

Roger Dubuis

There's Still Much More to Come

by James Gurney

Approaching his mid-60s, it seems that Roger Dubuis is just hitting his stride as a watchmaker. The comparatively young company he formed with Carlos Dias in the mid-1990s has developed an identity and style that is completely unique. Some may feel that the sheer boldness of the cases and dials clashes with the horological seriousness of the movements inside, and there is no doubt that there are potential collectors out there who simply cannot live with the vigour of these designs. However, to a certain extent this actually suits the company. Since the production numbers involved are miniscule compared with the more established watch houses, Roger Dubuis is far less constrained by the need to create a broad appeal.



Despite the strength of the designs, it is significant that the name on the dial is Roger Dubuis, meaning that it is the watchmaker and his skills that form the core identity of the company. Roger Dubuis's status as one of the most experienced and respected watchmakers means that this core is built on solid foundations. Dubuis's career stretches back to 1953 when he entered Geneva's School of Watchmaking. After more than two decades working with some of the most prestigious companies, in 1980 Roger set up as an independent and worked on various movement projects for a variety of watch-making houses. It was not until 1995 that he went into partnership with Carlos Dias to produce watches under his own name. The fact that Dubuis is rarely seen away from the workbench is a clear indicator of why he has put his own name to a watch at such a late stage in his career – self-promotion is clearly not part of the mix. What does seem to be included is a wilful disregard for the practicalities; in particular, the Carré Cambré case of the Sympathie must be a nightmare to construct. The team of watchmakers who work alongside Dubuis must be thankful for his semi-mystical attachment to the number 28, which usually serves as the limit for his series of watches.

A conspicuous character

The challenges that Roger Dubuis places before collectors are quite deliberate, and could even be described as humorous. The Hommage and Sympathie collections were made to seem tame compared with what followed: the MuchMore and TooMuch collections, unashamedly oversized in concept (although there are smaller 34-mm versions) and certainly not for the shy and retiring. The latest addition to these collections proves that being radical and loud does not necessarily mean lacking in grace. In the 4 years since the launch of the MuchMore series, there have been numerous complications and variations in design, although few are as restrained as the Minute Repeater launched at Christmas, with its dark dial and white-gold case.



Another recent creation that will be shown at the Geneva Salon is the Golden Square perpetual calendar. While the case and basic design are by no means quiet, the calendar displays are quite restrained, with days, weekdays, months and moon phases all shown within the central area of the dial.

Those horophiles just getting used to the visual impact of Roger Dubuis's style should take care – rumours abound of even more radical designs emerging from the Dubuis atelier in Meyrin, Switzerland. ◉