**L’Epée 1839’s Imperial Hot Air Balloon Time Piece**

L’Epée 1839 is proud to unveil a one-of-a-kind Métiers d’Art creation, adorned with exquisite enamelwork celebrating one of human’s greatest invention, through of the Age of Enlightenment: The Hot Air Balloon, a new device giving the ability to elevate and float in the air. Shaped into a striking sculptural form, the Imperial Hot-Balloon reflects L’Epée 1839’s love for ground breaking inventions and flying objects with its signature boundless creativity and technical skill.

This unique timepiece pays homage to the historic ascent of the first hot air balloon invented in 1783—the first time a man-made object took to the skies—rising above the earth and capturing imaginations. More than just a timepiece, it’s a celebration of wonder, exploration, and the timeless urge to look up and dream.

At its heart lies a fully gilded movement: a mechanical marvel encased in art.

Developed to complement the design of the timepiece, the Imperial Balloon features a movement developed specially to resemble a hot-air balloon. The hours and minutes are shown by a flame-shaped double-ended hand, gliding over two rotating discs, powered by an eight-day movement.

This mechanical timepiece is set and wound through an ingenious system that combines form and function, reminiscing the conception of an authentic Hot Air Balloon, with its design and engineering, precision and durability.

To set the time, simply turn the wheel-shaped crown located in place of the balloon’s burner blast valve. Winding the barrel is rather unexpected: the key is the balloon’s basket. Simply turn the basket to power the mechanism.

Drawing inspiration from both its rich symbolism and a defining moment in European history, this kinetic sculpture reflects the splendor of the Age of Enlightenment—*le Siècle des Lumières*—and the grandeur of the French royal court, which supported the Montgolfier Brothers in such endeavor. On September 19, 1783, in the gardens of the Château de Versailles and before King Louis XVI and the royal court, the Montgolfier brothers launched the world’s first hot air balloon, marking the dawn of human flight. This extraordinary event captured the Enlightenment’s core values: reason, progress, and boundless ingenuity. The Imperial Balloon Timepiece channels the bold spirit of that era, weaving together historical tribute and artistic expression.

The decoration on the Balloon first express the grandeur of the French Royal Court represented by King Louis dynasty, with delicate imperial engravings and zodiac-inspired motifs reflecting the timeless link between horology, astronomy, and mankind’s eternal pursuit of discovery and power. The clock’s royal blue and gold palette radiates opulence and refinement, while every design detail tells a deeper story. The fleur-de-lis, symbol of divine rule, Royalty, with the Bourbon dynasty’s legacy, and the golden eagle, emblem of imperial power and ambition, are more than decorative—they embody knowledge, strength, and aspiration.

With its exquisitely enamel-adorned balloon, L’Epée 1839 once again ventures boldly into new artistic territory. Enameling is one of the oldest and most revered decorative arts in watchmaking, passed down through generations of highly skilled artisans.

From the earliest days of horology, enameling has been cherished not only for its beauty but also for its ability to transform a timepiece into a true work of art. Watchmakers soon recognized that beyond precision, visual appeal made timepieces more desirable and enduring.

This meticulous craft involves applying layers of colored vitreous enamel onto a metal surface, then firing it at high temperatures—typically between 800°C and 860°C—to create a smooth, luminous finish. L’Épée draws on the time-honored Grand Feu technique, rooted in the Russian Fabergé tradition. This demanding process yields colors of exceptional depth and permanence—unaltered by time—while requiring absolute precision from the enameller.

The technique often begins with hand-decorated metal, engraved with radiating lines or intricate curves, then coated with transparent enamel to reveal the patterns beneath. In cloisonné enameling, ultra-fine gold wires—thinner than a strand of hair—are shaped into delicate cells that are filled with enamel, color by color. Each hue, created by adding specific metal oxides, is fired separately at its ideal temperature. Some pieces demand 12 to 15 firings, as even a few seconds too long in the kiln can undo days—or weeks—of painstaking work.

***Table Clock or ceiling clock?***

L’Épée 1839 has imagined its tethered flight in a very specific way, offering a completely new way of presenting time. The Métier d’Art piece can be displayed on a desk, a table or a shelf, and it can also be hung directly from the ceiling, floating in air above it all.

The Imperial Hot Balloon is supplied with a suspension kit. A very thin cable, fully incorporated into the clock’s design, attaches to the balloon, allowing it to take flight.

The time is displayed on the balloon’s burner; a two-pointed needle resembling a flame indicates the hours and minutes on two black cylinders stacked one on top of the other.

The crown for setting the time is located under the vertical escapement, and its gear train is located between the basket and burner, in place of the blast valve. Just as the flow of gas inflating the hot air balloon is adjusted with the blast valve, the clock’s time is adjusted with this crown.

Winding the clock involves the whole basket. Regardless of how the timepiece is displayed, to wind the clock, simply turn the base several times (generally six turns), to provide enough power for eight days of flight. For greater ease of use, especially when the timepiece is placed on a table, L’Épée 1839 has also made it possible to wind the clock by turning the basket’s upper ring, to avoid having to lift the clock.

**IMPERIAL HOT AIR BALLOON**

**Technical Specifications**

**Unique piece 1 of 1:** *Can be customizable and manufactured on demand*

Dimensions: Height 31 cm; Diameter (balloon) 17.2 cm; Height (basket) 8 cm

Weight: 3.9 kg

217 components

**FUNCTIONS:**

Desk clock and suspension clock

Time displayed on two stacked cylinders; flame-shaped indicator serving as hour and minute hands

Wound by the basket

Time setting via the button above the basket

**L’ÉPÉE 1839 MOVEMENT**

L’Épée 1839 Movement, designed and manufactured in-house

1855 LR Caliber

Balance vibrations: 18,000 vph – 2.5 Hz

Single barrel

Power reserve: 8 days

Number of jewels: 17

Number of components: 207

Incabloc shock protection system

Materials: brass and stainless steel

**THE BASKET**

The basket is an essential piece of the movement since it serves to wind the barrel.

Materials: brass

Finish comprised of polishing, sand-blasting and satin finishing.

**THE BALLOON**

Materials: enamel, copper, gold wires

**About David Kakabadze Enamel**

David Kakabadze Enamel manufactures cloisonné panels for table clocks and dials for wrist watches for some of the most prominent watchmakers in the world. The history of David Kakabadze Enamel dates back to 1998, when a grandson of a prominent Georgian artist ─ David Kakabadze Jr., established enamel and goldsmith workshop in Tbilisi, Georgia. Handicraft masterpieces produced throughout the years were inspired by David Kakabadze Sr. ─ a modernist artist, film director, stage designer, experimenter, inventor of glassless stereo cinema, who spent most of his career in France (during 1919- 1927), exhibiting regularly at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris and in Société Anonyme Collection at Brooklyn Museum. At present, David Kakabadze Enamel is a family-owned, world-renowned enameling workshop, specialized in all types of enameling ─ cloisonné, painted, two-sided, transparent, engraving, filigree, micromosaic, as well as platinum, gold, silver, brass and all technological processing of those materials, in creating masterpieces ─ watch dials, jewelry, decorative and religious art.

**L’EPEE 1839—Switzerland's leading clock manufacture**

L’Epée has been a prominent clockmaking firm for more than 180 years. Today, it is the only manufacture in Switzerland to specialize in the production of high-end clocks. Founded in 1839 by Auguste L’Epée in France’s Besançon region, the company originally focused on producing music boxes and watch components. Even at this early stage, the brand was synonymous with entirely hand-made pieces.

Starting in 1850, the manufacture became a leader in producing escapements and began to develop special regulators for alarm clocks, table clocks and musical watches. It gained wide recognition and filed numerous patents for special escapements, particularly for use in its anti-knocking, auto-starting and constant force systems. L’Epée became the principal supplier of several famous clockmakers and went on to win many gold medals at World Fairs.

During the 20th century, the firm owed its success largely to its remarkable travel clocks. Many associate the L’Epée brand with influential individuals and people in positions of power. Members of the French government often gave clocks to their distinguished guests. When the Concorde supersonic airplane began its commercial flights in 1976, L’Epée fitted the cabins with wall clocks to give passengers the time. In 1994, the brand demonstrated its penchant for challenges by constructing the largest pendulum clock in the world, the “Giant Regulator”, which features in the Guinness Book of Records.

L’Epée 1839 is currently based in Delémont in the Swiss Jura Mountains. With CEO Arnaud Nicolas at the helm, it has developed an exceptional collection of table clocks that includes an entire range of sophisticated clocks.

*The collection focuses on three themes:*

Creative Art - Artistic pieces first and foremost, often developed in partnership with external designers as joint creations. These clocks surprise, inspire and even shock the most seasoned collectors. They are intended for those consciously or unconsciously looking for exceptional objects that are one of a kind.

Contemporary Timepieces - Technical creations with a contemporary design (Le Duel, Duet, etc.) and minimalist, avant-garde models (La Tour) incorporating complications such as retrograde seconds, power reserve indicators, moon phases, tourbillons, chiming mechanisms or perpetual calendars.

Carriage Clocks - Lastly, classic travel clocks, also known as “officers’ clocks”. These historical pieces issued from the brand’s heritage also feature their fair share of complications: chiming mechanisms, minute repeaters, calendars, moon phases, tourbillons and more.

All pieces are designed and manufactured in-house. Their technical prowess, combination of Form and Function, very long power reserves and remarkable finishes have become signature features of the brand.