

THE WATCHES

MAGAZINE

Swiss International Magazine
Autumn 2017 #050

Interviews Yoko Imai - Chabi Nouri - Jean-Marc Wiederrecht - Portrait Initium - Guest Naomé



English Edition

L 11801 - 50 - F: 7,00 € - RD



Breguet

The watchmaker who mastered the seas

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HUBLOT
Big Bang Purple Velvet

A dial or how to make yourself interesting

By Eléonor Picciotto

Complications aside, watchmakers need to showcase their ingenuity if they want to carry on dazzling buyers and consumers with a timepiece's design. From volcano ash and velvet to straw and eggshell inlay, these relatively classic premium watches are exploring new sides of themselves with a unique dial.

How do you make a piece interesting or how do you make yourself interesting? That's the question...After designing the most cutting-edge complications, slimmest calibres, the ultimate cases or inventing systems of all kinds earning almost every brand a world record, what else can you do? The design.

A change in colour or material seems to be the easiest style change, especially when we're talking watches. However, you

need to remember there are limitations such as space, size and weight. Some watchmakers on the quest for creativity use and abuse their brain matter to unearth that little something that nobody's done before. Guided by their ambassador and Italian dandy Lapo Elkann, this year Hublot has brought out a Velvet collection where every model comes with a pair of sunglasses from Lapo's own brand Italia Independent. When it comes to originality, a while ago Cartier painstakingly selected flattened pieces of straw then glued them together to create the colourful design of a panda or lion on the Rotonde model.

After all, why not...But how's technique involved in all that?

Watchmakers may be essential to designing a piece but other



PIAGET
Schiuma d'Oro

PIAGET
Bubble Dots Feather

DIOR
Fil D'or

sometimes rare and exceptional trades are vital to the success of an often bizarre idea. At Piaget, dozens or even hundreds of hours were spent on the Altiplano. It takes 25 hours to make the Altiplano's wooden inlay on the dial in flecked maple, over double the amount of time for the Schiuma d'Oro with a gold leaf dial and eggshell mosaic or the Bubble Dots Feather made with 50 shades of blue in a feather inlay. The work is as staggering as it is stunning.

Without question, brands have to call upon external sources, artisans that you could easily call "beauty technicians."

A dial that gets people talking is one thing but a dial that has a story to tell is something else entirely. The best example is Dior's tribute to haute couture. Its Fil D'or dial weaves together 4630 gold threads to depict the brand's pattern to make an optical illusion of a dial elevated by diamonds. The most extreme story is RJ-Romain Jerome's dial made of ash from the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull's eruption...

Similarly, Jaeger-Lecoultré and more recently Romain Gauthier have used a meteorite to adorn their dials. Something

that's so grey, so cold yet so beautiful that we easily associate with the creation of the earth followed by its history which is, at the end of the day, our own.



Chabi Nouri, a calming force at the top of Piaget

By Eléonor Picciotto

Young, talented and likeable, Chabi Nouri spent two years under Philippe Leopold-Metzger's wing before being appointed Piaget's Chief Executive at the start of the year. Some said, "One hell of a woman"; others said "Wonder woman".

Here are ten questions about the personality and passion that have made this forty-something mother a female role model that many of us can look up to.

Your career began at Richemont with Cartier then you went to British American Tobacco before returning to the group.

What did you miss most?

The creative element along with a passion for the product! My professional experiences have all been extremely rewarding and have built on one another. From the relationship you have

with clients or affiliates to the prospects or artisans we work with. It all fuels your professional and people skills. You don't decide which opportunities you have and that's what makes the experience magical!

We're seeing more and more women in top positions in a predominantly male industry...Now you're CEO, a first in the industry. What's your advantage?

Diversity in business is vital. I believe that it's a real asset to be able to understand different cultures and ways of thinking in the same team. It's not so much if you're a man or woman; it's a person's profile that matters most. As a woman, I'm delighted to see more and more women in our industry and the ratio is fairly balanced. After all, I represent 50% of our world's population!

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Piaget seems to be focusing on digital more than ever. How do you want to make your mark? Are you taking “millennials” into account?

Of course! Sales are extremely interesting online. Nowadays you have to be able to tell the same story on different channels. Being true to the message and telling it in different ways is essential. Digital is integral to our society but I think that it's more about engaging internet users and not just giving them the option of buying online.

You've mentioned bringing Piaget to e-commerce. Would you have an own brand online shop? E-commerce standards or marketplaces?

At the end of the day we're striving to build a relationship with the client whether on our website or someone else's. From bloggers and journalists to friends, we have to be able to appropriately express the Piaget universe. But you have to remember that three quarters of the people who buy in store have done online research beforehand.

What would you say sets Piaget apart in watchmaking?

I think it's our philosophy for making stylish watches. Let's take the Altiplano for example. Aside from its super-slim calibre and legendary slim case, it oozes elegance. The same goes for the women's collections with Possession, Cocktail and Gala...We're inclined to go the extra mile at Piaget: a

slimmer movement, a case and movement that are in tune in terms of finesse. Piaget stands for appeal and elegance.

How about jewellery?

All the pieces are playful in our regular jewellery ranges: they spin, move and transform. They exude positivity: the use of colours, gems and materials keep things light and can be worn day and night. The latest Sunlight Journey collection is a prime example of our fine jewellery. We again took our expertise and creativity even further by using feather and opal inlay to express wonder and joy with plays on colour and spectacular materials.

Inlays with feathers, opals, wood and more recently eggshell... always a step further, always more original: how far are you willing to go?

As far as we have to! The inspiration for a collection will take us as far as we have to go. If that means hunting down the best artisan then that's what we'll do. Sometimes we give an extra challenge to these talented craftsmen who have to learn to work on a small surface. Piaget has let them unleash their creativity by giving them more space to work on the dials thanks to the ultra-slim movement.

Don't you think that the creativity we've seen recently is reaching saturation point?

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Not at all, I think there's still room for everyone. You just have to give yourself the time to research, think and push the boundaries even further yet stay true to the brand's values that have stood the test of time.

Piaget made its name in watchmaking by specialising in ultra-slim calibres then in jewellery with incredible and impressive expertise. How do you expect the brand perception to change?

I'm not sure we can really talk about a change in perception; I'd say more what Piaget brings to mind and expresses. It's a long-standing brand with lots of expertise that's motivated and driven to exceed itself as proven by the bold colours and materials as well as the blend of shapes. The Cuff-Watch is a great example of the fusion between watches and jewellery. Piaget oozes real energy and joy.

What with your new responsibilities and business trips, what do you do with the little time you're left with?

I exercise but not as often as I'd like...but I enjoy spending time with family and friends as well as devoting myself to nature. You need concrete planning to strike a balance between your work and personal life: it works and helps me balance both!



The Tank is turning 100!

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By Eléonor Picciotto

The Russian Revolution took place in 1917 and saw Lenin take power. An equally important milestone, in the history of watchmaking at least, took place the same year with the launch of the Tank designed by Louis Cartier. A century has gone by but this legendary watch hasn't aged a day.

Cartier was flourishing in 1904 as it put its stamp on art deco jewellery and introduced its first wristwatch. A decade later, the First World War was in full swing with a convoy of utility vehicles, stretchers and tanks that undoubtedly inspired the Tank in 1917. Nothing was left to chance with this watch that broke every rule in watchmaking at the time by dropping the round case. The years go by but its popularity hasn't diminished with its "track" dial that subtly bears the double minute track and "shafts", two vertical bars incorporating the strap's lugs into the case without looking out of place. From the cult Tank launched by Louis Cartier in 1922 to the Tank Américaine that was designed in 1987 but launched 2 years later and, of course, 1996's Tank Française, this timeless watch has embodied its very own style over the years.

Cartier in Motion by Norman Foster

Eight months before reopening the new design museum in

London, Norman Foster was asked to redevelop the former 1962 Commonwealth Institute. What started as two Cartier watches requested for the museum's permanent collection turned into an entire retrospective commissioned by the eminent English architect who was knighted by the Queen in 1999 to become Lord Foster of Thames Bank. From designing Hong Kong Airport and the HSBC building that marked a turning point in his career to creating the self-sufficient Apple HQ in London, he's a master of matter and form. Learning about Cartier, a brand he knew little about, was a lightbulb moment. Norman Foster visited the factory several times to soak up the culture and the brand. He's fascinated by the hands and, like Louis Cartier, Gustave Eiffel and Albert Santos-Dumont, Lord Foster is obsessed with clean lines. He presents Cartier in Motion, a touring exhibition that is a playful exploration of key moments in the life of the 100 year old Tank. From the reconstruction of an Eiffel Tower and the Santos plane to a look back at different Tank models, Norman Foster shows that Paris' evolution in terms of shapes and the urban layouts has inspired the shape of Cartier's cases. Over two hundred pieces are presented in display cases including everyday interwar items designed and made by Cartier. If the most impressive thing isn't the timeline depicting the Tank's history and evolution in terms of discoveries that have affected the last century then it's probably the 16 mysterious clocks that

CARTIER

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Cartier alone knew the secrets behind and whose production grabs your attention.

A rich legacy

Pascale Lepeu has curated the Cartier collection for over 24 years and discusses the subject with starry eyes. As the exhibition's curator, she says that, *"these are precious, absolutely fabulous pieces made with scrupulous sophistication that reflects the artisan's pride in pushing boundaries by striving to expand and improve their technique. A small enamel clock to me is even rarer and more precious than a beautiful necklace."*

According to Pascale Lepeu, one of the reasons they could design an exhibition like this in under 8 months is solely because of Cartier's incredible legacy as the brand hasn't just kept all its archives; it's digitalised them too. *"The more documents we had, the less we worried about fakes and the more the pieces' value increased,"* says the guardian of Cartier's temple. Being in charge of a collection like Cartier's involves painstaking yet educational work as you have to research and categorise new things every day. *"There's no such thing as a typical day,"* says Pascale Lepeu, *"It can as easily take six months as two years for an exhibition or to research a piece. We host archive and factory tours as well as visits by people such as experts and exhibition curators. Naturally, managing and maintaining the Cartier collection is a daily task that we undertake with the utmost passion."* The research involved in locating a piece as well as the logistics to ship it is usually the most complex part. When we ask this knowledgeable woman working behind the scenes what her biggest challenge is, she instantly replies: *"Maintaining the pieces! We need to constantly take care of this legacy that's so unique and that involves everything from restoration and maintenance to transport."* Seeing these items, jewellery and watches come to life or come back to life is what she likes best! *"They're small objets d'art that encapsulate the history of our brand, decorative arts and the lives of people, namely women. Clothes kept up with trends, watches adapted to this evolution before technological progress enabled watchmaking to diversify. The Tank is a great example, time has flown by despite it being almost a century old,"* she says.

The Tank is 100 years of iconic models and icons: from Madonna and Brad Pitt to Yves Saint Laurent and Patti Smith. To mark the start of a new more elegant and simplified style, Kim Kardashian treated herself to a Tank at an auction in June that once belonged to the legendary Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. She was one of the first women to wear a Tank in 1960 as it was originally designed for men. Will Kim K. a.k.a. the new Jackie O. make wearing the Tank in 2017 a sign of the times?

RICHARD MILLE

Princesses for one day

By Eléonor Picciotto



© Jules Langeard

The 18th Princesses Rally saw Richard Mille enter its 3rd year in a row as the sponsor of an all-female event. 90 teams and 12 nationalities drove from Paris to Saint Tropez in classic and modern cars at an average speed of 40km/hr in five days. Join us on an exhilarating adventure.

We hit the road in an air-conditioned bus during a heatwave to pick up our racing cars that are dolled up all year outside Paris. The to-the-minute schedule involved a briefing to learn how our cars worked and especially how to use a roadbook and tripy. Yep, you can't just go with the flow when you're doing a rally in a car from 1964 for several days, especially not when it's your first time.

Driving into Paris in our canary yellow Porsche 356 earned us a good few smiles, thumbs up, photos and kind words from the Parisians surprisingly enough. *They can do it...* said the ex-pat Parisian that I am. I must admit that all the vintage and colourful cars parked on Place Vendôme caused quite a stir bringing together family, friends and anyone in the area. The pressure peaked when the Rally kicked off on Sunday

morning. We were the second team to hit the road. We had to drive onto the podium aiming straight for the two metallic beams of the same width as the tyres without going even a centimetre over in case of being the first to topple the car over, in the morning and in front of the photographers' cameras. All good. It was already 30 degrees at 9am, I think it was 45 inside our car with our pulses racing at 300 beats per minute.

Once we were out of Paris with the gearbox and clutch well in hand, we had to get to grips with our roadbook.

"You have 13 minutes to cover 4.37km then you have to turn right at the red arrow," said Elodie, my co-driver and colleague. "OK so what speed should I be at?" I naturally answered. "Since we're 17 seconds behind and we need to catch up, shall we do the rule of three?" We sceptically started calculating. Epic fail. "I have no idea. Just drive and we'll see." Roaring with laughter, let's be honest, this strategy suited me perfectly.

Snaking through the French roads once in a lifetime should be, I personally think, made compulsory in some way or another. What a beautiful country! We drove slowly through



endless fields, went through deserted villages or thanked the few locals showing us the way to go as if it were their mission. We passed by hares, horses, butterflies and cows. We even spotted Bambi. Every pointed church we saw at every single little village reminded us of the Bible's words about sharing. Morality, everyone takes their turn, everyone drives.

You'd be wrong to think that being a co-driver means time goes slower. We were fortunate enough to be armed with different models from the Richard Mille women's collection so it was the perfect time to take in the details and finishes, maybe even take some photos. Especially when you have a diamond and rose gold RM016 or brown ceramic RM07-01 on a diamond-covered chain strap. Careful, keep your eyes on the road. We can safely say though that the TPT carbon RM07-01 with a titanium body is a joy to wear as it's so light, especially when you're driving during a heatwave.

We laughed and drove a lot. We swore and shouted a bit. Time raced by. How sad we were to say goodbye to our beloved motor but how happy we are to have taken part.