



URWERK UR203

THE EXTRAORDINARY THING ABOUT URWERK and what separates them from the majority of would-be horological futurists is that they invent simultaneously on the inside and from the outside of the watch. That is to say that aesthetic innovation is always accompanied by technical revolution. What further legitimizes them is that time-telling concepts as well as radical visual reinterpretations of the watch case are born in-house from the minds of watchmaking prodigy Felix Baumgartner and the design firebrand Martin Frei.

Together, they recognized that the traditional perception of complications had reached something of a glass ceiling. After all, in the era of ubiquitous electronic time-telling devices, a mechanical watch that could tell the date in perpetuity was charmingly anachronistic, but didn't

exactly offer something unprecedented to modern man.

So it was that Baumgartner and Frei turned to the emotional revelation of time, through portrayals best described as miniature machine art or futuristic sculpture. These methods of telling time, which initially focused on revolving floating hour indicators aligned with a fixed minute track, found their conceptual roots in an ancient night clock, but through URWERK's vision, soon evolved into an all-new time-telling language that freed one from the empirical onslaught of ticking hands.

URWERK's seminal moment occurred when they became the first brand to introduce three-dimensional time indicators into a wristwatch, first in the Opus 5 — their collaboration with Harry Winston — then second, with their own signature timepiece, the UR201. In this watch, the hours are shown on three-dimensional spinning pyramids. Even more startling was the fact that minutes were read off telescopic hands that extended out of these pyramids. These hands traced three different vectors from 0–14 minutes, 15–44 minutes and 45–60 minutes. In the first and third vectors, the hands will extend like telescopic spears, but during the middle vector, they recede. This telescopic function not only aided visual clarity and made dramatic dial-side animation, but also allowed for a smaller, more wearable, elegant watch.

Interestingly, despite the vast innovation needed to construct this special carousel mechanism replete with spinning pyramids and extending telescopic hands, Baumgartner chose to hide the mechanism from prying eyes, allowing only a flirting glance of the control cam lying beneath the carousel.

In 2009, URWERK launched a revolutionary automatic version of the UR201 known as the UR202, featuring the first turbine system that manipulated aerodynamic turbulence to control the watch's speed of wind. But the carousel mechanism still remained a mystery.

With the 20-piece limited-edition black-platinum run of the UR203, URWERK finally strips bare the mechanism of its unique three-dimensional time-telling system, and in so doing, creates the ultimate act of time-telling machine art.

Through an obsessive skeletonization process, it has literally laid bare the inner micro-universe of cam, transporter, rubies and pistons behind its unique time-telling mechanism. The result underscores the phenomenal amount of groundbreaking engineering that has gone into URWERK's carousel system. Finally, you can clearly identify the manner in which the transporter (A) follows a predetermined path on the cam which controls the piston (B) that, in turn, controls the active length of the telescopic minute hand (C). Note also that the top of each piston is geared to enable the rotation of the hour pyramid (D), and that each minute hand rests inside

a ruby bearing (E) to help guide its course while reducing friction of its motion.

The skeletonization process is also applied to the minute track to enhance visibility by providing greater contrast to the redesigned luminous indices. The front features a three-year service indicator, as well as a 150-year "horological odometer" life-span indicator, though in our minds, even 150 years from now, this watch is destined to be as groundbreaking as it is today. Furthermore, the use of advanced coatings such as MOVIC on precisely machined ARCAP parts ensures that this horological sculpture will work flawlessly even a century and a half from today. ★

