

TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING

Five timepieces to watch out for at Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) 2019 that starts on 14 January

The Skeletal CARTIER PRIVÉ TONNEAU SKELETON DUAL TIME

Cartier's latest Privé Tonneau collection pays tribute to one of the earliest wristwatches created by the brand—the Tonneau line came to life in 1906. It also emphasizes a renewed focus on men's watches. The extra-large skeleton dual-time, our pick from the collection, is an ode to high-end watchmaking in the 21st century. The watch displays two time zones using a single movement, which is its pièce de résistance. Limited to 100 pieces each in platinum and gold.

The Fashionista HERMÈS CAPE COD CHAÎNE D'ANCRE

The anchor chain motif was created in 1938 and the Cape Cod line of watches was launched in 1991. Now after nearly three decades and several iterations, both have appeared in one timepiece. The atelier wiped the dial clean of everything else for the first time, except the name that appears off-centre—another first—around the 11 o'clock position. In the 2019 edition, the anchor motif interweaves black spinels and aventurine, or diamonds and white mother-of-pearl, on black and white lacquered background, respectively.

The Sporty PANERAI SUBMERSIBLE CHRONO-GUILLAUME NÉRY EDITION

Bold, clean and sporty, Panerai's new professional diver's watch delivers what it promises: water-resistance at 300m. The 47mm case is made from lightweight and corrosion-resistant material. The watch, inspired by French free-diving world champion Guillaume Néry, is fitted with a unidirectional rotating bezel to display the duration of the dive. The most telling feature yet might be its luminosity: Panerai insists the luminous white markers will stand out in "all lighting conditions and in complete darkness".

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That the Swiss watch industry is going through a prolonged period of stagnation is common knowledge. Europe's inability to shake off muted sales and protectionist trade policies in the US under President Donald Trump are making matters worse. But the worst seems to be over. The industry might post its third consecutive annual growth in 2018, according to Jean-Daniel Pasche, the president of the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry. The Asian markets of China and Hong Kong still hold the key.

The focus of the industry, therefore, seems to be on consolidation. From 2020, the two major fairs—the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) and BaselWorld—will be held together in efforts to keep them both operational. This is despite the fact that at SIHH in Geneva, the number of exhibiting brands has increased over the last few years despite some storied brands pulling out. Van Cleef & Arpels is not participating this year and it will be the last show for Richard Mille and Audemars Piguet.

SIHH 2019 (14-17 January) has a line-up of 35 exhibitors, including 18 historic maisons and 17 independents, with the Swiss luxury brand Bovet, which was established in 1822, as the notable debutant.

Most brands that have released their pre-SIHH lines seem to have reinvented their iconic pieces and that seems to be the unifying theme so far. Here's a look at some of the timepieces to watch out for.

The Ultra-thin PIAGET ALTIPLANO 41MM TOURBILLON

The maison is one of the very few traditional manufacturers with an equal focus on gem-setting and it is evident in the new timepieces which are also ultra-thin and illustrated with meteorite. The Piaget Altiplano 41mm Tourbillon, limited to 28 pieces, in white gold with a blue meteorite dial is a thing of beauty. Hours and minutes are indicated with a subdial at 8 o'clock position, while the flying tourbillon indicates the rotation of planetary bodies at 2 o'clock.

The Classic LAURENT FERRIER GALET ANNUAL CALENDAR SCHOOL PIECE OPALINE

Last year at the SIHH, the independent maison introduced the Galet Annual Calendar School Piece, which went on to win the GPHG award in the Men's Complication category. Buoyed by its success—the annual calendar was an unprecedented complication for a brand its size—Laurent Ferrier has come up with a new line of the calibre in an opaline finish. The new watches were inspired by the contrast of a chess board and developed with the aim of ensuring smooth handling, visual balance and readability.

