

FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2009

Machines from the studio

At BASELWORLD Palace master watch-makers celebrate their return



Max Büsser at the showcase with his horological machines

Watch Factory is the name of the joint exhibition of 12 small watch manufacturers in room Palace 7. Some of them have been highly appreciated in the trade for many years, other brands are making their debut at the show. One thing that they all share in common is that they construct highly unusual watches; unusual in their sophisticated technology – in many cases with functions that they alone provide – and highly specialised in their design: a layman would perceive the technical mastery of some of the pieces without being aware that their purpose is the display of time. And whereas the majority of the 12 do not produce

their watches in factories but instead patiently construct and mount their works by hand in traditional, quiet studios, for a number of products the name factory is an apt one, where they have the appearance of machines. Horological machines is also how Max Büsser refers to his creations. For each new model he assembles a circle of experts with whom he is acquainted. Under the name MB&F (Max Büsser And Friends) they develop technically complex instruments, the like of which the world has never seen before and which bear comparison to the machines of Jules Verne. Max Büsser knows the BASELWORLD well from his

time as an employee of other brands, and when he received the invitation to exhibit in Basel this year he did not need to be asked twice, "I am back," he says, with satisfaction, and there is more: the presence in Basel is ideal for his young brand.

Even though the show often appears to him like a whole year condensed into one week, he views the onrush of additional visitors at the weekend positively: "It's great." Much in the manner of Büsser's watches, the timepieces from Urwerk trigger great astonishment, because wholly new approaches are taken in the display of time; small cubes with numerals rotate on moving spokes within futuristic cases.

Craftmanship expertise

In addition to Urwerk, other colleagues that Max Büsser was able to easily convince to take part in the show ("50 percent said yes straight away, the others the next day") include Beat Haldimann and Peter Speake Marin with their brands. Speake Marin had already exhibited at Basel years previously, on the stand of the AHCI, the association of independent watch-makers.

Now, following a few years of abstinence, he is back, presenting his own, self-developed work alongside the remarkable collection that incorporates so much craftsmanship expertise. Having his own stand in the Palace has five key advantages, says the Briton: "Four chairs and a table" – room enough for detailed conversation with interested customers and astonished visitors.

Watch-making creativity

Beat Haldimann, a further resource in the development of highly specialised, fine watch technology, is also back at the show after a break of four years. A monitor on his stand shows the modest work at his villa in Thun, where he and his 10 colleagues produce often no more than 30 of his ingenious watches. His latest product, the H2 Resonanz, is a "twin pendulum clock for the wrist," he explains, proudly displaying the creation at the Palace, which also offers oppor-

tunities and privacy for discreet customer discussions. Alongside further astonishing products of watch-making creativity, the same room is also hosting the premiere of the collection of Steinway & Sons: formed like one of the company's grand pianos, the case itself already reveals a good deal about the interests of the wearer. In addition, the watches also offer functional uses for pianists: the seconde metronomique, for example, which swings to and fro, providing the perfect bar for études. Remarkable. (jl) ■



Debut: Steinway & Sons watches shaped as a grand piano

The most expensive Kitty at Swarovski

From Shaun Leane to Vivienne Westwood and Victoria Crown – many designers over the years have been inspired to create crazy designs using the magnificent crystals and coloured gemstones from Swarovski. One of the most

costly ideas ever produced using these sparkling stones is to be presented to the public for the first time at BASELWORLD 2009, at the Swarovski stand in the Palace area: a one-of-a-kind 900 platinum Super Hello Kitty Jewel Doll adorned with 2345 genuine gemstones and an exclusive one carat diamond, all precision cut using Enlightened™ Swarovski Elements. In addition to this expensive Super Kitty, the Austrian company has also teamed up with the Sanrio Company Ltd. The result of this friendship between the two companies is an unlimited five-piece jewellery collection, produced to mark the 35th anniversary of Hello Kitty. The presentation ceremony will take place on Friday evening at 18:00 in the Palace area. (cete) ■ Palace, P05

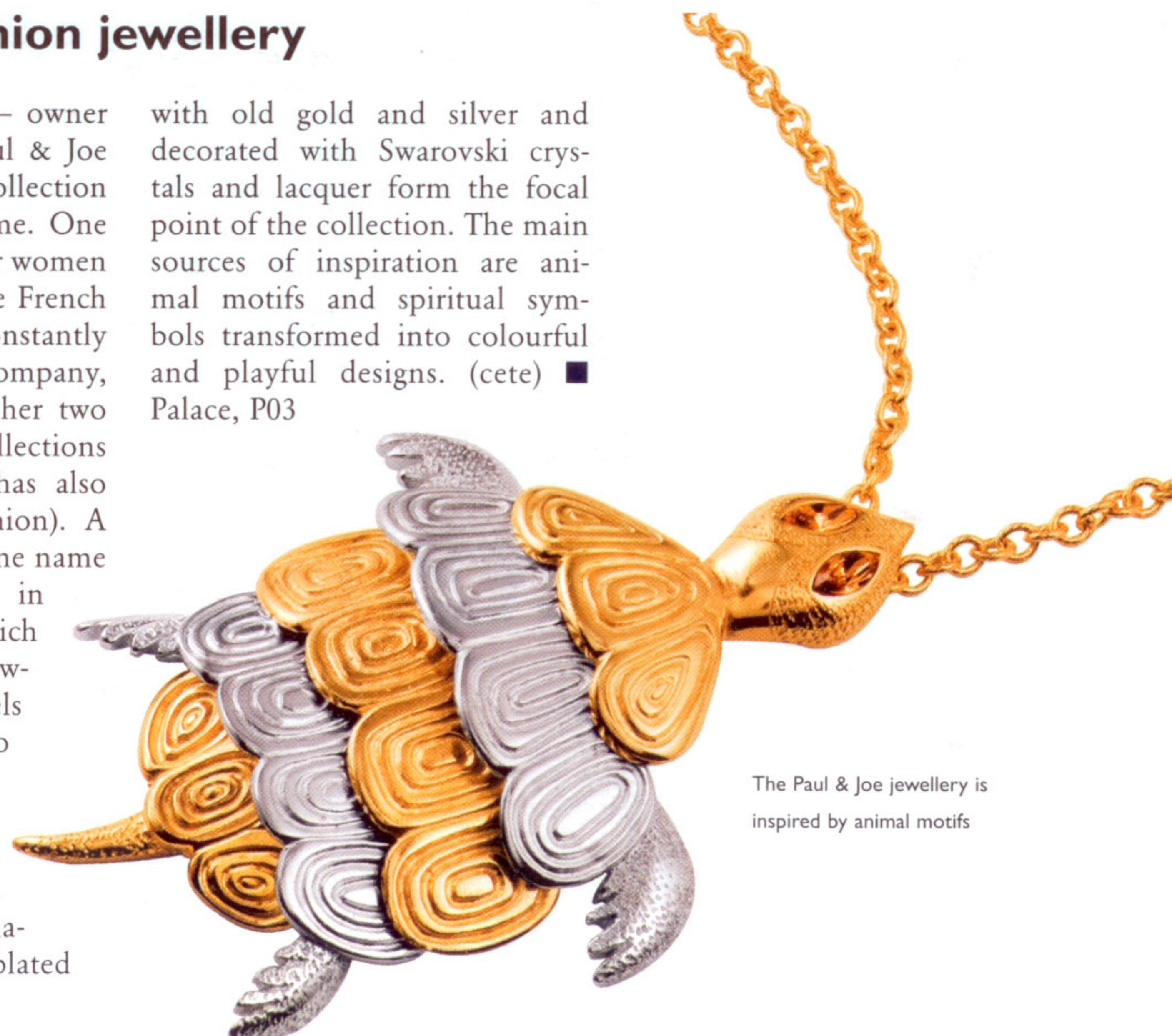


Happy birthday: Super Hello Kitty Jewel Doll

Fresh new fashion jewellery

In 1995, Sophie Albou – owner of the fashion label Paul & Joe – presented a fashion collection for men for the first time. One year later, a collection for women followed. Since then, the French business woman has constantly worked to expand the company, which she named after her two sons, as well as its collections (in the meantime she has also launched children's fashion). A jewellery range of the same name is now being presented in Basel: the GL Group, which also holds licences for jewellery and fashion labels by Ted Lapidus, Kenzo and other fashion labels, is presenting the 64 piece Paul & Joe collection at its stand in the Palace area. Imaginative rings and chains plated

with old gold and silver and decorated with Swarovski crystals and lacquer form the focal point of the collection. The main sources of inspiration are animal motifs and spiritual symbols transformed into colourful and playful designs. (cete) ■ Palace, P03



The Paul & Joe jewellery is inspired by animal motifs