DW5 Empreinte

Geneva, June 1ˢᵗ 2021

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The austerity of metal transformed into an expression of life.

The new DW5 *Empreinte*, a one-of-a-kind creation belonging to the Maestri'art collection, stems from collaboration between Denis Flageollet, founder and master-watchmaker of De Bethune and Clara Martin, designer and winner of the first De Bethune/ECAL prize in 2019.

This prize aims to encourage graduates' research work. In Clara Martin's case, it was a deeper approach to exploration of "The Authority of Black" that the young designer had undertaken during the final year of her Master of Advanced Studies in Design for Luxury & Craftsmanship at ECAL (University of Art and Design Lausanne).

This opportunity gave rise to a collaboration between these two enthusiasts with an insatiable curiosity for material, texture and form. The challenge was to find a new way of developing the colour black which becomes matter. This colour has been frequently used by Denis Flageollet for many De Bethune models and is an omnipresent theme in Clara Martin's work.

Empreinte thus marks the culmination of a lengthy process of research, experimentation and sharing know-how between the two designers.

Why *Empreinte*?

Firstly, there is the pictural research *Empreinte* (imprint) used by Clara Martin to design the motif on the case.
Secondly, the *Empreinte* (stamp) of technical innovation made by Denis Flageollet with a world-first presentation of a titanium surface that is both blackened and blued.
Thirdly, the *Empreinte* (impression) left on the material by Michèle Rothen's hand engraving.
Fourth, the *Empreinte* (trace) of research in which the connotations of metal and cold and sterile black are transformed into a fascinating, delicate, sensitive object with an almost natural appearance.
Finally, the *Empreinte* (mark) made on all young designers by Pierre Soulages' prolific work in structuring light through black and blue.

This one-of-a-kind creation reveals itself to us and questions our preconceptions. It creates a surprise effect by the rippling pattern that evolves in step with its environment.
Clara's work reveals all the complexity of the colour black by creating a poetic link with observers who see in it a revelation of their own projections.

Clara describes her craft as "the means of conveying through an object the beauty of a material and a unique skill". The challenge of making black and titanium vibrant and poetic thanks to the finesse of the "light design" was achieved with the help of Denis Flageollet's expertise and passion.

The pictural research *Empreinte* (imprint)

As a designer Clara Martin is developing an investigation into black and the way in which light is drawn. She is expanding this research through graphic experiments, textures and shapes that she classifies by creating a taxonomy. This method of classification allows her to combine her eclectic treatments of

black in order to create objects that "sum up" her research. Her objective with these objects is to change the current perception and connotations of the colour black, which she no longer treats as such, but as a material, regarding it as "material-colour". She strives to prove that this colour is much more powerful and sensitive than we think. It is both incredibly demanding and a source of freedom and infinite projection.

After a long period of research and constant dialogue with the De Bethune workshops, solutions were implemented to soften the material and redesign the Dream Watch 5, while retaining its identity.

The *Empreinte* (stamp) of technical innovation

With the DW5 *Empreinte*, De Bethune examines the notion of time through a poetic object that defies any prejudices regarding black and metal. To divert their potentially pejorative symbolism, an unexpected watch was created, vulnerable through its delicacy and evoking a meditative state. Denis Flageollet, with his experience of blackened metal and his work on the bluing of titanium, took up the technical challenge imposed by the graphic choice of linking for the first time the very different processes of oxidation of titanium in order to achieve textured, mottled blue and black patterns. On the one hand, the science of vacuum deposition of metal oxides; and on the other, the mastery of fire!

The *Empreinte* (impression) left on the material

Engraver Michèle Rothen exercises her craft with peerless meticulous care. In this latest Dream Watch, she has surpassed herself in expressing her skills through the quality of structures serving to create an almost volume-like expression of pictural research. This involved infinitely accurate craftsmanship, coupled with acknowledged top-flight artistic talent. Working with this material was a particularly arduous task on this model given the considerable complexity of engraving titanium (a metal even tougher than steel). The concentration of so many different tracings is a feat in itself. Playing with these superimpositions represents an additional challenge. It is all about making titanium – a material of unequalled strength and coldness – tender and sensitive. About subtly modifying each surface state, each micro-detail, each depth effect, in such a way as to "enhance" the graphic research. As if redrawing the model one last time. The caseback features a more restrained approach focused on drawing out and accentuating the structural lines of the watch's volume.

The legendary *Empreinte* (mark) made by Pierre Soulages

Pierre Soulages is a great French master painter who has dedicated his life to obstinately working on black and on light. At over 101 years of age, the French artist continues his research in his studio in the south of France. He was the first artist in the world to modulate and play with volumes, shades and shimmering colours in order to redirect light according to a unique rhythm and movement in each of his works. According to Pierre Soulages, "Black is the most vehement way to bring light into being", as

he proves with his "outrenoir" (beyond black) creations, a series of purely black paintings that captivate observers by the power and fragility of these works sometimes measuring several metres high.

When Clara Martin came face to face with one of these "outrenoir" masterpieces, she wondered whether it was possible to convey this impression not through a large-scale bas-relief work of art but instead through functional objects. This is where she began her work of exploring the drawing of light through black.

From then onwards, the designer saw black as a material to be worked and developed by exploiting different forms, materials and surface aspects. Her wish is to showcase black in a non-abstract manner and to let it entrance us. In this unwavering search, there is a special place for the unexpected and for serendipity, alongside carefully controlled expertise. Perpetually seeking to convey emotions, she strives to make us truly see black for what it is.

This Maestri'art DW5 *Empreinte* is a sort of vibrant and moving volume, drawing light so finely that black becomes a deep and sensitive material. Once again, De Bethune has applied its skills to a one-of-a-kind and truly exceptional creation.

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ABOUT CLARA MARTIN

CLARA MARTIN'S PASSION FOR TEXTURES, FORMS AND KNOW-HOW HAS INFLUENCED HER WORK AND THE CREATION OF DUALISM BETWEEN CRAFTSMANSHIP AND INDUSTRIAL EXPERTISE.
THROUGH BOTH PERSONAL WORK AND PARTNERSHIPS, THIS DESIGNER DEVELOPED AN EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH APPROACH WHICH LEADS TO A TAXONOMY OF "BLACK" COLOUR AND ITS PARTICULAR RELATIONSHIP WITH LIGHT.
SHE AIMS AT CONVEYING THE BEAUTY OF A MATERIAL AND KNOW-HOW THROUGH AN OBJECT.
CLARA'S ABILITY TO NEVER LET HERSELF BE INFLUENCED BY PREJUDICE IN HER RESEARCH HAS ALLOWED HER TO DEVELOP AND EXPLORE MANY AND VARIED DOMAINS OF EXPRESSION, WHICH IS WHY SHE DEFINES HERSELF AS A "MULTIDISCIPLINARY DESIGNER".
FOR NOW, CLARA WORKS ON THIS COLOR RESEARCH AND LOOKS FORWARD TO DEVELOP NEW PROJECTS AND COLLABORATIONS.

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