

Watch Journal

Featuring: The Audemars Piguet Royal Oak Concept RD#1

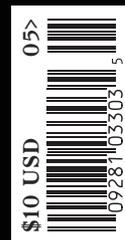
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The Design Issue





OPPOSITE: The 24-hour planetarium of the Astralis collection
BELOW: The Parmigiani Tonda Special Edition Meteorite

Otherworldly

By Keith W. Strandberg



A Space Rock on Your Wrist.

SUBSTANCE



KEITH W. STRANDBERG



ABOVE: The Louis Moinet Tourbillon Rosetta Stone BELOW: The Louis Moinet Astralis in midnight blue

Meteorite has been used in watchmaking since the 1980s. It's difficult to pin down when exactly the material was first used, but today there are a handful of companies making limited edition timepieces with meteorite dials.

Louis Moinet is one of these companies, and the brand has been featuring the celestial material for many years now. “We decided to use meteorite in our watches because of the historical link Louis Moinet had with astronomy: He was a member of the Astronomy Society in Paris and the inspiration for developing the first chronograph was astronomical observation,” says Jean-Marie Schaller, president of Louis Moinet. “We also use it because it is a natural element enriching the design of our timepieces, as we use it in our Treasures of the World collection.”

SOURCING METEORITES

Meteorites are extremely rare. Only about 50 authenticated Mars meteorites and 100 moon meteorites have been found to-date. Meteorites are all very different from one another, and from any other material found on Earth—because they are truly out of this world.

Louis Moinet works with meteorite hunters, always looking for the rarest and most

beautiful pieces to use in its watches. The most popular meteorites are those from the moon, perhaps because the moon is something that people live with every day.

“For me, it was really emotional when I held this little piece of moon rock in my hand for the first time,” remembers Schaller. “I went outside, looked at the moon in the starry sky and thought, ‘Wow, this piece of the moon traveled 380,000 kilometers to reach my hand. It escaped the moon’s gravity, wandered in space and then became a shooting star and fell to Earth, ending up in a Louis Moinet tourbillon watch!’”

WORKING WITH METEORITES

Creating a dial using meteorite is a very challenging process, made almost impossible by the material. According to Schaller, it all depends on the texture of the stone. “It can break or even crumble when it’s being cut,” he says. “All the work is done by one of the very few craftsmen who possess the skills to cut the stone very slowly so it doesn’t crack. Then, the slices have to

be cut again into the final form, and then these are polished. Until the piece is finished, the meteorite can break.”

Louis Moinet has used many meteorites in its watches, including the Rosetta Stone meteorite, considered the oldest fragment ever found, with an age of about 4.5 billion years (its official name is Sahara 99555).

Meteorites are quite expensive, currently costing more than the prices of gold, platinum and diamond combined. “It could be the most expensive material on earth,” Schaller says. “I like the connection meteorites have with the infinite world. They show us how small we really are in the universe. Also, I love the mystery. Some carry inside them natural treasures—for instance, the Enstatite H3 contains nanodiamonds.”

Watches that use meteorites are not only visually stunning: They offer an opportunity to wear a space treasure on your wrist every day. Now *that’s* unique.