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HIGH-ART TIMEPIECES & GEMSTONES WITH AN EDGE



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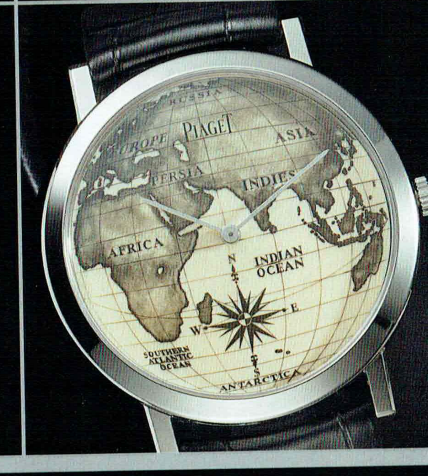
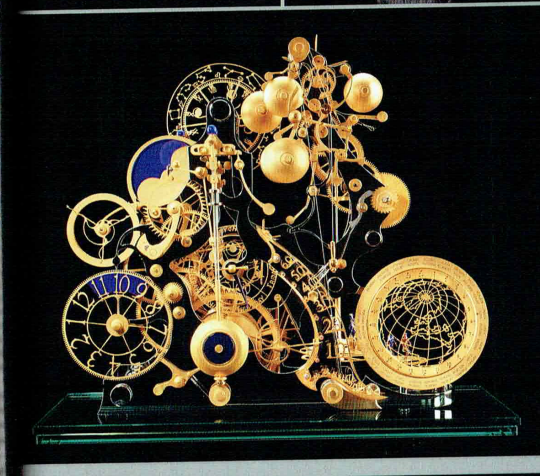
Robb Report

WATCH & JEWELLERY SPECIAL

ROBB REPORT BRINGS YOU INCREDIBLE WATCHES, REMARKABLE CLOCKS AND STUNNING PIECES OF JEWELLERY THAT SPELL INNOVATION AND STYLE AND SHOWCASE EXEMPLARY CRAFTSMANSHIP AND AESTHETICS.

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OPPOSITE PAGE, ROW 1 (LEFT) AND ROW 2 (RIGHT), PHOTOGRAPH BY LISA CHARLES WATSON; STYLING BY CHARLES W. BURKHOLDER; ROW 3 (LEFT), PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF HARRIS; STYLING BY PERIK TRAM



CHIMING IN A NEW ERA

THE STRIKING AESTHETIC AND TECHNICAL BRILLIANCE OF CLOCKS SHOWCASED BY A HANDFUL OF MODERN-DAY CLOCKMAKERS IS DRAWING THE AESTHETE TO ITS VINTAGE CHARMS ONE MORE TIME.

BY SAROSH MODY



This page:
Baroque Birdcage
by Naeschke.
Opposite page:
Tres Caracoles
by Miki Eleta.

IN THE 21ST CENTURY, WHERE TELLING TIME requires no more than the press of a finger or the flick of a wrist, table clocks are considered redundant. However, there are some clocks that are making a statement in today's age and time and drawing the aficionados and collector's alike.

In its heyday, between the mid-1700s and 1800s, the stately grandfather clock was a technological innovation, a status symbol for the well-to-do. Unfortunately, clockmaking today survives as a dying art, executed through the hands of a select few individuals who are keeping alive the history and traditions of quintessential masters like Thomas Tompion and John Harrison.

Patronage from aficionados has brought about a revival and injected a creative disposition as can be seen in the works of contemporary artists and clockmakers like Miki Eleta, Tilmann von dem Knesebeck, Matthias Naeschke, Robert Bray and Frank Jutzli, to name a few. They are the modern-traditionalists of clockmaking of our times.

MIKI ELETA

"To me, manufacturing a clock means a feeling of life and adventure. I respect all that has been invented so far—but I do not respect the idea that nothing is unknown," affirms Eleta, who prefers his work be addressed as 'kinetic art' rather than the traditional 'clock'. "Therefore I do not stop searching for surprises, new forms, unknown movements and presentations and the realisation of imagination," he explains.

The self-taught artist expresses his own, unusual view of time through kinetic objects that he personally constructs from start to finish in his workshop in Zurich. It takes a while to comprehend his mechanical philosophy; a single glance may not be sufficient. There are several integrated horological complications. There is the hour indication on the left to which on the mid-right side will see the minutes in a retrograde fashion. A world-time indication, which mentions 46 cities, is placed on the right. Above the pendulum you see the weekdays. The moon-phase is placed on the top left

side while the musical work is placed on the top right side and strikes every hour with different music. During the musical phase (behind the world-time indication), dancers and four musicians will dance. On the left side, at 10 o'clock, there is a snail-like round sphere which is a philosophical question to space and time. Using mainly steel, gold, stones, brass, crystal, chrome, and bronze, the paradox of this modern artist is that he still works the traditional way, and all by hand—from designing on paper instead of CAD, to the turning/milling and final decoration and polishing. Named **Tres Caracoles**, the clock's striking sound is like that of pentatonic tuned bells. The music is Eleta's own invention and every full hour the music plays for about 20 seconds; that same tune will only be repeated again after a couple of hundred years.

TILMANN VON DEM KNESEBECK
If you were to lay your eyes on Tilmann von dem Knesebeck's creation, **TK III Mystery of Time**, you

would see no clock in sight; there would be no more than a pillar visible. The way the clock unveils can be described as watching a 'mechanical blossoming'. The pillar opens to reveal a clock. As the clock opens, one can admire the beauty of the mechanic components. The time indication with the hands of the clock has a mysterious air. The heart of the clock is the tri-axial lantern tourbillon with a hairspring chronometer escapement, designed to resemble a lyre.

On the outer ring, two thin pillars are arranged so as to carry a small planetarium. This planetarium is located in the sphere rings. Mimicking celestial movement, Knesebeck takes us through the workings of the planetarium. "The earth's rotation is facilitated by a mechanical drive train. It is out of this drive train that the two moon drive trains get their energy," he reveals.

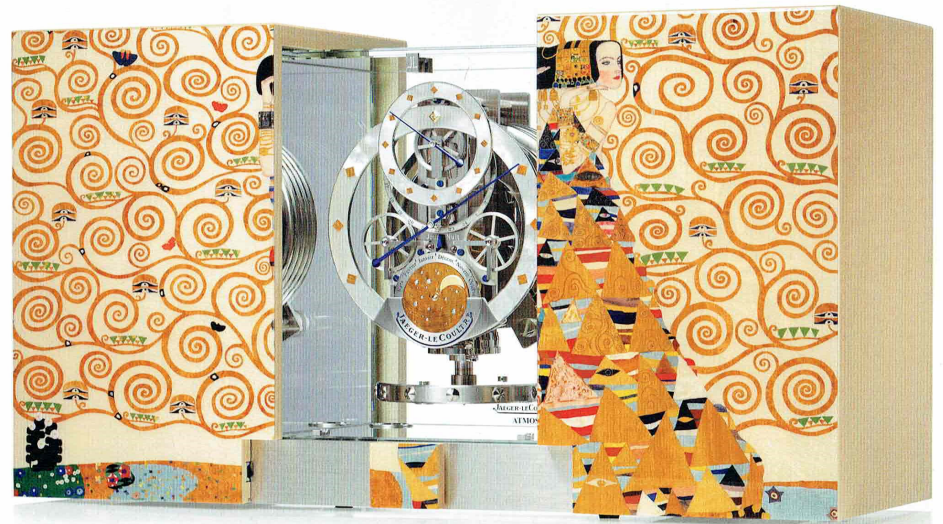
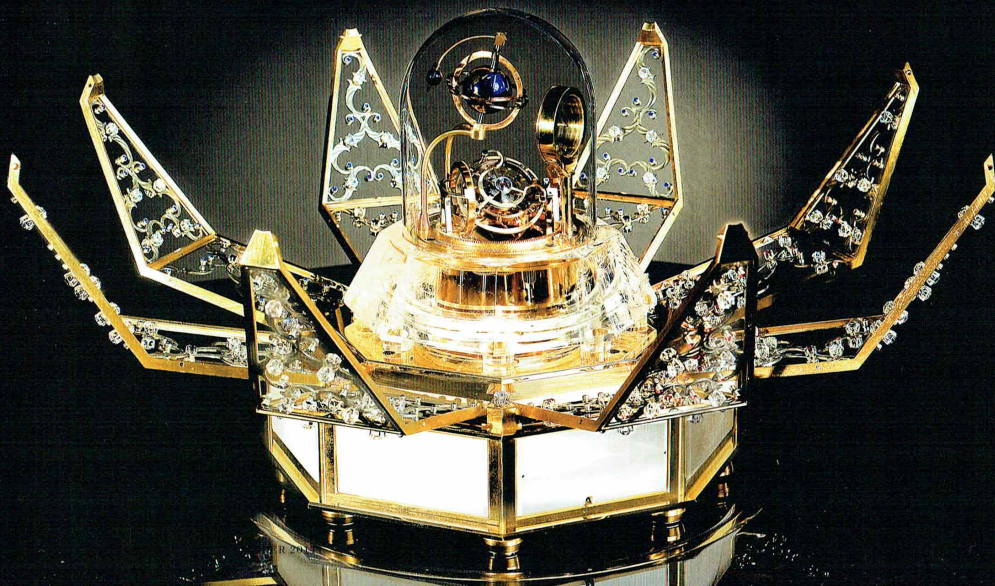
The centre of this planetarium is the globe which is made of translucent enamel and 18-karat yellow gold. The terrestrial globe completes

one rotation in 24 hours. The blue enamel indicates the oceans and the continents have a golden shimmer in the base material. The equator is made of white gold and separates the northern hemisphere and the southern hemisphere. The future owner's place of origin is marked with a diamond.

Two mechanic gear trains are arranged in the terrestrial globe. They indicate the sidereal rotation velocity of the moon and also imitate the synodic rotation of the moon. Inside the clock, two main power springs transmit their energy to the mechanics. Every hour, you can hear a gong produced by a gold bell chime.

"Despite the complexity, the clock is a purely mechanical clock that can be taken away from the chapel easily. It will work anytime, anywhere," states Knesebeck.

The pillar receives its energy from the outside. Firstly, this is how the clock can be moved out and back in the pillar; secondly it opens and closes the chapel; and thirdly, this is how the mechanics are wound



and set. This energy is also used in order to provide all the auxiliary functions. The mysterious clock with its tri-axial tourbillon and the planetarium are an independent, and purely mechanical.

MATTHIAS NAESCHKE
Superficially, Matthias Naeschke's singing bird appears identical to a baroque original. Every hour, this strikingly beautiful **Baroque Birdcage** music box plays a baroque-style melody. The cage itself consists entirely of superbly gilded brass; the casting mouldings were carved by a sculptor in Paris while the chaser artistically perfected the newly cast parts. The china cartouches with their flower arrangements are all hand-made and were drawn exclusively for this cage.

Understanding the passion behind the recreation of this baroque birdcage, his son, Sebastian Naeschke muses, "In the mid-18th century, a number of craftsmen developed a very high artistic and technical standard which nowadays can at best only be surpassed by exceptional

quality of material and durability. However, creating music automatons required not only skilled hands but also comprehensive, specialised knowledge. One type of music box—rare even in those days—consisted of a birdcage with a small mechanical pipe organ and an animated bird."

At the base of the cage there is an enamel dial below a precision 8-day movement which was custom-made by master clockmaker, Paul Gerber. The gilded hands were designed to complement the magnificent base bezel. Eight harmonious, perfectly formed side bars bestow the cage with nobility. In order to achieve this, an exceptional number of individual steps - involving drawing, sawing, engraving, polishing, cleaning and gilding are required, most done by hand.

"Fully wound," says Sebastian, "the pipe organ and singing bird, play for three days, triggering 72 times!"

MB&F
Placing the **Starfleet Machine** next to the Baroque Birdcage Automaton

This page: Jaeger-LeCoultre's Atmos Marqueterie l'Attente clock (above) and Frank Jutzl's Table Clock with Mysterious Tourbillon (below).
Opposite page: Tilmann von dem Knesebeck's TK III Mystery of Time, at Archides.

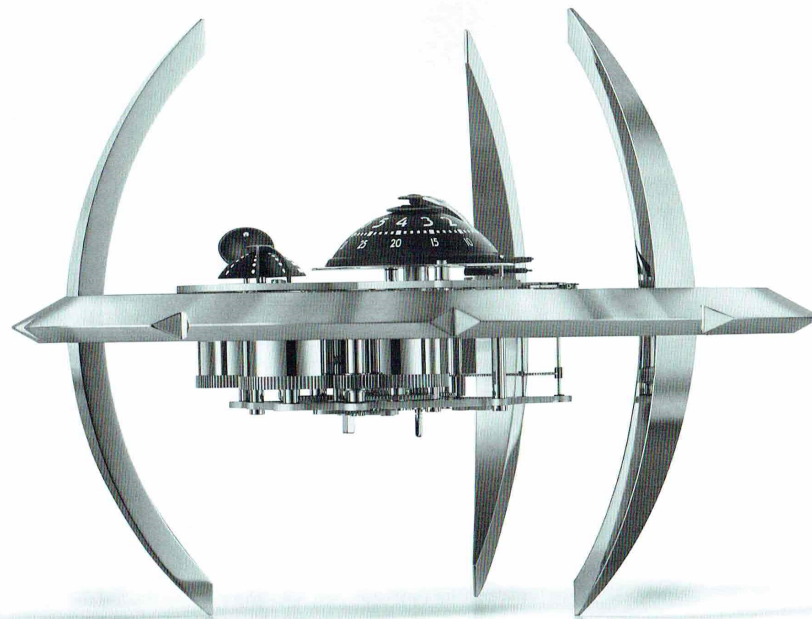




is like observing different generations together. Next to even contemporary table clocks, the Starfleet Machine stands out; this is the first creation bearing the distinguished L'Épée (Switzerland's only remaining specialist high-end clock manufacture) name, and features sleek, domed indicators and laser-cannon retrograde seconds. The central hour and minutes dome bears MB&F's signature numerals, while the bars on the power reserve indicator are framed by the dome's supporting dark, hand-finished arc. As the massive 40 days of power runs down, the dome slowly rotates 270°, and rotates back the other way when the clock is wound up. The accompanying radar dish rotates at the same speed as the power reserve indicator. Starfleet Machine comes with its own transparent biosphere dome, fitting over the top and following the contours of the vessel's three graceful arcs. In intergalactic missions, the dome creates a life-supporting habitat for the vessel and its crew on inhospitable planets. Here on earth, it protects Starfleet Machine from potential environmental hazards incompatible with high-end clocks: Dust and curious fingers! The dome is made in polished Plexiglas which, given its smooth profile and handle-free form, makes it light and easily removable when turning the clock over for time setting and winding.

JAEGER-LECOULTRE
The **Atmos Marqueterie l'Attente** clock by Jaeger-LeCoultre is an eternal phenomenon. Its mechanical principle, which embodies an extraordinary technical and poetic approach to perpetual motion, lives on the alternation between daytime warmth and the cool of the night, as well as the rhythm of the seasons. Tiny fluctuations in temperature alone are enough to supply its movement with energy. The explanation behind is quite simple, as with all brilliant inventions: The beating heart of the system is composed of a gaseous mixture contained within a capsule that

EVERY KING, EMIR AND SULTAN IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS A SKELETON CLOCK, AND ALTHOUGH IT DOESN'T HAVE THE SINCLAIR HARDING NAME ON IT, YOU CAN TELL FROM ITS DNA THAT IT'S THEIRS.



dilates or contracts in step with temperature differences, much like the bellows of an accordion. Each of its movement supplies power to a mainspring that in turn delivers its force to an extremely sparing horological mechanism of which the balance performs just two oscillations per minute—around 150 times less than the customary rate of a wristwatch. This exceptional model, which is produced in a strictly limited 10-piece edition, is superbly handcrafted by an Austrian artist, paying homage to the master of art nouveau, Gustav Klimt. The wood marquetry involved conveys the subtle nuances of the frieze by means of more than 1,400 meticulously fashioned wooden elements from 35 precious wood varieties. Each part reveals a miniature world of its own and is incorporated within an overall vision, faithfully inspired by the original. A few hundreds of hours of work have been dedicated by the artisan into completing this masterpiece. Housed inside an inner glass crystal cabinet

a regulator-type clock emerges when the button concealed within the wood decor is pressed.

SINCLAIR HARDING
Within the community of clock-lovers, the **Skeleton Clocks** are much sought after. "Not only do we see a strong demand from the ardent collectors" says Robert Bray, the driving force behind the ingenious British clockmaker Sinclair Harding, "but I've heard that every king, Emir and Sultan in the Middle East has one of our clocks, and although it doesn't have our name on it you can tell from its DNA that it's ours; the Queen even has a clock that I designed and made, although again it doesn't have our name on it." Bray and his sons undertake the entire process of clock-making in their very own workshop. At Sinclair Harding, he works closely with clients and special attention is paid to requests. "My customers are the best innovators, a lot of times we get asked for special materials for the bases, personalised

moon-phase dials, passing strikes, tidal dials and of course, many with engraved plaques commemorating the clocks commission," he says.

FRANK JUTZI
Frank Jutzi chose to break away from the norm. "The **Table Clock with Mysterious Tourbillon** is not a striking clock. It sets itself apart from other clocks with the mystery tourbillon, which you do not see anywhere, especially in a table clock," he says. Jutzi added a jumping hours to the clock under which the tourbillon is fixed on to a glass of sapphire only 0.4mm thin. All parts of the case are gilt. For the tree trunk, the ground, and the branches, more than two kilograms of silver has been used. The case is set with nearly 100 engraved and enamelled ivy leaves. Two cut and engraved kingfishers made of lapis lazuli with opal and onyx parts and 18-karat gold feet are fixed on the two branches. Though Jutzi does a few clocks per year, the mystery clock remains a piece unique. [E]

This page:
MB&F's Starfleet Machine.
Opposite page:
The Three Train Skeleton Clock by Sinclair Harding.