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— IN ASSOCIATION WITH —

BACS & RUSSO

PRESS RELEASE

Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo Presents the 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition, Created in Partnership with Massena LAB and Raúl Pagès

The Special-Edition Wristwatch Features a Proprietary Hand-Finished Movement and is Limited to 99 Examples in Stainless Steel



The 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition
CHF 8,800

GENEVA – 24 April 2024 – Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo is delighted to introduce its latest collaborative horological creation: the 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition. This exquisite vintage-inspired wristwatch is the result of a creative partnership between Phillips Watches leadership, William Massena from the esteemed horological concept studio Massena LAB, and the masterful touch of award-winning independent watchmaker Raúl Pagès.

The dial finds inspiration from the Observatory-grade Patek Philippe Ref. 2458 wristwatch, a unique masterpiece crafted in platinum for the distinguished collector and lawyer Joe Ben “J.B.” Champion, Jr. in 1952. Notably, when

this unique vintage wristwatch last sold publicly at auction in 2014, it set a record for the most valuable time-only wristwatch ever sold at auction, cementing its place in history.

Despite its historic influences, this collaboration remains profoundly modern, building on the technical platform first established by Massena LAB and Raúl Pagès in 2022, with the successful release of their Magraph Limited Edition wristwatch.

The result is the all-new 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition, featuring a 38.5mm × 10mm case made of 316L stainless steel, and with the manual-wind, proprietary caliber M690 ticking inside. The impressive caliber M690 is an iteration of Massena LAB's first movement – but here with sub seconds at 9 o'clock-and features an impressive level of traditional hand-decoration, which is achieved by a network of Swiss craftsmen whose work is overseen by Pagès himself. Pagès also designed and conceived the overall architecture of the movement, but he does not personally handle the production or decoration of the movement like he would in one of his own watches. This is the caliber M690's first-ever appearance in a publicly released wristwatch.

Our collective love for vintage watches and the stories woven around them served as our guide in creating the 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition. Crucially, this admiration didn't confine our creative process and exploration; rather, it empowered it. That is the reason we opted for a two-tone grey dial with yellow gold accents found throughout the pearl-style minute track, the handset (hour, minute, small seconds), and the hour markers (Arabic numerals for six and 12 o'clock, batons used for the remaining). The cool-tone grey-and-gold colour scheme lends a slightly more contemporary aesthetic compared to the traditional Observatory Dial format.

The 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition wristwatch has been produced in an exclusive run of exactly 99 timepieces in stainless steel. All watches will be available for purchase exclusively through Phillips, for CHF 8,800. Please reach out to massenalab@phillips.com , to register your interest in purchasing the 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition.

Aurel Bacs, Senior Consultant, Bacs & Russo and **Alexandre Ghotbi, Deputy Chairman & Head of Watches, Continental Europe & Middle East**, jointly said: "This watch is a story of friendship, three friends sitting having dinner together and imagining a watch they would create if they could. The result is a modern watch but with a nod to a golden era for which we have a particular appreciation. We loved the Magraph that William had launched using a proprietary movement developed by the great Raul Pagès and a tribute to the beautiful vintage Audemars Piguet VZS calibers. Our idea was to place the seconds at 9 o'clock for a more dramatic effect but, to create a bit more symmetry, we decided to have our brand names placed at 3 o'clock in a circle like as found in the JP Champion Patek Philippe. The two-tone grey dial was our desire to place the watch in its era and the gold elements add a dash of colour. This was certainly the easiest of our collaborations as we were all on the same page from the beginning and understood each other without even speaking! We truly hope that the collector community will appreciate the watch as much as we enjoyed designing it."

William Massena, founder of Massena LAB, added: "Creating the 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition with my friends Aurel and Alexandre has been a real pleasure. As a collector of vintage watches, and having worked for years in the auction world myself, the opportunity to work with Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo, a known leader in today's watch industry, has been an honour. And, of course, to do all of this with the help of Raúl Pagès who has contributed greatly to the caliber M690, it should go without saying that I am feeling quite lucky to have friends and partners such as these."

An Organic Collaboration

The 1952 Observatory Dial Limited project was born out of the personal friendship between three men and the passion they share for the world of fine watch collecting. Aurel Bacs, Senior Consultant for Phillips Watches; Alexandre Ghotbi, Phillips Deputy Chairman and Head of Watches, Europe and Middle East; and William Massena, founder of Massena LAB, have been close friends and colleagues for more than 25 years.

After several years of collaborative watch releases for Massena LAB and Phillips, with other partners, it felt completely natural to come together to create a special watch that shares the Phillips and Massena names on the same dial. Massena was also able to bring on Raúl Pagès to oversee the assembly process and entire hand-decoration of the calibre M690, just as he did for the Magraph.

The project came together swiftly. Aurel, Alexandre, and William finalised the watch's design over dinner one night in Downtown Manhattan. The trio's longtime friendship and history of shared horological experiences made it extremely easy to communicate and work together on design and production. They each understood exactly what the other wanted to achieve through the collaboration.

Pagès, meanwhile, is fresh off winning the inaugural edition of the "Louis Vuitton Watch Prize for Independent Creatives," which he was awarded in February 2024. In addition to celebrating his big win, Pagès continues to work on delivering his highly sought-after RP1 Régulateur à Détente to clients – after all, it is the watch that earned him the top prize. So, it goes without saying that Pagès has been extremely busy lately, and yet he still found the time to work with us on creating the 1952 Observatory Dial Limited Edition.

This watch wouldn't be the same if we were missing any collaborators.

Technical Details

Movement: Manual-winding, Massena LAB proprietary caliber M690. Designed by Massena LAB in collaboration with Raúl Pagès.

Functions: Hours, minutes, small seconds at 9 o'clock.

Dial: Two tone grey dial with applied indexes and Arabic numerals 12 and 6 in yellow gold, subsidiary dial for the small seconds.

Case: 38.5mm 316L stainless steel, inspired by highly collectible watches from the 1940s and 50s.

Crystal: Sapphire crystal with anti-reflective coating on each side. Exhibition case back also with sapphire crystal.

ABOUT PHILLIPS IN ASSOCIATION WITH BACS & RUSSO

The team of specialists at Phillips Watches is dedicated to an uncompromised approach to quality, transparency, and client service. Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo holds the world record for the most successful watch auction, with its Geneva Watch Auction: XIV having realized \$74.5 million in 2021. 2023 marked the second most successful year for Phillips in Association with Bacs & Russo with an annual total of \$215.8 million.

Record-breaking prices include:

1. Paul Newman's Rolex "Paul Newman" Daytona reference 6239 (CHF 17,709,894 / US\$17,752,500) – New York Auction: Winning Icons – 26 October 2017 – Highest result ever achieved for any vintage wristwatch at auction.
2. Patek Philippe reference 1518 in stainless steel (CHF 11,020,000 / US\$11,112,020) – Geneva Watch Auction: FOUR – 12 November 2016 – Highest result ever achieved for a vintage Patek Philippe wristwatch at auction.

ABOUT PHILLIPS

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