

# Out For A Spin: Alex Ballmer Visits A Swiss Vineyard With Two Iconic Vacheron Constantin Chronographs

Our Digital Content Coordinator Alex Ballmer, meets a dear winemaker friend to talk about wine and watches.



*By Alex Ballmer*

Growing up surrounded by all these magnificent vineyards created in me a sort of connection with these vines which produces those magical grapes, and even more divine beverages. Hence my excitement once I knew that I could spend the day visiting my high school friend turned winemaker, Laura Paccot, accompanied with our inimitable photographer Jess Hoffman to visit her family Domaine and compare two amazing chronographs.





Thrilled is more than a euphemism to describe my state of mind once Laura showed up. So many years had passed since we last met, her “joie de vivre” which emanates from her smile is intact. After digging out old stories from the past and expressing my congratulations on her pregnancy, she quickly explains to me the story of her family in the region. Her great-grandfather Jules Paccot bought the first vineyards in Féchy (a beautiful small Swiss town in the canton de Vaud). All future generations succeeded to grow and establish the name of the estate. Laura is now the latest generation working closely with her father Raymond to produce the best quality wines. Laura smiles while talking about her father and confesses: “It’s really nice to have him close to me, it’s hard to manage the many tasks to create a wine. I know that he is here, it’s reassuring.”



Just before jumping in her car to visit the beautiful scenery, I surprise her with the watch she will be wearing during our day together: The Vacheron Constantin reference 47101 in platinum. Laura’s interest in watches is thin, but a glance at the beautiful tear drop shaped lugs suffices to charm her.





While turning the watch to show her the beautiful Lemania-based calibre 1140 I knew what the reaction would be: a subtle amazed face accompanied by a soft-toned “Woah” which she exactly does. “This model introduced in 1989 is a tribute to the reference 4178 from the 40s, as you can see the watch is well balanced and the 36mm is very versatile for any wrist size”. I explain once she finished strapping it on her delicate wrist and share her thoughts “I love the heft of the watch; it feels precious without being flashy.”



We are now in the vineyard surrounded by grapes that are still young and waiting patiently to be picked up. She grabs a bunch of them and tells me "We cultivate the grapes in harmony with nature, the entire estate has been worked biodynamically for nearly 20 years. The aim of this method is to respect and reveal the subtlety of the different terroirs, especially for the Chasselas, which are indigenous to Switzerland. A variety that has little acidity and alcohol, but that can have a lot of minerality and elegance that will seduce any connoisseur."



While we are sharing our different wine preferences, she glances at my wrist and sees the other star of the day. The Vacheron Constantin Historique Cornes de Vache 1955 in platinum.



Featuring modern interpretations of legendary designs from the past the watch is comfortable on the wrist thanks to the 38.5mm case size and the curved fancy lugs.





The two-tone dial further enhances the overall vintage look and feel of the timepiece. We start comparing the two watches side by side. We are pointing out similarities like the dial, lugs, and movement. Vacheron Constantin has produced timepieces since 1755, les “historiques” collection pay tribute to their heritage, whilst adding modernity to these models which evolve with its era.



I’m starting to find some similarities with Laura’s family shaping the history of these vineyards, constantly evolving with each generation to enhance the reputation of the Domaine name and keeping their ancestor’s techniques alive through each harvest. Laura is proud to be the next generation taking care of the estate and hopefully, her own kids that are and will be raised in this environment will be part of the story too.



After being amazed by the breathtaking view, she brings us where they mature the wine. We are now in a small town just adjacent to the vineyards, walking a few minutes before arriving in front of an ancient wooden door.

She opens it to reveal a myriad of barrels containing the precious liquid that is slowly aging to maturity. As she is expecting, Laura is not able to drink wine at this moment. As I’m not accustomed wasting any drop of it, she teaches me how to spit and how to recognize some flavors that appear in the mouth.





Jess' expert eye sees an opportunity to take some beautiful pictures of the two chronographs thanks to an uncommon lighting created by a few lights passing through the door.



Unfortunately, everything has an ending. During my ride back home, I had time to reflect on Vacheron Constantin. I remembered a video retracing the story of one of the most important Vacheron wristwatches ever made ([watch the video here](#)). I'm conscious that the Reference 47101 and the Cornes de Vache 1955 offered to our upcoming Geneva Watch Auction XIV (5&7 September) are not at the same level of importance as the Don Pancho.





Nonetheless, they are two amazingly rare chronographs paying tribute to the pasts with outstanding movement finishing and bold designs that stand out from the norm.



I concluded that the level of passion, professionalism, and love for the art from the brand to create perfectly made timepieces through the ages is not unlike the work of the Paccot family.







I would recommend anyone to learn more about the Paccot estate [here](#).  
Learn more about lot 37 of the Geneva Watch Auction XIV [here](#).  
Learn more about lot 223 of the Geneva Watch Auction XIV [here](#).  
Photo Credit: © Jess Hoffman

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The Geneva Watch Auction: XIV  
Geneva 5 November 2021