

LES ATELIERS
HERVÉ SCHLÜCHTER
Art Traditionnel Horloger
Traditional Horological Art

International Launch
21 June 2023

Instruments Mécaniques Philosophiques
Philosophical Mechanical Instruments

Note of intent by Hervé Schlüchter

Introducing the "L'Essentiel" watch:
The Philosophical Regulator

Hours indicated on a 24-hour philosophical disc in aventurine,
minutes via central regulator hand, and small seconds on a subdial at 6 o'clock.
Two complications: 24-hour philosophical disc, stop lever for time correction.
Three horological specialties: 'moustache' lever escapement, Guillaume-type balance,
and wolf's tooth winding.

A limited edition of 25 pieces.



Create to endure

1750, today... At that time, watches were created and built for the long term, to last, with the best materials, to stand the test of time. As these objects were destined to accompany several generations, particular care was taken to ensure their longevity and, of course, that they remained a pleasure to admire.

When my dad was still alive, he commissioned me to make him a pocket watch, as his granddad always wore one. His request was simple: *"I'd like to wear a pocket watch too, and since you make beautiful pieces for others, I'd be delighted if you made one for me"*. I couldn't honor his request in time, as he left us before I could even sketch a single line for his watch; too busy and occupied was I, at the time, in my role as a director of watchmaking for a major brand.

I was still mourning my father's passing when I decided to fulfill my dream of independence, and finally started work on his pocket watch. This was the initial impetus for the "Tree of Life" project – and for the first watch, "L'Essentiel" (*'that which is Essential'*). Having become a father myself, just two months after mine died, I became inhabited by a deep desire to materialize a philosophy of life.

As I started conceiving my father's pocket watch, I almost immediately imagined that it would carry a philosophical message within... What if my great-grandfather's pocket watch also harbored a message for me – and for my children in the future...?

**What if we linked watches together...
like members of the same family tree...
And so the seed for the Tree of Life was planted.**

I was thus going to materialize several watches, mirroring the states of mind that evolve in our lives ever since the human condition began.

- **Childhood** – its carefreeness, its magical ability to just be, in the here and now, to live from day to day. It's a state we strive for throughout our lives.
- **Parents** – their/our broader vision,
 - And finally, **Grandparents** – their wisdom about the passage of time.

I knew I wasn't beginning to work on *a* watch. I was setting out on a bigger journey.

When it came to the technical approach, the specifications quickly became very clear. The basic postulate was to draw inspiration from the movements of iconic pocket watches, from their majesty and generousness of form. And since I'd chosen to make the components myself, using traditional methods would ensure the creation naturally remained as pure as its intent.

Cutting through to the Essential.

The name for the watch came naturally – the word kept coming up in every philosophical, technical and design consideration.

Inspiration for the purity of the design came from leafing through a work by Antide Janvier and coming across a magnificent regulator dating from 1800. I was going to create a regulator. A philosophical one. In a 39mm case.

I always begin with designing the dial, then I create the movement that corresponds to the watch face I've drawn.

The 24-hour disc would thus be the philosophical disc. It would carry the owner's message, addressed to them and to generations to come.



Drawing up the movement's specifications

I decided to build my caliber on several foundational watchmaking specialties. I wanted my own balance wheel, with proportions identical to those of pocket watches, a Swiss anchor escapement with a 'moustache' lever, wolf's teeth on the ratchet, large and fine and elegant wheels, a spine of mirror-polished steel components, *ébauches* in silvered *maillechort* for the same natural feel as the marvelous pocket watches from the golden age of watchmaking, and of course absolute comfort and purity.



After completing initial calculations and choosing an agreeable frequency of 18,000 vibrations per hour, I turned to the desired thickness for a 39mm watch. 8mm, excluding the crystal, I felt would achieve perfect diameter/thickness proportionality. So began the 3D modelling phase, and the hours spent starting over and over again to ultimately capture this ever-elusive harmony, from the buckle to the crown, and from the crown to the balance wheel.

Finalizing the technical file together marks the transition between virtual 3D modelling and real materials. Once the countless specific fittings have been carried out, the actual work can finally begin. When you're creating your own caliber, the extent of all that has to be done upstream before you can even get started is staggering – and it is nowhere to be seen in the final product! At this stage, it takes an unstoppable passion for and an unshakable faith in horology to keep pushing on.

For months, nothing happens; the movement is lifeless, not even the slightest oscillation. Make. Test. Modify. Repeat. And repeat until perfect. As my master Philippe Dufour taught me, there's no time limit for doing things right. There's no room for approximation in this horological quest within the traditional art of watchmaking. Every morning, the material challenges you anew to 'Excellence' – and you know you must step up. This speaks to the humility that characterizes the craftspeople who are truly – and daily – immersed in the materials of their art.

The "L'Essentiel" watch is born.

*(In my imagination I never saw it as a watch,
but as philosophical mechanical instrument.)*

It may sound strange, but when I must explain the purpose of my work in three words, "*philosophical mechanical instrument*" always rings true and in tune with my original intention. A living mechanism that keeps track of one's life (lives), transmitting and safeguarding a philosophical message.

I would have loved to have been handed down a mechanical instrument by my forebears, something that messages me and guides my steps throughout my existence. To inscribe fundamentals onto a mechanism as one chisels truths into marble. It is a feeling that gives me great comfort and joy because infusing my creations with these words gives me the chance to keep the light shining on life values: Today, Now, Love & Gratitude.

On the watch, I chose Latin as a witness to the past: *Hodie* (today) and *Nunc* (now) appear in the sun. Simple, everyday words, but they perfectly express the feeling of childhood. The absolute present, not tomorrow, not 2 hours from now, just now. As for the choice of 'midnight words': Amor & Gratia. Love & Gratitude – words that are obvious to me, and very powerful ones that can end a day in a wondrous manner.

A Manifesto of Traditional Horological Art

The choice of materials was of course fundamental – to ensure longevity, comfort, and quality of the exterior for watchmakers who will be caring for my creations in the future. Everything, without exception, abides by the motto: "Creare Durare" - Create to endure.

The materials would thus be those reflecting the purest watchmaking tradition, with as few galvanic treatments as possible, to maintain a perfect level of finish over time.

The barrel and the time train

The first element to manifest in the energy sequence of a watch is the barrel and its ratchet wheel. I've always marveled at the wolf's teeth around crown and ratchet wheels in old pocket watches. This profile adds a special touch to these two components, especially when the teeth are chamfered and polished, and the topside of these two parts is given a sunray finish in the direction of rotation, respecting the mechanical logic and harmony.

The *maillechort* (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy) barrel bridge houses the suspended crown wheel and the click's spring, which is integrated into the bridge. I chose to design a single-piece click that echoed the shape of the barrel bridge.

After the barrel and its 60-hour power reserve comes the time train, with its large gold-plated spoked wheels – beveled, circular-grained and countersunk on both sides. Here too, I wanted large, majestic wheels and a large, beautiful center wheel. For the 3 wheels of the time train, I wanted a common logic to their bridges and consistency in the finishes, by creating a bridge for each wheel – like the calibers of iconic pocket watches. I wanted to graphically represent a spine of mirror-polished steel bridges, as slender and elegant as possible, with their arms cradled, as a figure of style. The center bridge thus provides the movement's axis of symmetry, responding to the curve on the barrel and balance bridge. Curves and shapes, simple and direct.

Balanced lever escapement and regulating organ

After the time train, come the escapement and its specialties, a tribute to traditional horological art. The escape wheel is of the traditional shape and works in concert with the counterpoised lever. In fine watches, this type of anchor exacted a level of filing and polishing indicative of the care given even to the smallest details of execution. I decided to incorporate this type of anchor for reasons of aesthetics and craftsmanship and opted for the mustache-shaped lever. It's both surprising and pleasing to see a 'moustache' anchor in action, and quite rare these days.

The intent with the watch's regulating organ was to bridge the past with the present. That's why I took my inspiration from the specific shape of marine chronometer balances, with their four inertia blocks and adjusting screws. Its dimensions would correspond to what used to be the norm, i.e. occupy about the same space as the movement's radius. To enable collectors to check the accuracy of their watches, I fitted the movement with a stop lever that passes through the movement and halts the regulating organ when setting the time. The *finesse* and length of this spring is a delight of mechanical lightness.

The system for holding the stud is a small mechanism that enables the reference point to be finely adjusted simply by turning an eccentric on the balance bridge. The adjustable stud holder and its swan-neck spring are made of steel and chamfered, with the top surfaces mirror-polished. Beneath the heart of the watch are two personalized plates, hand-engraved with "Tree of Life", "L'Essentiel", and "Creare Durare".

The face of the watch

The 24-hour aperture reveals the unfolding days, with its "hidden" words for future generations. I chose Latin to give them a hint of mysteriousness. *Hodie Nunc* (Today Now); *Amor & Gratia* (Love & Gratitude).

This philosophical disc was a real challenge, as it's made of aventurine with the sun and moon metallized in gold and silver, all pad-printed. The choice of aventurine and its starry sky effect is perfectly suited to this open window on time, our personal, intimate time.

As for the other dials, I wanted to use *Grand Feu* enamel and *guilloché* in my first creation. These are magical, timeless crafts. *Grand Feu* enamel, with its immortal character, allows the dials to be domed, enhancing the generousness of *L'Essentiel*. The central dial is in *maillechort* (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy) with a hand-turned *guilloché*. One of my dreams, to learn the art of *guillochage*, came true thanks to the relationship based on transmitting *savoir-faire* I have with the master of this art, Georges Brodbeck.

The hands are traditionally crafted, *finesse* being one of the hallmarks of elegance. The regulator hand, indicating the minutes, sits at the center of the slender mechanical instrument. They are flame-blued, the old-fashioned way, and the slight variations in color give each its uniqueness.

The case, the bracelet and the buckle.

The case is, of course, one of the elements that demands a great deal attention to detail, particularly in terms of ergonomics. Great care has been given to the elegance of the lugs, the right slope, the right proportions and the right positioning on the wrist. Engraved on the crown and buckle, the stylized HS. The pin buckle follows the same logic of alternating polished with straight-grained surfaces. All case and buckle components are in stainless steel for this limited edition of 25 pieces.

L'Essentiel is delivered in a sober case crafted from chocolate Barenia leather bearing the philosophical mechanical instrument's serial number; inside, the certificate of authenticity and a set of spare straps.

To share the first act of the Tree of Life project, what better time than the Summer Solstice.

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Technical Details

Name of the watch: L'Essentiel
'Tree of Life'

Exterior

Components: 45
Case: Stainless steel, 3-piece case design, pressed case back Horizontal satin-finished case band with polished lugs, polished bezel and case back Sapphire crystal, double-sided antireflective coating
Case dimensions: 39mm
Height: 10.37mm
Water resistance: 3 ATM (30 meters, 100 FT)
Crown: Stainless steel, polished with engraved logo
Strap: Black alligator, hand-stitched; inner in red alligator, small scales
Buckle: Stainless steel, hand-engraved logo, satin-finished top and bottom
Polished edges, hammered pin support
Polished pin, flanks satin-finished

Display

Central dial: *Maillechort* (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy), hand-turned *guilloché* decoration; hand-engraved HS logo; hand-chamfered periphery
Flanks straight-grained, underside circular-grained
Hour and seconds aperture: Steel, hardened-tempered and whitened by hand, hooped
Bevels and countersinks, hand-made and polished; flanks straight-grained
Minute and seconds dial: White *Grand Feu* enamel, glossy black transfers
Flanks straight-grained, underside circular-grained
Minute and seconds hands : Steel, hardened-tempered and whitened by hand, flame-blued
Balanced; bevels and countersinks, hand-made and polished
Cannons, countersunk and polished
Philosophical disc: Aventurine, mounted on notched crown
Gold plating for the Sun; silver plating for the Moon
Latin philosophical inscription: on the Sun, *Hodie Nunc* (Today Now);
and on the moon, *Amor & Gratia* (Love & Gratitude)

Movement

Name: Caliber HS-01
Diameter: 34.60mm / 15½ 'lignes'
Height: 7.38mm (including switch)
Number of components: 189
Frequency: 18'000 vibrations/hour
Complications: 2
24-hour philosopher's disk, stop seconds lever
Watchmaking specialties: 3
Swiss lever escapement, counterpoised 'moustache' lever
Wolf's teeth on ratchet and crown wheel
Guillaume-type 'Homage' balance wheel
Number of jewels: 27
Power reserve: 60 hours

Technical Details, cont'd

Technical components

Barrel:	Quick-rotating, fixed flange; drum circular-grained, flanks straight-grained, interior circular-grained, lid circular-grained
Ratchet and crown wheel:	Wolf's-tooth profile, topside sunray-finished, underside circular-grained; teeth hand-polished
Click-spring:	Mirror-polished, hand-chamfered; screws countersunk, flanks straight-grained, circular-grained
Wheels:	3N gold-plated ARCAP spokes; polished bevels; circular-grained; diamond-coated inside and out, straight-fluted
Pinions:	Traditionally manufactured; hardened-tempered and whitened by hand
Escapement:	Leaves and shafts, hand-polished, burnished Swiss lever escapement; 'moustache' lever, mirror-polished, chamfered, flanks straight-grained Escape wheel, mirror-polished Endstone plate, mirror-polished Bevels and moldings, hand-made and polished
Pendulum:	Guillaume-type (diameter 14.10mm) Variable inertia with adjusting weights
Spiral:	Phillips terminal curve Stud holder, eccentric fine-adjustment

Ebauches and bridges

Plate:	<i>Maillechort</i> (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy), hand-engraved with 'Hervé Schlüchter' and 'Bienne' 'Work No.', hand-engraved under the regulating organ Circular-graining, top and bottom; recesses circular-grained, flanks straight-grained Countersinks hand-turned and polished; flanks straight-grained
Barrel, escapement and balance bridges:	<i>Maillechort</i> (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy) <i>Côtes de Genève</i> or graining; underside circular-grained, chamfered Countersinks hand-turned and polished; flanks straight-grained
Center wheel, intermediate wheel, and seconds wheel bridges:	Steel, hardened-tempered and whitened by hand, mirror-polished, chamfered, balanced Countersinks hand-turned and polished; flanks straight-grained Olive-domed jewels, set in 18K yellow gold chatons
Anchor bridge:	<i>Maillechort</i> (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy); underside straight-grained, chamfered Countersinks hand-turned and polished; flanks straight-grained Studs and underside circular-grained
'Angel's wings' bridges under the balance wheel:	<i>Maillechort</i> (nickel, copper, and zinc alloy), hand-engraved with 'Tree of Life', 'L'Essentiel', and 'Creare Durare' 3N gold-plated lettering; circular-grained, chamfered Countersinks, hand-turned and polished; underside circular-grained
Serial No. plate:	18K yellow gold, number hand-engraved, circular-grained, chamfered Countersinks, hand-turned and polished; underside circular-grained