

WELCOME TO ROBOCREATURES ERA

"Art begets art", American author Susan Vreeland once famously said. And this is certainly true in the case of TriPod, the 13th collaboration between L'Épée 1839 and MB&F.

TriPod comprises a minimalist clock face suspended between three delicate insect-like legs. It follows the mighty T-Rex what will become a trilogy of half animal/half robot creations that we called Robocreasures. Trinity's name originates in the trios that inform it: three legs, three insect-eye spheres, and three movement levels comprising the creature's mechanical body. Also, TriPod is the second in a group of three clocks set to form a trio. In the same way that H.R. Giger created his Alien universe, we're creating our own world of creatures".

Robocreasures could well be future time capsules, fossilised "life" from a prehistoric era. With TriPod, Berlin-based designer Maertens, L'Épée CEO Arnaud Nicolas and Maximilian Büsser lead us into a horological post-modern prehistoric era.

TriPod features three delicate legs supporting a colourful body, three insect-eye spheres made of precision lens-quality glass and a clock dial making one full revolution in 36 hours that indicates three sets of hours and minutes. Underneath the dials a 182-component three-dimensional sculptural movement crafted on three levels by L'Épée 1839 with a vertical balance wheel beating at a traditional 2.5Hz (18,000vph). Time-setting

and winding are by key, and when fully wound the movement offers a generous eight-day power reserve.

An essential element of TriPod is indicating the time, which is done by looking down on the dial composed of rotating disks. But this clock requires some interaction between Man and Machine: the observer reads the time thanks to three optical spheres, each magnifying the clock's numerals and making them legible.

To allow all three of the "insect eyes" to show the time from any angle, the dial features three sets of numerals 1-12, meaning that the dial completes a full rotation in 36 hours instead of the customary 12 hours. The time is visible through one of the magnifying lenses at any time.

"These clocks are our companions", says Büsser. "They live. They tick. They're like a pet - bringing life into your interior". Jurassic Park also famously gave us life where there wasn't... but what came after the dinosaurs? The trio of Robocreasures provides one imaginative possibility.





TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

LIMITED EDITIONS

50 pieces per colour

FUNCTIONS

Hour and minute display
Animation of a full dial rotation in 36 hours

WINDING & TIME SETTING

Double-ended key to set time and wind the movement

MOVEMENT

Single barrel
21 jewels
182 components
2,5 Hz

POWER RESERVE

8 days

MATERIALS

Plated brass and optical mineral glass

DIMENSIONS & WEIGHT

26 cm high x 30 cm diameter
2,8 kg

The Inspiration

Young designer Maertens was the creative incubator for TriPod, during his internship at MB&F. The 1993 film Jurassic Park was a big influence on Maertens as it was the first movie he remembers watching as a child. While Maertens' inspiration from his childhood memory was first realized in MB&F's T-Rex, the first clock in the Robocreature trilogy, it's been a gift that keeps on giving. Which is apt as the entire premise of all of MB&F's mechanical masterpieces is to foster children's dreams as a creative adult.

When designing T-Rex, Maertens imagined a backstory to guide his development process to create a coherent balance of mechanical and organic visual elements. That story grew from elements in MB&F's past projects that included a starship pilot discovering new planets. As Maertens uncovered further inspiration from his love of Jurassic Park, a new story began to unfold that is now the backbone of the Robocreature trilogy.

TriPod represents how time originates for Jurassic Park. "This insect is the transition between dinosaur and what comes next because they're all still here", says Maertens.

While the primary inspiration for TriPod is the mosquito caught in amber that provides the DNA to genetically craft new dinosaurs, for the clock's look Maertens decided to emulate a water strider (Gerridae), an insect able to walk on the surface of water using surface tension and its long, slender, hydrophobic legs to distribute its weight over a large surface area.

"It feels much like a levitating insect walking over the water," Maertens explains, "and this inspired me to create something that looks very delicate. This is a direction I like to go, even if it caused some strife with the engineers over issues like stability". TriPod's three long legs make it seem too fragile to be true, but the balance is so perfectly calculated that the entire creation comes across as elegantly as the insect it's modelled after.

Movement and body

As a sculptural clock, an essential element of TriPod is indicating the time, which is done by looking down on the dial composed of two concentric, rotating disks. The outer disk displays the hour while the inner disk displays the minutes in increments of 15. Reading the time requires interaction between Man and Machine: the observer reads the time thanks to three optical spheres, each magnifying the clock's numerals and making them legible.

To allow all three of the "insect eyes" to show the time from any angle, the dial features three sets of numerals 1-12, meaning that the dial completes a full rotation in 36 hours instead of the customary 12 hours. The time is visible through one of the magnifying lenses at any time as well as the dial from above (albeit much smaller).

The spheres are suspended by brass "arms" cradling them like hands so as not to disturb their perfectly round shape or scratch them. Nicolas explains that manufacturing these cradles for the lens spheres was difficult to do in one piece, which was necessary to maximise stability.

