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The George Daniels Horological Collection



George at his bench in younger years – this image is used on the cover of the sale catalogue.

Sotheby's sale catalogue for the George Daniels Horological Collection has recently been released ahead of the auction, which takes place on Tuesday 6 November in London, starting at 2.30pm.

For those wishing to see the Collection beforehand, it will be on display from Thursday November 1 through to 2pm on the day of the sale, at Sotheby's New Bond Street, London headquarters.

Catalogues, which are likely to become collector's items, will also be on sale at the gallery, priced at £35.



Space Traveller Watch.

George Daniels was surely the greatest watchmaker working during the twentieth century. He was a great advocate of horological education and a staunch supporter of the BHI. Sadly, Dr Daniels died on 21 October 2011 and this catalogue represents his horological collection, the sale of which will benefit those causes through the George Daniels Education Trust. Among other beneficiaries, the Trust has given funding for the continued upgrade of the BHI Distance Learning Course and will provide support for students of horology.

The catalogue lists the various lots in several sections: Early works by George Daniels (lots 1 to 3), Bronzes by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi (lots 4 to 8) with a foreword by Robin Spencer, The George Daniels Watches (lots 9 to 17), Omega and Experimental Co-axial watches (lots 19 to 26, followed by some other watches to lot 36) and finally the George Daniels collection of Antique Watches and Clocks, with a separate section entitled 'Joseph Knibb' but including other items and a clock by Thomas Tompion. There is a foreword by David Newman, chairman of the George Daniels Education Trust, an introduction by Andrew Crisford, a Tribute to George Daniels by Michael Clerizo and a second foreword by Tina Millar, former head of Clocks and Watches at Sothebys London. Interspersed among the lists of lots are tributes to Dr Daniels by Stephen Forsey, Roger Smith, Stephen Urquhart (president of Omega), François-Paul Journe, Michael Turner (former head of Clocks and Watches at Sotheby's London), Emmanuel Breguet and Alan Banbery (former curator of the Patek Philippe museum).

There is quite a variety of clocks, watches and related items in this sale, to illustrate which I will mention a few which I consider to be highlights. Among the lots listed as early work is an English regulator of around 1840, converted by Dr Daniels



Replica skeleton clock by Daniels, certificated by Breguet.



Daniels co-axial chronograph wrist watch.

to use a Grasshopper escapement of the pattern used in John Harrison's sea clocks. It also has anti-friction rollers and a gridiron pendulum; all devices invented by Harrison. The next clock is a replica of a skeleton clock by Breguet, so high in quality that it was granted a Breguet certificate of authenticity. There are nine Daniels watches in the sale, including a Space Traveller pocket watch and several wrist watches incorporating the co-axial escapement.

The next group includes several fine wrist watches fitted with the co-axial escapement and a number of others. There is even a talking watch, showing that Dr Daniels had a liking for oddities. It is difficult to pick out 'stars' from the Daniels collection, because the majority of items are of such high quality and, in many cases, rarity. My particular favourite, which I might bid for if I win the Lottery, is a small ebony bracket clock by Joseph Knibb.

Each lot is fully described and illustrated, with references to the provenance, mentions in literature, previous appearances in exhibitions and estimates of the expected price. Although many of the lots have estimated prices far beyond my means,



Ebony table clock by Joseph Knibb.



Wandering hours watch by Bushman, London.

there are some with more modest estimates. There are additional illustrations related to the Daniels watches, giving technical information and guides to the functions. Apart from the clocks and watches, there are a number of related items. Examples are: the brass pantograph used for engraving Breguet's secret signatures, several other scientific instruments and a number of works of art.

As this book is an auction catalogue the contents list has a structure which is peculiar to such documents. After the Foreword and Introduction, all of the items in the sale are covered by one entry. The other chapters are about how to bid, the procedures, methods of payment, tax implications and Conditions of Business. There is a form for those who wish to place bids by post or telephone.

The presentation of the catalogue is of a very high standard, as is usual with those issued by Sotheby's. The quality of photography and illustration is excellent and I have no hesitation in recommending this as a work of both interest and reference whether the reader intends to bid or not.

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Images courtesy of Sotheby's.



Early movement by Thomas Tompion.