Time is Money for Purchaser of £3 Million Gold Watch

One of the world’s most complicated watches, which was the product of a competition between two collectors, could fetch up to three million pounds sterling at auction, writes Will Bennett.

The Henry Graves Watch, named after the man who ordered it, was the result of five years’ work by the most skilled technicians at the Swiss firm Patek Philippe.

The gold timepiece, completed in 1933, has more than nine hundred parts, two faces, nine dials and eighteen hands. In addition to telling the time, it also calculates the time of sunrise and sunset, the date of the week, month, the star chart and the age and phases of the moon.

It automatically compensates for leap years and the omission of a leap year every four centuries and the face incorporates a star chart of the night sky in New York.

It nearly weighs five hundred grams and is slightly more than three centimetres thick. It remained the world’s most complicated watch for fifty six years until 1989 when it was only surpassed by technicians at Patek Philippe working with computer-assisted machines.

The watch, which will be auctioned at Sotheby’s in New York, was the result of a long-running rivalry between Mr. Graves and another extremely wealthy American collector, James Packard.

In 1916 Mr. Graves heard that Mr Packard had become the owner of the world’s most complicated watch and decided to acquire something better. This started a fierce seventeen-year competition which saw both millionaires demanding more and more sophisticated mechanisms from Switzerland’s finest watchmakers until victory finally went to Mr. Graves with the watch that is now going to be auctioned.