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Christophe Claret

by Ken Kessler

A micro-engraving of the Kaaba looks as if it is emerging from the middle of the watch. The illusion offers a full 360° view of the famous cube-shaped building found at the center of the sacred mosque in Mecca.

As Christophe Claret increases the quantity of watches it produces under its own name, the catalog has grown to include a number of lines. Tourbillons and minute repeaters have always been Claret specialties, and the growth as an eponymous brand, rather than a maker of complications for others, has engendered a policy of marrying diverse complications in unexpected ways, such as minute-repeater GMTs.

Though not launched at SIHH *per se*, the Marguerite and Mecca watches unveiled at the end of 2015 were available for close examination. Marguerite, part of the company's Margot range, is a perfect example of the ever-strengthening trend toward haute-horlogerie watches designed expressly for women — a departure from merely downsizing men's watches to suit women's wrists. As the company states, this model "affirms the brand's determination to give substance to a full-fledged feminine collection that consists of complications exclusively devoted to women."

Offered in four versions, Marguerite features two butterflies in blue, orange or red Super-LumiNova that flit around a daisy, made with lacquered petals that overlap as in a real flower. The "female" perches on a daisy petal that rotates to show the hour, while the "male" indicates the minutes.

Mecca follows the Aventicum model unveiled in 2015, which contained an effigy of Emperor Marcus Aurelius presented holographically by a mirascope. This device consists of two parabolic mirrors arranged one on top of the other, the mirror on top having a hole in the middle. When an object is placed in the center of the bottom mirror, the reflection from the top mirror creates a hologram of the object appearing to be nearly two times larger than it actually is.

In the Mecca timepiece, a micro-engraving of the Kaaba looks as if it is emerging from the middle of the watch. The illusion offers a full 360° view of the famous cube-shaped building found at the center of the sacred mosque in Mecca.

Christophe Claret also presented new interpretations of its spectacular Soprano tourbillon minute repeater with Westminster chimes and a gem-set version of the equally arresting Allegro minute repeater with cathedral gongs, GMT with day/night indicator, big date and small seconds. ★



CHRISTOPHE CLARET

MECCA

MOVEMENT

Caliber AVE15 self-winding movement; hours and minutes; 72-hour power reserve

CASE

44mm; Grade 5 titanium; 72-hour power reserve

STRAP

Black alligator leather

OPUS 3 BREAKING THE MOLD

The Opus 3 was the one that broke the mold within the series, two chapters in. That's not the least bit surprising considering Vianney Halter, the watchmaker who took on the task in the third year, is not known to create watches that necessarily look like watches — and the Opus 3 is no exception.

The manually wound Opus 3 uses six portholes to display six digits that tell hours in blue, minutes and the four last seconds of each minute in black and the date in red. A day/night indication is worked into the movement with the hours during the day (7am to 6pm) displayed using filled-in figures, while the hours at night (7pm to 6am) are displayed using hollowed-out ones.

Because of the way that the Opus 3 sought to break the mold, difficulties in the production process saw the first pieces delivered only in 2010. Fifty-five pieces of the watch were created: 25 in rose gold, 25 in platinum and the last five in platinum with baguette- and brilliant-cut diamonds set into the watch. ▶



OPUS 4 CHIMING IN



The fourth Opus was the creation of watchmaker Christophe Claret, who, in a demonstration of his expertise in chiming watches, created a minute repeater with cathedral gongs. The watch had two faces: one side showed off the gongs and tourbillon, worked into the movement, and the other side included a large moonphase display and date. Hour and minute hands on both sides of the watch created the possibility for a wearer to wear the watch either way, according to his or her preference.

Only 20 pieces of the Opus 4 were ever made, all of which were in platinum with the exception of two unique diamond-set pieces. ◀