

TAKING *PIÈCE UNIQUE* TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL

THE PROBLEM WITH MAKING **UNIQUE PIECES** IN THE WATCH INDUSTRY IS THAT EVERY PIECE HAS TO BE...WELL, UNIQUE. OTHER BRANDS CAN GET AWAY WITH REGULAR LINE WATCHES, TIMEPIECES THAT JUST TELL TIME AND DON'T **TURN HEADS**. NOT **JEAN DUNAND**.

BY **KEITH W. STRANDBERG**



Caliber CLA88QPRM was designed exclusively for the Shabaka by Christophe Claret.

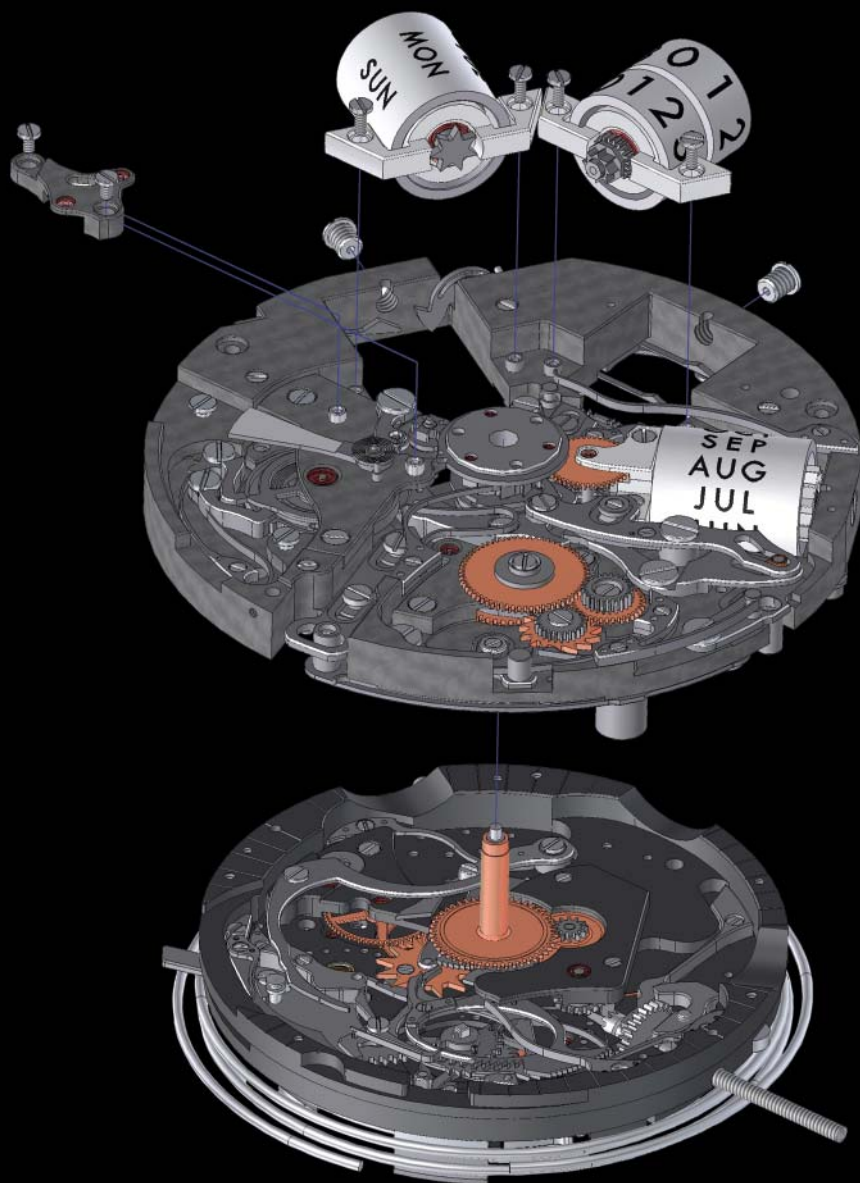
Debuting in 2003, this high-end watch company named after Jean Dunand, the Swiss Art Deco virtuoso, makes only special timepieces that are out of the ordinary. Retailing from \$300,000 to more than \$800,000, they had better be extraordinary. Jean Dunand has so far been successful introducing its “Grande Complication” and “Tourbillon Orbital” to much acclaim, but this sort of success comes with its own set of challenges. After each introduction, the question eventually comes up: “What is coming next?”

The men responsible for answering that question each year are Thierry Oulevay, president of Jean Dunand, and his partner, complicated movement legend Christophe Claret. Together, they are the architects of what’s next at Jean Dunand. This year Claret developed a brand-new movement exclusively for Jean Dunand, and Oulevay married it to a concept that exhibits Jean Dunand’s signature Art Deco styling. The result is the **Shabaka**.

Shabaka was the 25th dynasty pharaoh and king of Egypt, and now Jean Dunand is using this royal name for its next incredible introduction.



The Shabaka is named after the 25th dynasty pharaoh and king of Egypt. It features an instantaneous perpetual calendar and a minute repeater on cathedral gongs. The day, date and month appear on unique rolling indicators.



The Shabaka's movement is unique because of the rolling indicators whose sheer size necessitated a completely new architecture.

SHABAKA: THE CONCEPT

Jean Dunand watches always start with the movement, which comes from the mind and the workshops of Claret, and then Oulevay and Claret come up with a unique case and dial design. “The challenge when we do any Jean Dunand piece is to combine the concepts of Christophe Claret, a genius with three-dimensional technical concepts, together with innovative, creative, unpredictable artistry,” Oulevay says. “We don’t have any specific guidelines, but we do go by the golden rules of proportion, overall design and harmony. With the Shabaka, the brief was very concise — we wanted a strong design, something edgy, a shaped watch but we wanted to respect the golden rule while mixing together the square and the round. This is why we ended up with the round opening, to display the elements of the

perpetual calendar, on a tonneau shape.”

When he first saw the case design that would hold the Claret movement, Oulevay said the watch’s profile reminded him of an Egyptian pharaoh head, inspiring the raised pyramids in the design. Since Egyptomania really started in the Art Deco period — spurred by the discovery of the tomb of King Tutankhamen — the design made sense for a Jean Dunand watch.

SHABAKA: THE MOVEMENT

Claret, the movement mastermind, specializes in minute repeaters, so the introduction of the complication within this perpetual calendar was not much of a surprise. What was a surprise, however, was Claret’s willingness to alter the architecture of the movement to serve the design of the watch, not something master watchmakers typically do.

Shabaka’s most dramatic feature is the perpetual calendar with instantaneous jump displayed on cylinders instead of discs to improve readability.

SHABAKA: THE WATCH

The resulting watch combines a perpetual calendar with unique rolling indicators and a cathedral gong minute repeater that is visually stunning and technically advanced. The four cylinders are rotated by four different 90-degree transmission systems, each fitted with a security device to ensure precise calendar changes. Their turning instantaneously will cause the owners of the Jean Dunand Shabaka to get a little less sleep — it’s likely they will be staying up to midnight most nights to see the day and date display change, and they already know what they’ll be doing at midnight on the last day of every month.

TOURBILLON ORBITAL: INTRIGUING NEW DIALS

The **Tourbillon Orbital**, the watch that put Jean Dunand on the watchmaking map, continues to make waves with the addition of one-off dials made of exotic materials,

such as 4-million-year-old petrified coral, Dalmatian jasper, lapis lazuli and rare opals. These ornamental stones are unique pieces in their own right and when featured in the Tourbillon Orbital, they add a whole new dimension to the timepiece. The entire movement — including flying tourbillon, barrel and dial — makes a full revolution each hour, moving at the speed of the minute hand, so the appearance of the watch is never the same when you glance at it to check the time.

One glance and the tourbillon will be at three o'clock and 15 minutes later it will be at six o'clock; it totally changes the face of the watch. It's magic to watch the Tourbillon Orbital and observe time elapsing no matter which dial you choose — classic gold, Art deco-inspired or spectacular semi-precious stone.

The ornamental stones are extremely challenging to find and then to fashion into dials of large size. Stones are usually found in mines, while fossils may be found in the petrified woods in Arizona, for example. Some stones are found in Far-Eastern countries at an altitude of over 4,000 meters, according to Oulevay. After finding the stones, the next challenge is to cut them to the correct thickness (less than one millimeter), which is no easy task as there is always the risk that the stone will break. The rarity of the stones and their fragility determine their value, with prices easily going into the tens of thousands of dollars for one dial.



The Pietersite stone was discovered in Namibia by Sid Pieters in 1963. The most spectacular ones — like the large stone used to cut the dial of the above Tourbillon Orbital — are rare and display extraordinary blue colors with brown shades.

CONTINUING IN ART DECO STYLE

One of the hallmarks of Art Deco was searching out new materials with which to work, so the new dials mesh perfectly with the movement's philosophy. Oulevay and Claret are both enthusiasts of the period, and the watches have a multitude of Art Deco elements incorporated, such as skyscraper hands and tourbillon cage bridges, fir-tree motif engravings and ceramic stones that are subtly incorporated into the overall design of the timepieces. Jean Dunand's dials take the decorative art of the timepieces to a new level by providing color and depth to these already unique timepieces.

Having every watch be a *pièce unique* is a daunting proposition, but Oulevay and Claret are up to the task. So far, they have never failed to deliver on the promise of creating exceptional, one-of-a-kind timepieces. ©

Above: The dials of each Tourbillon Orbital are unique and the latest include 4-million year old petrified coral, Dalmatian jasper (shown), lapis lazuli and rare opals.