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# Frenchmen and the MOON

BY JONATHAN BUES

If Louis Moinet ever met Jules Verne in nineteenth-century Paris, they might have together come up with these two new models



The timepieces, Instrument 1 (below, a chronograph) and Instrument 2 (right, a rattrapante chronograph), are named for two of Jules Verne's works that focused on the moon and man's desire to reach it.

**Bottom right:** Last year Louis Moinet debuted the Magistralis, the first watch to use an actual piece of moon rock in its construction. Its movement is pictured here.



Louis Moinet may have been an inventor, educator and artist. But by far, he is best known for his work in the field of horology; the French clock and watchmaker crafted timepieces for European royalty and two American presidents, Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe, which to this day grace the White House and Monticello. His enduring legacy as an intellectual within the field is ensured by the *Traite d'horlogerie*, a celebrated encyclopedia of watchmaking he authored in 1848.

Moinet's contemporary Jules Verne penned fantastic tales of limitless world in which he pre-saged technologies not yet fully conceived. He took readers to

places that were thought unreachable, such as the moon and the ocean floor. The two Frenchmen were born mere hours apart—Moinet in Bourges, Verne in Nantes, and as adults, they lived and worked in Paris. But did they know each other? It's possible.

There is no actual evidence that the two ever met. But, armed with the knowledge that these two great intellectuals were contemporaries living in the same city, Louis Moinet Watches, the firm that takes inspiration from the celebrated watchmaker and author, has created two timepieces that salute Jules Verne's visionary fiction. In the words of Louis Moinet CEO Jean-Marie Schaller, they are

timepieces that "Verne's characters might have taken with them on an expedition to the moon."

## Moon and man

The timepieces, Instruments 1 and 2, are named for two of Verne's works that focused on the moon and man's desire to reach it. The first, a chronograph, is Instrument 1 "From the Earth to the Moon." The second, a rattrapante chronograph, is Instrument 2 "Around the Moon."

Last year Louis Moinet debuted the Magistralis, the first watch to use an actual piece of moon rock in its construction. Schaller acquired a piece of moon rock some time ago, and has plans to continue to

The Louis Moinet Tempograph, which debuted last year, is now available in silver. A new silver and gold combination is also available.

use small bits of it in future watches. When the idea to create a series of watches commemorating Jules Verne and his lunar works arose, Schaller was fortunate to have the remaining piece of rock.

In the Magistralis, the moon rock was cleverly crafted to form the watch's moonphase display (the most realistic of moon phases, perhaps?). In the new Instrument watches, the sliver of moon is seen through a porthole at 9 o'clock, evoking one of Verne's fantastic fictional vessels.

The central feature of the Instruments is an innovative lever system for "arming" and "disarming" the timekeeping mechanism. It ensures that the chronograph is always secure and cannot be inadvertently stopped once the wearer

has begun timing an event.

Crafted from three metals—stainless steel, grade-5 titanium and 18-karat rose gold—the case is securely in the tradition of "techno-luxe" watches, timepieces as rugged and technical as they are luxurious. On the dial, the familiar Louis Moinet côtes de Jura motif, a symbol of the brand that is found on all Louis Moinet dials, confirms its brand lineage.

#### New packages

Starting this year, Louis Moinet watches that are ordered in North America will ship with special new packaging that does justice to a luxury watch purchase. The president of Louis Moinet North America, Michael Brader-Araje, who is a watch collector himself,



wanted to give buyers a watch box that wouldn't just "sit on a shelf in a closet." He feels it's unfortunate that so much of the packaging that accompanies fine watches has no practical use.

Brader-Araje went to Orbita, a watch winder brand located in his home state of North Carolina, with an unusual request. Though Orbita frequently works with watch brands and private collectors on custom items, what Brader-Araje had in mind was something rather more original.

"We're very excited to have worked with Orbita to make a truly special watch winder in the form of Louis Moinet's double-volume *Traite d'horlogerie*," he says.

"Orbita makes some of the very finest watch winders on the market. Every new Louis Moinet timepiece purchased in North America will come with this Orbita rotator as its packaging. When the five-year lithium battery inside runs out, collectors can send it to Orbita to have a new battery installed." ☺

