

Pure Indulgence

The Cat's Eye's sugar-sweet coating belies Girard-Perregaux's hardcore horology

Maria Doultou



Girard-Perregaux Cat's Eye Tourbillon with gold bridge (Sfr.150,000).



Black mother-of-pearl dial variety, with a diamond-set bezel (Sfr.135,000).



The Cat's Eye with small seconds and power reserve, fully paved (Sfr.39,000).

In front of me is a large, white, silk hat-box with a creamy bow on top. It is the sort of floppy bow that Truly Scrumptious, the blue-eyed daughter of the confectionery baron in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, would have tied around a box of chocolates. So indulgent is this packaging that I can only imagine something deeply delicious is housed inside. I savour the moment as I gently tug on one of the ends of the ribbon.

Nestled inside the ivory lining is another box and opening its wooden lid reveals something rosy, sparkly and perfectly formed. Not the pink marquise-cut diamond ring nor the delicate feather-trimmed hat

that the box suggests, but a diminutive Girard-Perregaux Cat's Eye watch. Catching the light, the 315 diamonds sparkle on the lugs and case as I lift the exquisite timepiece out of its cradle. The Cat's Eye Tourbillon on its pink satin strap, with matching mother-of-pearl dial is so feminine it could get away with just being a very, very pretty face.

Heart of gold

But this is Girard-Perregaux, the 200-year-old watch firm. Though better known for its chunky masculine designs and racy dials, the house has been making ladies' timepieces of note for a while. Lady Hamilton's 1826, 2 mm thick

minute repeater hidden inside a Florentine ducat would suggest that the La Chaux-de-Fonds manufacture knows a thing or two about what women like.

A glance at the dial confirms that this particular Cat's Eye – so named because of its oval shape – is a lot more than wrist candy or the latest cream puff of watch. It is a pedigree mechanical masterpiece. The GP 97000 movement's tourbillon carriage is visible through an opening in the mother-of-pearl dial, suspended beneath G-P's trademark gold bridge. If any more icing were needed on this particular petit four, rest assured that Girard-Perregaux's home-made tourbillons

are some of the finest in the business. This is but the second such complication designed for women by the marque; the first, in 1998, was a triple bridge housed in a far simpler round case. Here, you can choose between a white or pink dial and strap. But as this is such a personalised item, you could probably choose your very own dial colour.

The Cat's Eye collection, which launched last year, shows Girard-Perregaux's growing commitment to ladies' *haute horlogerie*. However, if you desire the

sugar-rush of instant gratification, set your sights on a moonphase or power reserve model because the tourbillon has a considerable waiting list.

Not just a pretty face

But who, other than our fictitious candy heiress Truly Scrumptious, would be worthy of such a refined watch? Sienna Miller perhaps; a dewy-eyed fresh-faced bonbon of a girl who would appreciate the whimsical indulgence of a pink, diamond-set watch, yet acknowledge the hard work and skill in the tourbillon's creation.

Like Sienna, this is not just about being a pretty face. Performance is paramount, as she proved in London this year, at Wyndham's Theatre. At the tender age of 23, she stepped in to play the 721-line role of Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, when lead actress Helen McCrory fell ill on only the second day of performances. As Rosalind, Sienna excelled and proved that she is a lot more than celebrity arm candy. In Act IV she asks: "Can one desire too much of a good thing?" When referring to a Cat's Eye Tourbillon, perhaps one can. ○

Further information: www.girard-perregaux.com