



# TIME MACHINE

If it wasn't for the hand-stitched alligator leather strap, there would be little to identify the **Horological Machine No. 3** as a wristwatch on first sight – that's how far detached the latest model from **MB&F** (Maximilian Büsser & Friends) is from conventional timepieces. Rather than display the time on the watch's flat face, the third invention from MB&F has two vertical cones that present the hours and minutes vertically on the side of each one. Designed to show off the oscillating kinetic movement that powers the machine, what would conventionally be the watch's face reveals a solid gold battle-axe-like automatic winding rotor with the date arcing round it. Turning the watch over, a sapphire crystal case back exposes the kinetically-charged ceramic bearings that provide power to each of the timekeeping cones; the *HM3* is the first time that ceramics have been used for the actual bearings of a watch.

Obviously, a timepiece like this is not available to everybody. In fact, only five of the watches have been earmarked for the Southeast Asian market and anybody

who wants to get their hands on one will have a two-year wait following their order. Unsurprising when you consider that the *HM3* is designed and constructed by Maximilian Büsser in collaboration with a hand-picked selection of the finest horological experts in the world. Every single component piece is left to a master in that particular field to produce: the movement, the dial, the case, the hands, the buckle, the strap... they are all constructed by the craftsman that can ensure the highest possible finish for that particular component. The length that MB&F goes to in ensuring perfection means that it doesn't describe itself as a watch brand, rather as a 'micro-engineering concept laboratory'. (Read the interview with Maximilian Büsser on page 86)

**PRICE TAG:** 2.8 million Baht

Available to order from PMT The Hour Glass: G Floor, Emporium; 2nd Floor, Gaysorn; M Floor, Siam Paragon

## 2PROFILE\_STARTUP

By Nicholas Snow



# CHASING A DREAM

**FEW WOULD DARE** give up everything in pursuit of their dreams. Maximilian Büsser is an exception, and his desire to follow his instincts has led to the creation of some of the most unique and avant garde timepieces the watch-making industry has seen.

On a recent whirlwind world tour – which included a stop-over in Bangkok – Maximilian Büsser revealed HM3, the third in a series of rare Horological Machines from the Maximilian Büsser & Friends (MB&F) stable. Inspired by his childhood fascination with spaceships, the watch is destined for the wrists of a privileged handful in Thailand – a privilege that comes at a steep price to the tune of 2,8 million baht!

Maximilian Büsser resigned from his post as managing director of Harry Winston Timepieces aged 38 – a position he had held for seven years and one of the watch industry's top jobs – giving up a lucrative salary, expense account, the world of first-class travel, Armani shopping sprees, five-star hotels and fine dining, to boldly go where few men have gone before. When he resigned from Harry Winston, Max says, "my bosses fell off their chairs. The very next day after being freed from my contract we founded MB&F."

## REVELATIONS

In the homestretch of his high-powered job, envied by most, Max was motivated to take the entrepreneurial leap because of what he describes as two major turning points in his life, the first of which was the loss of his ailing father. "I'm not immortal anymore," Max realized. "Wake-up call! You're next in line. You start thinking, 'If I get hit by a bus tomorrow, am I really going to have no regrets? Am I going to be really proud of what I've done with my life?' I should – I'm the head of Harry Winston – but I'm not. So, that sort of unnerved me."

Max had his second revelation when a friend took him to see the works of Geneva-based Thai artist Siripoj Chamroendivhya. "He was drawing forests with a black pencil on white canvas, very dark... It resembled Tim Burton films like *Sleepy Hollow* – very oppressive, all black... I looked at my friend and said, 'I'm not going to put this in my sitting room!' He looked at me and said: 'What you're talking about is not art. It's interior decoration. This is a real artist. He doesn't give a damn about your sitting room. He doesn't give a damn about you either. He needs to express something...'"



"That sort of hit me really hard," Max said. "I realized I had been creating products since the age of 24, and that I'd been very much an interior decorator. Then I thought, 'Wow. Wouldn't it be incredible if I could create products without thinking of any clients?' I started imagining this dream company that would make me proud those 20 seconds before the bus hit. I want to be creating products I believed in, and I also didn't want to give a damn if others understood what I was doing..."

## NEW DIRECTIONS

Max invested his life savings (about US\$ 600,000) and set out across the globe to visit retailers with whom he had previously worked, armed only with technical drawings and a piece of plastic painted to look like the HM1, explaining, "This is my dream, a whole concept company where every year we'll create a kinetic sculpture, an 'Horological Machine'. Every single person who is involved in the company (the 'friends' in MB&F) will be credited – they'll all be integrated into the whole story."

Still short on funds, Max would then reveal he did not have enough money to launch the brand. "It's either I go and find a financial investor and my whole dream gets blown

apart because the guy will want gross and profit and everything I don't want. Or else you are crazy enough to trust me and pay a third in advance now based on this design – and maybe I'll deliver the first piece in two years." Six retailers, including The Hour Glass (prior to the PMT merger) said okay. "Now, when I talk about 'the friends', you understand what that means," Max emphasized.

Why he calls the watches 'horological machines'? "If I take the strap off," he explains, "does this look like a watch? We can't call it a watch. It's a three-dimensional, mechanical piece of art, with many of the ideas of what we create rooted deeply in our childhood or our dreams..."

## VISION REALIZED

MB&F's Horological Machines are rare and only a select few will ever own one. "They are people who seek another path," Max says of his customers. "You need to be self-assertive to wear such a watch. It's not about the bling. These are real sculptures. Artisans have done wonders to make them come to life." It's no wonder that an owner of both the HM1 and the HM2 flew her own private jet from California to New York so she and her husband could meet Max and get a first look at the HM3.

With the HM3, Max has realized his dream of creating something reminiscent of spaceships from TV favorites of his youth – *Star Trek*, *Thunderbirds* and *Dr Who*. After a two-year wait, beginning around April 2009, only 50 HM3s will be available worldwide in two models, the Sidewinder and the Starcruiser. In keeping with the childhood theme, Max revealed of the HM2 timepiece, "Many people are amazed when I tell them that, for example, the automatic rotor that winds it up – the red gold battleaxe you can see on the watch's face – comes from a comic of my youth called *Grandizer*. You don't do luxury products explaining that your childhood comics have influenced you. That's just a no-no. Well, we do it, because this is what we believe in..."

Narun Thamavaranukup, managing director of PMT The Hour Glass, said of Max, "We believe in what he produces and what he creates. Everything represents the true quality in the man himself, and the true creativity. I would say that there are very few craftsmen or creative people in the world that would be able to match the creativity behind MB&F." ■