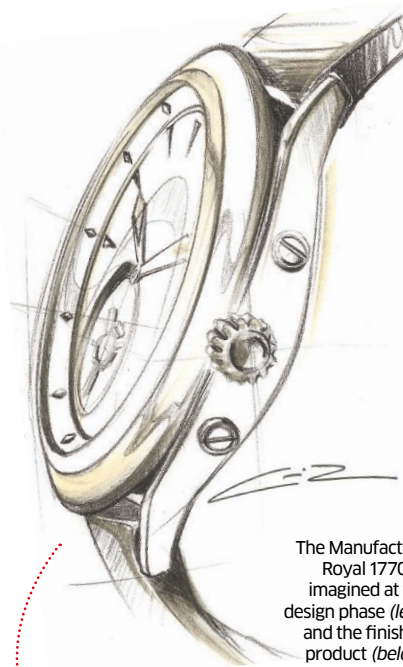


Giroud sketched this watch specially for *GQ*

Design speak

Eric Giroud's a one-man movement whose repertoire spans dozens of haute horology brands. He brings cool to the industry in a way we haven't seen since Gérald Genta. But unlike Genta, he's got India in his crosshairs



The Manufacture Royal 1770 as imagined at the design phase (left), and the finished product (below)

What are you busy with these days?

I'm working with 10 brands across major luxury groups at the moment. But I can't talk about those projects. What I can tell you is that I'm working on two designs that I think are very interesting: the next generation of MB&F's Legacy Machine as well as its Horological Machines.

Have you considered starting your own watch brand?

I don't think I'm cut out for the business side of this industry; I love my independence and freedom. If I ever do start my own venture, it will probably be a restaurant or a small collection of furniture, but not watches.


Other than timepieces, what do you wish you'd had the chance to design?

The Porsche 911. Its design is timeless and very simple. I even owned a 911S a while ago. Another design I'm fascinated with is that of the surfboard. Minor tweaks to it drastically change how people are able to find a better surfing line.

When was your last creative block?

This morning. When I get one, I'm very honest about it: I call up the brand and chat with them to work around a solution. I also immerse myself in contemporary art to overcome these blocks. Recently, my wife and I have been collecting the works of contemporary artists from the East and West Coast of America. Michael Hilsman is my latest discovery. I also admire the work of Anish Kapoor. Sometimes, something as simple as a tram ride from my office to Geneva's city centre gives me some of my craziest ideas.

We hear an Indian watchmaker's been angling to work with you.

I have been in talks with an Indian company for the last two years but I can't reveal much more. Three years ago, I travelled to the south of India. To work with a brand, it's important for me to like the people who run it, and I love Indians. 

You can't typecast Eric Giroud. On the one hand, this independent Swiss product designer is a conservative revivalist. Consider his take on the elegant 1770 Manufacture Royale: a modern jig on a classic timepiece. On the other hand, he can be a mad genius who works beyond the parameters of conventional wristwatch design. Remember his work on MB&F's sick 3D Horological Machines, or the avant-garde Harry Winston Opus 9 and Opus 11?

Brands know the real money is in design these days – there hasn't been any groundbreaking technical innovation since George Daniels created the co-axial movement four decades ago. Which is why Giroud's the go-to guy for some of the biggest names in the industry, from Tissot to Swarovski.

We recently caught up with the watch designer for a chat.

