

## Villeret Métiers d'Art Binchōtan

**Through its *Métiers d'Art* collection, Blancpain continually innovates by combining the expertise of its artisans with a range of ancestral decorative techniques rarely seen in watchmaking. This year, the Manufacture is presenting its first dials featuring Binchōtan, a charcoal made from Ubamegashi oak in the Kishu region of Japan.**

Binchōtan is a Japanese charcoal made using traditional methods dating back over 400 years. Its remarkable quality lies essentially in its density, resulting from the slow combustion of Ubamegashi (Holm oak) in a clay oven heated to temperatures ranging from 1000 to 1300 degrees Celsius. The swift firing process, followed by rapid cooling, reduces the tree's bark to ashes before yielding a smooth surface boasting a hardness comparable to that of steel.

While renowned for its purifying properties, Binchōtan is rarely used for ornamental purposes. Blancpain now gives new expression to this natural material through a series of one-of-a-kind creations. In its Le Brassus *Métiers d'Art* workshops, the artisans of the Manufacture, driven by a perpetual quest for innovation, have adopted this 17<sup>th</sup> century Japanese technique for crafting their dials. The Binchōtan is first washed and then cut into fine disks, to the surface of which several layers of resin from the sap of the Asian lacquer tree are applied in order to protect the material from aging. The disks are polished to heighten the beauty of Binchōtan's natural streaks and the intensity of its color, before being meticulously decorated with a pigmented lacquer. Blancpain then fits the dial with a gold applique hand-engraved and patinated using the Japanese Shakudō techniques that the Manufacture first introduced in 2015.

Binchōtan can also be used to create decorative inlays applied to previously engraved dials in association with *Grand Feu* enameling.

The new *Villeret Métiers d'Art Binchōtan* watches testify to Blancpain's creativity and highlight its watchmaking expertise. These one-of-a-kind models come in a 42 mm red gold double stepped case housing the 13R3A caliber, visible through the sapphire crystal case back and ensuring an eight-day power reserve displayed on the bridge side.