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## COOPER HEWITT TO PRESENT “JEWELLED SPLENDORS OF THE ART DECO ERA: THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN COLLECTION” EXHIBITION ON VIEW APRIL 7 THROUGH AUG. 27



Panther Vanity Case, 1925; Produced by Cartier (Paris, France).

### JAN. 25, 2017

“Jeweled Splendors of the Art Deco Era: The Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection” at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum will feature more than 100 extraordinary examples of luxury cigarette and vanity cases, compacts, clocks and other objects. On view in the Carnegie Mansion’s Teak Room from April 7 through Aug. 27, the collection includes exquisite work from the premier jewelry houses of Europe and America—among them Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Lacloche Frères, Boucheron and Bulgari—dating from 1910 to 1938.

“A collection with a rich and storied history, these magnificent works represent the foremost craftsmanship of their era,” said Cooper Hewitt Director Caroline Baumann. “With exotic motifs exquisitely formed with the finest jewels, metals and precious stones, these boxes, timepieces and jewelry also are virtuosic demonstrations of artistic expressivity and mastery of ancient techniques. Concurrently on view in association with ‘The Jazz Age: American Style in the 1920s,’ this exhibition offers an unprecedented opportunity to see these objects in the context of the dramatic societal and technological changes impacting the world during this pivotal moment in early modern history.”

Personal gifts from Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (1933–2003) to his wife, Catherine (b. 1938), the collection was amassed over three decades and displays the excitement, innovation and creativity of the Art Deco era at its most luxurious. Born in Paris, Prince Sadruddin was the son of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan and Princess Andrée Aga Khan. Dedicated to public service, he spent nearly 40 years at the United Nations, including a position as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from 1966 to 1978. In addition to his humanitarian work, Prince Sadruddin was passionate about art, culture and environmental issues.

Vibrant colors, bold forms and exotic motifs mark the collection, with inspiration drawn from the natural world, Eastern cultures and the machine age. Among the works on view will be boxes adorned with Chinese dragons, Persian birds and Japanese plum blossoms in a riot of colorful gemstones, alongside starkly elegant boxes stripped of excessive ornamentation inspired by industrial design. A highlight of the objects shown will be the Panther Vanity Case by Cartier, which features the sleek figure of a panther set in a lush jungle landscape. Created in 1925 and shown at the Exposition internationale des Arts decoratifs, the colorful and exotic scene exemplifies the 1920s aesthetic.



Cypress Tree Vanity Case, 1928; Produced by Van Cleef & Arpels (Paris, France); Manufactured by Alfred Langlois (France).



Imperial Guardian Lion Mystery Clock, 1929; Produced by Maurice Couet (French, 1885-1963) for Cartier (Paris, France).

The world's most renowned jewelry firms created exquisitely crafted vanity cases, called *nécessaires*, which contained divided interior compartments to conceal face powder, lipsticks and mascara. Designed for the increasingly liberated modern woman asserting her style and independence, these jeweled personal accessories examine the impact of changing femininity. A superb example on view will be the 1928 Cypress Tree Vanity Case by Van Cleef & Arpels with an exotic and nature-based motif, which was one of Prince Sadruddin's earliest box acquisitions. The increasing independence of women in the 1920s coincided with the popularity of women's watches. On view will be pendant necklace-form watches and vanity cases with hidden watches, which offered an unobtrusive way of checking the time.

The collection also includes bejeweled timepieces, from large mystery table clocks to small standing watch-form clocks. On view will be the 1929 Imperial Guardian Lion mystery clock for Cartier—so named as the minute and hour hands appear to float—with serpent-like dragon hands surrounded by diamond-studded numerals, set on a carved coral stem. The casemakers were often the same as those whose stonework and enameling adorned the cigarette boxes and vanity cases in the collection. The mystery clock would have involved six or seven specialists, including a clock-maker-designer, the *orfèvre-boîtier* (goldsmith-specialty box maker), the enameler, the lapidary, the stone setter and the polisher.

## **PUBLICATION**

The accompanying 256-page publication will be published by Thames & Hudson. Featuring detailed descriptions for more than 100 works, hundreds of full-color illustrations and essays by Sarah D. Coffin, curator and head of product design and decorative arts at Cooper Hewitt; Stephen Harrison, curator of decorative art and design at the Cleveland Museum of Art; and Evelyne Possémé, chief curator, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris. Retail price: \$75 hardbound.

## **RELATED EXHIBITION AT COOPER HEWITT**

The first major museum exhibition to focus on American taste in design during the exhilarating years of the 1920s, “The Jazz Age: American Style in the 1920s” (April 7 through Aug. 20) will examine a broad spectrum of design showing the multidimensional aspect of American style in this decade. Co-organized by Cooper Hewitt and the Cleveland Museum of Art, the galleries will be filled with extraordinary jewelry, fashion, furniture, textiles, tableware, paintings, posters, wallcoverings and architecture, demonstrating the popularity of bold colors and forms that characterize this age. Through a rich array of more than 350 works drawn from both public and private collections, the exhibition will trace design’s evolution and its influence, as talent and craftsmanship, urbanity and experimentation flowed back and forth across the Atlantic.

## **ABOUT COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM**

Founded in 1897, Cooper Hewitt is the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. Housed in the renovated and restored Carnegie Mansion, Cooper Hewitt showcases one of the most diverse and comprehensive collections of design works in existence. The museum’s restoration, modernization and expansion has won numerous awards and honors, including a Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, a Gold Pencil Award for Best in Responsive Environments and LEED Silver certification. Cooper Hewitt offers a full range of interactive capabilities and immersive creative experiences, including the Cooper Hewitt Pen that allows visitors to “collect” and “save” objects from around the galleries, the opportunity to explore the collection digitally on ultra-high-definition touch-screen tables, and draw and project their own wallpaper designs in the Immersion Room.

Cooper Hewitt is located at 2 East 91st Street at Fifth Avenue in New York City. Hours are Sunday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden and Tarallucci e Vino cafe open at 8 a.m., Monday through Friday, and are accessible without an admissions ticket through the East 90th Street entrance. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Public transit routes include the Lexington Avenue 4, 5 and 6 subways (86th or 96th Street stations), the Second Avenue Q subway (96th Street station), and the Fifth and Madison Avenue buses. Adult admission, \$16

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in advance via [tickets.cooperhewitt.org](https://tickets.cooperhewitt.org), \$18 at door; seniors, \$10 in advance via [tickets.cooperhewitt.org](https://tickets.cooperhewitt.org), \$12 at door; students, \$7 in advance via [tickets.cooperhewitt.org](https://tickets.cooperhewitt.org), \$9 at door. Cooper Hewitt members and children younger than age 18 are admitted free. Pay What You Wish every Saturday, 6 to 9 p.m. The museum is fully accessible.

For further information, call (212) 849-8400, visit Cooper Hewitt's website at [www.cooperhewitt.org](https://www.cooperhewitt.org) and follow the museum on [www.twitter.com/cooperhewitt](https://www.twitter.com/cooperhewitt), [www.facebook.com/cooperhewitt](https://www.facebook.com/cooperhewitt) and [www.instagram.com/cooperhewitt](https://www.instagram.com/cooperhewitt).

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