

## WATCH THIS

Forget the correct time: it's the right watch that matters.

**You're** a young financier, anxious for a bit of water-cooler cred, mindful of the impression you make in the cappuccino queue. So what are you wearing under that shirt cuff to create the right vibe when you casually glance at the time?

Well, here's the mail: that big-man, big-watch thing is suddenly looking decidedly yesterday. Forget the platter-size Audemars Piguet Offshore Rubens Barrichello or the monster TW Steel you thought you'd got away with; the new suave is recessive. Blame the same cycle that saw flares give way to slimlines: the new trend in timers is something that shouts taste, refinement and restraint. This year's crop is full of pieces you'll hardly know you've strapped on.

So it's out with the sharp and showy, in with the shy and shapely. Among the standouts, there's a new **Explorer 1 from Rolex**. It's a little larger at 39mm than the almost identical 36mm model it replaces, but if you want the definitive three-hand time-teller, this may be it. Top marks for legibility, and likewise for bystander recognition and envy.

Then there's envoy competitor Cartier with its own monumentally modest **Calibre de Cartier**, a 42mm model housing a new automatic Cartier movement. It suggests little but reflects the kind of taste that comes with painstakingly acquired confidence. Pluses? Those gorgeous Roman numerals typical of Cartier, and the fact it's so fresh you might be among the first to be spotted sporting one.

Which brings us to the passion of parvenus the world over, **Panerai**. If you're wearing one of their Luminor models, why not consider the more refined Radiomir range, in particular a new specimen unveiled at this year's Geneva watch fair. It's designated the **PAM 339 Composite Marina Militare** and has a brown 47mm case constructed of clever composites that gives it a wonderfully warm look. You have brown brogues to go with it, don't you?

I could go on – for example to **Girard Perregaux's 1966 Chronograph**, another shy beauty loaded with burnished mechanical brains. But whatever choice you make, the message is clear: we've entered a new time zone where less is now more, and more may be less. Surely worth thinking about if you value your time.

**BANI McSPEDDEN**



Watch Luxe



Kiwi Luxe



## PARADISE regained

A Garden of National Significance gong has sealed Otahuna's re-emergence.

**W**hen Miles Refo first stumbled upon the garden of Otahuna Lodge – in a secluded valley on New Zealand's South Island – it reminded him of Frances Hodgson Burnett's Victorian novel, *The Secret Garden*. "There was very little infrastructure and not enough going into the place in terms of labour and water and so forth, but there was a sort of soul, or heart, that shone through," Refo says.

Four years later, it is still giving up its secrets. "Every now and again, we find a photo we hadn't seen before that tells us something new – how areas were originally planted and where paths went," he says.

Tracing the 100-year-old contours of Otahuna's 12-hectare melange of botanical, pastoral and woodland garden has been a labour of love for Refo and his partner, Hall Cannon, both Manhattanites who bought the largely overgrown property in 2006.

By turns a monastery and a Catholic

commune, Otahuna had shrunk to a fraction of the original 2000-hectare arcadia that was once the domain of parliamentarian, pastoralist and developer Sir Heaton Rhodes.

All the same, Refo and Cannon have channelled much of their \$10 million restoration program into those hectares, which still include a famed daffodil field, potager, cutting and rose gardens, a windmill-shaped Dutch garden and a woodland walk, carpeted in forget-me-nots and trilliums, that wanders through a series of glades.

"We haven't got to all of it yet; there's probably about two acres [0.8 hectares] left of woodland garden yet to be renovated," Refo says. "But parts like the woodland walk will stay wild – purposely. That won't become a really formal space. The structure there is provided by the mature trees."

In fact, the structure of the original garden is held everywhere by mature trees,



particularly the 100-year-old oaks that line the curving driveway to the house and a number of outstanding specimen trees, including grand beech and giant redwoods.

"There was a great emphasis on exotic trees that were popular in Britain at the time and there are some interesting things from the Americas and the Mediterranean," he says. "The most prized tree here is a Mexican strawberry tree – a madrone tree. And the anchor plant, *Colletia paradoxa*, is really quite ugly but strange and wonderful."

Along with the oaks, typical Victorian plantings include viburnum, rhododendrons and cardiocrinums (three-metre-tall lilies from the Himalayas), maple, loquats and lots of bamboo. "The Victorians had a fascination with everything Asian and they collected a lot of Asian plants here," Refo says.

The gardeners cut their way through wild sawgrasses to uncover an unusual circular seat in a woodland clearing. It had turned up in one early photo that also revealed a magic circle of trees: a Japanese maple, three beautiful pagoda trees and a mayten, a weeping tree a little bit like a willow.

Refo, who was in publishing in New York, works closely with head gardener Steve Marcham to recreate Rhodes's vision, including the framed vistas that can be captured around the property. "That sighting of artificial views meant to look wholly natural is very much a feature of colonial gardens and that gardenesque style," he says.

"We're trying to play up the original gardeners' intentions, with views towards Gibraltar Peak, an alley of lawn that frames the peak looks very natural. In reality, that very Georgian principle of forced perspective and forced views and carefully orchestrated sight lines is anything but natural."

Trees may be the original glory of the place, but the not-so-humble potager, or kitchen garden, is moving centre stage. Under chef Jimmy McIntyre, Otahuna's cuisine has won an international following (it's among the top 20 food and wine destinations in the world, as voted by readers of Andrew Harper's influential *Hideaway Report*). And in a nice play on the whole idea of heritage and authenticity – a true point of difference in a country where its super lodge peers are usually very expensive new builds – home-grown produce is at the root of that reputation.

The daily menu, including each evening's five-course tasting menu, responds to the cycles of the garden. The immaculate established orchard features 25 kinds of fruit, along with walnuts, hazelnuts and almonds, while the stone-walled, half-hectare potager produces 90 types of vegetables, many of them heirloom varieties, including 15 kinds of tomato.

Steve Marcham and his three assistant

It's among the global top 20 food and wine destinations – and home-grown produce is at the root of that reputation

gardeners are also working to have the place certified organic.

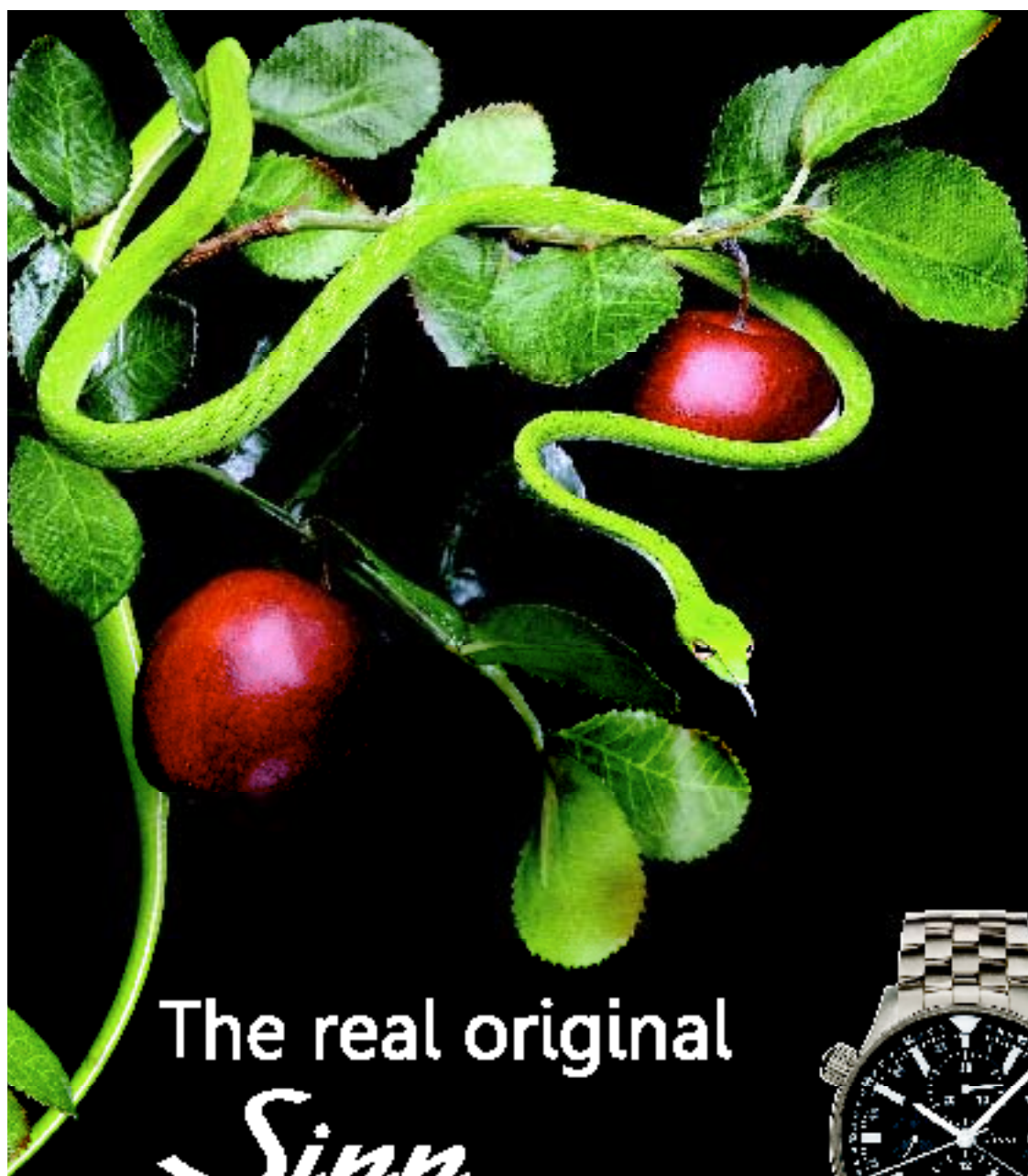
A dainty little Edwardian drying house, all red-earth brick and shingled roof, now houses logs on which shiitake mushrooms are being cultivated. Even the oaks have contributed to the bill of fare: a forager located porcini mushrooms deep in the surrounding soil. After mulching beneath the trees last season, the kitchen had eight kilos to play with.

"I don't think we would have been able to do what we've done, or what we're trying

to achieve, without the context of the garden around the house," Refo says.

"Certainly we didn't buy the property just for the garden but it continues to be one of the most rewarding things that we do. The house is pretty much renovated and we can put an end date on that; the garden is a year-round commitment and we are about three years into it and only now just starting to see the results from what we did first up." (For more on Otahuna, see our superlodge feature, page 32.)

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