

Blancpain creates its first porcelain dial for the Year of the Rat

In celebration of the Chinese Year of the Rat Blancpain is unveiling its first watch with a porcelain dial entirely hand-crafted in its *Métiers d'Art* workshops. Issued in an eight-piece limited edition of one-of-a-kind timepieces, the special series marks the introduction of this traditional Chinese skill within the Manufacture in Le Brassus.

With its artisans that master a wide range of decorative techniques and ancestral manual arts, Manufacture Blancpain in Le Brassus is a leading center for watch-related artistic crafts. Blancpain makes it a point of honor to regularly extend its expertise by integrating new forms of craftsmanship into its workshops. Against this background, after more than a year of development and testing, the Maison is now unveiling its first porcelain dials entirely designed and produced in-house.

Involving several steps punctuated by long drying and firing phases, creating a porcelain dial requires dexterity and patience. Presented in the form of a powder mainly composed of quartz, feldspar and kaolin, porcelain is first diluted in water. The resulting pulp is sieved and filtered to remove all residues and impurities, prior to being cast in dial-shaped molds. After demolding, the dials are dried for 24 hours before being fired at 1,000°C for the same length of time. This first step in the kiln hardens the dials and prepares them for enameling. The enamel is then rigorously applied by hand to each dial, before a second 24-hour firing at 1,300°C that serves to vitrify the porcelain and make it shiny, translucent and enduringly stable.

The Métiers d'Art Porcelaine special edition combines the art of porcelain with enamel painting. Dedicated to the Chinese zodiac sign of the year, each of its eight one-of-a-kind timepieces depicts the Rat. Each animal and each decoration is painted freehand with an extremely fine brush. A lengthy 1,200°C firing stage fixes the colors on the porcelain. The ability to achieve such a temperature, which would be impossible with an enamel dial on a gold base, opens up whole new fields of possibility in terms of both color and intensity.

With a 33 mm diameter white gold case featuring a bezel set with 48 brilliant-cut diamonds, the Métiers d'Art Porcelaine watches are powered by the 1154 automatic movement, whose exquisite finishes may be admired through a sapphire case-back. An alligator leather strap sets the perfect finishing touch to these precious timepieces.