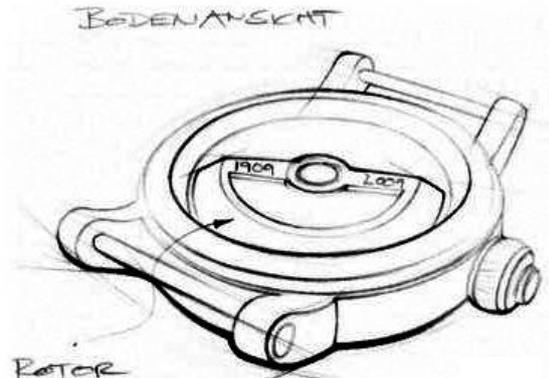


# BASELWORLD 2009

By Ekaterina Helwig

## Classical vs. Futuristic

Amidst the crisis for this season many leading brands have placed stakes on the classical collections. The shock and the challenge, accepted as a norm in the watch design even by the oldest and most respected brands in recent years, have given way to now the increasingly dominant moderation and perfectionism. This change is reflected both in the watch size averaging



At the same time the hi-tech and luxury-sport design trends, after the unprecedented boom during the pre-crisis era hard to imagine now, which helped them to win and firmly hold the status of nearly classical trends in the watchmakers' trade, yet continue to develop rather actively. It should be however admitted that only few manufacturers have taken risks to release 'extraordinary' models and besides even futuristic collections demonstrate not too expressive forms.



42mm and in the selection of material (rose-coloured gold, diamonds) and, of course, in the classical proportions and noble contours of watches.

The Form follows the Function: this postulate of the German modernism, which shaped the look of the functional Military-style watches back in the 20s of the last century, has become very actual these days when people often intuitively reject luxuries of decoration and sophisticated form and prefer to pay only for the indispensable .



## Form-Factor

The ultra-trend is associated with sophisticated cases made of numerous parts. Contemporary material treatment technologies and finishing operations' techniques encourage designers to experiment with the modular multilayered constructions where the complexity of external design detail may compete in sophistication with the watch mechanics. While this detail sophistication can be easily traced through most futuristic collections, the method is also applicable, in a less ostentatious manner though, to some classical models.

This trend also provides for the visual integrity of internal mechanics

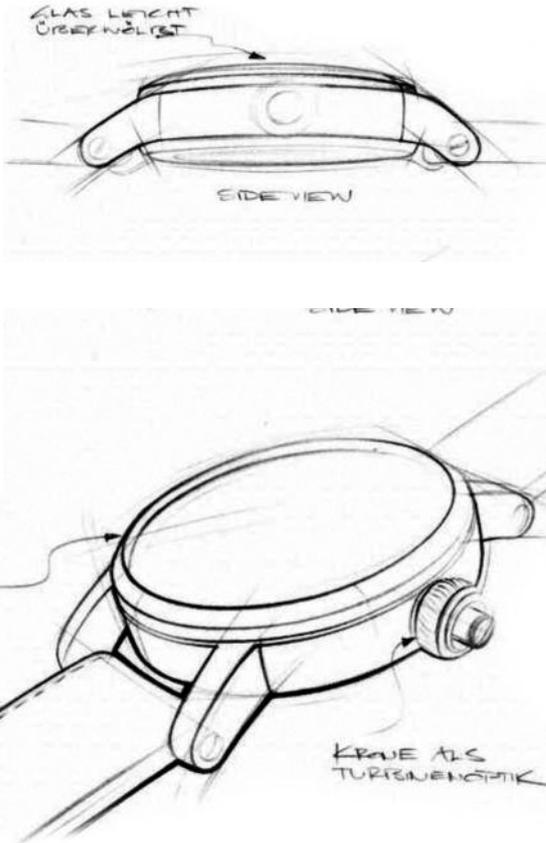
## Colour. Grey Domination

The traditional colour for wristwatches is the colour of the metal they are made of. However, recently the colour has been increasingly winning more space in so small an object as a wristwatch. Moreover, this applies to both ladies' and men's jeweller collections. The black colour is of course the major competitor against the gold and the steel. The total black appeared in contemporary men's collections along with the materials: ceramics, carbon, PVD. Last year a number of premium brands already presented their collections conceived and implemented in the total black, wherein design details and even time indications were distinguishable and readable merely through different finish and shape or size of the components. This method of approach to the design helps create the integrity and wholeness of an object whereby the designer just shapes its form as a

sculptor. Having been in fashion for a number of years already this black trend has been logically, though less massively supplemented with the white. The 2009 season's favourite among the men's watch colours is the grey. The grey fully complies with the modern trend of reserve and moderation; compared with the black it allows even more experiments with the textures of the materials as it is the natural colour of many uncoated or plated metals; yielding more gradations the grey allows a favourable solution to the colour composition in the "total" style.

In terms of popularity in men's collections the orange (again) is running next but just as an accent.

Ladies' jeweller collections impress with the tropical rave of colour: white, plum and chocolate combined with rose-coloured gold and diamonds; shades of red cobalt and herbaceous green.



and exterior design details, which is effected through uniformity of the material, multiple transparent inserts in the case, and skeletal composite dial plate. It is the combination of the latter with the partially exposed skeletal calibres that create the "mechanical well" effect revealing more and more levels of mechanical parts so magically oriented deeper and deeper into the works.

Unobtrusive and inconspicuous time indication requires an effort to read and thus only accentuates the need to regard a modern wristwatch as a self-sufficient artistic object.



## Focus on Details

**Shock resistance.** Many brands have presented for this season models with extra shock protection based on different techniques. TAG Heuer offers MONACO Twenty Four Concept Chronograph model with calibre 36 placed inside the case where it is supported with steel tubes like the cockpit cage of a racing car. Pierre DeRoche TNT Royal Retro demonstrates improved shock resistance based on the mechanism with six retro-grade second hands. Glashutte Original exhibited their model with the mechanism enclosed within a shock-absorbing frame.

**Screws.** These are used in a more and more sophisticated manner. Decorative and graphically treated screw head have come to serve as alternative trademarks or logotypes as each brand is trying to create its unique graphic pattern. The work of Gerald Genta, who created Royal Oak for Audemars Piguet, has never stopped to inspire designers' minds, the more so as the "active" screw connection visually fully complies with the now fashionable concept of multilayered cases. Sapphire glass, gold and steel – all can be transpierced by screws now.



**High technologies to protect high watch-making art.** WISEkey, one

of the leading providers of smart-card technology, announced their joint effort with Hublot to create an authenticity protection system. System will undoubtedly help reduce the level and number of fakes in the watch-making industry, but the very fact of such a system becoming a reality proves that the watch-making trade is becoming increasingly integrated in the process of advanced technologies development. The watchmakers thereby address the younger segment of their well-to-do audience living in the digital world, for whom such system should provide additional motivation for the watches choice. ■

**Combination of materials.** The use of a great variety and number of materials in one model has recently become a very strong trend in the trade. Moreover, it is perhaps possible only in the watch-making business that traditions are so boldly broken: e.g. combination of precious metals and stones, a time-honoured classic for the jewellers' and watchmakers' trade, with the modern hi-tech compound materials.

**Prominent relief grooves and guilloché** cover parts of the case and the dial plate and these can completely change the impression produced by the model.

