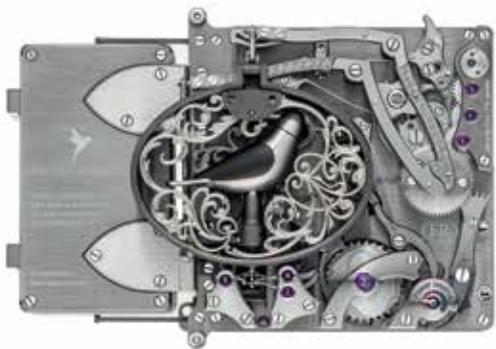


FRÈRES ROCHAT

The renaissance of (en)chanting birds

Le Brassus company, Frères Rochat, which this year celebrated its jubilee of two centuries of history, has revived the tradition of singing birds, a field in which the Rochat brothers excelled in the 19th century. Emotions, poetry, music and technical progress are all on the agenda.



View from above FR2903 movement.

The story goes that aristocratic families in Imperial China had a passion for singing bird automata to the point of sometimes making them sing just before the evening meal. There was a six-month wait before obtaining the precious treasure. The Sultan of Constantinople spent hours listening to them while his ministers did tapestries in the antechamber.

These singing bird automata, remarkable for the refined work and the ingeniousness of the technique used, were born due to the creativity of the Rochat brothers in the 19th century, in the Vallée de Joux. In 1813, the brothers, who made movements for Jaquet-Droz & Leschot, capitalised on their know-how and opened their shop in Geneva. The models assembled in their workshops were sent to London, the heart of watchmaking trading activity at the time, prior to being sent all over the world.



Emotion meets technical skill when the automaton begins to play a symphony.

Emotion above all

These brothers are credited with having created more than 200 singing birds, some of which have reached spectacular prices at auctions. To renew this art today presented a certain challenge. "It was a considerable human and professional adventure", admits Stéphane Velan, CEO and president of Frères Rochat. To the extent that it took three years to create the singing bird launched at Baselworld this spring.



The body of the bird and the case exterior are made in gold.

This little masterpiece consists of a Grand Complication calibre made of 1227 parts, 14 cams, a 12 semitone whistle, four different melodies, 74 rubies and a fusee-barrel with a micro-chain made up of 404 links. But emotion is never far from technical progress. Time appears to stand still when the bird delicately emerges from its nest, nods a greeting with its head before opening its mouth and starting to sing Mozart's 40th Symphony. Once the show is over, the bird disappears inside its beauti-



Cover in Grand Feu cloisonné enamel.

ful case which closes behind it. Every detail show respect for tradition, including the body of the bird and its decoration made of gold and adorned with precious stones. The complexity of the movement is enhanced with diamonds, rubies and emeralds.

Today, these singing birds, the price of which amounts to several hundred thousand francs, can be completely personalised according to the purchaser's wishes.

www.freres-rochat.com

1813-2013: The saga of watchmaker aesthetes

At 20 years old, David Rochat, a well-known master watchmaker, was overcome by a passion for the design and manufacture of singing bird machine movements, a watchmaking aesthetic born in the Vallée de Joux. With his three sons, François, Frédéric and Samuel, he founded David Rochat & Fils, which as of June 1802 regularly supplied complete movements for singing bird automata from the famous Jaquet-Droz & Leschot company. Very soon, David Rochat & Fils stood out by the sophistication of their bird movements and the subtle superposition of cams which put an end to unplanned breaks in the melody. From 1810 onwards, the main players in the sector retired from the market. The Rochat brothers were the only ones who mastered the entire production chain. Famous all over the world for the architecture and quality of their movements, the three brothers focused on the aesthetic paroxysm of every element of decoration. The mastery of noble materials and of artistic crafts enabled them to achieve sumptuous decorations. The story continues.