

The JwlrlyMachine: Boucheron's sparkling interpretation of MB&F's Horological Machine N° 3

What could possibly bring together the 152-year-old House of Boucheron, that most venerable of France's high-jewellery Houses, and MB&F, the young, cutting-edge Swiss creative laboratory whose Horological Machines first invaded our planet only five years ago?

The answer is the JwlrlyMachine, an astonishing haute-joaillerie version of MB&F's Horological Machine N° 3 (HM3).

The catalyst: Horological Machine N° 3

The original HM3, in gold and titanium, sent tremors through the fine-watchmaking world when it was launched in 2009. It pushes the technical and aesthetic limits of horological architecture and design further than even the most open-minded observers could have imagined.

The viewer's mind has to adjust to the fact that its kinetically energetic engine is displayed on the top of the watch, where the battle-axe-shaped rotor – an iconic MB&F symbol – and the oscillating balance are clearly visible. But the eye is also assailed by the twin cones that rise majestically from the three-dimensional sculpted case. It is hard to believe that this dynamic sculpture also tells the time.

And yet this is a highly technical wristwatch and a feat of micro engineering. MB&F's engineers and watchmakers have to machine, hand finish and assemble the 305 parts of the HM3 engine working to tolerances of a micron – one thousandth of a millimetre. The 22-karat rose gold "mystery" rotor appears to defy the laws of physics, in being visually symmetrical instead of more obviously off-centred. This was achieved by machining the underside of one arm to a razor-thin edge, thus reducing its mass. Two high-tech ceramic ball bearings visible on the back of the case drive the time indications on the top and sides of the twin cones: one cone presenting the hours and day/night indicator, the other the minutes. An oversized date wheel around the rotor, actually larger in diameter than the movement itself, frames the engine.

When the HM3 was launched, one press release began, "Warning! Horological Machine N° 3 is so far outside existing time references that it may cause sensory overload". It was scarcely an exaggeration.

The JwlrlyMachine: breathing the magic of Boucheron

With the HM3 as unsettling as ever, the House of Boucheron is poised to create its own seductive shock waves with the JwlrlyMachine, an haute-joaillerie version of Horological Machine N° 3. In a spectacular flight of fancy, the House's peerless artisans have conceived the watch as a splendid three-dimensional jewelled owl, presented either in 18k white gold, with amethyst, diamonds and blue and violet sapphires, or in 18k red gold, with pink tourmaline, rose quartz, diamonds and pink sapphires.

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The owl's eyes are large glowing cabochons, set over the twin cones, and its sparkling wings, wrapped protectively around the precious HM3 engine, are entirely pavé-set with brilliant-cut stones. Its feathered breast is sculpted and engraved from a single block of amethyst or rose quartz. The glowing eyes, sparkling wings and softly gleaming breast create a carefully choreographed play of light. But most mesmerising of all: beneath the owl's breast, its heart appears to be beating. The visual illusion is created by the faintly perceived swings of MB&F's solid-gold battle-axe-shaped rotor beneath the translucent stone.

This effect typifies the hint of secretiveness that Boucheron's artisans instil into some of their best-loved jewels; as does the fact that the uninitiated will need to search for the time indications on the sides of the cones among the owl's sparkling plumage.

True to the original HM3, the JwlryMachine is not for the faint hearted. It is an imposing piece, made all the more so by its sheer beauty. The extreme refinement that radiates from the proportions, the choice of stones and the quality of craftsmanship makes this creation "very Boucheron".

A legendary dynasty of jewellers

On the face of it, the two creators, Boucheron and MB&F might seem an unlikely team. The House of Boucheron, in its historic setting at 26 Place Vendôme, Paris, is a legend in the rarefied world of French high jewellery. A family dynasty, founded by Frédéric Boucheron in 1858, it has never ceased to enchant its discerning clientele. Royalty, aristocrats, billionaires, film stars, authors and artists find a fitting match for their celebrity and status in its magnificent creations.

Over the generations, Boucheron has acquired unparalleled expertise, centring on its passion for precious stones. Its designs are free-spirited and audacious, and with the ease of the true artist, its master jewellers create exclusive harmonies of colour, selecting from the world's most rare and covetable gems.

While Boucheron's sources of inspiration are eclectic, love of nature is a cherished theme. The collections abound with references to flowers, raindrops and waves and charismatic animals, birds and insects, whose air of having been effortlessly conceived is part of the Boucheron mystique. Today as ever, Boucheron keeps its promise of luxury and fascination.

An iconoclastic creative laboratory

In direct opposition to his time-honoured creative partner, Maximilian Büsser founded his creative laboratory just five years ago. And where the House of Boucheron's jewels are clearly objects of desire, the initial reaction to MB&F's Machines may well be one of shock and awe.

After 14 years spent managing prestigious watchmaking brands, Maximilian Büsser broke free of the constraints of traditional horology. He decided to create for himself, drawing on the imaginary world of his childhood, peopled by spacecraft and fantastical beings, and on his passion for working with other creators and artists. In forging the concept of the "Friends", (the "F" in MB&F), his aim is to transparently recognise and credit those involved in realising his dream.

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MB&F's Horological Machines certainly tell the time, but they are light years away from classic haute horology. They are daringly engineered works of performance art that owe their power to the tension between their radical concepts and the meticulous traditional watchmaking skills that bring them to life. Each new avant-garde, three-dimensional Horological Machine takes us further into an alternative reality and out of our horological comfort zone.

Shared values

MB&F's iconoclastic Horological Machines were never conceived with diamonds in mind. However, Maximilian Büsser had been nurturing the idea of working with the House of Boucheron for years. "I was impressed by their immense savoir-faire," he says, "and by their creative passion. They are resolutely avant-garde, and each of their jewels is a virtuoso performance. So in a way, although their creations are sensuous and feminine, and ours are not, we speak the same language. And they love to surprise. I knew that they could take one of our Horological Machines and transform it into an incredible feat of three-dimensional *haute joaillerie*.

The idea accelerated when Maximilian Büsser made the acquaintance of Jean-Christophe Bédos, CEO of Boucheron. According to Mr Bédos, "MB&F showed an appreciation of the excellence that Boucheron embodies. A collaboration between our two Houses was certain to lead to an exceptionally creative concept, with a sparkling result and even a sense of humorous audacity."

The concept: a meeting of two worlds

Right from the initial get-togethers, it was clear to MB&F that the Boucheron creative team would amaze and delight them with their characteristic flair.

Nevertheless, one of the Boucheron designers in charge of the project remembers his first impression of Machine N° 3. “Completely insane! All I could think was, What are we going to do! How can we find a meeting point between this Machine and Boucheron’s world of sensuousness, jewels and femininity? But our work wouldn’t be rewarding if there were no challenge.”

The designers found that meeting point. At the creative presentation, they unveiled sixty-three concepts, each a work of art. But Maximilian Büsser homed straight in on the owl. Structurally, it is a perfect match for the Machine. Like all the best ideas, once you have seen it, it becomes self-evident. And it has that gentle touch of humour that makes an important jewel lovable as well as impressive.

Boucheron’s design team couldn’t have been happier with MB&F’s choice. The great House’s feeling for nature is legendary; reflecting the Art Nouveau influence in their jewels, it is a constant source of inspiration. Preference has always gone to the strangest, most extravagant of Nature’s creations – including the mysterious night creatures – and the exquisitely constructed, delectably coloured jewels that result are so particular to the House that it refers to them as its Cabinet of Curiosities. Contributing ever-more audacious, unexpected pieces to the Cabinet is one of the Boucheron artisans’ greatest joys.

Beautifully built

The young creative laboratory and the 152-year-old jeweller have created a perfect fit. Boucheron’s artisans conceived the owl’s splendid jewelled body as a complex framework of solid gold that fits snugly onto Horological Machine N° 3, transforming it into the JwlryMachine. The framework is cast as five separate segments, which are then sent to MB&F to be assembled on the watch. MB&F’s engineers had selected five points on the upper face of the watch where there was enough substance for the segments to be screwed down without disturbing the watch’s complex timekeeping functions. Screws are used so that the segments can be removed when the watch requires service.

For the segments to be anchored correctly, Boucheron has to work to tolerances expressed in microns – demonstrating the extreme precision that its lapidaries, gem-setters, engravers and goldsmiths bring to their work.

Reserved for the master craftsman

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In a piece where every detail is perfect, the owl's most striking feature is nevertheless its translucent breast. It is formed from a single block of amethyst or rose quartz, which must be sufficiently large and exceptionally pure. As amethyst and quartz are both very hard stones, the artisan must have a very delicate touch when carving out the breast's irregular contours and sculpting the feathers, so as not to shatter his handiwork. Compounding the risk, the stone is also shaped in cross-section to achieve a gradation in the depth of the colour over the breast from the owl's beak to its feet, just enough for the shadowy movement of the rotor to be perceived.

"Even Maximilian Büsser thought we were mad to suggest the beating heart," says one of the Boucheron designers on the project gleefully. The final effect works on two levels: it is hypnotic, and it hints at the mysteries of the engine inside.

A polished performance

Maximilian Büsser says that in all his ten years of joint creative adventures, he has rarely seen a collaboration proceed so smoothly. In his opinion, the Boucheron creative team's spirit exemplifies "Where there's a will there's a way". For their part, the Boucheron team emphasise the joy that they had in bringing the owl to life. They relished the challenge of making the two worlds meet – the world of MB&F's alternative reality and the world of Boucheron's warmth and seduction.

The JwlryMachine will be made to order, and other colour combinations are possible.

About Boucheron

The House of Boucheron, a French family dynasty of jewellers, created by Frédéric Boucheron in 1858, and expanded by four generations of the founder's direct descendants, in the year 2000 found a worthy successor in the PPR / Gucci Group.

With its clientele of film stars, authors, artists, maharajahs and billionaires, Boucheron – which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2006 - holds particular appeal for those whose celebrity and status find a match in its magnificent creations.

Throughout its long history of brilliant collections, between uniqueness of design and bold sophistication, Boucheron jewellery offers the promise of exquisite luxury and alluring fascination. With the magical ease of a true artist, Place Vendôme's master jeweller selects and combines precious stones from an extensive palette of flamboyant colours from among the world's rarest and most desirable gems. With its free spirited and audacious designs, the House of Boucheron constantly reinvents the timeless essence of unique elegance.

Boucheron currently operates more than 50 boutiques around the world, as well as an on-line sales website to satisfy lovers of fine jewellery and timepieces wherever they may be.

About MB&F

In 2005, Maximilian Büsser left what was considered a dream job, as head of Harry Winston Timepieces, in order to set up MB&F – Maximilian Büsser and Friends – a company dedicated solely to designing and crafting small series of mechanical sculptures that tell the time, in collaboration with talented professionals.

Their three-dimensional Horological Machines are at once high-tech twenty-first century engines and incredibly sophisticated micro-mechanical works of art. HM3's groundbreaking predecessors are HM1, launched in 2007, which shook the watchmaking world with its dual dials over multiple levels and its figure-eight movement with raised central tourbillon; and HM2, presented in 2008 and featuring the world's first mechanical movement offering instantaneous jumping hours, concentric retrograde minutes, retrograde date, bi-hemisphere moon-phase and automatic winding. Its case, comprising more than 100 components, is the most complex in watchmaking history.

Demand for the Machines has increased tenfold in the past three years, but production is kept very low (145 HM in 2010). Growth is not an objective; the only goal is undiluted creativity. Recently, three high-profile Friends have interpreted the Machines according to their own strong personalities. The American artist Sage Vaughn wrapped HM2 in barbed wire; the French artist watchmaker Alan Silberstein interpreted the same Machine as a black box that pays homage to the cult cameras of the 1940s. And now, with the Jwly Machine, the House of Boucheron is shedding its inimitable brilliance on HM3.

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JWLRYMACHINE – Technical Specifications

Movement:

Three-dimensional horological engine designed by Jean-Marc Wiederrecht/Agenhor;
Sowind oscillator and gear
Balance oscillating at 28,800 bph.
22K rose gold battle-axe shaped 'mystery' automatic winding rotor
Hour and minutes information transmitted via ceramic ball bearings to laser-cut hands.
Number of jewels: 36 (all functional)
Number of components: 304

Functions:

Hour and day/night indicator on one cone
Minutes on second cone
Date around the movement

Case:

JWLRYMACHINE, Purple: 18K White Gold/Titanium and Amethyst
Breast made of an engraved amethyst: 35.27K
Eyes made of two cabochon amethysts: 6.34K
Diamonds: approx. 0.96K
Blue and purple sapphires: approx. 5.17K
Screwed-down crown with cabochon amethyst: 0.33K

JWLRYMACHINE, Pink: 18K Pink Gold/Titanium and Quartz
Breast made of an engraved quartz: 32.71K
Eyes made of two cabochon rubellite: 7.88K
Diamonds: approx. 0.96K
Pink, purple and blue and purple sapphires: approx. 5.17K
Screwed-down crown with cabochon rubellite: 0.33K

Sapphire crystals:

Cones and both display backs with anti-reflective treatment on both faces.

Strap & Buckle:

Hand-stitched alligator or lizard strap with 18K Gold and Titanium custom designed deployment buckle.

'Friends' responsible for the JWLRYMACHINE

Concept: Maximilian Büsser/MB&F and Jean-Christophe Bédos/Boucheron

Product Design: Eric Giroud/Eric Giroud Design Studio & Quentin Obadia/Boucheron

Technical and Production Management: Serge Kriknoff/MB&F

Production logistics: David Lamy/MB&F

Movement Development: Jean-Marc Wiederrecht/Agenhor, Nicolas Stalder/Agenhor

Movement manufacturing: Georges Auer/Mecawatch, Salvatore Ferrarotto/APR Quality

Hand-finishing of movement components: Jacques-Adrien Rochat and Denis Garcia/C-L
Rochat

Ceramic ball bearings: Patrice Parietti/MPS

Movement assemblage: Didier Dumas and Georges Veisy/MB&F

Case and buckle construction and production: Philippe Marti, Dominique Mainier and
Bertrand Jeunet/G.F.Châtelain

Sapphire cones: Sébastien Sangsue and Grégory Esseric/Sebal, Peter Bloesch/Bloesch

Dials: François Bernhard and Denis Parel/Nateber

Hands: Pierre Chillier, Isabelle Chillier and Félix Celetta/Fiedler

Strap: Olivier Purnot/Camille Fournet

Presentation case: Frédéric Legendre/Lekoni, Isabelle Vaudaux/Vaudaux

Communication:

Graphic Design - Alban Thomas and Gérald Moulière/GVA Studio

Product Photography - Maarten van der Ende

Display Architecture - Frédéric Legendre/Lekoni

Portrait Photography - Régis Golay/Federal

Webmasters - Stéphane Balet and Guillaume Schmitz of Sumo Interactive

Texts - Ian Skellern

Project Managers - Estelle Tonelli/MB&F and Cécile Neyaga/Boucheron

Communication Assistant - Céline Cammalleri/MB&F

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