

Geneva, September 18, 2020



“We are especially honoured to receive the Gaïa Prize this evening, because it is regarded as one of the most prestigious, if not *the* most prestigious, prize for watchmaking,” declares Felix Baumgartner, co-founder of the URWERK watch company. “For Martin Frei and me, this award acknowledges the lucky star under which we met for the first time at a New Year’s party in 1995. A couple of beers and a whisky later started us off on a conversation about the meaning of time, which has never really ended to this day. The prize also recognises our years of anxiety and hard graft. We believed in ourselves then, but had to put up with the scepticism, if not the amused condescension of our peers. But above all, it’s for our teams in Geneva and Zurich who have supported our crazy imaginings. For that we are profoundly grateful.”

On September 17, 2020, Felix Baumgartner and Martin Frei received the Gaïa Prize for entrepreneurial spirit from Mr Régis Huguenin, curator of the International Horological Museum and chairman of the jury. The evening also saw the award for craftsmanship and creativeness go to independent watchmaker, Antoine Prezioso, fellow member of the *Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants* (AHCI). Denis Savoie, the historian, was also honoured for his work.

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About URWERK

“At URWERK, we vow never to bring out yet another iteration of an existing mechanical complication,” declares watchmaker Felix Baumgartner, the independent watch company’s co-founder.

Its position is simple, clearly stated and respected.

URWERK appeared on the watchmaking scene in 1997. Since then, its revolutionary view of time has ruffled the traditional world of fine watchmaking and delighted collectors.

As a young, pioneering company, it thrives on its rebellious and non-conformist spirit, setting an example among independent watchmakers.

Producing just 150 watches a year, the company sees itself as a craft studio where traditional expertise coexists with avant-garde styling. The company manufactures modern and complex watches that are unprecedented and in keeping with the most demanding criteria of fine watchmaking: independent design and research, advanced materials and handcrafted finishes.

URWERK’s strong personality reflects that of its founding partners. Felix Baumgartner, a watchmaker like his father and grandfather, has time running through his veins. While some might talk of timepieces as a pastime, for Felix they are at the centre of his life.

Martin Frei is the artistic counterpart of his partner’s technical expertise. Accepted into Lucerne’s college of art and design in 1978, Martin explored every form of visual artistic expression from painting and sculpture to video. But what fascinates him most is how time is defined and expressed through the ages.

The two men met by chance and quickly became friends, spending hours analysing the gap between the watches they saw in the shops and the kind they dreamed about making. They embarked on their first model in the 1990s. Its unusual way of telling the time was taken from the wandering hour clocks produced by the Campanus brothers in the 17th century. In it, successive hours rise and set in an arc like the sun. Since then, the wandering satellite hours have been the hallmark of Urwerk’s watchmaking.

“Our watches are unique because each has been conceived as an original work,” says Felix Baumgartner. “That is what makes them valuable and rare.” Martin Frei, responsible for the future shape of 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.”