


NAVIGATING DESIGN

SEAGOING VESSELS PROVIDE
A LIMITLESS SOURCE OF
INSPIRATION FOR THREE WATCH
DESIGNERS BY Y-JEAN MUN-DELSALLE



Who could resist the intoxicating pull of the ocean, beguiling unwary seafarers with her alluring voice that calls out in endless waves of maritime reverie? Certainly not Martin Frei, Richard Mille and Jean-François Ruchonnet. Come with us on an aquatic voyage as we navigate the stormy seas of nautical watchmaking design, a peculiar world where sailboats and superyachts take pride of place on the designer's drawing board in the creation of timepieces fit for sailing on the high seas that will truly rock your world.



FROM TOP:

As founding partner and chief designer of URWERK, Martin Frei infuses his artistic sensibility into the design process; an exercise in high performance and luxury, the 118 WallyPower was one of Frei's principle sources of inspiration in the creation of the URWERK 201; the audacious design of the UR 201 in platinum recalls the distinct lines of the 118 WallyPower superyacht and the silhouette of the cranium of the hammerhead shark



MARTIN FREI ★ THE PISCES MAN

Born under the sign of Pisces, this is no ordinary man. Entirely in his element when surrounded by water, having grown up by a small lake, sailing is in the blood of Swiss-born Martin Frei. One half of the duo that founded URWERK, the horological house that has shaken up the staid world of haute horlogerie through its audacious timepieces that reveal an ingenious way of looking at time, Frei is also the creative heart of the team. Having explored sculpture, painting and video, he has transposed his artistic vision into the universe of watch design. And what better way to manifest his maritime love affair than by creating "a watch made for men who love the sea," says Frei.

His starting point for the creation of the 201, which displays time through a revolving satellite complication, stemmed from his artistic background. He reveals, "As a visual artist, I tend to look at the world which nature creates and — in it, as a part of it — at what we create as sources of inspiration." Not only must the design be original, straightforward, crafted with passion and functional, it must incorporate a certain kind of magic. As such, the bringing to life of the 201 was a dream come true for Frei, much as boats "designed and crafted with the ambition to create the finest possible, they too bring to reality something that generally only exists in dreams or films".

The knife-edged lines of the 201's case recall the sharply cut curves and flat planes of the 118 WallyPower, a luxury stealth superyacht with narrow, angular contours. Explaining his vision, Frei divulges, "The history of timekeeping is tightly connected to the history of navigation. I always think of a watch as a tool that helps us to navigate in time. The most perfect allegorical image for navigating in time is if you picture yourself standing on top of a 118 looking at the sea and

"AS A VISUAL ARTIST, I TEND TO LOOK AT THE WORLD WHICH NATURE CREATES AND — IN IT, AS A PART OF IT — AT WHAT WE CREATE AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION"

the great wide-open horizon; of course, you would wear a 201 on your wrist."

So, can we expect more marine-inspired watches from URWERK in the future? Only time will tell. Frei replies, "I am sure about it. I am a big fan of submarines, for instance. But then again, I am also fascinated by airplanes, spy tools, mechanical calculators, film and photo cameras, robots, satellites, other time machines... We will see."

