



BACK FROM BASEL:
EVERYTHING AND ITS OPPOSITE
Tendencies • Strategies • Analyses
100 brands under the loupe



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HE LOVES ME, HE LOVES ME NOT...

For those whose fancy is tickled by mechanical follies, there was one obligatory stop: **Christophe Claret**. The man who has built and produced 70 different calibres in 25 years never stops experimenting with the mechanics of chance and happy juxtaposition, with strikes, rings and gongs, while revisiting the most complex escapements. Fresh from presenting his Poker Watch in Geneva in January, here he was again at Baselworld with two stunning new calibres, in his own inimitable style. The most visually striking new release was the Margot, an unparalleled romantic complication. Imagine picking the petals off a daisy, in the most random way possible. "He loves me, he loves me not... one by one, or two by two, it just depends. The twelve petals of the central flower disappear before your eyes as if by magic, accompanied by a soft tinkling sound (75 combinations are theoretically possible). Similarly, inscriptions cataloguing the extent of the unknown lover's devotion appear in a window at four o'clock. If you should end up with "... not at all" a discreet pushbutton brings

the message back to "... madly." With the push of a different button, the petals instantly reappear around the glittering central corolla. Stunning! On a strictly horological level, the ingenious Mr Claret has turned his attention to the detent escapement with another watch, the Maestoso. Seven years of development were required to perfect its pivoted detent escapement, whose origin harks back to marine chronometers but whose great weakness lies – or at least used to lie – in its sensitivity to shocks, particularly lateral shocks. They can easily cause the escape wheel to catch, with the risk of breaking, while shocks can increase the amplitude of the balance, leading to excess energy that accelerates the escape wheel. Unfortunately, it is impossible to explain in detail within the confines of a general article such as this the mechanical solutions perfected by Christopher Claret. Let us simply note that two distinct systems have been added, namely an anti-pivot cam integral to the sprung balance and a flexible thrust bearing fitted on the wheel and connected to the balance, which absorbs any excess energy (in other words, an original constant-force system).



(Europa Star will look at different types of escapement mechanisms in its next issue, ES 4/14, to be published at the end of August).

Aesthetically, the Maestoso, whose depth of field gives an unparalleled view of the detent escapement and its workings, has "royal" leanings, with its Louis XIV style Grand Siècle sculpted pillars and Charles X-inspired bridges. "Châtelain" Christopher Claret (the Margot advertising spot was shot in front of the château he restored), master of the Solei d'Or Manufacture, is not just a one-trick pony.

PARTING (SNAP)SHOTS

Unfortunately, it is impossible to report on everything that caught our eye at Baselworld. There are many other watchmakers, design houses and initiatives we would like to mention in addition to the hundred or so mentioned in the following pages. However, we will continue to revisit them in forthcoming issues. After all, watchmaking is known for taking the long view! In the meantime, I will leave you with a few final snapshots.

It was extremely gratifying to witness the buoyant enthusiasm and spirit of curiosity of the watchmakers within the **Académie Horlogère des Créateurs**

△ Form left to right:

MARGOT
and
MAESTOSO
by **Christophe Claret**