

## THE AUCTIONEER

## Jonathan Darracott, head of the watch department, Europe, Bonhams

Jonathan Darracott studied horology in London's East End before being awarded a scholarship to a prestigious Swiss school. It is likely that he is the only watch specialist at an auction house who is also a fully qualified watchmaker.

I hunt all over Europe for interesting watches. I meet clients to advise them, with the ultimate aim of selling their watches on their behalf.

The depth and breadth of the watch world never ceases to amaze me, and I am fascinated by the workmanship, particularly in vintage pieces. It was so much more difficult to make a chronograph in the 1940s than it is today.

Our world is also full of surprises. Recently we consigned a remarkable collection from the estate of a nobleman. He had 2,225 watches, and we have been asked to sell them all. They have a value of more than £1.5 million and range from ordinary pieces to standout rarities, such as a superb Vacheron Constantin tourbillon minute repeater. We'll sell the first selection at our London auction on December 16. [bonhams.com](http://bonhams.com)

SIMON DE BURTON



Jonathan Darracott

# The time keepers

Four experts who keep the horological scene ticking over

## THE ENGRAVER

## Kees Engelbarts, engraver and watch creator

Geneva-based Dutchman Kees Engelbarts engraves dials and movements for some of the most prestigious Swiss watch companies.

It was by total coincidence that I discovered engraving. When I was young I won a medal that I collected from the engraver. As I entered the workshop, I had a light-bulb moment — I signed up for engraving school the next day.

I love to work with Damascus steel and mokume-gane, a Japanese material translated as “wood-grain metal”. It is produced by fusing layer upon layer of different metals in a kiln to form a sandwich. When you chisel away at the surface, you expose the lower levels, which you can flatten using a roller to create fascinating, wood-like designs. My particular style blends mokume-gane with sculpture, which helps me to create unique dials.

I'm not a watchmaker, but I've always thought that, if the focus is the engraving, it's more logical to name the watch after the engraver. I love working on my own timepieces, experimenting and playing with different ideas. [kees.ch](http://kees.ch)

SOPHIE FURLEY



Kees Engelbarts



Brian Duffy



Isabelle Chillier

## THE RETAILER

## Brian Duffy, chief executive, Aurum Holdings

Timepieces have always fascinated Brian Duffy, and he has a growing collection. The former Ralph Lauren EMEA president joined Aurum two years ago and began “an enjoyable, steep learning curve”.

Aurum is one of the UK's leading watch and jewellery retailers. Our brands, the 91-year-old Watches of Switzerland, the royal jeweller Mappin & Webb and Goldsmiths, the first retailer of Rolex, have tremendous heritage, while the young pup, Watch Shop, is just eight years old. We're well represented in stores and online, and sell across the spectrum, with more than a 30 per cent share in the UK market.

We're also in a great position to observe trends. We're seeing white dials being favoured over black for men's watches and a growth in customers opting for blue faces. There has also been an increase in women buying men's timepieces; it's not clear whether it's always for themselves, but women are favouring larger, chunkier models. Right now, I'm wearing my favourite watch — a Patek Philippe Perpetual Calendar. Pure, understated elegance. [aurumholdings.co.uk](http://aurumholdings.co.uk); [watches-of-switzerland.co.uk](http://watches-of-switzerland.co.uk)

JOANNE GLASBEY

## THE HAND-MAKER

## Isabelle Chillier, managing director, Fiedler SA

Isabelle Chillier joined her family's watch-hand business in 2001. She makes millions of hands each year for more than 40 luxury watch brands.

When I was a little girl, I never imagined that, one day, I would take over my father's business; I had no interest in watch hands. I studied for a master's in international economics, then went to Paris to pursue a career in the art world and gained an art-history diploma at Christie's. While there, however, it hit me that I was doing the wrong thing, so I returned to Geneva.

Most people don't know there are specialist companies such as ours, but watch hands are so much more than just a component of a timepiece. Our work sits between two worlds: industrial production and luxury, and our work is challenging. It can take more than 30 steps to complete a single hand and many of the processes are delicate manual procedures.

I may not be an engineer but I'm naturally curious, and this has served me well. I love to develop ideas and watch them flourish. It's all part of being an entrepreneur. [fiedler.ch](http://fiedler.ch)

SOPHIE FURLEY