



Ritz 1905 derives its name from the year Cesar Ritz began construction of his iconic hotel on 150 Piccadilly. It has a cushion shaped case and the crown is set with a single cabochon sapphire, except for the tourbillon version which is set with a diamond.

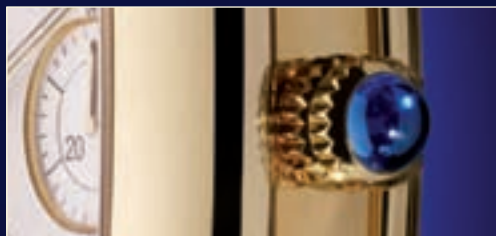


Checking In



Legendary watch designer Gerald Genta is responsible for such landmark timepieces as the Patek Philippe Nautilus, the second-generation IWC Ingenieur, the Cartier Pasha, the Omega Constellation and, of course, the Audemars Piguet Royal Oak. His latest creation, however, has not been conceived for one of the world's most famous dial names, but for the watch and jewellery retailer run by London's Ritz Hotel. **Simon de Burton** made a reservation to ensure QP was first with the news.

Below: The Rivoli. Right and bottom right: The Rotunda is named after the atrium gallery and has a round case, set with cabochon sapphires in pink or blue.



It is to Carter's credit that he went straight to the top and commissioned Genta

Although Gerald Genta is well known for creating some of the most successful wristwatch designs of modern times, there has, until now, only been one make of watch that has carried his name - and that, of course, is the Gerald Genta brand that now belongs to Bvlgari Time.

But that has all changed thanks to his latest project, which was to create a series of extremely limited edition timepieces for Ritz Fine Jewellery, the business that began in 2000 with a shop beneath the arches of the Ritz Hotel in London's Piccadilly and which has recently grown to include a second outlet on Bond Street.

Straight to the top

It was the idea of Ritz Fine Jewellery's manager, Paul Carter, to create a small number of high-end timepieces to complement the existing watch line, which is targeted more at those with an interest in jewellery, than lovers of haute horlogerie. It is to Carter's credit that he went straight to the top and commissioned Genta, providing the loose brief that there should be three distinct models and that each one should include elements in its design that take inspiration from the architecture, atmosphere and history of the Ritz Hotel.

"The thinking behind the Bespoke Watch Collection by Ritz Fine Jewellery was to create a small series of timepieces that combine simple, elegant lines, the best materials and the highest possible level of finish," says Carter.

"We wanted them to be tactile and interesting but not overly ostentatious or flashy, and we wanted them to use the type of quality movements that would attract genuine watch aficionados. Getting the balance right was never going to be easy, and it is for that reason that we approached Gerald Genta to bring our vision to reality."

Genta's first task was to make himself at home in the Ritz in an attempt to imbue some of the



Three styles

The line-up comprises the following models



The Rivoli, inspired by the Art Deco styling of the hotels' famous bar, has a tonneau-shaped case with interesting convex sides and a 'stepped' back which gives the piece something of an architectural feel, which is intended to echo the camphor and satinwood fittings of the bar itself. Dials are available in white, slate grey or Ritz blue and cases can be pave-set with fine quality diamonds. As an alternative to the standard, high quality, crocodile skin straps that are available in a variety of colours, the Rivoli, like the other models in the line-up, can be supplied with a matching gold bracelet.

The Rotunda, which is named after the hotel's well-known Atrium gallery, is a simple, round-cased watch with a clean, tidy dial. Cases are tastefully set with cabochon sapphires in pink or blue and the basic model starts at around £15,000, rising to £90,000 for tourbillon versions. As with the other two tourbillon models, the Rotunda tourbillon is powered by a hand-engraved Antoine Preziuso, hand-wound movement with 72-hour power reserve. The case is made from 950 platinum and has diamond-set bezel and winding crown.



The 1905, which is named after the year in which construction began on Cesar Ritz's London masterpiece, features a bold cushion-shaped case and is probably the most versatile model of all, thanks to its slightly sporting pretensions. No heavy gem-setting on this one, just a crown set with a single cabochon sapphire, Cartier style, or, in the case of the top-of-the-range tourbillon version, with a single diamond.

glamour, atmosphere and style for which it is famous. He then went away and, by assimilating architectural, cultural and social elements from the hotel, created three ranges, each of which includes a date model, a chronograph and a tourbillon.

Available in a choice of precious metals, the entire collection will amount to just 15 watches, each of which will be limited to a numbered edition of one. The dial of each watch has purposely been left free of any branding in order to allow the buyer to personalise the piece with his or her initials, crest or any other motif - including, if required, one designed on their behalf by Genta himself. So this is, in essence, a bespoke timepiece - and, interestingly enough, the back of each watch in the collection is engraved with Genta's autograph, the first time his signature has ever appeared on one of his creations.

Appeal of anonymity

It will be interesting to see whether or not buyers are willing to stump up as much as £90,000 for a watch that, while undoubtedly of high quality, will not be recognisable to most people due to the lack of a well-known dial name - but, according to Carter, the anonymity of the Ritz Fine Jewellery watches is very much part of their appeal.

"We will be inviting only our very best customers to buy these watches and, if my intuition is correct, I think that they will appreciate both the fact that Gerald Genta has designed them and the fact that they are not instantly recognisable," says Carter.

"The buyers will be people who appreciate the genuine luxury of a unique piece and who are willing to pay a little extra for that type of exclusivity. We guarantee that no two watches will be alike, and that is something that definitely gives them added value."

The tonneau-shaped case of the Ritz Rivoli shares both its name and its Art Deco styling with the hotel's well-known bar. Dials are available in white, slate grey or Ritz blue.

