

# The THUNDERBOLT STRIKES

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Busser expects to make about 25 to 35 Thunderbolts per year, each priced at \$158,000.

With HM4, Max Büsser's friends once again help MB&F create a time machine unlike any other

**R**eaders of *International Watch's* July issue were treated to the first in-print images of the long-awaited MB&F Horological Machine Number 4. Now unveiled, it's clear that Maximilian Büsser and his Friends have once again come up with a watch that is anything but traditional. And while every watch MB&F has designed since its 2005 debut has defied classic watch design, somehow this newest timepiece makes the cutting edge itself seem a bit dull by comparison.

The reason should be obvious: the HM4, unlike its three predecessors and their derivatives, actually

looks like its inspiration was taken from a concrete object. Nicknamed the Thunderbolt, the HM4's titanium and sapphire crystal case was indeed inspired by aviation. Its sleek aerodynamic form actually has its roots in Büsser's childhood passion for assembling model airplane kits, though certainly none looked remotely as futuristic as this. And neither does any other watch on the market, really. Büsser conceptualized the look of the Thunderbolt, while well-known designer Eric Giroud was responsible for its final industrial design.

Having spent so much energy and time with sapphire supplier Stettler

The five transparent sapphire sections of the HM4's 54 mm x 52 mm x 24 mm case require more than 100 hours of machining and polishing.



## HM4 is sculpture that tells time



learning how to create unusual forms in sapphire for the HM2-SV model, Büsser took this knowledge to another level in the new model. The five transparent sapphire sections of the HM4's 54 mm x 52 mm x 24 mm case require more than 100 hours of machining and polishing. A solid block of crystal is thus transformed into a complex, exquisitely curved panel allowing the mechanical beauty of the Thunderbolt's "engine" to be revealed.

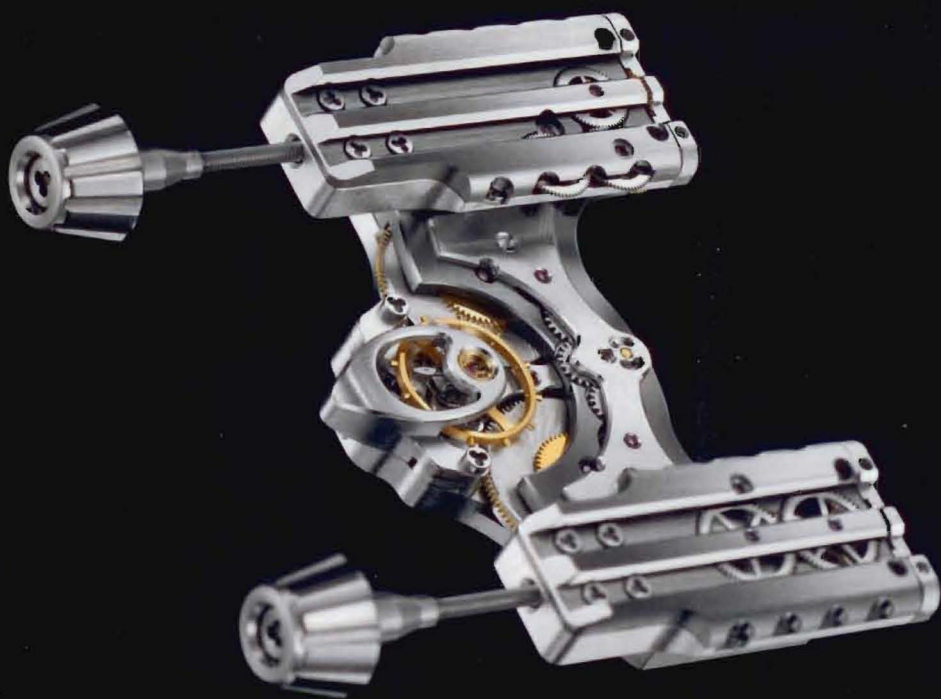
With so many details to look at on this timepiece—which could literally be called a sculpture that happens to tell the time—the time display, legible though it is, might easily be overlooked in one of the two windows placed at the end of what look like thrusters. Indeed, you might say being able to see the time there is an added fringe benefit.

### Mechanics

However clearly visible it is, the movement is not the first thing that one sees when eyeing this Thunderbolt. But aficionados of mechanical watchmaking can rest assured that development of the caliber inside was just as critical here as the creation of the watch's stunning case design.

Laurent Besse, Béranger Reynard, and Patrick Lété of Les Artisans Horlogers, a small high-end movement firm based in Le Locle, Switzerland, conceived the movement. Almost all of the 311 components were manufactured especially for use here and produced in three small Swiss factories. The movement parts are hand-finished by Rochat, located in the Vallée de Joux. Assembly is completed by MB&F's two watchmakers in its own Geneva workshop.

The manually wound movement has seventy-two hours of power reserve provided by two mainsprings that operate simultaneously. The balance, visible through one of the sapphire crystals set between the tails of the two "thrusters," oscillates at a



frequency of 21,600 bph. The unusually shaped movement—why should it be any different in that respect from the rest of the timepiece?—contains a total of fifty jewels, an unusually high number for a time-only watch, even though it also boasts a power-reserve display. The latter is located right across from the time display on the second "thruster." Two crowns, one for setting the time and one for winding, are integrated right into the ends of the "thrusters."

#### On the wrist

Just seeing pictures of this kinetic piece of art, the prospective owner may think the timepiece not as wearable as others. And, indeed, wearing it would be a definite choice to stand out in a crowd. Once the choice has been made, however, the new owner will find that wide, articulated lugs ensure comfort on the wrist, and that the apparent size becomes less of an issue. Mundane as it may seem to mention, the HM4 Thunderbolt comes on a black hand-stitched calf-skin strap with a titanium and white gold deployant buckle. Strap it on and you're ready for takeoff. ④