

Press Release – Excellence Marqueterie

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## **CRAFTSMANSHIP FROM WOOD TO WRIST**

**Excellence Marqueterie — Limited edition of 99 pieces**

**Louis Erard continues to enliven métiers d'art with a contemporary perspective and an impossible challenge: to make the most exclusive craftsmanship accessible, this time with the extreme practice of miniature marquetry featured on the dial. Each dial is handmade, piece by piece, by an independent artisan, Bastien Chevalier, based in Sainte-Croix.**

At such a size, marquetry is pushing the boundaries of its own discipline. With such a pattern, marquetry becomes madness. And at this price, this watch should not even exist.

Everything in this achievement comes cubed in geometry, technique, and aesthetic and commercial innovation. Because everything is new. The artisan has never produced such a large series: 99 pieces. No wood marquetry dial has ever been available in a watch for less than 4,000 Swiss francs. The pattern alone is an unthinkable challenge.

The watch would not exist without a certain timely meeting between Manuel Emch, director of Louis Erard, and Bastien Chevalier, specialist in miniature marquetry in Sainte-Croix.

For Louis Erard, the goal is always the same: to make the delights and deliriums so exclusive to métiers d'art of high-end watchmaking accessible. And not only in terms of price, but culture, with an irrefutably contemporary spirit. The checkerboard expresses the spirit of the times: aesthetic, playful and eye-catching, with a trompe-l'oeil pattern that protrudes and hollows out under the light.

Louis Erard has borrowed the motif once before, in a series of 99 watches dedicated to hand guilloché. On this marquetry dial, the challenge is intensified. Bastien Chevalier himself — one of the few, if not only, Swiss experts in this art — recognises that taking up such a challenge is pure madness: “Geometric design is the hardest thing to do. You have to be totally precise. The pattern won't permit any error — the slightest deviation is visible.”

Each facet is cut into the wood by hand with a saw. Each colour is in a different wood: three shades of blue-tinted tulip tree, and grey-tinted willow burl, cut in the direction of the grain. The cut must be of surgical precision to a tenth of a millimetre, if the pieces are to be assembled without the slightest gap appearing in this surgical-level jigsaw. Bastien Chevalier has developed his own technique to achieve this remarkable feat: conscious breathing, in the style of yoga masters.

The dial incorporates more than 70 elements. The series is made up of 99 pieces. The patience required of this work is extreme, and the production time exceeds the normal budgetary limits for a dial at this price.

Once cut, the tiny pieces are meticulously sorted and deposited with the tip of a scalpel under a binocular microscope, then fixed on the first mount. The assembly is then glued on the appropriate side. The back is prepared so that it can be attached to the dial's metal base, and then the outward face is delicately taken again to be sanded to the correct thickness: it's almost imperceptible, a few hairs' breadth. Each step is decisive; there's no going back. Time passes. The first dial is complete... 98 to go.

In this highly exclusive model, Louis Erard brings a rare craft to the fore — a craft that business logic would normally reserve for discerning collectors — and combines it with fine watchmaking. A modern case with precise shapes in polished steel, 42 millimetres in diameter, with domed sapphire crystal, water-resistant to 50 metres and bearing the signature fir tree crown. The blue grained calf leather strap features tone-on-tone attachment points, Louis Erard blue lining and a pin buckle. The movement is an automatic Sellita SW261-1 with hour and minute function, visible from the open caseback.

Finally, the shock price: less than 4,000 Swiss francs. Again, completely unheard of on this type of finish and at this level of exclusivity: Louis Erard's way and art of taking on the challenge of contemporary watchmaking. More métiers d'art will follow.

**PHOTOS+FILM:** [https://bit.ly/LE\\_Marqueterie](https://bit.ly/LE_Marqueterie)

## **Excellence Marqueterie ref. 34237AA58**

**Limited edition of 99 pieces**

**Price excl. tax: CHF 3,900**

Movement	Automatic, Sellita SW261-1 calibre, 2 hands, 11½", Ø25.60 mm, height: 5.60 mm, 31 jewels, 28,800 VpH (4Hz), élaboré grade movement, meticulously decorated, special openworked oscillating weight with black lacquered Louis Erard symbol, approx. 38 hours of power reserve
Functions	HM Central hour and minute hands
Case	Polished stainless steel, Ø42 mm, lug width: 22 mm, lug to lug: 49.60 mm, thickness: 12.25 mm, 3 pieces, domed sapphire crystal with anti-reflective treatment on both sides and Louis Erard logo transferred in black under the glass, movement visible through the transparent blue caseback, water resistant up to a pressure of 5 bars (50 m/165 ft), signature fir tree crown, caseback engraved with "Limited Edition 1 of 99"
Dial	Cubed pattern made of wood marquetry, entirely handmade in the traditional way by Bastien Chevalier (Mbch), composed of more than 70 pieces in 2 wood species, stained in 4 different colours (grey-stained willow burl and tulip tree stained in 3 different blues for the cubes)
Hands	Signature fir tree hands in blued steel
Strap	Blue grained calf leather with tone-on-tone attachment points, blue grained calf leather lining, polished stainless steel pin buckle, functional catch spring bars enabling the strap to be changed quickly Dimensions: 22/20mm width, 80/115mm length

### **ABOUT BASTIEN CHEVALIER, MBCH**

After completing an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker, Bastien Chevalier perfected his skills in marquetry under the guidance of the former winner of the prestigious competition for the best craftsman in France: Jérôme Bouteçon. The latter taught Bastien Chevalier the art of marquetry for nearly six years at cabinetmaker's Philippe Monti in Sainte-Croix, Switzerland.

Specialising, among other things, in cigar boxes for Davidoff & Cie, as well as Reuge SA music boxes, in 2003, the company experienced financial difficulties. That year, Bastien Chevalier made the decision to create his artistic marquetry workshop, producing various fine pieces and commissions for clients such as François Junod (automaton manufacturer), Vianney Halter (watchmaker) and Reuge SA (music boxes).

Bastien Chevalier was born in the graffiti years, and he lays claim to this. Bastien Chevalier's highly contemporary style is a radical departure from the often old-fashioned perception of marquetry and its "Belle Époque" style images.

Winning international prizes and exhibitions in trade fairs and art galleries, his work is becoming increasingly renowned day by day.

### **ABOUT LOUIS ERARD**

Based in the Jura mountains, the birthplace of watchmaking, Louis Erard embodies the values of Swiss mechanics, the tradition that keeps its promises. Combining luxury, timelessness and elegance, this independent brand is renowned for its mechanical watches and, in particular, its iconic regulators. A collection on which the brand, founded by Mr Louis Erard in 1929, built its reputation.

Today, continuing the work of its founder and honouring the watchmaking tradition, the Maison is reinterpreting the codes in a contemporary language, revisiting its artistic crafts and opening up its field of expression through collaborations and exchanges of know-how. Louis Erard continues to set itself apart from mass-market brands. Inspired by high-end watchmaking, the brand draws on its values to enhance its mechanical timepieces.

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