



JAEGER-LECOULTRE PRESENTS THE NEW REVERSO TRIBUTE ENAMEL ALFONS MUCHA

The Manufacture Jaeger-LeCoultre is proud to be one of the few watchmaking Manufactures to master the arts of enameling and hand-engraving. To showcase its Rare Handcrafts “Métiers Rares”, the Grande Maison has given three new faces to its Reverso watches, displaying famous artworks crafted with remarkable skill by its master artisans.

Jaeger-LeCoultre has long maintained an ardent interest in painting and art history. The Reverso Tribute Enamel collection pays homage to the illustrious painters who share the values of the Grande Maison. Each Reverso Tribute Enamel watch has been crafted by our artisans to offer a front dial finely guilloché by hand and covered with translucent Grand Feu enamel, twinned with a reverse face featuring an enameled miniature of a painting inspired by a great painter that is as Alfons Mucha.

For this collection, Jaeger-LeCoultre has drawn inspiration from “The Seasons”, the artist’s emblematic 1896 series of decorative panels, to decorate three different models of the Reverso Tribute Enamel—each in a limited series of eight pieces.

A challenge to our savoir-faire

The front face of each watch has been worked in guilloché of remarkable quality. Finely crafted by Jaeger-LeCoultre’s master engraver, this guilloché requires extremely complex artisanal skills and a machine that dates back a hundred years. On this face, a sunburst guilloché appears in relief under the deep color of its transparent enameling. Each color required hours of research to achieve its perfectly even hue, and to ensure it harmonizes with the colors of the painting reproduced on the reverse of the case.

When the watch is turned over, a veritable masterpiece reveals itself on the caseback.

Jaeger-LeCoultre’s Rare Handcrafts “Métiers Rares” master enameler faces multiple challenges in creating each of the three miniatures that feature on the reverse.

Much of the complexity lies in working by hand to scale the original painting—measuring over a meter—onto a surface of 3 cm², during the very process of enameling.

The reproduction needs to be as faithful as possible, but using different tools and materials from the ones Mucha used. For instance, the master enameler must painstakingly seek to reproduce the Czech artist’s rich palette, despite having only a restricted number of colors to work with.

Another challenge is the need to anticipate what color the result will be, and employ darker shades than the original, because the various protective layers that are applied subsequently over the design will alter the painting’s color intensity.

In the miniature inspired by “Spring”, Mucha captures the very atmosphere of this season, personifying it in an innocent fair-haired figure wearing a translucent white dress and standing under a blossoming tree. It took meticulous research and many trials to reproduce the fluid lines of her dress, because the protective coats of enamel hinder some of the spontaneity of this design. The same painstaking attention went into creating even the tiniest details, like the white flowers she wears in her hair, the little birds, and the background, which is itself very rich in detail. An additional difficulty for the enameler was reproducing the monochrome dress, a craft known for its play on multiple colors.

A frame that was engraved and sculpted entirely by hand also surrounds the miniature on each model. Using a special chisel, the master engraver created the design by hollowing out the material. This is an incredibly difficult



task, because the engraving is executed after the enameling. So the engraver must sculpt around the miniature without altering it, before decorating the case with exquisitely delicate details. It is an operation that requires enormous finesse.

This exceptional piece will have required more than a 100 hours of work (70 hours of enameling and 30 hours of engraving) in order to reproduce the master's artwork as faithfully as possible.

The process of Grand Feu miniature enameling

Before starting to paint, the enameler analyzes the original artwork and resizes it, so it fits the dimensions of the Reverso case. Then, a white enamel base is applied several times to the hollowed-out surface of the gold Reverso case. The piece is placed in the oven at 800°C (Grand Feu means "Big Fire") so the enamel melts onto the gold. Just as a painter works on a blank canvas, the enameler creates an outline of the design on this white surface.

To achieve the right colors and desired image, successive layers of oxides are applied so their gorgeous design gradually discloses itself. Repeated firings are carried out between the application of each layer. The final color is only revealed after firing, which means the enamel artist must have perfect mastery of the color palette and be able to anticipate the end result—the color that will become fixed at 800°C.

The last stage is to protect the miniature by applying six to eight layers of protective coating, firing it between layers. This technique is called the "Geneva Technique". All in all, a minimum of 15 firings are required—and sometimes even more.

Before assembling the Reverso case, the enameler will lap and polish the enamel and gold by hand to restore their full shine.

Grand Feu enamel is the most difficult and delicate technique to execute. It requires years of experience and, above all, tremendous patience and meticulousness. To create such masterpieces as these, enamellers must draw on all their senses.

About Alfons Mucha

Internationally celebrated Czech artist Mucha is inextricably associated with the image of the 1900 Paris. He is best known for his distinctive stylized theatrical posters that epitomize Art Nouveau. Alfons Mucha has often inspired Jaeger-LeCoultre's creativity—leading to the Reverso "The Seasons" in 1996, Reverso "Precious Gemstones" in 1999, and Reverso "Clair de Lune" in 2001. "The Seasons" (1896) was one of Mucha's earliest decorative panels and became one of his most popular series.

As well as being a great poster artist, Mucha was also a visionary; an exhibition tracing his story is on at the Musée du Luxembourg until January 27, 2019.

Reverso Tribute Enamel Mucha - Boutique Edition

Dimensions: 45.5 mm x 27.4 mm

Thickness: 9.7 mm

Caliber: 822A/2 - Manually wound

Functions: Hour/Minute

Case: White gold/Yellow gold

Front: Grand Feu enamel and guilloché dial

Reverse: Grand Feu miniature enamel and hand engraving

Limited edition available only in Boutiques: 8 pieces for each model

References: Q39334M1, Q39314M2, Q39314M3