

DIVE INTO BASELWORLD

GEM LUNACY

The alluring and mystical moonstone is a jewel to be taken seriously **Page 10**



TIME TO SIMPLIFY

Watch complications shouldn't be that complicated. We explain **Page 20**



CHOKER IN THE PACK

They have history, they have glamour and they will always be wearable **Page 22**





HERMÈS

HERMÈS

For several years Hermès has seduced Basel with its exquisite watches, with handmade straw marquetry dials, enamelled dials and watches that suspend time. Its new Slim d'Hermès is equally enticing. Slim d'Hermès, as the Anglo/French location implies, is an ultra-thin watch. Nothing unusual there: Ultra-thin watches are part of the repertoire of many brands. What is distinctive is something most brands ignore: transferring the aesthetics of thin to the dial. Compared with a standard-thickness watch, ultra-thin watches have a completely different look and feel, so why cap them off with a standard dial?

The numerals on the dial of the Slim d'Hermès are a meeting of Art Deco or the Jazz Age and the digital age, devised for Hermès by the graphic designer Philippe Apeloig. And what distinguishes them is what is missing.

Except for "1," each numeral has a tiny gap in its construction. The lacuna is most noticeable in the numeral "8," where the two circles are not connected. By some strange visual alchemy on the dial these numerals create a slim impression, the perfect match for the case.

Slim d'Hermès comes in several versions: time-only with a 39.5mm case and 7.64mm thick, in rose gold (£11,400/\$18,500), and in stainless steel (£5,100/\$8,500). The perpetual calendar version (9.04mm thick) is available only in rose gold (£24,200/\$38,900).

CHRISTOPHE CLARET

Aventicum, a new watch from Christophe Claret, illuminates the creative process of a master watchmaker. As a child, he loved exploring the Roman ruins around his native Lyon. When Mr. Claret began spending time in Switzerland in the 1970s he continued his investigations in Avenches, known to the Romans as Aventicum, a center of commerce and imperial government located about 120 kilometers northeast of present-day Geneva.

For years, Mr. Claret wrestled with how to turn his interest in classical antiquity into a watch? Avenches provided the answer. In 1938, workmen in the town had unearthed a solid gold bust of the second-century philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius, deep in thought and suitably imperious. Mr. Claret decided to reproduce the find on a watch, but not in the obvious manner, as a miniaturized 2-D bust on a flat dial. Instead, he opted to use a technique akin to holography. He employed a simple device, the mirascope—a child's toy—which has three parts. There are two parabolic mirrors placed one on top of the other like two bowls, open side to open side. The mirror on the top has a circular opening at its apex. The third part is an object—for Aventicum, this is a 3-millimeter gold reproduction of the emperor's bust—secured to the lower mirror. When held at the right angle, Marcus Aurelius appears in all his 3-D glory, hovering over the watch.

Hour numerals are engraved on a ring that surrounds the top mir-



BVLGARI

BVLGARI

The Centre Georges Pompidou (a.k.a. the Beaubourg), in Paris, is a building turned inside out, with its guts—pipes, escalators and more, painted in bright colors—on the exterior. The skeleton turns heads.

Bulgari is aiming to turn heads, too, with its skeletal Tourbillon Saphir collection, which at first glance appears to be a range of skeletonized watches. The brand describes them as such, but the look of these watches is altogether different from most skeletons.

On traditional skeletons, bridges and plates and other components are filed away, leaving only the bare minimum necessary to ensure structural integrity. The Bulgari approach is to unveil the movement by making the bridges, plates

and dial from white—or clear—sapphire. More of the movement is on show through the clear sapphire sides and back of the watch. Screws resembling columns positioned around the outside of the case hold the watch together. Hour markers are glowing circles of color that extend down the sides of the case.

The overall visual effect is of a watch turned inside out, similar to the Beaubourg—an effect enhanced by the ample size of the case, 53mm in diameter, with a depth of 14.89mm. The newest member of the collection is the Ultracero, with a black titanium case and green markers. How is titanium, a metal of silvery color, turned black? By applying a coating of "diamond-like carbon," DLC. (The Ultracero will retail at 200,000 Swiss francs.)



CHRISTOPHE CLARET

ror. The hands, pointers engraved with H and M, circle the numerals.

The references to ancient Rome continue on the back of the case where, after a small wave of the watch, five Roman chariots, engraved on the rotor, engage in a race.

Aventicum measures 44mm x 52.11mm x 18.49mm (49,000 Swiss francs, in red gold; 53,000 Swiss francs, in white gold).

ULYSSE NARDIN

Could 2015 be the year the classical world conquers the watch world? Ulysse Nardin is about to let loose the scourge of ancient Rome: Hannibal. The Carthaginian general stars in the third chapter of the brand's Conqueror series: the Hannibal Minute Repeater. Black granite from the Alps, which Hannibal and his elephants traversed, form the background on the dial, while the foreground features the white-gold figures of Hannibal, an elephant, the mountains and warriors. Activate the minute repeater and not only does the watch chime but the figures go into action—the elephant raises its trunk, and Hannibal slashes his sword. The Hannibal watch is big (well, the man did travel with elephants): The platinum case is 44mm. And ancient military geniuses do not come cheap (735,000 Swiss francs).