

LES AMBASSADEURS
PRESENT:

ARTISTIC CRAFTS

VIRTUOSO JEWELLERY

HAUTE HORLOGERIE

HAUTE COUTURE

TECHNIQUE: WATCH STRAPS





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THE LEADING HOUSE OF LEADING NAMES



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Métiers d'Art

MÉTIER D'ART ARE BRINGING US BACK IN TOUCH WITH WHAT MATTERS. TODAY'S PRODUCTS ARE TOO OFTEN MASS PRODUCED, STANDARDIZED AND ALMOST TOO PERFECT. LOOK AT THE IPHONE, WITH ITS SCULPTED SIDES AND IMPOSSIBLY PERFECT FORM. THE IPHONE IS GREAT TO USE, BUT IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A PRODUCT WITH A SOUL, YOU HAVE TO LOOK SOMEWHERE ELSE.

For those in the know, hand fashioned products, based on traditional methods and artisanal processes, are helping us to stop and value what is unique and special. Products that incorporate *métiers d'art*, traditional arts, often mixing innovative technology with these artisanal ways, have something special – we know that they have been touched by human hands and are the better for it.

Luckily, many luxury segments are rediscovering, and in some cases reviving and preserving, *métiers d'art*. Watches, suitcases, pens and even automobiles are using traditional techniques and age-old processes for production, even in the most modern of products.

ASTON MARTIN

Aston Martin automobiles, made in Gaydon, England, have had hand-craftsmanship as a key ingredient since the company was founded in 1913. “We pride ourselves on the fact that we are a contemporary company with a design viewpoint that is very modern, but part of what makes an Aston Martin is the

human hands, creating products that have a soul,” says Marek Reichman, Aston Martin’s director of design. “There are about 200 man-hours on average in our regular production cars, but this can go to extremes of about 2,500 man-hours for our exclusive cars (like the One-77). We are, in fact, making automobiles by hand, creating something that people will love.”

The interior is one place where hand craftsmanship comes into play, as the leathers are hand-sewn, the controls and keys are hand polished and finished, and all Aston Martin cars are hand painted for the final coat, as well as hand polished to achieve the glass finish for which the company is known.

All of the traditional crafts that Aston Martin uses are done in-house, and one key challenge is to keep this know-how alive. “We have the Aston Martin Academy where we do our training and teaching,” Reichman says. “We also have many long-standing employees that pass on the knowledge that they have developed.”



The creation of an Aston Martin automobile includes an incredible number of man hours to hand-stitch the seat (pictured) and the interior of the car, as well as to hand-polish the exterior to a flawless mirror polish finish.



Above:
Aston Martin created the Q-Design department to offer bespoke automobiles. Anything the customer wants, including unique colors, special leathers and individual touches, is possible.



GLOBE-TROTTER SUITCASES

Suitcase makers to the Queen of England, Globe-Trotter has been making suitcases the same way since 1897. “The design and production of our luggage remains true to its roots,” says Katherine Green, Brand Manager, Globe-Trotter. “Every suitcase is hand crafted on original Victorian machinery at our factory in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, in exactly the same way they were being produced back when we started. Our suitcases have always been made from a material called Vulcanised Fibreboard, which was invented in Britain in 1859, and is formed from 14 layers of specially bonded paper. However, we have also moved with the times by introducing new sizes and styles, as well as new colors.

“Nothing is overlooked at Globe-Trotter,” she continues. “Each and every suitcase is made by hand, so precision and attention to detail are key for our craftsmen and women. We have many customers who come into the store with suitcases which have been handed down to them from their parents, or grandparents, and they have become very emotionally attached to their cases, which have become their longstanding travelling companions. There is an emotional connection between the owners and





*Above and Left, top and bottom:
Suitcase makers to the Queen of
England, Globe-Trotter has been
making suitcases the same way
since 1897, by hand and using
original Victorian-era machinery.*



The Visconti Divina collection features a spiral of pure silver wrapping around the pen, imbedded in the deep colored resin.

their cases. Our luggage is luxury, and luxury isn't about necessity, it is about the feeling the product evokes."

VISCONTI PENS

Founded by Dante Delvecchio in 1988, Visconti has been focused on honoring the grand Florentine pen making tradition, while at the same time innovating with new technology and new approaches. "Most of the pens we produce are limited editions with a story behind them, therefore the decoration we are using has to be in harmony with the pen story and design," Delvecchio explains. "So the most important thing is to find the artistic techniques that are able to tell the story, like a camera for a director.

"For example, our Divina collection has incredible silver spirals wrapping the pen, with the silver trims imbedded in the resin," he continues. "All of our scrimshaw pens, like the Amerigo

Vespucci, are extremely detailed. The lacquering of our Dragon is at the highest level."

The methods of manufacturing that Visconti employs are a mix of the modern and the traditional, while the decorative techniques are time-honored and hand-done, making each pen unique.

MÉTIERS D'ART IN WATCHMAKING

One of the industries where artisanal crafts are alive and well is watchmaking. Watchmakers like Jaeger-LeCoultre, Bovet, Ulysse Nardin and Vacheron Constantin are committed to preserving these traditional decorative arts.

"The *Métiers d'Art* collections are at the center of Vacheron Constantin's core elements: the very first watch conceived and manufactured by Jean-Marc Vacheron in 1755 was already decorated with hand-engraved patterns," says Christian Selmoni, artistic director, Vacheron Constantin. "Since the early



This timepiece, the Dove from Vacheron Constantin's Les Univers Infinis Collection, combines four different métiers d'art: engraving, stone setting, enamel painting and guilloché.



Visconti's famous Forbidden City pen requires hours and hours of hand-work to realize the incredible detail.

years of our brand, we have been developing and consolidating our expertise and craftsmanship in watchmaking and in the decoration.

"Vacheron Constantin makes no compromises in the design and the production of *Métiers d'Art* watches: we believe that they all are examples of a living tradition, a heritage of more than 250 years of the finest craftsmanship," he adds. Though production is severely limited, watches that incorporate *métiers d'art* are being very well received and sell extremely well. Combining *métiers d'art* with high watchmaking means the best of both worlds.

Watchmaking is one of the leading industries when it comes to mixing the traditional with the cutting edge.

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INSIDE THE VACHERON CONSTANTIN WORKSHOP

The engraver painstakingly carves into the metal bit by bit, carefully removing it to form an intricate pattern of doves inspired by artist M.C. Escher. Next, the enamellist steps in and adds colored glass, in powder form, filling the pattern, then fires this in a kiln, watching the enamel melt and change into just the right violet color. For the white doves, she uses opalescent enamel, finishing with a clear coat (the Geneva technique) to ensure the enamel never fades or changes color. Next, the stone setter adds diamonds, forming the metal so the stones are held securely and in just the right position to catch the light and enhance the jewel's natural brilliance. Finally, it's the guillocheur's turn, highlighting the doves and alter-

nating between rough and smooth to play with the light. It's very rare for the enameled and gemset dial to be guilloché worked as a final step, and requires intense attention to detail.

Now, the dial of one of the three *Métiers d'Art* - Les Univers Infinis timepieces from Geneva-based Vacheron Constantin is ready to be assembled onto the mechanical movement, then put into the case. This 40 mm dial already represents hundreds of hours of work, from design to execution to final assembly. A masterpiece of the watchmaking arts, this timepiece is an example of the unique watches inspired by art, architecture and new ideas becoming increasingly popular today.



Jaeger-LeCoultre has its own in-house enamel atelier, one of the many forms of *métiers d'art* the Le Sentier-based watch manufacturer offers.

“Ulysse Nardin is a great example on how an almost 170 year old company with a rich history can conserve traditional watchmaking and yet integrate some of the most advanced materials and processes,” says Patrik Hoffmann, president, Ulysse Nardin. “For us, *métiers d'art* are an integral part of our philosophy and culture. They reflect the know-how and the art of watchmaking skills at its best. At the same time we were reintroducing enamel into watchmaking, we were the first watch company to use silicon in a watch when we introduced the Freak in the year 2000.”

MAKING ENOUGH

Producing enough of these *métiers d'art* watches to satisfy demand is an issue, as there is no school training these artisans. Most watch brands have responded by having their in-house *métiers d'art* workshops train new people, so this traditional know-how is never lost. At the same time, some watch brands are working to rediscover arts and techniques that have been lost to the sands of time.

Jaeger-LeCoultre has worked long and hard to bring the various *métiers d'art* workshops inside their manufacturing facilities, rather than hav-

ing to rely on outside artisans. Today, Jaeger-LeCoultre does all its enameling, miniature painting, engraving, guilloché, stone setting and more in-house with its own team of designers, artisans and craftsmen. In this way, Jaeger-LeCoultre guarantees the quality of its production and solidifies the future of their *métiers d'art* timepieces.

Products that include artisanal processes and incorporate a hand-made element are like a breath of fresh air in today's mass produced world, helping us reconnect with our past and appreciate our future.

ULYSSE NARDIN & BOVET ENAMEL DIALS

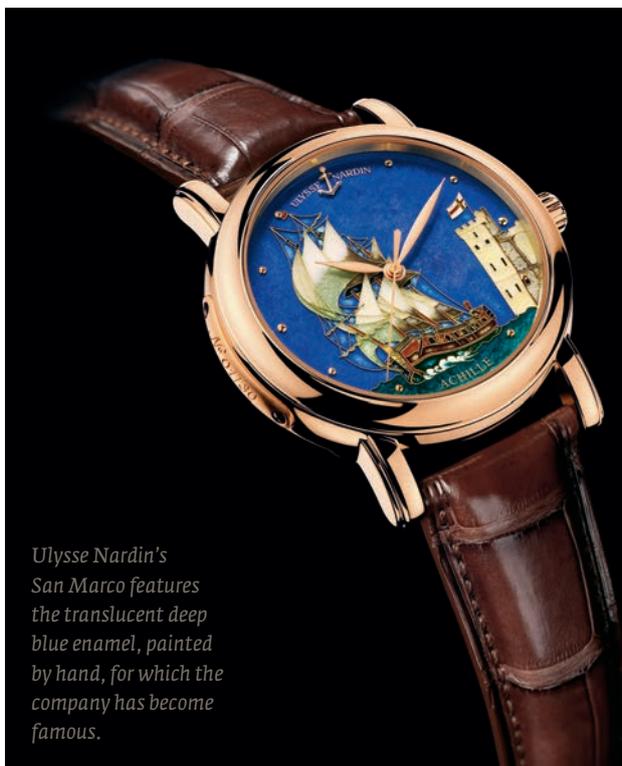
When Ulysse Nardin's partner for enamel dials, the owner of Donzé Cadrans, announced he was going to retire and sell the business, Ulysse Nardin didn't hesitate – they purchased the facility immediately.

“The first idea was to secure our past, that was extremely important to us,” says Patrik Hoffmann, president, Ulysse Nardin. “What we did there was an important milestone for Ulysse Nardin, because we really revived enamel.” The history between the two companies goes all the way back to the beginnings of the modern Ulysse Nardin, when the late Rolf Schnyder was looking for a unique blue translucent color for a special dial. Schnyder discovered Donzé Cadrans and commissioned the company to make the dial, which was an expensive process of trial and error. Dials burnt up in the oven, broke during production because they were so fragile, snapped and cracked during assembly because the watchmakers didn't know how to handle them and more. The watch, the San Marco, was a success and all the hard work paid off for both companies. In fact, every enamel dial since then has been done by Donzé Cadrans.

In many companies, there is a move afoot to modernize operations and

streamline the production. In Donzé Cadrans, however, the work is decidedly artisanal. In fact, walking into the company feels like walking back in time, as the dial creation is done just as it has been for centuries.

Dial production, and especially enamel dials, is very labor intensive. Just about every step is done by hand, from applying the enamel powder to the dial to firing it in the oven. There is no magic formula either, much of it depends on experience and feel. When the white enamel dials go into the oven, the temperature has to be just right and the dials have to stay in the oven the exact right amount of time, and there are no electronic timers present. The enamellist



Ulysse Nardin's San Marco features the translucent deep blue enamel, painted by hand, for which the company has become famous.

Bovet specializes in miniature painting in enamel, offering a bespoke service to clients who want something special.



who puts it into the oven watches, turns, spins the plate on which the dials are placed, checks and checks again. When it feels like it's the right time, she takes the dials out and they are done. More enamel powder is applied, and then the dials are fired again... and the process repeats.

With enamel painting, it's a similar process, though more complicated as each color has to be treated differently. In fact, the color of the enamel before going into the oven is not the same as after it is fired, so the enamellist has to have the experience to know what color to apply and how long to fire it in the oven to get the desired result. Bovet has been producing intricate timepieces that feature high complications and exquisite artisanal processes, including miniature painting, enamel and hand-engraving, for almost two centuries. Enamel and miniature painted pair watches sold by Bovet to Imperial China are even on display in museums around the world. The modern Bovet takes great pride in continuing these traditions, integrating tourbillons and minute repeaters with *métiers d'art*. It's not a foolproof process either, as the dials are very fragile and can be ruined at any time during the process. Leave a dial in the oven too long, or don't take enough care, and the dial will be destroyed and the process has to start all over again.