

Cartier and skeleton watches: a vocation for mystery

See, hide, invert and reveal... Cartier watchmakers have a genuine vocation for transparency, mystery and secrets.

The story begins with the first mystery clocks in 1912. These fascinating, unsettling pieces seemed to suspend time, transforming it into something that was unreal yet highly precious. Their secret, invisible mechanisms created the perfect illusion of hands that floated, as if weightless, inside a crystal prism.

They embodied the magic, ambition, art, craftsmanship and beauty of exceptional expertise, which pushed back the boundaries of belief and embraced the impossible by inventing new watchmaking techniques imbued with mystery and creativity.

Always devoting technique to the production of the best, most beautiful creations, Cartier keeps the magic alive with a fine watchmaking collection of skeleton timepieces that incarnate extraordinariness, inventiveness and originality.

Skeleton watches, where function merges with form

Transparency is an integral element of Cartier tradition and has become a feature of today's fine watchmaking collections. It reaches its ultimate expression with skeleton watches, gems of artisanal watchmaking all produced in the Cartier Manufacture in La Chaux-de-Fonds.

Skeleton watches are outstanding feats of watchmaking equipped with sophisticated mechanisms that blend seamlessly into their designs; the movement becomes the dial and function is embedded in the form.

Classic skeleton watches, an aesthetic based on solids and voids

The Santos, Pasha and Rotonde watches inspire Cartier to create genuine works of art that compete in terms of technicality and inventiveness. They include the Rotonde de Cartier skeleton flying tourbillon calibre 9455 MC with Geneva Seal, the Pasha de Cartier 42 mm skeleton with panther design and the Santos 100 skeleton model.

All of the movements are skeletonised and openworked to form a plethora of creative forms that enhance the famous Cartier Roman numerals and a dazzling jewelled panther. The diamond-set bridges of the latter form a web of lightness and transparency, which guarantees the perfect illusion.

The Rotonde and the Santos 100 watches face a similar challenge. Their ultra-modern movements are highlighted by the exquisite skeletonising of the bridges and main plate to form impressive Roman numerals: a world first, for which a patent has been filed.

In a dazzling demonstration of watchmaking skill, the calibre 9611 MC replaces the dial and provides exceptional readability, which is rare for skeleton watches.

The strikingly graphic design features the XII, III and IX numerals, accompanied at 6 o'clock by the flying tourbillon carriage in the Rotonde, and by an hour-and-minute complication in the Santos 100... These watches are like living works of art, all enhanced by a range of hand-executed finishes: bevelled bridges, satin-brushed sides and circular-grained wheels.

Cartier

Skeletonising, a unique area of expertise

Subtle but essential, the finishes adorning Cartier movements are the result of exceptional expertise and precision. Born from the passion of in-house artisan decorators, the endless search for beauty highlights the true value of fine watchmaking movements, in which every detail is carefully worked by hand.

The bevelling, satin-brushing and polishing of components – some of which are astonishingly small – require a level of dexterity that only the artisan decorators can achieve.

One simply needs to examine a movement through a watchmaker's eyepiece to appreciate the complexity of their art. Each bridge is bevelled with a burnisher, each side is delicately drawn without affecting the polish of the edges and the faces of certain components are given a mirror polish. All of these operations create a play of contrasts and sparkling surfaces and can take an artisan decorator up to 15 hours of work to complete a single bridge.