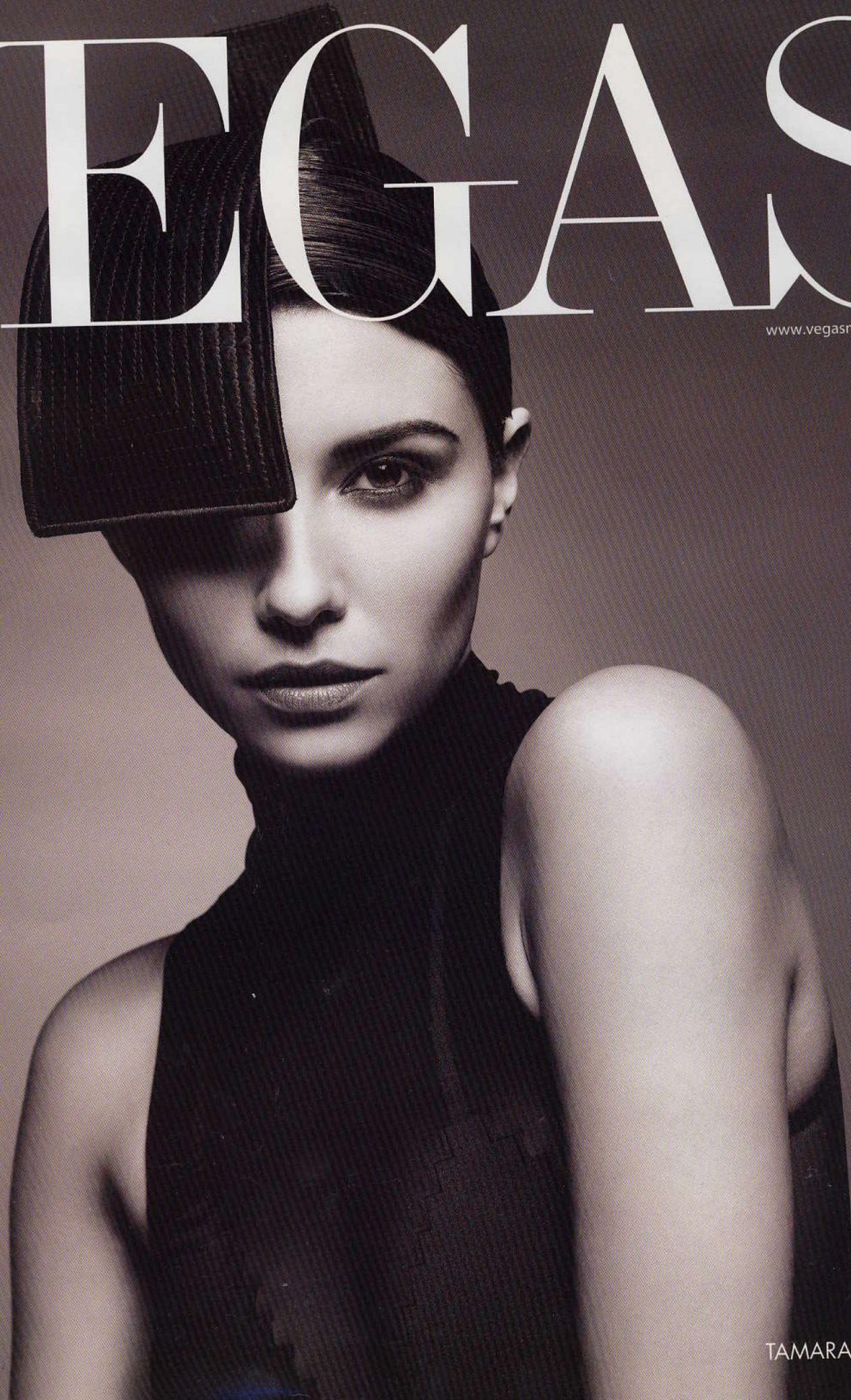


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# LUXURY WATCHES

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PORTRAIT BY SABIN ORR

## All Tomorrow's Complications *Urwerk Watches Are Haute Horlogerie As Modern Art*

**J**ust 33 years old, Felix Baumgartner is a legend in the world of watchmaking. The Swiss co-founder of the barely 11-year-old Urwerk Baumgartner & Frei/Geneve watch company is a third-generation watchmaker and was developing complicated timepieces for major brands by the time he was 20.

As a child, Baumgartner spent his days in his father's restoration atelier in Schaffhausen. "When I was seven years old, I was already rubbing the black patina of time off old wheels to restore their mobility by using a rag soaked in grease remover," he recalls. At 17, Baumgartner had graduated from the watchmaking school in Solothurn and was dreaming of creating his own original brand—a dream he brought to fruition just five years later with his brother, Thomas, and design partner Martin Frei. In 2003, they unveiled Urwerk's famed UR-103 at BaselWorld, garnering international acclaim for its revolutionary system of satellites and cams, which Baumgartner continues to use and improve on today.

From his early models (UR-102, nicknamed Sputnik; UR-103; and the Harry Winston Opus 5, built in 2006) to the most recent UR-202 unveiled this year, Baumgartner has a sophisticated following eagerly anticipating his next creations. He only produces 100 or so watches annually, by hand.

"We were never content to modify yesterday's complications, but wanted to invent and craft complications of tomorrow," says Baumgartner. "The passion for the intricate and complex mechanisms my father and grandfather strove to perfect was passed down to me. But it is essential that I express my appreciation for futuristic technologies and modern art, as well."

As a master watchmaker with roots firmly planted in haute horlogerie, Baumgartner has brought a futuristic edge to his timepieces. The signature UR-103 series is a sleek complication that embodies Urwerk's approach. It features the time indication in an arc across the dial, enabled via an ingenious mechanical orbiting three-dimensional satellite system. The back of the watch has a control board reminiscent of a car's dashboard, with indication of the minute and seconds, and a precision adjustment device.

The newest UR-202 is the result of years of research, experimentation and testing. The watch is a twin-turbine automatic that offers telescopic minute hands extending and retracting through the middle of the revolving hour satellites. The concept of employing fluid dynamics to regulate the rate of automatic winding is based on an 18th-century method of air friction that Baumgartner has harnessed and refined. By using cutting-edge miniature twin turbines (air compressors that can be seen spinning on the back of the watch) coupled with the winding rotor, Baumgartner has deftly brought the brand into the 21st century of watchmaking.

Urwerk watches retail from \$60,000 to \$400,000, with the average



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