



## MEDIA RELEASE

### NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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## Diamonds are forever: Australian-exclusive *Cartier* exhibition features 300+ precious jewels, tiaras, necklaces, gemstones, iconic watches and more

NGV International, St Kilda Road | 12 June – 4 October 2026 | Ticketed



**Tuesday 30 September:** Featuring 300+ resplendent and beautifully-crafted jewels, tiaras, necklaces, brooches, timepieces, design drawings and more, the 2026 Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® presentation, **Cartier**, is the largest exhibition on the global jewellery house ever staged in Australia. Direct from London's **Victoria & Albert Museum** and opening exclusively in Melbourne at NGV International on 12 June 2026, the exhibition explores Cartier's unparalleled reputation for design excellence, craftsmanship and innovation through a dazzling selection of Cartier creations owned and worn by the likes of **Elizabeth Taylor, Rihanna, Princess Margaret, The Duchess of Windsor, Dame Nellie Melba, the Maharaja of Patiala, the Begum Aga Khan III**, and American heiress **Barbara Hutton**. The Melbourne-exclusive exhibition also features many jewels and objects that have never-before-visited Australia.

The exhibition charts the evolution and artistic legacy of the jewellery house, including its transformation at the turn of the twentieth century by brothers **Louis, Pierre** and **Jacques Cartier**, grandsons of the house's founder Louis-François Cartier. The brothers established branches in Paris, London and New York, creating the first internationally recognised jewellery maison, and honed Cartier's inimitable style by bringing design and manufacturing in-house. With an enviable client list of royalty and aristocracy, Cartier was described as 'the jeweller of kings and the king of jewellers' by King Edward VII, who granted his Royal Warrant in 1904. Cartier's reputation later broadened thanks to the devotion of leading creatives from the worlds of cinema, music and fashion.

A major highlight of the exhibition will be a **display of more than 20 magnificent tiaras**, a timeless symbol of royalty, glamour and artistry – and some of Cartier's most celebrated creations. With symbolic links to the laurel wreaths of classical antiquity and celestial halos, the tiara has been worn for centuries across cultures from Asia to Europe. The spectacular display includes Cartier's celebrated Scroll tiara (1902), crafted in the house's signature 'Garland style' and worn by **Clementine Churchill** at the coronation of **Queen Elizabeth II** in 1953 and by **Rihanna** on the cover of *W* magazine in 2016. Others include the Sun tiara of 1907 with a 32-carat fancy intense yellow diamond in its centre; and the Art Deco diamond and platinum Halo tiara of 1934, which was inspired by ancient Egypt and owned by **Her Highness the Begum Aga Khan III**.

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The exhibition includes a 1951 necklace gifted to **Elizabeth Taylor** by her third husband and film producer, **Mike Todd**, while on holiday in the French Riviera in 1957. The necklace features a geometric latticework design of diamonds that showcase seven Burmese rubies, exceptional for their size and matching colour. Taylor herself described the necklace as 'like the sun – lit up and made of red fire.'

The exhibition also focuses on Australian opera singer **Dame Nellie Melba**, who was an early client of Cartier when the firm was becoming known internationally for its 'Garland style' jewels, often featuring floral swags and bows wrought in platinum and precious gemstones. Pierre Cartier was a fan of Dame Nellie, and a signed 1902 photograph of Melba, once owned by Pierre, will feature in the exhibition along with necklaces and bodice ornaments that the world-famous opera singer owned and wore both on and off the stage.

On display will be an intricate diamond rose clip brooch (1938) worn by **Princess Margaret** at her sister's coronation, as well as a major selection of exceptional jewels belonging to **Wallis Simpson**, the Duchess of Windsor and wife of former King Edward VIII. These include her famous Flamingo brooch (1947), an extraordinary Bib necklace encrusted with diamonds, amethysts and turquoise, and her 1949 Panther sapphire clip brooch which features an impressive 152.35-carats Kashmir cabochon sapphire.

Named for their colourful use of rubies, emeralds and blue sapphires, a rich selection of Cartier's iconic Tutti Frutti jewels will also feature. Additionally, there will be a standout selection of Cartier timepieces that showcase the jeweller's industry-leading innovations in watchmaking, alongside a selection of contemporary works featuring Australian opals.

The never-before-seen exhibition design is a collaboration between the NGV, Studio Sabine Marcelis and CLOUD, two multidisciplinary design practices based in Rotterdam in The Netherlands. The exhibition design will be inspired by colour, light and materiality, three elements that are synonymous with the aesthetic qualities of Cartier's jewellery. The exhibition design will reflect Cartier's expansive network of cultural and gemological sources that inspire their jewellery creations.

**Steve Dimopoulos, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, said:** 'Not only do the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibitions provide a dazzling experience, but they are also important to the state's economy – supporting local jobs and businesses in the CBD and across Victoria. *Cartier* will again reinforce Melbourne's reputation as Australia's cultural capital, that's why we are backing this world-class exhibition that will be exclusive to the NGV.'

**Colin Brooks, Minister for Creative Industries, said:** 'This exhibition is set to be a brilliant addition to our arts and cultural calendar, providing tourists and locals alike a unique opportunity to see treasures never before seen in Australia.'

**Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said:** 'Cartier are world-renowned for their excellence in jewellery and timepiece design and innovation – a reputation fostered by the three entrepreneurial brothers Pierre, Louis and Jacques Cartier. This exhibition tells the story of how they transformed their grandfather's jewellery business into one of the most prestigious international jewellery houses with a clientele including royalty, high society and movie stars. We're indebted to our partner institution the V&A, for their support of this Australian-exclusive exhibition, as well as key lender Cartier.'

**Helen Molesworth, Senior Curator of Jewellery, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, said:** 'Cartier is one of the most famous jewellery houses in the world. This exhibition will explore how Louis, Pierre and Jacques Cartier, initiated a strategy of original design, exceptional craftsmanship and international expansion that transformed the Parisian family jeweller into an international household name. The V&A is delighted to tour its Cartier exhibition which celebrates 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 of the NGV some of Cartier's most famous creations as well as revealing previously unseen objects that further enrich our understanding of a jewellery house that continues to influence the way we adorn ourselves today.'

**Pierre Rainero, Director of Cartier Image, Style and Heritage, said:** 'Building on the success of its presentation at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the NGV iteration of the *Cartier* exhibition will showcase pieces never-before-seen in Australia. It promises to be an enlightening experience for the public, offering a captivating journey into the world of Cartier and its signature style, a living language in permanent evolution. We hope that it will not only inspire delight and awe, but also intellectual curiosity, fostering a deeper appreciation for jewelry as a distinct and powerful artistic expression.'

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The Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® exhibition *Cartier* will be on display at NGV International from 12 June – 4 October 2026. Admission fees apply. Information and tickets are available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.com.au/melbourne)

*Exhibition created by the V&A in partnership with the National Gallery of Victoria and in collaboration with Cartier.*

## **ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

The exhibition opens with an introduction to Louis, Pierre and Jacques Cartier, who were united in their ambition to expand the family business globally, which had been established by their grandfather in 1847. The emergence of the 'Garland style' will be explored as well as early cultural influences on Cartier's creations, including ancient Egyptian design. This section reveals how the Maison developed its own instantly recognisable style, one that combined modernity and innovation with elegance and refinement.

The next section of the exhibition focuses on the rise of Cartier's signature design aesthetic, its workshops, the Maison's exceptional access to significant gemstones and its technical innovation. At the Paris 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, Cartier prominently displayed its creations alongside leading Parisian jewellers and couturiers in the Pavillon de l'élégance. A new aspect of the NGV exhibition will be a focus on Jeanne Toussaint, Cartier's longstanding female Creative Director from 1933 to 1970 and her innovative design aesthetic. Visitors will see how the panther motif, celebrated by Toussaint and one of the Maison's most iconic symbols, continues to evolve in contemporary jewels, using many of the same jewellery techniques that have been practised for decades.

In the early twentieth century, Cartier secured access to some of the most important gems in the world, notably due to sourcing trips made by Jacques Cartier to the Middle East, India and Sri Lanka, as well as the house's elite clientele and dealer networks. In a section entirely devoted to the materials behind the creations, some of the finest gems in the world will be on view. A section on timepiece design illuminates Cartier's exceptional technical innovation, whether in jewellery, clocks or watches.

The final section of the exhibition celebrates Cartier jewels that were worn by stars of the stage and screen, and the stylistic evolution of the Maison in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The exhibition will culminate in a spectacular display of more than 20 tiaras. Cartier became a master of these crowning jewels at a time when high society wore them to the most glittering events in the social calendar.

## **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 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 recently as the 2000s. These pieces act as material records of Cartier's more than 170-year history of style and creativity, as well as provide a wider historical account of evolutions within the decorative arts 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 45 monographic exhibitions, including most recently at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

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**Image Caption:** 'Hindou' Necklace, Cartier Paris, special order, 1936; altered 1963, Commissioned by Daisy Fellowes, Vincent Wulveryck, Collection Cartier © Cartier; Elizabeth Taylor at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas, June 1958 © Photofest; Scroll Tiara, Cartier Paris, 1910, Owned by Elisabeth, Queen of the Belgians, Vincent Wulveryck, Cartier Collection © Cartier

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