



Purity and power

Beneath a calm and pure exterior, the Calatrava family's latest addition cradles a brand-new manually wound movement that offers optimal precision and an increased power reserve. Nicholas Foulkes lauds this decidedly modern take on Patek Philippe's time-only classic

To hear **Thierry Stern** talk at length and with spellbinding eloquence about a time-only wristwatch, the new Calatrava REF. 6119, is to experience what it is that sets Patek Philippe apart. His enthusiasm illuminates, on a profound emotional level, the passion for fine watchmaking that has driven the Stern family for almost nine decades.

And their zeal ignites passion in Patek Philippe's acolytes, as proven by the keen attendance at Grand Exhibitions; the hunger for complications; the delight in exquisite decorative techniques; the remarkable prices paid at auction for antique, vintage, modern, and contemporary Patek Philippe timepieces; and the longing that makes those collectors who are used to gratifying their material desires in an instant, wait patiently for years to be able to fasten a Nautilus to their wrist.

All this is well known. But the same spirit that inhabits the brightest shooting stars of the horological firmament also inhabits this watch, one of the simplest and purest expressions of the Patek Philippe genius. There was no cacophonous baying demand for this watch to be created. It complies with no marketing orthodoxy. This is not watchmaking as a fashion statement, as a micro-mechanical high-wire act, or as a self-consciously nostalgic handicraft. This is watchmaking as...well...watchmaking.

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEFAN HENNRICH

Beginning with the first model with a reference number, the REF. 96, the Calatrava line of classic round wristwatches made its debut in 1932. Creating this collection was the first step the Stern family took as new owners of the brand. The 96 suffix still denotes the characteristics of the essential Calatrava of almost 90 years ago with its dauphine hands and applied faceted obus hour markers.

Yet, mention the word Calatrava to many enthusiasts, and the watch conjured in the mind is a different time-only Patek Philippe with the distinctive Clous de Paris (or hobnail) guilloché bezel. First appearing as the REF. 96D (the D for decoration) in 1934 and reprised many times subsequently – most famously as the REF. 3919, the star of the manufacture's advertising from the mid-1980s to the mid-'90s, and more recently as the REF. 5119, launched in 2006 – the hobnail design is so familiar that it has become almost invisible.

But not anymore. At least not if Thierry Stern has anything to do with it. Understated it may be, but make no mistake, this is one

Opposite: the Calatrava REF. 6119, available in either rose gold or white gold, offers a modern take on the classic Clous de Paris model that was made famous by the REF. 3919. The REF. 6119R combines a rose gold case with a silvery grained dial as well as applied faceted obus hour markers in 18k rose

gold. The hour and minute hands, also in 18k rose gold, are dauphine-style while the seconds hand is cheveu-style. The REF. 6119G features a white gold case, a vertically satin-finished charcoal gray dial, and 18k white gold applied hour markers and hands in the same style as the rose gold model

of the most important launches yet of the Thierry Stern era at Patek Philippe.

For many, the Clous de Paris Calatrava is the first Patek Philippe they experienced, the Stern family included. "It's a typical watch that I have seen on all the wrists of my relatives," Thierry explains. "I was talking with my cousin recently. He received one when he was twenty years old. I think today he must be fifty. And he said, 'I don't wear it anymore. It's a little bit old-fashioned and too small.' I looked at the watch again, the 3919, and I said to myself, 'He's right, it's a beautiful watch, but not for today.'"

The most significant change for the REF. 6119 is the case diameter, increased from 33.2 mm on the REF. 3919 to 39 mm. "For me that was more up-to-date and more masculine," explains Thierry. However, he was careful not to overdo the level of testosterone. "We started at forty millimeters, and it was too big, thirty-nine was much more appropriate. A single millimeter may not seem like much, but it really makes a difference. It's just amazing. When you see

This contemporary Clous de Paris Calatrava is a timepiece for the next generation of watch lovers



With the REF. 6119, the classic Calatrava has been given a sleek, contemporary new look featuring a larger diameter (39 mm) and an updated dial design. As Thierry Stern notes, “We made it stronger, but still pure.” Far left: the curved lugs add a modern, sporty feel, appearing alongside the characteristic Clous de Paris bezel. Below: the small seconds sub-dial with a cross segmentation and the *chemin de fer* minute track awaken the face – after all, “the dial has to be alive,” says Thierry.

Left: flip the watch over to the sapphire crystal caseback and a brand-new manually wound movement is visible, the caliber 30-255 PS, with 27 jewels and 6 elegantly shaped bridges that are finished with Côtes de Genève as well as chamfered and polished edges. The movement architecture allows each function its own bridge and cleverly balances aesthetics and optimum performance; notably, a power reserve of 65 hours is achieved with two barrels mounted in parallel



to develop a new manual movement with a diameter greater than that of the caliber 215 PS while permitting the construction of flat cases by keeping the height at 2.55 mm.

A power reserve of 65 hours has been achieved with two barrels mounted in parallel simultaneously meshing with the central pinion. As well as supplementing the available power reserve, this configuration of barrels increases the torque of the movement; thus the caliber 30-255 PS has the highest moment of inertia of all Patek Philippe’s 4-Hz movements, increasing rate stability and simplifying the precision adjustment of the movement. Indeed, the new caliber has been engineered with reliability in mind, incorporating six bridges to secure key components.

With this caliber, Thierry shows that Patek Philippe does not shirk its responsibility for leadership in the watch industry. “You have to be courageous to launch a manual movement today, because all that most people require is a self-winding movement. But for those who really enjoy watchmaking, there is something special about a hand-wound caliber, and we still have a lot of clients who enjoy that. Maybe another company would not have taken the risk to develop a manual caliber. However, as we already have a wide range of self-winding movements in the collection, I decided I could take the risk

the two prototypes next to each other, you really see a massive difference.” Also apparent is a change that directly cites the REF. 96D: the use of applied faceted obus hour markers and dauphine hands to impart a more purposeful air compared to the combination of black-lacquered Roman numerals and leaf hands familiar from the REF. 3919.

Although much bigger than its ancestors, there is no sense of the REF. 6119’s pared-back functions struggling to fill the dial space at their disposal. Details such as the *chemin de fer* minute track and the boldly outlined small seconds sub-dial at six o’clock

add further power to the design, much in the way that a great artist can coax an almost infinite range of expression from simply varying the pressure she or he applies to a pencil stroke. The character is completely different from the more delicate restraint of the 3919. Nevertheless, the bloodline linking the two models is evident.

With a radical overhaul in dimensions comes space for a new caliber. The idea of fitting a smaller caliber to a considerably larger case would, in Thierry’s eyes, have been an improper deception. Instead, the new reference was taken as an opportunity

“There is something special about a hand-wound caliber...you turn the crown and you give life to your watch”



REF. 96 (12-120)
Case Ø: 30.5 mm
1932



REF. 96D (12-120)
Case Ø: 30.6 mm
1934



REF. 2526 (12-600 AT)
Case Ø: 35.5 mm
1953



REF. 3520D (177)
Case Ø: 32 mm
1972



REF. 3796 (215 PS)
Case Ø: 31 mm
1982



REF. 3919 (215 PS)
Case Ø: 33.2 mm
1985



REF. 3992 (240)
Case Ø: 33 mm
1988



REF. 5107 (315 S C)
Case Ø: 37 mm
2000



REF. 5115 (215 PS)
Case Ø: 35 mm
2000



REF. 5120 (240)
Case Ø: 35 mm
2001



REF. 5196 (215 PS)
Case Ø: 36 mm
2004



REF. 5119 (215 PS)
Case Ø: 36 mm
2006

Elegance through the ages. Left: key recurring characteristics in the Calatrava family are the serene, uncluttered dial and a discreet, slender case. The ancestral roots of the new REF. 6119 can be seen in its 18k gold applied faceted obus hour markers, which refer back to the 1932 REF. 96 and 1934’s REF. 96D; the Clous de Paris bezel salutes models such as

the REF. 96D, REF. 3520D, REF. 3919, and REF. 3992, among others; and the new model’s curved lugs take inspiration from the REF. 96 and REF. 3796. In redesigning the Calatrava, Thierry explains, the idea was not to copy a previous design – say the famous REF. 3919 – but to make “a new watch, that still has a classical line and that a younger generation would love to wear”

because I strongly believe that there will be purists who will enjoy it. Also, it is part of the history of the watch industry; if you intend to be a real master in your field, you need to keep a manual movement that is very flat.

“We should never forget the knowledge of the past. If I don’t do it, maybe in five years we won’t even remember that there were manual movements,” he laughs, then adds seriously, “That would be sad. You turn the crown and you give life to your watch, and a lot of people still like to take hold of the crown, to wind the crown, and to see the movement starting. That’s what they like to do every morning, and I understand that.”

Now, with the contemporary incarnation of the Clous de Paris Calatrava and its elegantly functional new caliber, there is a timepiece for the next generation of watch lovers. This is a model for those for whom the feel of winding the crown between thumb and forefinger is an inalienable part of their experience of fine watchmaking.

A new Patek Philippe is always welcome, but this one is reassuring, too. It looks ahead to this year, next year, or even the next 10 years, and it is indisputable evidence of a renewal and reinforcement of the most fundamental values of Geneva watchmaking. As Thierry puts it, “When I look at the 3919, I see my grandfather. When I look at the new 6119, I am looking at my sons.” ♦