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WATCH YOUR TIME

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GIRL TIME

— LAURIE KAHLE

Designers seduce women with feminine watches that offer more than just a pretty face.

The most famous and complicated woman's timepiece of all time was a pocket watch produced for Marie Antoinette by star watchmaker Abraham-Louis Breguet, who, as the legend goes, received the commission from her lover. Tragically, she met the guillotine 34 years before the watch was completed in 1827, so she never even saw it. While Breguet produced rare pieces for the French queen and Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples, watches historically were a male domain. It wasn't that long ago when watchmakers simply scaled down a men's model, sprinkled it with diamonds, and, voila, you have a watch for women. That approach has dramatically changed in recent years as manufacturers seek to woo women with a full spectrum of inherently feminine designs that allow them to express their ever-changing moods. As you might expect, a women's watch wardrobe evokes her closet, which contains everything from trendy fashion frivolities to jeans to ladylike classics. Women would never wear a man's suit that was re-cut and frilled up to look more feminine, so they expect their timepieces to be conceived and designed for them just like their fashions.

LADIES FIRST

In a bold and surprising move, Patek Philippe introduced its much anticipated caliber CH 29-535 PS manually wound chronograph movement in a women's watch, the Ref. 7071, which is reaching stores this fall. Aptly dubbed Ladies First, this cushion-shaped chronograph clearly intends to make a statement that complicated watches for women are not an afterthought at Patek Philippe. "As ladies' watches have gotten larger, the ability to introduce complications like a chronograph has increased," explains Larry Pettinelli, president of Patek Philippe USA. "Until a few years ago, a ladies' case this large would not be marketable." The setting of diamonds under the crystal is a subdued flourish that stays true to the company philosophy that diamonds are an accent rather than the focus of attention. In a refreshing flip of the status quo, the women's 7071 will be followed by a men's watch powered by the same movement.



PATEK PHILIPPE LADIES FIRST CHRONOGRAPH. HOROLOGICAL EXPERTISE MEETS GLAMOUR IN THIS WOMEN'S CHRONOGRAPH. 18-K ROSE GOLD ASYMMETRICAL CUSHION-SHAPED CASE (39X35 MM) WITH SAPPHIRE CRYSTAL BACK. SILVERED WHITE OPALINE DIAL WITH GUILLOCHÉ "FLAME" MOTIF. 136 ROUND DIAMONDS (0.58 CARATS) SET IN THE FLANGE. SELF-WINDING MECHANICAL MOVEMENT. COLUMN-WHEEL CHRONOGRAPH. 30-MINUTE COUNTER AT 3 O'CLOCK, SMALL SECONDS AT 9 O'CLOCK. HAND-STITCHED ALLIGATOR STRAP WITH WHITE TOP STITCHING. WATER-RESISTANT TO 30 M.

Traditionally, fashion brands focus on style more than substance, so they have eschewed mechanical movements in favor of simple, inexpensive quartz varieties. But Dior, Ralph Lauren and Chanel, in particular, stand out for their ability to blend the craft-intensive world of haute couture with that of high horology. These fashion powerhouses have managed to impress the most ardent technical experts with their inventive complicated movements. For example, Chanel partnered with visionary movement maker Renaud et Papi to launch this year's intriguing men's J12 Rétrograde Mystérieuse with a crown that rises vertically from the sapphire crystal and a mind-boggling minute indication necessitated by the hand's blocked path around the dial due to the crown's unconventional placement.

FASHION GOES MECHANICAL

Chanel's interest in mechanical watchmaking emerged with the 2008 debut of the J12 Caliber 3125 powered by a modified Audemars Piguet automatic movement that also drives the slick Intense Black J12. The newest member of the brand's best-selling family is the automatic J12 Marine, a serious dive watch that is outfitted in scuba gear and ready to plunge 300 meters with a unidirectional rotating bezel for recording dive times, luminescent raised hands and numerals, and a screw-in crown. Meanwhile, Dior put a new spin on the world time concept with the Dior 8 Fuseaux Horaires movement developed by designers Orny et Girardin. The design's orbiting satellite indicates the time in eight world capitals as it completes a full turn in 24 hours while also revolving around the dial every 12 hours. Dior is utilizing this novel movement in eight Art Deco-inspired gold and lacquer models and 100 chic, mother-of-pearl and diamond models. Laurence Nicolas, president of Dior Montres, points out that the artistic vision originates in the Paris studios and is then passed to the watchmakers to evaluate technical feasibility and execute the concept in a functioning timepiece. He compares the process to haute couture where designers call upon artisan seamstresses, embroiderers, lace makers, and bead makers to realize their fantastical fashions. The embodiment of this expression is the new Dior Christal Haute Couture Passage collection of eight one-of-a-kind watches each directly borrowing its palette and design elements from a specific haute couture ensemble. %



DIOR CHRISTAL "8" FUSEAUX HORAIRES. SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION OF 100 PIECES WITH AN EXCLUSIVE FEATURE DISPLAYING LOCAL TIME AND 8 TIME-ZONES AND A DAY/NIGHT INDICATION. SWISS-MADE SELF-WINDING MECHANICAL MOVEMENT. 38 MM STAINLESS STEEL CASE WITH DIAMOND SET BEZEL. MOTHER-OF-PEARL DIAL. STEEL BRACELET SET WITH WHITE CRYSTAL SAPPHIRE.



JAEGER-LECOULTRE REVERSO SQUADRA DUETTO HAUTE JOAILLERIE. THIS WATCH COMBINES THE SOPHISTICATION OF A MANUFACTURE MECHANICAL MOVEMENT WITH AN ORIGINAL AESTHETIC AND THE ICONIC REVERSO REVOLVING CASE. SELF-WINDING MECHANICAL MOVEMENT WITH SECOND TIME-ZONE AND DAY/NIGHT INDICATOR. 18-K PINK GOLD CASE, MOTHER-OF-PEARL DIAL, BEZEL SET WITH 213 DIAMONDS. WHITE ALLIGATOR STRAP WITH FOLDING BUCKLE.



HUBLOT BIG BANG ALL WHITE GOLD DIAMONDS. 41 MM CASE IN 18-K RED GOLD. BEZEL SET WITH 114 DIAMONDS (1.22 CARATS). WHITE DIAL. SELF-WINDING CHRONOGRAPH MOVEMENT. 18-K RED GOLD BRACELET.

VACHERON CONSTANTIN LADY KALLA FLAMME. THIS NEW MODEL REINTERPRETS THE ICONIC LADY KALLA MODEL LAUNCHED IN 1982, WHILE INNOVATING BY THE FIRST EVER USE IN THE WATCH INDUSTRY OF A NEW ASYMMETRICAL "FLAME" DIAMOND CUT THAT REFLECTS THE LIGHT IN AN EXTREMELY DISTINCTIVE WAY. 18-K WHITE GOLD CASE AND DIAL RESPECTIVELY SET WITH 20 AND 60 FLAME-CUT DIAMONDS WHICH, TOGETHER WITH THE 120 DIAMONDS STUDDING THE BRACELET, MAKE A TOTAL OF ALMOST 36.5 CARATS. MECHANICAL HAND-WOUND VACHERON CONSTANTIN MOVEMENT WITH OVER 30-HOUR POWER RESERVE.

HAUTE COUTURE WATCHMAKING

High-jewelry pieces are the haute couture of watchmaking. The fact that these extravagant, often one-of-a-kind creations also happen to tell time is hardly the point. Old-guard manufacturers such as Vacheron Constantin, Audemars Piguet, Patek Philippe, and Piaget tap their considerable resources to produce lavish special editions that test the skills of Switzerland's most accomplished gem setters. At Piaget, a bracelet watch is set with various cuts of black and white diamonds to resemble a piano keyboard, while Vacheron Constantin's Kalla Flame is laden with asymmetrical flame-cut diamonds. Such rare jewels show

off a brand's creativity and its mastery of the art much like the fashion houses do with couture.

Jewelling is one of watchmaking's historic *métiers d'art*, which also include enameling and engraving. These centuries-old decorative techniques have been experiencing a renaissance in recent years, turning timepieces into works of art. "Telling a story that generates emotion is what we are looking to do from the first drawing," says Louis De



VAN CLEEF & HARPELS LE PONT DES AMOUREUX. 38 MM WHITE GOLD CASE SET WITH DIAMONDS. DIAL MOTIF IN ENAMEL. BRIDGE AND LOVERS IN WHITE GOLD. ENGRAVED CASEBACK. MECHANICAL MOVEMENT WITH RETROGRADE HOUR AND MINUTE. WHITE ALLIGATOR STRAP. LIMITED NUMBERED EDITION.

Meckenheim, Van Cleef & Arpels' watch marketing manager. For example, this year's Le Pont des Amoureux (Lovers' Bridge) depicts two lovers who rendezvous at the *Pont des Arts*, a pedestrian bridge in Paris. The scene is painted using a technique called *contre jour*, which employs black and white enamel to create gradations of light and dark. √



AUDEMARS PIGUET TAKES ON AMERICA

In the ten years since taking over at the head of Audemars Piguet North America in 2000, François Henry Benhamias has achieved astounding results in building business for the brand in the region. It has shed its traditional, conservative image to win a new reputation for contemporary, edgy designs. The first step in reconquering the market was an exhibition of exceptional timepieces commemorating Audemars Piguet's 125th

Audemars Piguet has covered a lot of ground over the past decade, although its objective remains unchanged: exclusive products and outstanding service. "At the end of the day, we're pretty much a welcoming, relaxed brand," François Henry Benhamias declares. "We tell our customers 'welcome to the family' because we want to build a lasting relationship with each of them. This is all part of the concept of excellence. The luxury industry has been too sure of itself these past years. At Audemars Piguet, we prefer to listen to the people who appreciate our products."

anniversary. This was staged alongside a charity auction where 35 stars, including Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sharon Stone, Tom Cruise and Kurt Russell, modeled an Audemars Piguet watch. Proceeds from the sale of these watches raised \$1.5 million dollars for the Arnold Schwarzenegger and Muhammad Ali foundations. Ten years later, the Manufacture renewed the event, this time collecting \$816,000 for charities supported by Bill Clinton, Shaquille O'Neal and Jay-Z. Over these ten years, François Henry Benhamias has entirely restructured the watchmaker's distribution network in the United States. The turnaround has been spectacular, with revenues rocketing from \$6 million in 1999 to \$78 million in 2008.



AUDEMARS PIGUET SPECIAL EDITION MILLENNARY ASTROLOGIA PERPETUAL CALENDAR. REPRESENTING THE PASSAGE OF TIME FROM BOTH AN EARTHLY AND ASTRONOMIC PERSPECTIVE, THIS ASTROLOGICAL COMPLICATION FOR LADIES ELEGANTLY RENDERS THE FOUR SEASONS AND TWELVE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC. MANUFACTURE MECHANICAL SELF-WINDING MOVEMENT WITH 21-K GOLD ROTOR. 18-K PINK GOLD CASE WITH BRILLIANT-CUT DIAMONDS. NIGHT-BLUE SATIN BAND WITH DIAMOND SET 18-K PINK GOLD AP CLASP.



VANESSA WILLIAMS (CENTER) WITH ALICE AND FRANÇOIS BENHAMIAS, DIRECTOR OF AUDEMARS PIGUET NORTH AMERICA, AT THE BRAND'S 'TIME TO GIVE' CHARITY AUCTION.

The double retrograde movement developed by renowned watchmaker Jean Marc Wiederrecht moves the couple closer with the passing of each hour until they meet at 12 o'clock twice a day to kiss and return to their starting point. "To give life to the story, we needed to have a very specific and extraordinary movement," explains De Meckenheim. "The technique serves the story but is not the objective. In men's watches, we create the movement first with a performance objective, then we build the watch around the movement. It's the opposite when we develop a ladies' watch: We create the design and then find the best techniques in art dial making or mechanical movement development to give life to the drawing."

ARTISTIC HANDICRAFTS

Cristina Thévenaz, CEO of DeLaneau, was a pioneer in reviving the time-honored Geneva arts of enamel painting and engraving and pairing them with original complicated movements conceived for women. DeLaneau's 1608 may appear deceptively simple with its side-by-side jumping hour and minute indications mimicking a digital readout, but the movement represents a noteworthy technical achievement. The condensed time display also provides an expansive open dial that serves as a canvas for DeLaneau artisans, who create only unique pieces. "We play with a palette of highly specialized handicrafts," explains Thévenaz, who plans to open the brand's first US boutique on Madison Avenue this fall. "That artistry mixes with the technical aspect of the movement. I want to marry the DeLaneau heritage in jewelry with a new kind of passion for horology."



RALPH LAUREN STIRRUP FULL PAVÉ DIAMONDS. WHITE GOLD STIRRUP-SHAPED CASE SET WITH 348 DIAMONDS. DIAMOND-SET CROWN. HAND-WOUND MANUFACTURE MECHANICAL MOVEMENT BY JAEGER-LECOULTRE FOR RALPH LAUREN. 70-HOUR POWER RESERVE. WHITE ALLIGATOR STRAP LINED WITH BLACK ALSAVEL. WHITE GOLD FOLDING BUCKLE.



FREDERIQUE CONSTANT MAXIME MANUFACTURE LADIES. THIS NEW MANUFACTURE TIMEPIECE FOR WOMEN COMBINES TECHNICALITY WITH ELEGANCE. 39 MM STAINLESS STEEL CASE WITH ROSE GOLD BEZEL SET WITH 52 DIAMONDS. WHITE MOTHER-OF-PEARL DIAL WITH SUNBURST GUILLOCHÉ. WHITE SATIN STRAP.

Of course, sometimes, girls just want to have fun, throw on a pair of jeans, and wear a watch that is both sturdy and stylish. Speaking to our sporty sides, Hublot uses colored gems to electrify its Tutti Frutti collection, and Audemars Piguet revisits its flagship Royal Oak offshore in a ladylike 37 mm dimension.

STYLE, QUALITY AND ROMANCE

Ultimately, the most memorable women's timepieces are those that manage to fulfill women's desires for style, quality, and romance. Breguet managed to hit all three pulse points with this year's Reine de Naples automatic strike, which commemorates the 200th anniversary of what the brand claims is the first wrist-worn watch made for Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples. The egg-shaped musical watch marks the passing of each hour with an automatic chime courtesy of a new movement specifically developed for women's watches. The mother-of-pearl dial showcases the striking mechanism through two apertures in the dial, delighting the eyes as well as the ears. Even Marie Antoinette would have been impressed. ▾



AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL OAK OFFSHORE CHRONOGRAPH. DESIGNED FOR REFINED WOMEN WITH A STRONG AND SLIGHTLY IMPERTINENT NATURE, THIS NEW PIECE FEATURES A MANUFACTURE CHRONOGRAPH MOVEMENT IN AN ICONIC 37 MM ROYAL OAK CASE IN STAINLESS STEEL. BLACK RUBBER-MOULDED BEZEL WITH 32 DIAMONDS. RUBBER STRAP WITH STEEL FOLDING CLASP. WATER-RESISTANT TO 50 M.



SWATCH SIGN IN THE SKY. NEW COLLECTION WITH SELF-WINDING MECHANICAL MOVEMENT. CHRONOGRAPH FUNCTION AND DATE AT 3 O'CLOCK. TRANSPARENT PLASTIC CASE. STEEL BEZEL, CROWN AND PUSHERS. WHITE RUBBER BRACELET.

BREGUET REINE DE NAPLES 8978. CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WRISTWATCH CREATED BY BREGUET FOR THE QUEEN OF NAPLES, THIS ELABORATE "COMPLICATION" STRIKES THE HOURS AUTOMATICALLY, A CHARMING AND DISCREET WAY OF SIGNALLING THE PASSAGE OF TIME. EGG-SHAPED CASE IN 18-K WHITE GOLD. BEZEL SET WITH 30 DIAMONDS. MOTHER-OF-PEARL DIAL. ENGRAVED SELF-WINDING MECHANICAL MOVEMENT IN THE SHAPE OF A DOVE. WHITE ALLIGATOR STRAP.

