



## ROYAL OAK REIMAGINED

Audemars Piguet teams up with Carolina Bucci for a limited-edition Royal Oak, self-winding 34 mm in black ceramic.

Words by **Smitha Sadanandan**



When Audemars Piguet decided it was time to revisit old favourites, they turned to their trusted collaborator – Carolina Bucci, fourth-generation Florentine fine jewellery designer. This summer, horology met fine jewellery, as Carolina took on the task of reimagining the Royal Oak and borrowed aesthetic cues from the Swiss watch manufacturer's signature Tapisserie design. As part of its 50th anniversary, the limited-edition 34 mm timepiece was transformed with a dial featuring a unique multicoloured mirror effect that appeals to both men and women.

Inspired by urban landscapes, Carolina dreamed up an unconventional dial by playing with a large spectrum of colours. For this collaboration, Carolina left behind her hammering technique to enrich the timepiece with a vibrant dial. She focused on contrasts, employing the tapisserie pattern in relief and obsessed over the minutiae.

To achieve the decorative twist, informs the Italian designer, a sapphire plate was adorned with little squares realised through micro-structuring that is added on top of the brass dial plate to create rich rainbow-coloured plays of light. "I wanted to place a rainbow in the most unexpected of places, a little like when you see oil floating on a puddle in a city street. So here, you have every colour of the spectrum on a canvas that is completely black, which is itself the absence of colour," she adds. Although the dial may appear black, it encapsulates a multi-coloured spectrum that brings alive the tapisserie effect: A golden metallisation, specially developed for the new design, also applied onto the back of the sapphire plate. It creates a mirror effect and shine lights onto the dial – the pattern of iridescent colours varies from dial-to-dial, making each design unique.

Here, Carolina Bucci shares her design notes.





#### **REDESIGNING THE ROYAL OAK**

“I wanted to experiment outside of my comfort zone, which has always been gold. I was most excited about designing in ceramic and have always loved the Audemars Piguet ceramic Royal Oak. So, I suggested to François-Henry Bennahmias, CEO of Audemars Piguet, that that is what I wanted to play with next.”

#### **Gérald Genta's vision**

“I was mindful that I had to retain enough of the original codes to stay true to the genesis of the design – in my case, it has always been about the perfect overlap of luxury and sportiness. Whether in gold, ceramic, or any other material, that is the key to respecting Genta's vision.”

#### **Owning a Royal Oak**

“Many years ago, after I saw an early 1980s gold 36mm Royal Oak on a lady's wrist in New York, I became obsessed with it. My husband eventually tracked one down for me, and I wore it constantly. It was that watch that led to the original meeting with the CEO and set in motion all the designs that we have worked on together.”

#### **All about the black ceramic dial**

“There is a 34mm black ceramic watch that was launched a year ago with a regular black tapisserie. I had already been talking to them about my ideas and felt that after my mirrored limited edition, I had unfinished business with the tapisserie, which was a key code for Genta. During COVID, amidst all the delays and difficulties, we decided to find a way to integrate a totally original dial into the silhouette of the 34mm black ceramic. I wanted to use the black backdrop as a contrast to the colours. My original inspiration was to show a rainbow that worked in the same way as an oil slick on a puddle in the street. Something unexpected, but nonetheless beautiful.”



#### **An homage to tapisserie**

“I felt like I had unfinished business with the famous tapisserie. It is one of the main codes of the original 1972 design. In my previous collaboration, I had eliminated it completely, trying to find a perfect counterpoint to the complex finish of Frosted Gold. I loved the way the mirror dial worked within the octagonal bezel, but here I think we found an amazing blend – a tapisserie that appears and disappears in different light. I wanted to create a rainbow that felt intrinsic to the design and not just superfluous decoration. Often, I feel that colour is splashed onto things to grab attention. What I hope to achieve with this watch is to make the colour feel like a discovery – part of how the watch sits on your wrist and moves in the light that brings the dial to life.”

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