



CHRISTOPHE CLARET

Layla

He loves me... he loves me not

A variation on Margot, the first Christophe Claret complication specifically developed for women

“He loves me... he loves me not.” Two years after unveiling its first ladies’ watch, Margot, the watchmaker from Le Locle offers a new variation suffused with oriental colors in a 20-piece limited series. Here’s how this new Christophe Claret ‘says it with flowers’ at the simple press of a button.

What hopeless romantic hasn’t ever plucked the petals off a daisy to discover how their sweetheart feels about them? “He loves me... he loves me not.” A game of luck, or a game of love? With this creation from Christophe Claret, time is wooed infinitely. The classic conundrum comes to life on dial of the Layla watch, an elegant and romantic ladies’ timepiece.

The story goes that the île Saint-Louis in the center of Paris during the Middle Ages was a meadow lined with willows and poplars. It was an idyllic place for sweethearts to stroll and ‘learn’ the depth of each other’s love by picking petals off a daisy while reciting: *“Il m’aime... il ne m’aime pas du tout”*. Translation: He loves me... he loves me not (at all). Note that while the English version is all or nothing – i.e. loves me, loves me not – the French has a wider range of possibilities: loves me a little, loves me lots, loves me passionately, loves me madly, or doesn’t love me at all. The tradition has since transcended time as well as crossing continents. It is the perfect allegory for Christophe Claret’s desire to create a watch that is both charming and complex, the ultimate embodiment of women. A beautiful expression of true love, Layla follows on from Margot in transforming watchmaking savoir-faire into an amorous declaration. With this new version, Christophe Claret pays tribute to the romanticism of Arabic poets.

Layla features an ingenious mechanism that helps to ‘predict’ – or at least tries to – one of nature’s paramount questions: “Does he love me?” A simple press of the pusher at 2 o’clock brings the watch to life. With each press, a petal – sometimes a pair of petals, it is impossible to foresee – subtly disappears under the dial in a smooth action, perfectly depicting the delicate undressing of the flower. The eagerly-awaited answer appears at random in calligraphic letters (in Arabic) on the dial at 8 o’clock: a little –a lot – passionately – madly – not at all? The difficulty for the Christophe Claret team lay in adapting the movement of the Margot for this interpretation so as to match the right-to-left direction of Arabic script.

At each press of the pusher, a distinct, crystalline chime resonates, aurally signaling the pace of the game. The striking mechanism is one of Manufacture Claret's signature complications, blending technical mastery with sublime esthetics, and here its hammer is adorned with a prong-set ruby. A caseband window at 8 o'clock allows clear views of it vertically striking the cathedral gong above. Pressing the reset pusher at 4 o'clock instantly makes all petals reappear around the pistil and turns the 'sentiment' display at 8 o'clock to an ellipsis shown by three little dots (...). The petal display and its mechanism have been awarded a patent.

Such an original technique called for ingenious design. The dial exudes romantic femininity. At the whim of its iridescent reflections, the natural pink mother-of-pearl dial reveals delicately engraved verses penned by the Arab poet, Qays Al Mulawwah. The poem from which these excerpts are taken tells the story of Qays, a young poet and son of an illustrious family of Bedouins, who falls in love with his cousin Layla. In Bedouin culture, fathers generally arrange marriages and the young woman's family refuses this match. Layla weds another suitor, leaves the region and Qays' lifeless body is discovered several days later, protecting an ultimate poem dedicated to his love.

On the dial, three emeralds at 3 o'clock, 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock poetically punctuate the scene. A pair of gold-tipped, steel hands – each delicately round-polished by hand – glides over the 12 white, satin-lacquered titanium petals that tightly embrace the central emerald pistil, its multi-level corolla intensifying the three-dimensionality of the dial's landscape.

In perfect harmony with the movement, the feminine gold case has a curved profile to suit even the slimmest wrist. Furthering softening the silhouette of this model, the crown is hidden from view, placed on the back next to the upper lugs. The center of the space between the lugs is adorned with an emerald, while baguette-cut diamonds also create a scintillating play of light around the bezel.

The display back reveals the self-winding rotor, a delicately carved, flower-shaped carousel of colors symbolizing sentiments of love, with a central cabochon concealing the rotor's ball bearings. Each one of the eight resplendent triangular precious stones denote a feeling – hope, passion, tenderness – also translated into Arabic. Which one will line up with the red-lacquered heart when the flower halts its waltz?

The Layla watch blossoms in a 20-piece limited edition.

Technical Specifications

Movement:

Caliber: EMT17, self-winding

Dimensions: Diameter: 38.4 mm
Thickness: 9.76 mm

Number of components: 731

Number of jewels: 95

Power reserve:

- 72 hours
- Two barrels

Escapement:

- Frequency: 4 Hz (28,800 vph)
- Swiss lever

Functions:

- Hours and minutes
- "He loves me... he loves me not" (*"Effeuille la marguerite"* in French)
- Symbolic 'color-feeling' on the winding rotor

Features:

- 12 "He loves me...he loves me not" petals to 'pick off'
- 'Sentiment' displayed in window at 8 o'clock: a little, a lot, passionately, madly and not at all
- Pusher at 2 o'clock 'picks off' one or two petals while advancing the 'Sentiment' indicator by 1 sentiment
- Striking chime at each action of the 2 o'clock pusher with a visible hammer at 8 o'clock
- "He loves me... loves me not" reset pusher at 4 o'clock: all the petals instantly reappear around a pistil, while the 'Sentiment' displayed turns to an ellipsis (...)

Case:

Dimensions: 42.50 x 14.52 mm

Water resistance: 3 ATM / 30 m / 100 ft

Reference: MTR.EMT17.150-170

Case: 5N red gold, baguette-set
69 diamonds (4.80 carats)

Top lugs: Framing an emerald

Hands: Steel with 4N pink gold tips

Dial: Pink mother-of-pearl
White gold prong-set with emeralds

Pushers: 5N red gold

Strap: Emerald green alligator
5N red gold prong-set with pear-shaped diamonds

Limited edition: 20

Price in Swiss francs (ex VAT): 288,000

