

Eric Giroud You Mean Beauty

What is beauty? Eric Giroud, the renowned watch designer behind iconic watches such as MB&F, Harry Winston Opus Series as well as many others, and Isabelle Cerboneschi, Editor in Chief of the Hors-Series supplements at Swiss newspaper Le Temps, fashion, culture & lifestyle specialist, discuss the meanings of beauty and the beautiful, in their lives and professions.



Eric: 'Isabelle have you seen anything beautiful in the recent fashion shows and luxury watches exhibitions?'

Isabelle: 'For me beauty came in Haute Couture, Paris. With the recent events, the city was in some sort of war state and the mood was certainly not to extravagant. I was afraid that the dresses would make no sense with reality, with what is happening in Syria, for instance. It's been extraordinary because even a designer like Elie Saab, who is most in love with those opulent, red carpet dresses, showcased a collection made of transparent fabrics, flower printing. He created a manifesto for his country, for the builders of his country, it was beauty at the service of freedom!'

Eric: 'I was very intrigued by the new Dior collection, with the colours especially.'

Isabelle: 'Raf Simons built a bridge, mixed deferent eras, the 70's with 18th Century, the 60's etc. In the 70's people were happy, the whole of life was ahead of them. It translated into creations with lots of flowers, embroideries. It was reminiscent of Mr. Dior's time, almost a Quantum Leap.'

Eric: 'I didn't understand at first. I had to research, read and understand his purpose. It is a wonderful era opening up for Dior now.'

Isabelle: 'Yes, he completely revisited the classics: filtering, refining, and chastening. He offered us a new approach, very different from John Galliano, whom I loved as well. But what is beautiful and what is not? Is it removing or adding? You know that very well Eric, don't you?'

Eric: 'Watchmaking is very different from fashion. In fashion you can suggest, which you cannot do with watches. There you need to explain almost everything. When I redesign an existing product for instance, I first try to understand its origin. In today's world of abundance, it is difficult to work



with little. Usually I start with a lot of material and inspiration and then funnel it down. I remove a lot; I learned that with my architectural background'.

Isabelle: 'So what defines whether something is beautiful or not?'

Eric: 'In watchmaking today, beautiful pieces mostly date from the 19th century; they are pieces that lasted over time, such as Breguet. There are some beautiful novelties as well. In some products you find a kind of tension, there is no bling and the curves play with light. Very beautiful indeed'.

Isabelle: 'Do you think beauty can be something else than a representation? I read François Cheng's Mediations and he likens beauty to evil. Not evil against good, but evil against beauty. I have always believed, like Dostoyevsky, that beauty will save the world'.

Eric: 'It's a romantic idea!'

Isabelle: 'Very romantic, but it is a driver in my profession. Working for a newspaper; we are exposed to evil all the time. I've always thought that beauty could save us. There is an intrinsic component to beauty. It is there to be noticed by everyone'.

Eric: 'I live it less through the objects than through the people I work with. Their

backgrounds, their stories. For me beauty is not given to you, you have to learn it, to grasp it. You must be curious, keep open eyes and have an open mind'.

Isabelle: 'So for you it is more of a learning process?'

Eric: 'Yes indeed. You must take the time to observe your environment, to get caught by the emotion. Some will sail on the sea when others will impregnate in the moment, the movement, and the beauty. But sometimes, you may have a vision of beauty that you cannot share'.

Isabelle: 'I believe we have received the capability to perceive beauty in a transcendent way. The universe is beautiful, for no reason and we can actually distinguish that. Of course there is the learning, the knowledge, especially in art. But beauty exists beyond that. Angelus Silesius, a priest and poet of the 17th century quoted;

"The rose is without 'why'; it blooms simply because it blooms. It pays no attention to itself, nor does it ask whether anyone sees it". There is no conscious will behind this beautiful presence'.

Eric: 'Is it generosity?'

Isabelle: 'No I don't think so, because there is

no consciousness. Eric: 'It is true with the rose. But the most talented at mastering and creating beauty are often very generous. They share'.

Isabelle: 'You mean beauty does not exist without sharing?'

Eric: 'Yes, my thoughts exactly'.

Isabelle: 'I also believe there can't be beauty without flaws. I think of the Japanese art, the Kintsukuroi, the art to fix a broken bowl with gold. You attract the attention, you give value to an object that has lived, and even though it is worn out it becomes more beautiful after being fixed than in its original integrity. I am very sensitive to this damaged beauty'.

There is intrinsic beauty: nature, a landscape, the rose. There is the beauty that is designed, created and shared and then there is beauty resulting from the passing of time, the patina, the sheen. The object that becomes more beautiful with wear'.

Eric Giroud designs watches and many other products, such as furniture, for companies and individuals who want to pursue their dreams. You may discover his creations at: www.ericgiroud.com