

More Than A Watch –  
It's A  
**Horological  
Machine**

Maximilian Büsser is a leading name in the haute horology industry. Best known for his success at Harry Winston Timepieces, he is back with a brand new label, MB&F. *MillionaireAsia's* **Joann Chia** meets the talented marketer turn artist and entrepreneur.

Maximilian Büsser is a shining example of how age is not a factor when it comes to making a name in the niche market of haute horology. When he was 31, and 10 years too young, (said the headhunter), Büsser landed the prestigious position of Managing Director at Harry Winston Timepieces, after having spent seven years in Jaeger-LeCoultre.

"When I took over, the first years were very tough because Harry Winston was being sold. There was no money in the company and it was completely decapitalised."

Six years later, under Büsser's leadership, Harry Winston Timepieces expanded from a seven-staff operation to a sizeable 80 employees and sales profits sky-rocketed tenfold. However, Büsser was not satisfied and felt a void which no amount of success could bring.

"The more Harry Winston grew, the less I was enjoying myself. I didn't understand. I've got this dream job I've never even dreamed of and I'm successful at it. Why I am not enjoying it?"

#### Getting Inspiration

In 2002, Büsser was out shopping for a contemporary art piece to decorate his living room. He brought along a friend, an avid art collector and designer, for some valued opinion. Three art galleries later, his friend was unimpressed with the selection and the exasperated Büsser was still empty-handed. It was only then that Büsser's friend brought him to a gallery where a Thai artist was drawing a forest with a pencil on a white canvas.

"Everything was black, very depressing and oppressive. I saw it, looked at Eric and said, 'Sorry, I'm not going to put that into my sitting room'", Büsser recalled. "He looked at me and said, 'Who cares about your sitting room? What you've been showing me is not art; the artists don't put themselves in it. Those were interior decorations.'"

For Büsser, that proved to be a wake-up call. "I realised I have been

an interior decorator my whole life. I was pretty successful at creating products and at managing companies. But the products I created were always to please the customers. I was hired to get the numbers up, to sell the most products, and I did what everybody was doing."

Much thanks to his friend, Eric Giroud, who incidentally, now works with Büsser on designing the Horological Machines, the conception of his new company, MB&F (Maximilian Büsser & Friends) started taking shape and he commenced work on various business plans while putting together the designs for Horological Machines N°1 and N°2.



The Horological Machine N°3 is available in two versions: "Sidewinder", with its cones lined perpendicular to the arm and "Starcruiser", with its cones in line with the arm

And after seven years at Harry Winston Timepieces, at the age of 38, Büsser tendered his resignation, and MB&F was incorporated the following day.

#### The Beginning Of A Dream

With MB&F, Büsser is fulfilling his dream of owning a brand dedicated to developing radical horological concepts by working in small hyper-creative groups of people in the industry.

Each year, independent horological professionals are assembled to design and craft Horological Machines for MB&F. By

transforming himself from a marketer to an artist, Büsser not only creates products which he enjoys, he also gets to work with top individuals to produce machines of high quality.

"I'm lucky enough to know a lot of talent and by them helping me make my dream become a reality, I help them become very well-known," explains Büsser. "These independent talents were never credited for their work. The first time, I'm putting the spotlight back on those who make our industry work."

For instance, Jacques-Adrien Rochat, who does the finishing and decoration of the parts in the movement, was pleasantly surprised that he was going to be credited for his work. Büsser shares, "Jacques said to me, 'Ok, you have to do it my way, because for the first time, I'm going to tell people this is how I'm able to work.' So he pushed the level beyond what I was expecting and he said, 'That is, in fact, the example of my competence, what I can do for you.'"

Apart from working with the industry's best, Büsser is also pushing the boundaries, looking for 'friends' in the medical machinery and aerospace industry in his continued quest to build radical and valuable Horological Machines.

#### Bringing Out The Creativity

As with all creations, Büsser puts a lot of himself into his job, allowing the child within to emerge. The present Horological Machines are inspired by his spaceship fantasies of Star Trek and Thunderbird. "Those were the days when I dreamed the most and I was at my most creative. And then I became a reasonable man, because that's what life taught me. Everybody was saying, 'You're going to be an adult now, you've got to be reasonable.'"

Today, at 41, with 17 years of experience under his name, Maximilian Büsser has certainly defied logic, breaking the boundaries of age and norm to build horological machines that changes the face of the haute horology business altogether. ■