



News Release

V&A to open first major exhibition in almost 30 years dedicated to *Cartier* jewels and watches **Tickets go on sale today**

Cartier

V&A South Kensington

The Sainsbury Gallery

12 April 2025 – 16 November 2025

vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/cartier | [@V_and_A](https://twitter.com/V_and_A)



Opening on 12th April 2025, the V&A will stage the UK's first major exhibition in almost 30 years dedicated to Cartier jewels and watches, exploring how the Maison became an unparalleled force in the jewellery and watch world. Tickets have been released today.

Featuring more than 350 objects, the exhibition will chart the evolution of the house's legacy of art, design and craftsmanship since the turn of the 20th century. It was at that point that the three grandsons of founder Louis-François set out to create the first globally recognised jewellery house, establishing branches in Paris, London and New York. With an enviable client list of royalty and aristocracy, Cartier became known as 'the jeweller of kings and the king of jewellers' and later broadened its appeal thanks to the devotion of leading creatives from the worlds of cinema, music and fashion.

The exhibition will include precious jewels and showstopping objects, historic gemstones, iconic watches and clocks from the V&A and Cartier Collection, as well as previously unseen drawings from the V&A and Cartier archives, together with works lent by His Majesty The King from the Royal Collection, major UK and international museums, and private collections.

The exhibition design is led by British architect and artist Asif Khan MBE, continuing a tradition of landmark collaborations where artists have shaped Cartier's scenography.

Highlights will include the Williamson Diamond brooch commissioned by Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 featuring the rare 23.6 carat pink Williamson diamond; the Scroll Tiara commissioned in 1902 and worn to the coronation of Elizabeth II, and by Rihanna on the cover of *W magazine* in 2016; a rose clip brooch (1938) worn by Princess Margaret at her sister's coronation; Grace Kelly's engagement ring (1956), from the Monaco Princely Palace Collection, that she wore in her final film *High Society* (1956); an amethyst and sapphire brooch made by Cartier London (c.1933) and worn by Jacques Cartier's wife Nelly; Mexican film star María Félix's exceptional snake necklace

(1968); the majestic Manchester Tiara from the V&A collection, made in 1903 for the Dowager Duchess of Manchester; a collection of panther jewels, one of the House's most enduring and instantly recognisable symbols, including a bracelet of pavé diamonds flecked with onyx (1978); and a selection of Cartier timepieces that embody its unique and pioneering approach to watchmaking, including the Crash wristwatch, designed by Cartier London (1967).

Exhibition curators Helen Molesworth and Rachel Garrahan, said: *“Cartier is one of the most famous jewellery houses in the world. This exhibition will explore how Louis, Pierre and Jacques Cartier, together with their father Alfred, adopted a strategy of original design, exceptional craftsmanship and international expansion that transformed the Parisian family jeweller into a household name. With its world-class jewellery collection, the V&A is the perfect stage to celebrate the pioneering achievements of Cartier and its transformative ability to remain at the centre of culture and creativity for more than a century. We are excited to be able to share with visitors some of Cartier’s most famous creations as well as revealing previously unseen objects and archive material that further enriches our understanding of a jewellery house that continues to influence the way we adorn ourselves today.”*

Exhibition Designer Asif Khan, said: *“I wanted our collaboration to be a dreamscape where art and science converge, with Cartier’s pieces suspended in light, time and sound, allowing history to breathe and the future to linger.”*

Across three main sections the exhibition will explore the creativity of Cartier and the emergence of its signature style, the legacy of its technical ingenuity and craftsmanship, as well as its sophisticated approach to image-making and maintaining its legacy and relevance in a changing world. The exhibition will cast a light on the history of Cartier London and will culminate in a spectacular display of tiaras.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about *Cartier* please contact Callum Walker on c.walker@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 4509 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

About the Exhibition

The exhibition opens with an introduction to Louis, Pierre and Jacques Cartier, who were united in their ambition to grow the family business, which had been established by their grandfather in 1847, into a business of global renown. Their close bond and their complementary skill sets enabled them to expand the house internationally and at the highest level of society. This introduction will feature the V&A's Manchester tiara, a majestic 1903 design. Made in France for an American who was married to an Englishman, it embodies Cartier's early aspirations and the global business to come.

The first of three main exhibition sections focuses on the creativity of Cartier: sources of inspiration, the emergence of the Cartier style, and the strength of its relationships with key clients and how these collaborations resulted in some of its most magnificent creations.

Cartier's creative genius notably lay in exploring decorative arts history from its doorstep and around the globe in the first decades of the 20th century and translating it into its own creations with imagination, discernment and authenticity. The emergence of the 'Garland Style' will be explored – a light, feminine and romantic aesthetic inspired by 18th century French architecture and decorative arts – as well as Cartier's early global-inspired pieces including a Cartier London scarab brooch with colourful, calibr -cut gem-set wings, a diamond-set, openwork piece inspired by the bazuband – a traditional Indian upper arm bracelet and an exquisite Islamic-inspired diamond plaque brooch given to the museum to commemorate the Cartier exhibition and exhibited for the first time.

This section goes on to explore how the Maison developed its own instantly recognisable signature style, one that combined modernity and innovation with elegance and refinement. From early on, Cartier experimented with recurring motifs, essential lines striking contrasts in bold colour combinations and a harmony of space and volume, and exceptional quality of materials and craftsmanship, consistently pushing boundaries and creating an inimitable philosophy of design. Examples of Cartier's strong Art Deco style will be embodied in a geometric 1925 brooch with a daring combination of orange coral and green emerald and a versatile 1941 Cartier London white diamond and platinum brooch with a harmonious, monochrome simplicity.

The Cartier brothers were skilled in establishing and developing client relationships at the very highest level, and many unique creations were born out of those relationships. A highlight object in this section is the Williamson Diamond brooch, on loan from the Royal Collection. It was commissioned from Cartier London by Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the year of her coronation, and features the rare 23.6 carat pink Williamson diamond that she had received as a wedding gift in 1947. Nearby on display will be a rose clip brooch that was previously in the private collection of Princess Margaret, now in the Cartier Collection – one of her favourite pieces that she wore at her sister's coronation. A 1928 ceremonial diamond necklace and choker commissioned by the Maharaja of Patiala will encapsulate Cartier's sophistication in combining Indian

jewellery tradition with Art Deco modernism.

The next section of the exhibition focuses on the Cartier workshops, its exceptional access to important gemstones and its technical invention. Client demand led each Cartier branch to establish its own in-house workshops where craftsmen worked to the firm's exacting standards. Visitors will see how the panther, one of the Maison's most iconic symbols, is made today, using many of the same jewellery techniques that have existed for centuries. Examples of this motif will feature in a 1914 wristwatch – the earliest example of the panther skin pattern used in a Cartier creation, alongside a 1978 panther bracelet of pavé diamonds set with onyx.

Key to the continued assurance of quality in the production of Cartier jewels, is the use of outstanding materials. In the early 20th century, Cartier secured access to some of the most important gems in the world, notably thanks to sourcing trips made by Jacques Cartier to the Middle East, India and Sri Lanka, as well as its elite clientele and dealer networks. From the rarest rubies to the largest sapphires and historic diamonds and even exceptional coloured diamonds, some of the most precious gems in the world have passed through the hands of the craftsmen of Cartier. In a section entirely devoted to the materials behind the creations, some of the finest gems in the world in Cartier designs will be on view. A necklace owned by American heiress Barbara Hutton made from one of the finest collections of jade beads in existence will feature here, as will the 101-carat vivid yellow diamond Allnatt brooch. An unrivalled display of Tutti Frutti jewels will also be on display in this section including the Mountbatten bandeau, which was made by Cartier London in 1928 and a rare example of a Tutti Frutti head ornament, bought by Edwina, Lady Mountbatten, and later last Vicereine of India, through her husband Louis, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma. An aquamarine, diamond and platinum tiara made by Cartier London the year of the coronation of King George VI when 'Tiaramania' was reported in the UK press, will be exhibited alongside other jewels featuring coloured gemstones such as amethyst and citrine that became fashionable in the 1930s.

Cartier's workshops became a laboratory for technical invention and innovation, freeing its creative imagination to making the seemingly impossible possible, whether in jewellery, clocks or watches. Bold in scale with lifelike movement, an exceptional snake necklace, which was commissioned by Mexican film star María Félix, encapsulates Cartier's ability to combine aesthetic invention and technical prowess to create a unique object that reflects its client's individual style. The watches on display will include the first modern wristwatch, the Santos, which changed the face of watchmaking in 1904 and heralded a modernity of design from which all future Cartier timepieces would follow. There will be a selection of Cartier London watches from the 1960s, including the iconic Crash (1967), which embody the artistic freedom and non-conformity that defined Swinging London. The Maison's creativity today will be highlighted by a 2024 watch that elevates the everyday form of a carabiner, the clip used by climbers, and marries functionality and artful design. An unrivalled collection of mystery clocks, whose hands seem to float in mid-air as they move, will also be part of this section.

The final section of the exhibition celebrates how Cartier shaped its image to become one of the most widely recognised businesses in the world. As early as the 1900s, its name became a byword for sophistication, originality and taste. It propagated that image through pioneering marketing techniques including public exhibitions, advertising and loans to society events and fashion magazines. At the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, Cartier was notable as the only jeweller displaying its creations alongside leading couturiers in the Pavillon de l'Élégance. Its display of audacious jewels included an orchid hair ornament of onyx, diamonds and platinum.

As time went on, actors and music artists replaced royalty and aristocrats as the style icons of their day. Successive generations of artists have admired Cartier and given it their own contemporary twist, helping it remain one of the most recognisable names in the world today. A highlight from this section includes Grace Kelly's 10.48-carat step-cut diamond Cartier engagement ring that she wore in her last film before she married Prince Rainier III of Monaco, on loan from the Monaco Princely Palace Collection.

The exhibition will culminate in a spectacular display of tiaras. The ultimate symbol of status, wealth and elegance, tiaras also represent the highest expression of a jeweller's creative imagination and technical skill, and are still made by Cartier today. Highlights include the never before exhibited Opal Tiara, commissioned by Mary Cavendish, the Marchioness of Hartington in 1937, and worn as a necklace at Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953 when she was Dowager Duchess of Devonshire and played an important ceremonial role as the Queen's Mistress of the Robes; the Garland Style Scroll tiara from 1902 that was worn at Elizabeth II's coronation, and by Rihanna in 2016 on the cover of *W Magazine*; and an Art Deco diamond and platinum halo tiara created in 1934 by Cartier London, which was inspired by ancient Egypt and worn by Begum Aga Khan III, who was considered one of the most stylish women of her day.

Cartier became a master of these splendid jewels at a time when high society wore them to the most glittering events in the social calendar. Although today few occasions require a tiara, they remain a pinnacle of glamour, romance and artistry, and some of Cartier's finest creations.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about *Cartier* please contact Callum Walker on c.walker@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 3949 4509 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition *Cartier* runs at V&A South Kensington from 12 April 2025 - 16 November 2025.
- The exhibition has been curated by Helen Molesworth and Rachel Garrahan. It is accompanied by a new V&A publication available from the V&A Shop for a special price of £35 (RRP £40).
- Tickets are available at vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/cartier

Social Media

Instagram: @vamuseum

Facebook: @VictoriaandAlbertMuseum

Tiktok: @vamuseum

X: @V_and_A

About the V&A

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (V&A) is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity, spanning 5000 years of human creativity. It was established in 1852 to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, its purpose is to champion creative industry, inspire the next generation, and spark everyone's imagination.

vam.ac.uk

About the Cartier Collection

In the 1970s, Cartier began to gather together pieces that had been produced in its earlier years; jewelry, timepieces and other precious accessories were thus collected for conservation, leading to the foundation of the Cartier Collection in 1983.

Today, the Cartier Collection includes pieces dating from as early as the 1860s until as late as the 2000s. These pieces act as material records of Cartier's over 170-year history of style and creativity and also provide a wider historical account of evolutions within the decorative arts as well as in society since the end of the 19th century.

With approximately 3,500 pieces and still growing, the Cartier Collection has sparked the attention of museums worldwide. Since the first major exhibition in 1989 at the Petit Palais in Paris, the Cartier Collection has been showcased by some of the world's most renowned institutions in 44 monographic exhibitions. "Cartier" is the third monographic exhibition dedicated to Cartier in the UK, after "Cartier, 1900-1939" at the British Museum in 1998 and "Cartier in Motion curated by Norman Foster" at the Design Museum in 2017.

About the Exhibition Designer

Asif Khan MBE is a British architect and multi-disciplinary artist. Current projects include the Museum of the Incense Road, Al-Ula; the Barbican Art Centre Renewal, London; the New Museum of London, and a red footbridge bridge across Canada Water. He is a participating artist in the Islamic Arts Biennale 2025, Jeddah. Khan was awarded an MBE for "Services to Architecture" (2017), and the FX award for outstanding contribution to Architecture (2024). His interests are in sensory experience and identity, utilising aesthetics, ritual and new conceptions of structure. He considers each project as "bridges leading to a new world, and a new self."