

Tiffany's Fashion Through Time

All too often, making jewelled watches simply means seeing how much metal can be replaced with diamonds, sapphires and rubies - admittedly with the occasional spectacular result. But the usual run of the mill is something less than a watch and only jewellery in the sense that wealth is being flaunted.

Tiffany's exhibition at their New Bond Street store is a welcome illustration of what can be done when imagination and flair are put into practice and proof, too, that mixing jewellery and watchmaking is not necessarily a matter of finding the lowest common denominator.

While Tiffany's reputation as a jeweller clearly needs no explanation here, the company's watchmaking past and credentials are less well known. It is, however, a history that even includes the establishment of what was one of the largest watch factories Switzerland had yet seen - a five storey building on Geneva's Place Cornavin completed in the 1870's.

As it happens, the *manufacture* experience did not exactly work out and was not the success Charles Lewis Tiffany hoped for. Within a few years the business was sold on to a pair of watch entrepreneurs who had already established themselves close to the top of the industry. They were Antoine de Patek and Jean Adrien Philippe with whom Tiffany already had a good relationship being the pair's first retailers in the US.

Scarab Lapel Watch ref. G2006.17 (1888). Red enamel case accented with rose-cut diamonds form the scarab's wings, which release via a lever to expose the dial. The detailed legs and thorax of the underside also opens to reveal a circular picture frame.



C Renaissance Revival Lapel Watch and Chatelaine ref. G1999.04 (1872-1879). Enamel mimics shell or hardstone cameos in the mythological figure Bacchus, god of wine, depicted on the watchcase. While the chatelaine plaques are adorned with putti and urns, quivers and flaming torch within a rose gold frame of scrolling leaves and collet-set diamonds. Layering the enamel in this style was a 19th century revival of a typical 16th century technique that allowed outline without metal.

D Duke Family Pendant Watch ref. G2004.05 (c. 1920). A crafted guilloché enamel design with emeralds and rose-cut diamond border in platinum. Originally belonging to the Nanaline Holt Inman Duke, mother of the tobacco heiress Doris Duke, the watch epitomizes the glamour of early 20th century fashion.

From this point on Tiffany learnt to build on their strengths as jewellers and retailers and to forge close relationships with the best suppliers in the business. And the results on display at the exhibition speak for themselves.

From diamond-set lapel watches made at the end of the 19th Century through art deco watches from the Jazz Age, post-war pieces reflecting the booming economy of the 1950's to contemporary pieces, the display is a showcase of styles and techniques that is or could be matched by few other houses. Opalescent layers of guilloché enamel and delicate jewel settings are matched by beautifully formed cases that while hard to imagine on modern wristwatches point to possible futures. ○

A Diamond Wrist Watch ref. G2006.13 (c. 1928). Inspired by the architecture of the Art Deco movement, the diamond cuts - brilliant, square, emerald and baguette - mirror the clean, geometric shapes of the case and bracelet.

B Gold and diamond brochure watch ref. G2006.11 (c. 1893-1905). The floral design created from 18ct. gold and diamonds covers the atchcase and suspended ornamental detachable brooch.



A



B



D

Further information: Fashion Through Time: Ladies' Watches From The Tiffany's & Co. On display in London between 3rd September and 29th October. Tiffany's & Co. 25 Old Bond Street, London W1S 4QB, tel: 020 7409 2790. www.tiffany.com