

Craft Works

Earlier this year, Swiss brand Vacheron Constantin took its passion, skill and associated craftsmen to Paris to take star roles in the Talents d'Exception exhibition, celebrating the exceptional work of some of France's finest craftsmen and women. Vacheron also took the opportunity to unveil some of its finest new treasures. **Tracey Llewellyn**

That the French are proud of their artisans in a way that puts other countries to shame is a fact. So why then was a Swiss company invited to be patron of the Journées des Métiers d'Art and the Talents d'Exception exhibition that opened on 31 March 2011 in the Moulding and Casting Gallery of the City of Architecture and Heritage in Paris? The answer is simple. The Swiss brand involved was Vacheron Constantin, a company itself dedicated to preserving age-old crafts and traditions through the production of its contemporary timepieces.

The eminent guest roster included Frédéric Mitterrand, Minister for Culture and Communication, Frédéric Lefebvre, Secretary of State responsible for Handicraft, Jean-Michel Delisle, President of INMA (the French National

Institute of Arts and Crafts), Serge Nicole, President of the Atelier d'Art de France, the Honourable Senator Catherine Dumas, as well as Juan-Carlos Torres, CEO of Vacheron Constantin. The aim of the exhibition was to celebrate the 217 recognised crafts in France as well as the 38,000 companies and 70,000 employees working in them by showcasing the work of ten ateliers. Crafts on show ranged from bottle making, to straw marquetry work, from felt-making to haute couture, from cabinet-making to embroidery, lacquering, lithography, gilding and fan-making.

But for any watch enthusiast, the highlight of the show had to be the watchmaking demonstrations put on by Vacheron Constantin including a visual explanation of a minute repeater by Master



Having been a patron of the Paris National Opera for the past four years, Vacheron Constantin last year announced a series of 15 unique watches as a tribute to the composers featured in Marc Chagall's mural on the Opera Garnier's ceiling. The first watch was presented in November 2010 and the second piece was unveiled at the Talents d'Exception. It showcases Chagall's image based on Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and reproduces every detail of the great master's painting.



Christian Lefrançois demonstrates the art of Vacheron



Preservation: 61

The Métiers d'Art "La Symbolique des Laques" series unites artists from one of the oldest Japanese lacquer firms – Zohiko, founded in 1661 – and the skills of Vacheron Constantin's finest Master Watchmakers. The series is being created over three years; with each year seeing a new set of three watches in a limited series of twenty. This year the Kame Kaeru Ko watches are dedicated to the aquatic realm. Each animal lends a powerfully symbolic face to the passing of time orchestrated by the skeletonised version of the ultra-thin Calibre 1003 calibre.



Enamellist extraordinaire, Anita Porchet.



Munenori Yamamoto, a Master Lacquer Artist from the Zōhiko company.

Watchmaker Christian Lefrançois, a presentation of Grand Feu enamelling by Anita Porchet and a display of the Maki-e technique exercised by Munenori Yamamoto, a Master Lacquerer from the Zōhiko company flown in specially from Kyoto for this exhibition.

And Vacheron took advantage of its participation in the exhibition to unveil two new models in its Métiers d'Art collection. Firstly, a tribute to the time-honoured Genevèse art of Grand Feu enamelled miniature painting with a unique model in the Métiers d'Art Chagall & L'Opéra de Paris collection, dedicated to the work of Tchaikovsky. This piece

was particularly pertinent as it was during the launch of this collection at the Opera Garnier last year that Frédéric Mitterrand came to the conclusion that Vacheron Constantin would be an ideal patron for the exhibition, something he echoed in his inaugural speech when he said: "Vacheron Constantin, [has represented] since 1755 a perfect example in the watchmaking field of the meticulous care and patience required for these crafts of excellence and refinement."

The second collection shown was, a tribute to the ancestral Japanese art of Maki-e, in co-operation with the Zōhiko

company – three new creations from the Métiers d'Art 'La Symbolique des Laques' collection. After 2010's set of bird themed pieces, this year's Kame Kaeru Koi watches, are dedicated to the aquatic realm, with animals selected for their symbolic legacies of longevity, luck and strength. The turtle, frog and carp disclose their attributes in stylised waters on the enamelled dials.



Frog (Kaeru) and Hydrangea.

Frédéric Mitterrand opens the exhibition with a speech praising French craftsmen and women.



Speaking on behalf of Vacheron Constantin, Juan-Carlos Torres reminded listeners that: "Vacheron Constantin shares with artistic crafts its faith in the wealth of human talent and its creative thrust; as well as its admiration for the ability some people have of raising their hand-crafted work to an art form; an ability which shows that the human hand is unequalled in its capacity to stir emotions..."

Further information:

www.vacheron-constantin.com



Carp (Koi) and Waterfall.



Turtle (Kame) and Lotus.