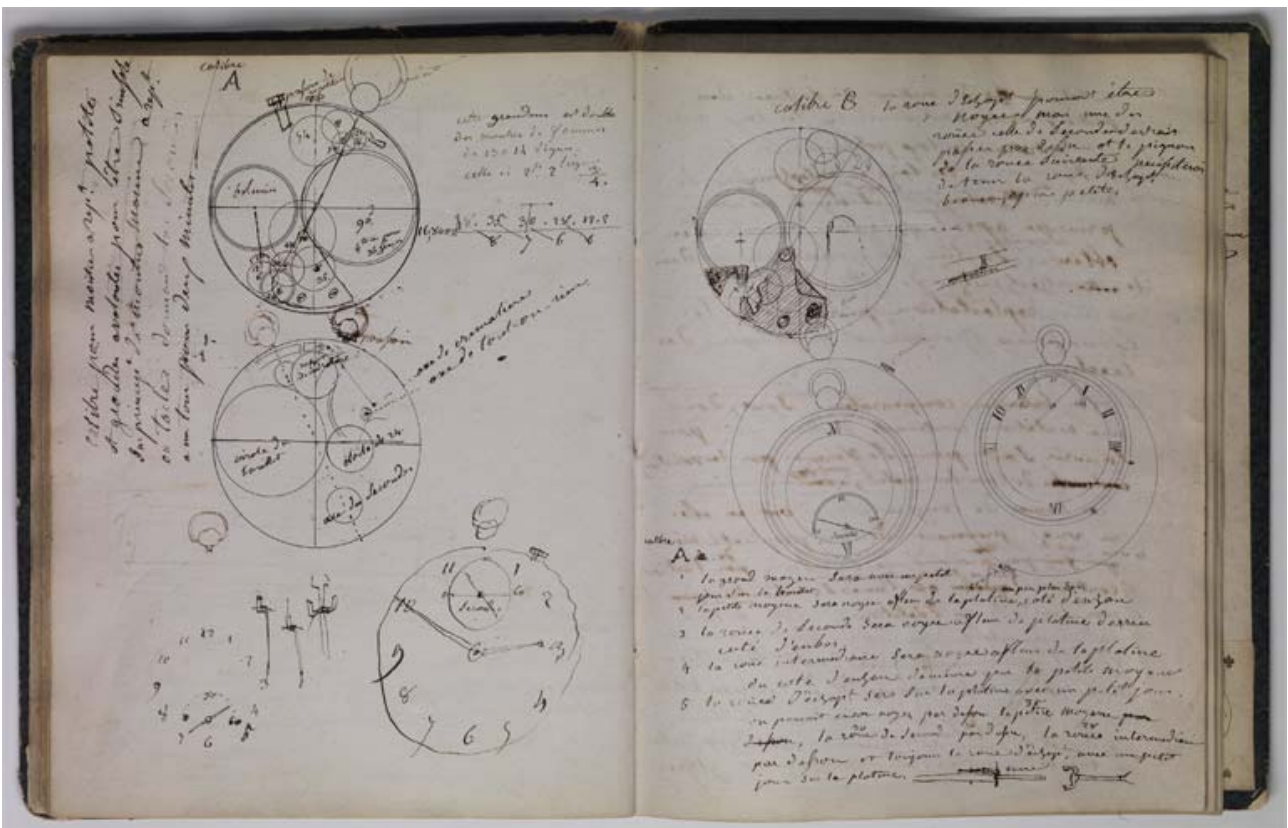
Breguet No. 180

Gold ring watch; winding and setting by means of a crown (right);
 alarm function set by a smaller crown (left) and, when it goes off,
 releases a small pin into the back of the finger.
 D. 2.5 cm. Gold dial with off-centre circle of Roman numerals and small
 seconds dial at XII, Breguet blued steel hands, cylinder escapement.
 Sold to Prince Alexandre Demidoff on 18 October 1836.
 Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
 © Montres Breguet S.A.

Archives



Patent for Abraham-Louis Breguet's invention registered on 9 March 1798
 Watchmaking mechanism called constant-force escapement
 Paper. 0.365 x 0.555 x 0.01 cm
 Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle, Paris, inv. 1BA146
 © Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle



Workshop notebook in the hand of Abraham-Louis Breguet
 Montres Breguet S.A. Collection
 © Montres Breguet S.A.

Visitor information

Where: Louvre – Sully Wing, Salle de La Chapelle

Recommended entrances to the museum:

- via the Pyramid: main entrance, 9am-10pm, access to the Napoleon Hall, reception areas, auditorium.

Recommended entrances for temporary exhibitions:

- via the Passage Richelieu: 9am-6pm, for ticket-holders, groups, Friends of the Louvre, card-holders (Louvre jeunes, Louvre professionnels, Louvre enseignants, Louvre étudiants partenaires) and auditorium audiences already with tickets.

- via the Galerie du Carrousel: access via the Carrousel gardens, 9am-10pm, or via 99, rue de Rivoli.

When: daily except Tuesdays, 9am-6pm. Late-night openings until 10pm on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Admission: access to the exhibition is included in the admission to the permanent collections of the museum: €9; €6 after 6pm on Wednesdays and Fridays. Free admission for under-26s from the European Union, under-18s, the unemployed, card-holders (Louvre jeunes, Louvre professionnels, Louvre enseignants and Louvre étudiants partenaires) and Friends of the Louvre. Free admission for everybody on the first Sunday of the month.

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In the the following stores: Fnac, Carrefour, Leclerc, Continent, Auchan, Extrapole, Hyper-média, Le Bon Marché,

Le Printemps, Galeries Lafayette, BHV, Virgin Megastore.

At Transilien / SNCF in Ile-de-France railway stations.

- Over 20 tickets: Boutique Musée & Compagnie, Tel: 01.40.13.49.13

Validity of tickets purchased in advance is unlimited. They entitle the holder to direct access via the Passage Richelieu or Galerie du Carrousel.

Information: Tel : 01.40.20.53.17 (information desk under the Pyramid) or www.louvre.fr

Auditorium du Louvre: Information: 01.40.20.55.55 / Reservations: 01.40.20.55.00

