

URWERK - The new path in Haute Horlogerie

In just 15 years, URWERK's original approach to watchmaking has shaken the traditionalists and won the respect of collectors.

Irreverent, rebellious, eccentric can each describe URWERK's watchmaking with varying accuracy, but its watches unerringly open the way forward for mechanical watchmaking in the 21st century.

URWERK is what translates the hearts and minds of its founding partners into sensational watchmaking. Felix Baumgartner, a watchmaker like his father and grandfather, has time running through his veins. A star graduate from the Schaffhausen watchmaking school, Felix learned the secret language of minute-repeaters, tourbillons and perpetual calendars at his father's bench.

Martin Frei is the artistic counterweight to his partner's technical expertise. Accepted into the Lucerne's college of art and design in 1987, Martin delved into every form of visual artistic expression from painting and sculpture to video, emerging as a mature artist.

The two men met by chance and discovered a common fascination with the measurement of time, spending hours analysing the gap between the watches they saw in the shops and the vision of their future creation.

Their first watch, developed in the early nineties, was inspired by the 17th-century night clock built by the Campanus brothers. In it, each hour on a rotating disc rises and sets in an arc like the sun. The wandering hour has since formed the basis for URWERK's astonishing 103 watch and the latest model, the 201. Both feature highly original design, advanced watchmaking techniques and new concepts such as the control board.

"Bringing out yet another version of an existing mechanical complication was not our aim," Felix Baumgartner explains. "Our watches are unique because each has been conceived as an original work. This is what makes them valuable and rare. Above all, we want to explore beyond the traditional horizons of watchmaking." Martin Frei, responsible for the shape of future time, helps make this possible. "I come from a world of total creative freedom. I'm not cast in the watchmaking mould, so I can draw my inspiration from my entire cultural heritage.

That heritage goes back to the roots of time, reflected in the name of their company. URWERK means "original accomplishment," and Ur of the Chaldees, in Mesopotamia, is where the Sumerians first observed the concurrence of the heavenly bodies with the seasons, and so developed the first measurements of time.

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