

Watch design: the macro-changes in the micro-world

Katerina Helwig for Jewellery Review, 05/2010

The world of mechanical watchmaking was always conservative and closed to the understanding of the majority. However, recently the interest in traditional watches has grown, in spite of the fact that time indicators surround us everywhere, from electronic devices to objects which have become an integral part of our life. Why does it happen?

The complex value of a timepiece, as object of consumption, developed a number of symbolic components: status quo, self-identification, satisfaction of the owner's personal aesthetic requirements and, of course, function. Now these values changed a little bit.

The functionality. The alloy of two hundred years' tradition and modern technologies allowed the creation of any set of indications a person needs in a watch. There is a large quantity of models which do not require a battery, thanks to the automatic winding module. A mechanical timepiece has a self-sufficient system which does not require neither electricity, nor change of batteries. And regarding the actual process of reading the indications, seeing time in a watch on a wrist is much more functional than on notorious electronics. We carry a mobile phone, as a rule, in a pocket, or in a handbag. Hence, to learn time it is necessary for us: first, to have a free hand, secondly, to get the device, thirdly, to activate it, as it very often is in a "sleeping" mode, and, at last, to look at it to see what time it is. To learn time on a watch, it is enough to turn a hand (and the hand doesn't necessarily have to be free) and take a glance at the traditional scheme with the central pointers is quite evident.

So, a watch is a product that has not become outdated and is still necessary from the point of view of functionality. However, there an important factor to be considered: cost. It is linked, first of all, to the complexity of manufacture and expensive materials, and also to non-material value, as some watches should be considered as cult objects and objects of art -- from an aesthetic point of view, highly valuable. The cost is linked to the self-identification of the owner of the object.

The **self-identification** issue is a question of prestige, price, quality and, in a certain measure, aesthetic taste. It would be desirable to believe that the prestige excites modern people less than self-expression.

Aesthetic self-expression has a set of aspects to be considered, but it is possible to notice that now its possibilities grasp areas which did not generate concern earlier. This fact causes transformation of the complex value of watches. All because design has globally changed. Until recently, a variety in design was provided with the mechanical complications, the limited set of one-dimensional forms of the case with small stylistic and design variations, materials and finishing processing. Now we

Denissov Chronograph

Collection based on Russian Chronograph Pojot 31681. The emotional image of the collection is expression of the values peculiar to Denissov watches: sports, dynamics, speed, beauty and power of technical progress.

The collection is produced on the basis of the Russian mechanism "Poljot" with stop watch and chronograph functions. The buttons of the chronograph have original recognisable design. They are made as pedals with the form of a kickstarter lever. The bow-shaped details connecting the case ring and the buttons of the chronograph, are made in the form of a motorcycle frame. The expressional design has the bezel in the form of a brake disk. Complicated configuration of dredging on the side surface and apertures on the front create a bright, unique rhythmic composition.

MB&F Horological Machine No3 (HM3)

The unusual memorizable form, technical and at the same time biomorphic: the attention is attracted by two cones which majestically tower above sculpturally designed three-dimensional case. The composition is counterbalanced with the magnificent kinetic active mechanism which, it is surprising, is opened for a review in the top part of the watch.

Skillfully processed mechanism with the rotor having the form of a fighting axe and quickly rotating balance wheel represent tremendous show which bewitches a look and amazes feelings.

The backside of the watch shows the technical secret which allows "to turn" mechanism HM3: 2 big ceramic hi-tech style ball-bearings provide effective transfer of energy upward -- to the cones and the wheel of date.

The cones are indexes of hours and minutes, thus the cone with an hour scale also contains the index put/night. The big wheel of date, a self-starter.

see absolutely new kinematics, non-standard spatial configurations, unusual forms. A global pendulum “classicism-romanticism”, which fluctuates from the beginning of history of arts, now is on the maximum coal of a deviation towards romanticism. In design, the expression of personal perception prevails.

Advanced watch design is a declaration of predilection for the modern art, a declaration of love to progress, to an era in which we live and which opens unprecedented possibilities: technological possibilities and – no less important – the possibility to think freely, to generate non-standard ideas.

Playfulness, spontaneity and an ease of relationship inherent to “kidults” help to create watches and to perceive them correctly.

The modern aggressive design brightly declares values and becomes clear to an increasing quantity of people. Watches become a data carrier about global – Instead of private – aesthetic codes. A watch can impersonate the avant-guard of design, even more than a car.

Why more? For some reasons, generally because of marketing aspects, we deal with a paradox: the majority of consumer goods are intentionally produced with the lowered characteristics to increase sales. Though modern technologies allow making them much more durable, more reliable, more functional.

For the creation of such a “useless” product as a watch, knowledge and abilities of talented people are mobilized, high technologies and materials are required and then applied. It occurs because a mechanical watch, unlike all other products, usually should still work within a hundred years... so, in a watch, we have a small slice of material space approached to perfection. And it reminds us of the most valuable thing given to us, something that we lose with each second – time.

Cabestan Winch Tourbillon Vertical

The dynamical sport car silhouette is reached by a unique design of the mechanism: the details, including vertically located tourbillon, are rotated at 90 degrees instead of the traditional arrangement. The indicators of time and power reserve are located on the rotating drums. The most complicated element is the 230 mm long stainless steel chain, which is assembled manually from 450 details.

Thomas Prescher Mysterious Automatic Double Axis Tourbillon

The sculpture of time by Thomas Prescher is created using the knowledge of ancient watchmaking art, which created all details by hand. Great design, best materials, perfect manufacturing.

The first thing to amaze when looking at this watch is the space, the cosmos, where the tourbillon rotates like a precious artifact. Then the interest appears to other visible details: horizontal oscillating weight, time and date indicators. But the most of parts are hidden from the eyes so to keep concentration at the point of the collection.