**Vanitas – L’EPEE 1839 by Fiona Krüger**

The Skull is the ultimate symbol of life, death and human experience – as such it has played a key role in both Horological History and Art History. Through *Fiona Krüger*’s artistic approach to Haute Horlogerie and *L’Epée*’s know-how, the Skull has been re-interpreted into a mechanical Vanitas painting for the 21st Century.

Quick history lesson: A Vanitas is a still life artwork which includes various symbolic objects to remind the viewer of the transience of life. This was an important and popular genre of painting in the 1600’s and include symbols like skulls and extinguished candles.

Vanitas is engineered and crafted by L’Epée 1839, Switzerland's specialised high-end clock manufacturer, founded in 1839. This charismatic cranium reminds you to celebrate life. The hours and minutes are shown by the clock’s hands, and a power reserve indicator is integrated into the mouth of the skull. As Vanitas loses power it starts to yawn, indicating it needs to be wound up. Though with a 40-day power-reserve, this monthly ritual will give you a moment to stop and take stock of the time you have.

Fiona’s Fine Art and Design training, combined with her international upbringing are apparent in the design of this mechanical symbol. Having spent part of her childhood in Mexico City her vivid memories of the Dia de los Muertos festival have influenced her own skull collection and this latest collaboration with L’Epée. This mechanical Vanitas is rich in symbolism but also in humour. The bridges of the clock are intricately detailed, designed to build up into a pattern which ultimately forms this ornate skull.

Creativity is at the heart of both L’Epée 1839 and Fiona Krüger Timepieces. This is evident in L’Epée’s acceptance of the challenge to create this modern day Vanitas with a humorous twist. The new “yawning” power reserve indicator required a whole new development and re-engineering of the clock movement. It is a marriage between fantasy and purpose which is at the core of the collaboration.

The ideas of life, time and mortality are synonymous and even more relevant in mechanical clock-making today than they have ever been. The unique design of the Skull imitating yawning as the power reserve depletes, joined with the ability to bring the clock to life as its wound up, reflects the history of clock making where fantasy, creativity and purpose were all incorporated in equal measure to create designs which made people dream.

**Vanitas is limited to 50 pieces per configuration and is now available in ‘dark’ and in a colourful edition.**

**Vanitas: A wall clock as no-one as seen before!**

When picturing a clock in your mind, everyone has a similar idea – round, 12 hours, two hands. Vanitas defies convention – the clock is itself a Skull, with mechanical eyes, a moving mouth and a distinctive case shape which frames the skull-shaped movement inside. The multi-layered bridges each have a specifically chosen finishing and décor, bringing depth to this sculptural skull. The hands bring a sense of familiarity to this innovative design which defies convention and brings together the worlds of Fine Art and Haute Horlogerie.

Vanitas looks best when the piece is hung on the wall. Just imagine entering a dark room with the ticking sound of the movement lightly echoing inside, the distinctive outlines of the skull coming into focus before you look into the skull’s mechanical eyes... Flick the lights up, and you'll dare to walk closer – if you do, you'll get the chance to appreciate the complexity of the L’Epée Movement, this Approx. 400-component timepiece.

**An out-of-this-world display**

Next to all known contemporary Wall clocks, Vanitas stands out like a bold brush stroke on a blank canvas. This new co-creation features a frontal escapement, 2 barrel arbors as “pupils”, all designed to sculpt the mechanical skull’s face.

Vanitas indicates the time by way of two hands which are centrally mounted on the nose. These hand-polished hands indicate the hours and minutes, hiding and revealing the skull’s eyes as if it was playing hide-and-seek.

Power reserve indicator: an indicator framed by two rows of teeth opens up as time passes, providing an intuitive view of remaining energy. When the mouth is completely opened (18.5mm a part from each other) the clock looks like it is “yawning” as a warning to its owner that it will go to sleep if some energy is not provided.

**Wall clocks – just like big watches?**

Vanitas is a luxury one-of-a-kind wall clock, featuring essentially the same mechanisms as a wristwatch, only larger: gear train, mainspring barrels (well, five in series), balance wheel, escape wheel and anchor. L’Epée’s regulator also features an Incabloc shock protection system, something generally only seen in wristwatches, which minimises the risk of damage when the clock is being transported.

Larger components, however, make finely finishing the movement much more challenging than finishing a wristwatch, because of the bigger surface areas. L’Epée CEO Arnaud Nicolas explains: “It’s not just a case of double the size of the components, double the time it takes to finish them. The complexity increases exponentially. For polishing you need to apply the same pressure as you would finishing a watch movement, but on a bigger surface, and that’s more challenging. It’s thanks to the experience and dexterity of our clockmakers that the Vanitas clock can feature such superlative fine-finishing.”

**Form follows function**

Form follows function is a principle associated with [modernist architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture) and [industrial design](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_design) in the 20th century. The principle is that the shape of a building or object should be primarily based upon its intended function or purpose. When it is reinterpreted by L’Epée 1839, the movement and the shape of the clock become one. The clock is no longer made of a movement and a housing which gives the shape of the clock. The movement itself defines the shape of the clock and the design cannot be recognized without the movement. The eyes are the barrels (two of them), the mouth is the power reserve, the philtra is the differential allowing the teeth to open up.

**VANITAS: Technical Specifications**

**Vanitas is limited to 50 pieces per configuration and is now available in ‘dark’ as well as in a colourful edition.**

**Display**

Hours and minutes

Power reserve indicator

**Main structure**

Height: 306 mm

Width: 220 mm

Thickness : 86 mm

Clock Weight : Approx. 5 kg. with 2.2 kg just for the movement.

‘Dark’ version:

Mat Housing in Black Anodized Aluminum with mineral glass.

Colored Version:

Mat Housing in Black Anodized Aluminum with mineral glass.

**Movement**

L’Epée in-house designed and manufactured movement

Balance frequency: 18,000 vph / 2.5Hz

Barrels: 5 in series

Power reserve: 35 days

Jewels: 11

Incabloc shock protection system

Manual-winding on the skull face: Double-ended key to set time and wind movement

‘Dark’ version:

Mechanism in palladium-coated brass. Movement Main plates in black PVD coated brass. Multi-layered screenprinted white decoration (gloss ink).

Colored Version:

Mechanism in palladium-coated brass. Movement Main plate in brass black PVD coating. Multi-coloured screen-printed pattern (gloss ink). Each colour used in the design of the clock was specially selected as it represents a specific meaning pertaining to the Dia de Los Muertos celebration: Blue = Trust, White = Purity, Orange = Sun, Yellow = Death, Pink = Celebration, Red = Life and Purple = Grief and Black = Mortality (hence the black PVD coating).

**L’EPEE 1839 – the premier clock manufacture in Switzerland**

For over 175 years, L'Epée has been at the forefront of watch and clock making. Today, it is the only specialised manufacture in Switzerland dedicated to making high-end clocks. L'Epée was founded in 1839, initially to make music box and watch components, by Auguste L’Epée who set up the business near Besançon, France. The L’Epée hallmark was that all parts were made entirely by hand.

From 1850 onwards, the manufacture became a leading light in the production of ‘platform’ escapements, creating regulators especially for alarm clocks, table clocks and musical watches. By 1877, it was making 24,000 platform escapements annually. The manufacture became a well-known specialist owning a large number of patents on special escapements such as anti-knocking, auto-starting and constant-force escapements and the chief supplier of escapements to several celebrated watchmakers of the day. L'Epée has won a number of gold awards at International Exhibitions.

During the 20th century, L'Epée owed much of its reputation to its superlative carriage clocks and, for many, L'Epée was the clock of the influential and powerful; it was also the gift of choice by French government officials to elite guests. In 1976 when the Concorde supersonic aircraft entered commercial service, L'Epée wall clocks were chosen to furnish the cabins, providing passengers with visual feedback of the time. In 1994, L'Epée showed its thirst for a challenge when it built the world's biggest clock with compensated pendulum, the Giant Regulator. At 2.2m high, it weighs 1.2 tons – the mechanical movement alone weighs 120kg – and required 2,800 man-hours of work.

L'Epée is now based in Delémont in the Swiss Jura Mountains. Under the guidance of CEO Arnaud Nicolas, L’Epée 1839 has developed an exceptional table clock collection, encompassing a range of sophisticated classic Carriage Clocks, Contemporary Design Clocks (Le Duel, La Tour,…) and avant-garde horological sculptures (Sherman, Starfleet Machine, Arachnophobia, Balthazar…). This last collection, named the “Art line” collection, was launched for its 175th Anniversary, is intended to shock, evoke and inspire people, not to toe the line. L’Epée clocks feature complications including retrograde seconds, power reserve indicators, perpetual calendars, tourbillons and striking mechanisms – all designed and manufactured in-house. Ultra-long power reserves have become a signature of the brand as well as superlative fine finishing

**FIONA KRÜGER**

Fiona Krüger Timepieces is an independent watch brand, differentiated by an artistic approach to *haute horlogerie* through the integration of art with “Swiss Made” craftsmanship and technology.

Fiona’s unique design process has been called a “New Metier D’Art” in itself, as she transforms mechanical watches into emotive timepieces. Her creative interpretation of mechanical watchmaking stems from her artistic sensibility and multicultural influences. Fiona pulls inspiration from her international background, Fine Art and Design training, and her fascination with the history of horology, to create pieces which evoke wonder.

The synonymous themes of “time” and “mortality”, which have played an important role in watchmaking since the 1400’s, inspired Fiona to develop her iconic SKULL collection. The skull itself is an internationally recognised symbol, engrained in the history of watchmaking. Drawing inspiration from the 17th century skull watch of Mary Queen of Scots, the Mexican celebration of Dia de Los Muertos and beautifully decorated skeleton movements found in today’s luxury watches, Fiona’s artistic re-interpretation of the skull symbol has resulted in a unique timepiece collection which transcends cultural divides.

The partnership with L’Epée furthers Fiona’s history of working closely with luxury brands, with a design commission from Fabergé for their 2017 Dalliance Collection, an exclusive event for Harrods to launch her Skull collection, and a partnership with luxury whisky brand The Macallan for an evening of whisky and watches in New York.

ABOUT FIONA

Fiona Krüger is a designer with a background in both Fine Art and Product Design. A passion for hand-made objects, tradition and craftsmanship are at the core of her work, which is why upon completion of her [Masters of Advanced Studies in Design for the Luxury Industry](http://www.ecal.ch/fr/1111/formations/master-of-advanced-studies/design-for-luxury-and-craftsmanship/projets-workshops) at [ECAL](http://www.ecal.ch/en/100/homepage) in Switzerland, she decided to launch her own independent watch brand, Fiona Krüger Timepieces.

Her studies in Switzerland allowed her to experience first hand the world of *haute horlogerie*, and she was notably inspired by her visits to the *Audemars Piguet* Manufacture (in particular watching the skeletonisation of their movements) and the *Patek Philippe Museum*’s Antique watch collection. Fiona was captivated by the opportunity in horlogerie to bring together the mechanical, the hand-made and her love for pattern and intricate work.

Fiona works intuitively, responding to the materials, techniques or themes she chooses to explore. She has a keen eye for detail and collaborates with artisans and suppliers who are looking for a different, more creative approach to watch design. Fiona is able to draw on her fine art background, design training and international work experience to come up with a variety of creative solutions to suit each individual timepiece.