

THE FIFTH ELEMENT IS AVAILABLE
IN 3 LIMITED EDITIONS OF 18 PIECES
EACH IN BLACK, SILVER AND BLUE.



THE FIFTH ELEMENT

FORECASTING SUNNY WEATHER AHEAD WITH A CHANCE
OF (ALIEN) VISITORS

The Fifth Element is an intergalactic horological weather station enabling accurate weather forecasting even when the power goes down.

Four (UFO) elements: clock, barometer, hygrometer, and thermometer combine in a mothership (with Ross, the alien pilot) to create an entity much larger than the sum of its parts: The Fifth Element. An analogue weather station might at first glance appear anachronistic; however, when the storm hits and the power goes down, the Fifth Element will still work perfectly. And, in the worst-case scenario, you can hitch a ride off planet Earth with Ross.

FOUR REMOVABLE AND INTERCHANGEABLE INSTRUMENT ELEMENTS MAKE UP THE FIFTH ELEMENT:

Clock Element

Because weather forecasting is based on the speed of changes over time, the accurate time is required for meteorological observations. For the Fifth Element, L'Épée 1839 reengineered and skeletonised their 8-day clock movement to maximize transparency and visual access.

Barometer Element

The barometer, which measures air pressure, is the mainstay of weather forecasting: as a general rule, increasing air pressure foretells good clear weather, decreasing air pressure portends inclement weather. The faster the change, the more extreme the coming weather.

Hygrometer Element

The hygrometer measures the percentage of water vapour in the air; it displays this as a percentage of the maximum amount of moisture that might be held at a given temperature.

Thermometer Element

Thermometers don't simply measure temperature, but the average kinetic energy of a substance: the higher the temperature, the higher the energy. A thermometer is essentially a power reserve indication of the energy in the atmosphere around us.

While the Fifth Element attends to the serious side of weather forecasting with joyful fantasy, this space-age weather station was only made possible thanks to L'Épée 1839, which mastered the precision manufacturing of the intricate series of curves and circles within circles that make up the large structure. Over 500 individual components form the mother ship and its interchangeable Elements; more than many Grand Complications!

And there's one more function that MB&F surreptitiously integrates into all of its machines: the ability to make you smile. For the Fifth Element, that role goes to Ross: thanks to his own manually-wound, air-regulated movement, the alien pilot rotates around the UFO's cockpit checking that the skies are clear of both clouds and hostile invaders.



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INSPIRATION AND DESIGN

The Fifth Element is a confluence of fantasies from classic UFO films, books, and comics of the 1950-60s with the desktop weather stations that were popular before weather forecasts were available on our phones.

The team researched weather stations across the last 100 years as well as the concepts of transparency, biomorphism, and both "inclusion" and "swarm" in animal/insect worlds. After defining the four elements, the next step was the design of the Fifth Element, the hub in which the pods are housed. The challenge was to create an archetypical UFO of the 1950-60s, but without concealing any of the four elements. Different structures and shapes were tried and tested, including a vertical configuration, before the final form was validated. Even then the process wasn't finished as the first prototype looked a little too old-fashioned for MB&F, so it was tweaked yet again.

REALISATION BY L'EPÉE

The pieces making up the complex framework of curves and circles composing the structure of the Fifth Element had to be milled from solid blocks of brass in a process taking many hours. Even with all of that metal removed to make a visually light and open frame, you can feel the inherent solidity and quality in the construction.

Each of the four elements is composed of an outer case containing the core instrument of each module and can be placed on the Fifth Element structure. The clock had to be reengineered for a vertical escapement on the side for visual access. The four elements - clock, barometer, hygrometer, and thermometer - are not only detachable and interchangeable; thanks to integrated support they can also stand, returning to the mothership when required.

While it's usually the minuscule size of watch components that makes them so difficult to produce and hand finish with high precision, it was the opposite case for the Fifth Element in that its relatively large size diameter made manufacturing and decoration difficult. Hand polishing tiny watch parts is labour intensive but that pales in comparison with hand finishing the relatively massive surface areas on the components making up the Fifth Element. The rotating base brought its own challenges as it was already difficult to source ball bearings of the size and strength necessary to support the substantial weight, but finding bearings manufactured to the precision demanded by the project made it even more so.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

FUNCTIONS

Clock (hours and minutes)
Barometer (air pressure)
Thermometer (air temperature)
Hygrometer (air humidity)

MAIN STRUCTURE: THE FIFTH ELEMENT

Dimensions: 376 mm in diameter x 209 mm in height
No. of components: 531
Materials: stainless steel, brass, bronze (alien)
Total weight: 15 kg

UFO CLOCK MOVEMENT

L'Epée in-house movement
Dimensions: 124 mm in diameter x 92 mm in height
Balance frequency: 2.5 Hz (18,000 bph)
Power reserve: 8 days from single barrel in base
Components in movement: 161 - Jewels: 11
Incabloc shock protection system
Movement finishing: polishing, bead-blasting, and satin finishing - Weight: 1,35kg

UFO BAROMETER

Atmospheric pressure: 960 / 1060 hPa
(28.4 / 31.6 in Hg)
Dimensions: 124 mm in diameter x 92 mm in height
Calibration screw-in base
Weight: 1.80 kg

UFO THERMOMETER

Temperature: -30° / +70° Celsius
(-20° / +156°Fahrenheit)
Dimensions: 124 mm in diameter x 92 mm in height
Components: 46
Weight: 1.90 kg

UFO HYGROMETER

Hygrometer: 0 - 100% humidity
Dimensions: 124 mm in diameter x 92 mm in height
Components: 46
Weight: 1.90 kg

