

Quality, Craftsmanship, and Design

An Interview with Frédéric de Narp,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Cartier North America

EDITORS' NOTE In his current post since September 2005, Frédéric de Narp has worked for Cartier since 1991, serving in such notable posts as Retail Manager of Cartier Switzerland, Retail Manager of Cartier Italy, and CEO of Cartier Italy. De Narp holds a master's degree from the University of Le Havre.



Frédéric de Narp

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 1847 by Louis-François Cartier and headquartered in Paris, Cartier SA (www.cartier.com) was deemed "the jeweler of kings and the king of jewelers" by no less a connoisseur than King Edward VII. Today, it remains one of the world's most esteemed luxury brands, designing and manufacturing exclusive collections of fine jewelry, wristwatches, leather goods, fragrances, pens, eyewear, and scarves, which are distributed worldwide through more than 280 Cartier boutiques. In addition, Cartier watches and accessories are distributed through select dealers. The firm is a subsidiary of Compagnie Financière Richemont SA, a Swiss luxury goods conglomerate.

What news did Cartier release at the Biennale des Antiquaires in Paris this September?

Cartier launched a new High Jewelry collection of more than 60 unique creations and 20 antique jewels and objects at the 24th Biennale des Antiquaires in Paris at the Grand Palais this September. We have exhibited at the Biennale since its inception more than 40 years ago. It is one of the most important art fairs in the world, and it's stimulating to present our collection there, among art. It's a good frame of reference to present never-before-seen pieces to all of the interesting people who visit from all over the world.

What is the theme or philosophy behind the pieces?

We were inspired to come up with something new and modern, but linked to the Cartier tradition. The designers worked around imaginary creatures – chimeras, dragons, and flying snakes – all with different and unique shapes, which were favorites of Louis Cartier at the beginning of the 20th century and his father in the 1880s. The figurative and symbolic theme is one that we have always worked with and is also deeply inscribed in every culture and the human imagination. Jeanne Toussaint [Cartier's former Director of High Jewelry, appointed in 1933]

used this theme until she left in the '70s, and it was also seen in Cartier's work in the '80s and '90s.

For this new collection, some of the creations were also inspired by the stones – in this case, the rare and amazing collection of padparadscha sapphires found by Cartier more than two years ago. They are very precious and are among the most valuable stones in the world. It's very rare to have such a heavy stone, between 20 and 30 carats, featured in two of the rings in the collection.

The padparadscha name comes from the Sanskrit word for "lotus flower." The stones exhibit a range of magical hues from pinks to oranges to reds, which is very moving and rare. These priceless gems, with a provenance from ancient mines in Ceylon, were purchased by Cartier in its never-ending quest for exceptional stones. Their weight, color, transparency, purity, and delicate hues make them legendary stones.

Can you discuss the restoration of the ceremonial necklace that belonged to the Maharajah Bhupindar Singh of Patiala?

The diamond necklace was created at the workshops of Cartier Paris in 1928. The piece was commissioned by Maharajah Bhupindar Singh of Patiala, who had been a loyal Cartier customer since the turn of the century. It is part of a ceremonial parure. The choker was lost, but has since been found and acquired by Cartier.

Cartier has spent the past couple of years meticulously and accurately restoring the piece to its original state, as several of the diamonds had disappeared and some links were missing. It took more than eight months to source old-cut diamonds whose characteristics complied strictly with both the selection criteria in force at the time and the descriptions in our records. The same demands were applied to the setting, whose platinum links were restored to match the original precisely. It is modern, in both its geometric form and its dimensions, and it is a testimony of the precious and creative link between India and Cartier.

What new pieces will be introduced in the coming year?

In addition to the new High Jewelry collection, Cartier is introducing jewelry with a art deco motif. Some of the new jewelry creations feature love, orchid, and panther motifs and



modern designs in rich materials like onyx, ceramic, black sapphire, and diamond.

We will be introducing new shapes and skins in our Marcello handbag and will also offer a made-to-measure handbag service, creating one-of-a-kind creations for our clients. Cartier will also launch a new men's fragrance, Roadster. We have taken inspiration for this scent from our coveted men's watch of the same name.

What is new with the Love collection?

The Love collection continues to be one of Cartier's most popular and iconic collections, thanks in part to the Love Charity initiative. With the initiative now in its third year, I'm proud to say the collection has allowed Cartier to donate more than \$3 million to charities, showing our true commitment and passion for a cause.

Do you anticipate future additions to the watch collection?

The Ballon Bleu de Cartier Flying Tourbillon, introduced this month, is Cartier's first timepiece to bear the Geneva Seal hallmark, awarded to a very select number of watchmakers as a guarantee of premier quality. The Flying Tourbillon combines the watchmaking traditions of Geneva with the modernity of a masculine, elegant, and graphical design. With a slate gray guilloché dial highlighted by an open-worked grid for the minutes, the Flying Tourbillon has a circular-grained crown in 18-carat rose gold set with a sapphire cabochon and contains 19 jewels and more than 140 parts.

Cartier will also introduce a new limited-edition Roadster watch featuring rich walnut wood and luminescent white gold. To fully appreciate the Roadster, one must first understand its inspiration. In the '50s and '60s, people began racing and customizing their automobiles, and the automobile industry responded by creating a segment of automobiles referred to as roadsters. They were exciting cars that were born to be wild. They were feel-good toys for drivers that needed a little more than a car to drive. The Cartier Roadster shares this outgoing spirit by offering a little more than just the time to its owners. It offers an experience that is truly Cartier.

For women, the le Cirque Animalier de Cartier collection features an elephant, panda, and tiger motif and explores Cartier's history in Asia. The watches showcase Cartier's heritage as a jeweler with lifelike animal designs. ●

A necklace from Cartier's new Biennale des Antiquaires collection