



HAUTE AMBASSADOR :: GREG SIMONIAN

BEST OF BASEL

An annual migration occurs every spring. Watchmakers descend from their mountaintop workshops while watch aficionados flock from every corner of the world to convene in the Swiss city of Basel. The gathering is nothing less than the biggest watch fair on earth, and the best place to find innovative new watches that collectors will covet in the year ahead.

I take the time to see hundreds of new watches at the Basel show—from my favorite companies that have been perfecting their craft for centuries, to passionate individual watchmakers who are taking timepieces in exciting new directions. The following five watches rank among my very favorites from this year's fair, for five very different reasons.

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HUBLOT'S BIG BANG FERRARI MAGIC GOLD

Several months ago, Hublot formed a partnership with the great Italian automobile manufacturer Ferrari to become its official timekeeper and producer of its official watches. In Basel, Hublot unveiled the first watch designed in partnership with the experts at Ferrari. The result is the Big Bang Ferrari Magic Gold, a timepiece that captures the sports spirit of Ferrari while respecting Hublot's inimitable design DNA. The 45.5-mm watch is made 18K scratch-resistant gold, which Hublot developed in-house and named Magic Gold. Subtle yet meaningful automotive design cues translate into the watch. Elongated push buttons are fixed on a rotating axis like the pedals in a car. Two interchangeable straps with tone-on-tone stitching give a nod to the signature upholstery of a typical Ferrari, while a quick-change system is inspired by the safety seatbelt mechanism in a racecar. On the dial, the minute counter recalls a Ferrari dashboard, while a date window displays the brand's famous "Modena" yellow. Ferrari's prancing horse logo sits discreetly at the 9 o'clock position, and a view of the modified UNICO movement reveals a new positioning reminiscent of Ferrari's alloy wheel rims.

GLASHUTTE ORIGINAL'S GRANDE COSMOPOLITE TOURBILLON

Glashutte Original's master watchmaker invented the Flying Minute Tourbillon in 1920, and this year the company introduces another world's first among mechanical watches: the Grande Cosmopolite Tourbillon. This unusual 48-mm platinum world timer is capable of tracking the time of day or night at the owner's home and on the road simultaneously, in any two of 37 world time zones (including those odd 30-minute and 45-minute zones), while accounting for daylight savings time. Whether the wearer is traveling eastwards or westwards, time and date changes remain accurate via a perpetual calendar complication that can be safely adjusted forwards or backwards in time. The abbreviated names of cities represent each of the 37 time zones on the 18K gold dial; the home time is positioned at 6 o'clock; and a flying minute tourbillon crowns the beautiful display. A sapphire crystal caseback allows for a clear view of the manually-wound movement and its 500-plus components. A limited edition of 25 pieces, the timepiece comes in an oak display box evocative of great world adventures.



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HYT'S H1

Avant-garde watchmaker HYT bursts onto the scene with one of the most shocking materials to measure time with: fluid. Traditionally the enemy of all watchmakers, fluid takes pride of place inside HYT's H1, and follows a course around the outside of the dial to indicate the passage of time. Two bellows driven by a piston reside at the heart of the hand-wound mechanism, and propel the fluid so that a meniscus between the fluorescent and clear waters always hovers at a location that represents the precise time of day. A minute regulator sits at the center of the dial, and it is overlapped by a small seconds display that resembles a water wheel. The 48.8-mm case is available in titanium, black DLC-coated titanium and 18K red gold. By combining haute horlogerie with fluid mechanics, HYT may have created the watch world's first hybrid design.



GIULIANO MAZZUOLI'S MANOMETRINO

When most of us look at an everyday object, we see a tool. But Florence, Italy-based designer Giuliano Mazzuoli sees that object's essence, its artistic qualities, and the innovative spirit of its creators. The most harmoniously designed Italian objects inspire Mazzuoli's own art—the silhouette of the historic Italian coffee machine inspired his line of pens, while the pressure gauge in an Italian sports car led to the design of his first watch, the Manometro. Now Mazzuoli, who counts a master watchmaker who built many of the tower clocks in Tuscany among his ancestors, is releasing a smaller version of his beloved Manometro. The Manometrino is proportional to its big brother, but with a diameter of just 27 mm it is a refreshing surprise in a sea of massive sports watches. The Swiss quartz-powered watch is available with a case of polished steel or PVD-treated steel. Hours, minutes and seconds are displayed on a black, ivory or ardoise-colored dial. And its calf leather strap and leather watch box are both handcrafted in Tuscany's famous leather workshops.

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BULGARI'S DANIEL ROTH CARILLON TOURBILLON

In terms of difficulty level, making a watch with a chiming function is a ten. Bulgari created a three-hammer minute repeater from scratch and upped the difficulty level with a tourbillon complication. The hand-wound Daniel Roth Carillon Tourbillon chimes the time on demand. Three precisely-made gongs strike different pitches: a C note for the hours, an E-D-C sequence for the quarter hours, and a single E note for the minutes. The crystal clear sound emanates from a sleek timepiece. The 43-mm pink gold case with sapphire caseback and dial houses a movement with 327 individual parts. Finishes on the hammers, gongs and tourbillon are polished steel; the elaborate mainplate and bridges are black thanks to a platinum alloy surface treatment. A 30-piece limited edition collection, each owner will see that his watch crown is individually engraved with a number from 1 to 30.

