



FACES IN TIME

The desire to explore history is nothing new—we have long been fascinated with the past for its ability to help us imagine the future while we gain a sense of identity. Vacheron Constantin has paired up with the Barbier-Mueller Museum to continue this cultural exploration to discover who we are and where we come from. Beginning in 2007 and continuing through this year, Vacheron Constantin will incorporate tiny replicas of tribal masks from the Barbier-Mueller Museum on the faces of their timepieces. The Metier d'Art Les Masques collection represents a perfect fusion of time and fine art. Vacheron Constantin saw this collection as a way to bring art, history and culture together creatively with a certain openness and awareness.

The partnership between Vacheron Constantin and Barbier-Mueller began in 2007. The two companies—both located in Geneva—took advantage of their close proximity and shared passion to bring about a new concept in watchmaking. The Metier d'Art Les Masques collection evokes not only a current sense of humanity but displays a celebration of civilization across the globe and throughout time. The masks chosen gather an array of uniquely beautiful faces that represent many

continents and groups of people in a desire to truly commemorate global unity.

While the idea behind the timepieces seems like a simple one, turning the vision into a reality required a great deal of dedication and craftsmanship to maintain the purity and detail of the masks. To begin the production process, Vacheron Constantin focused on four key parts: how to perfectly miniaturize each tribal mask, the material used, the décor and the color. In order to make such small and intricate three-dimensional replicas of the masks, the manufacturers relied on the use of laser technology to perfectly sculpt the minute details. As for the material of the masks, Vacheron Constantin chose to use gold in order to keep the mask replica intact and prevent tarnishing and other signs of aging. While the manufacturers wanted to keep the timepiece from tarnishing, they also wished to give the piece an aged appearance in order to replicate the original masks. To achieve this aged appearance, small deposits of copper were placed directly on the gold layer to initiate the oxidization process in a more controlled manner and give the masks a slight patina finish.

In addition to the beautifully intricate masks, the craftsmen at Vacheron Constantin incor-

porated a gold-lettered poem encircling the sapphire dial containing the mask. These poems, written by world-famous author Michel Butor, add the dimension of written words to the already aesthetically pleasing masks. These poems have special meaning to each timepiece as they help to better express the sentiment of the tribal mask's specific place in history. The gold lettering appears as light shines upon the face of the timepiece to add a mystical appeal.

The Les Masques Collection, now in its third installment, consists of 25 sets of four watches per collection. Each set of four watches comes as a complete set. The first collection featured masks from Indonesia, China, the Conco, and Alaska. In 2008, the second installment incorporated masks from Japan, Gabon, Mexico, and Papua New Guinea. The final collection, which debuted on June 2, displays tribal masks from Lombok, Mexico, China, and Gabon. The ultimate collection in the Les Masques series, the 2009 set will be on display at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from June 2 through September 27.

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