



Above and Beyond



Maximilian Büsser's revolutionary 'machines that tell time' are a vision to behold

LOOKING OUT OVER THE FAST-CHANGING CITY OF DUBAI, THE LOUNGE ON THE 13TH FLOOR OF THE EMIRATES TOWERS IS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR A SIT DOWN WITH MAXIMILIAN BUSSER WHO WAS IN TOWN TO SHOWCASE HIS NEWEST, MOST FORWARD-LOOKING, STATE-OF-THE-ART TIMEPIECE YET – THE HOROLOGICAL MACHINE NO. 3.



Let's start at the beginning: No. 1

With more than 15 years of high-level corporate experience in the watch industry, the last seven as managing director of Harry Winston Rare Timepieces, Maximilian Büsser appeared to have it all: position, success and respect. What could possibly entice him to give all of that up? Working with independent watchmakers on Harry Winston's Opus series concept watches was one of the most satisfying facets of Büsser's time at Harry Winston - with Opus he was like a child in a candy store. A utopian idea took hold: his own brand dedicated to developing radical horological concepts by working in small hyper-creative groups composed of people he enjoys working with.

In 2005 Maximilian Büsser took a deep breath, made a life-changing decision and left Harry Winston Rare Timepieces. . . MB&F was born. "I created my small concept label three years ago and part of the whole concept is to keep in touch, it's a very human concept, the whole brand is about friends, hence the 'F'," the charming entrepreneur explains with a smile. "I work with the best people, artists, and craftsmen in Switzerland, who I appreciate as human beings. The same applies to the retail section who I count among my friends, and the

same applies to our clients, because the people who bought into our product are completely fanatic about them, and it's not uncommon for me to get emails from them asking me to give them a call when I'm in their part of the world."

Fanatical? That's a strong word for a watch, right? Not if you've seen the watch! Horological Machine No. 1 (HM 1) is an extremely sophisticated timepiece on many levels: visually, technically and emotionally. As much, if not more, art and sculpture as micro-engineering. By designing and constructing a three-dimensional machine, MB&F have broken free of the constraints imposed by traditional horology. HM 1 features a radical new design and construction plus a totally original movement with 376 parts and 81 functional jewels. What's more, only 30 per year are crafted, for three years, meaning that very soon, the production will cease, making them even more highly coveted! "We design a completely new machine every year - we call them machines, as they don't look like watches - and each machine has a life span of 3 years. So there's a huge R&D development and there's no way we can amortize them over a year, but after three years, that's it, production ceases and it's time to move forward!"



No. 2!

Emboldened by the success of No. 1, MB&F continued to push the boundaries further with HM 2, which Maximilian dubs the 'space station machine'. No wonder, too, as the amazing 3-D time piece looks like it was bolted together like an erector set from his youth. Available in both white gold and red gold, only 35 machines are produced a year in each color. "Our people are so radical, and that comes from the fact that we don't create for our clients. The more I think of what I would like to see, and not think of the clients, the more fanatical our clients become."



The latest and greatest: HM 3

Despite seeing HM 1 and HM 2 up close, and being blown away by the design, look, feel, and revolutionary ideas, I'm still not prepared when Maximilian brings out HM 3. "Let me show you number three," he says, all excited, "It's about the child in me that likes Star Trek and Thunderbirds, and about the adult part of me, as a watchmaker, that wants to see the movement when I see the time." Well described! As HM 3 is like a miniature spaceship, and as if MB and his friends didn't already have enough fun designing it, they also created two different ways of wearing the 'spaceship'. "When we first came out with HM 1, people didn't understand what we were doing, now with HM 3 they do. With their 3-D design, Mechanical Sculptures would apply best to these pieces. A client who

has all three just sent me an email and he said wants first choice for all new models." There will only be a production of 25 pieces of each design of the HM 3, with delivery in March. We strongly recommend calling Seddiqi & Sons early to place your order before they're gone!

For one and all!

So, are these men's watches? "We don't target men or women, we simply create what we believe in. That said, even though the watches are pretty big, we have several female clients. One woman even wears this in the evening, and a client from Northern California who has her own private jet, does horseback riding, has a collection of orchids, has all three of our watches." Maximilian also doesn't believe on custom made orders, "we basically create what we believe in, and we don't think of what the customers want. I spent my career trying to please. Now I've assembled the best craftsman and am really happy letting them do what they want to do. It's almost like art, without boundaries. They are proud that they are doing something they believe in, that no one has done before."

Are you a watch collector?

I am in my soul, but at the same time, I've always been able to create what I want.

Should watches be collected?

Yes, but you also have to wear them and enjoy them. I feel sorry for people who leave them in the safe, after all, they are mechanical machines with souls!

You seem to love the extreme...

Yes, I have eccentric taste, for example, I own a TVR car, it's a small company in the UK that makes by hand extreme machines. There are no electronics, it's difficult to drive, and really amazing. I have it in Racing Green, as it's English.

How do you like to spend your free time?

To create a company like this, there's absolutely no off time. I

never worked this much, and I've never been this happy. I'm lucky to live in Geneva, by the lake, and by the slopes, but I can't even enjoy those now.

What are the challenges you face starting your own company?

The biggest, especially at the beginning, was being all alone the first three years and having to think 360 degrees on all levels – strategically and operationally. In a matter of a few hours I have to think of the strategy for the next five years, then call the supplier for the wheels, then answer questions for a journalist, then send a Fedex package, etc..it's mental gymnastics as I never imagined.

How do you see the future of MB&F?

We are trying to continue to create one watch a year, which is very challenging. We are now working on Number 7. Each one of our products is more radical and each one needs partners who will develop it. Many solutions on HM 3, for example, come from aerospace, like the ball bearings, never used before in a watch, and medical technology, like the sapphire cones, so we're constantly looking for to new worlds to make our world come true, and sometimes the technology is not ready for it."

“THE WATCH WORLD TODAY IS SO MUCH BASED ON IMAGE AND CELEBRITY TESTIMONIAL THAT NO ONE CARES ABOUT THE WATCH, JUST THE BRANDING.”



THE F

The F stands for friends, highly talented independent horological artisans, creators and professionals – all friends – who make up the close knit team that helps design and craft a radical and totally original horological masterpiece. MB&F encourages each member of the collective to reach out to their child's perspective of the world; it is a playground where they are surrounded by friends sharing the same sense of awe, amazement and everything-is-possible attitude.

MB&F THE MB

Maximilian Büsser was born in Milano, Italy, before moving at an early age to Lausanne, Switzerland where he spent his youth. Growing up in a multi-cultural environment and family - his father was a Swiss diplomat who met his mother, an Indian national, in Bombay - led Büsser to develop a cross-cultural broad-based approach to his life and to business. Entrepreneurship is Maximilian Büsser's forte. In 1998 and only 31 years old, he was appointed managing director of Harry Winston Rare Timepieces in Geneva.

And in July 2005, at the age of 38, Maximilian created the first ever horological Concept Brand: MB&F (Maximilian Büsser & Friends) in which he is the sole shareholder. Büsser's dream with MB&F is to have his own brand dedicated to developing radical horological concepts by working in small hyper-creative groups composed of people he enjoys working with.

