

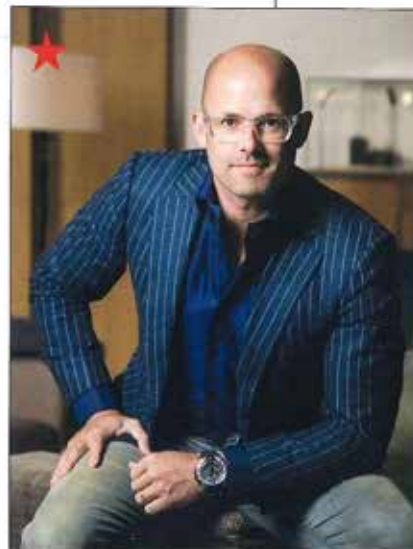


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INTERVIEW BY EMLIE YABUT-RAZON

TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM

VINCENT PERRIARD ON HIS CREATIVE JOURNEY WITH HYT AND
WHERE THE BRAND IS HEADED NEXT

It was at the end of 2010 when Vincent Perriard met Lucien Vouillamoz and discovered his invention of a liquid moving in a capillary (glass tube) that could be used to display time. It was the beginning of a great adventure for them, and four other partners who call themselves "hydro-mechanical horologists." HYT, or hydro-mechanical time was then born. The concept was easy to grasp but exceedingly difficult to execute, with the team having to find experts in various non-watchmaking fields, from space to chemistry, to execute their vision. They also chose to work with known movement makers, like Chronode and Audemars Piguet Renaud & Papi. In the end, a strong case and dial design, use of tech materials like titanium, aluminum composites and resins, and time uniquely displayed by a neon-colored liquid was a winning combination, and in 2012, HYT's first watch, the H1, won the Best Innovative Watch prize at that year's Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève. In 2013, HYT introduced their second watch, the H2, and the company has since grown in leaps and bounds. On a recent visit to Hong Kong, HYT's CEO tells REVOLUTION about their plans for world domination.

It's been three years since HYT was first launched. Can you tell us about your personal journey and how the brand has grown and evolved?

We started in 2012, but commercialization of the brand only started late 2013. It's been a great journey. It's an adventure, because this year, the first year with 12 months of business, we would already be twice the size of a lot of independent brands after the first year of commercialization, so it's incredible.

Twice the size means how much in terms of production?

We're going to be doing 600 watches this year, that's the level of demand. So today, we reached half of the year and we are exactly on track with this number. It is very positive and we are opening new doors almost every week. Today, we have 42 points of sale, and the aim is to reach 50 by the end of the year. Another 10 to go to match our targets.

Where are you opening next?

The first next doors would be in Southeast Asia, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Singapore. We are kicking off the Middle East with three doors this August: Qatar and Doha. We are also opening another two in the US: in Dallas, Las Vegas or Chicago. A milestone is that we are opening our office in Singapore, to operate in all of South East Asia.

We think it's important to have a subsidiary there because it's the heartbeat of the collector community. We'll have an office with administrative coordination, marketing and sales. We are also opening a point of sale in September. We waited for a year before starting because we wanted to make sure that we do it correctly.

And in Hong Kong?

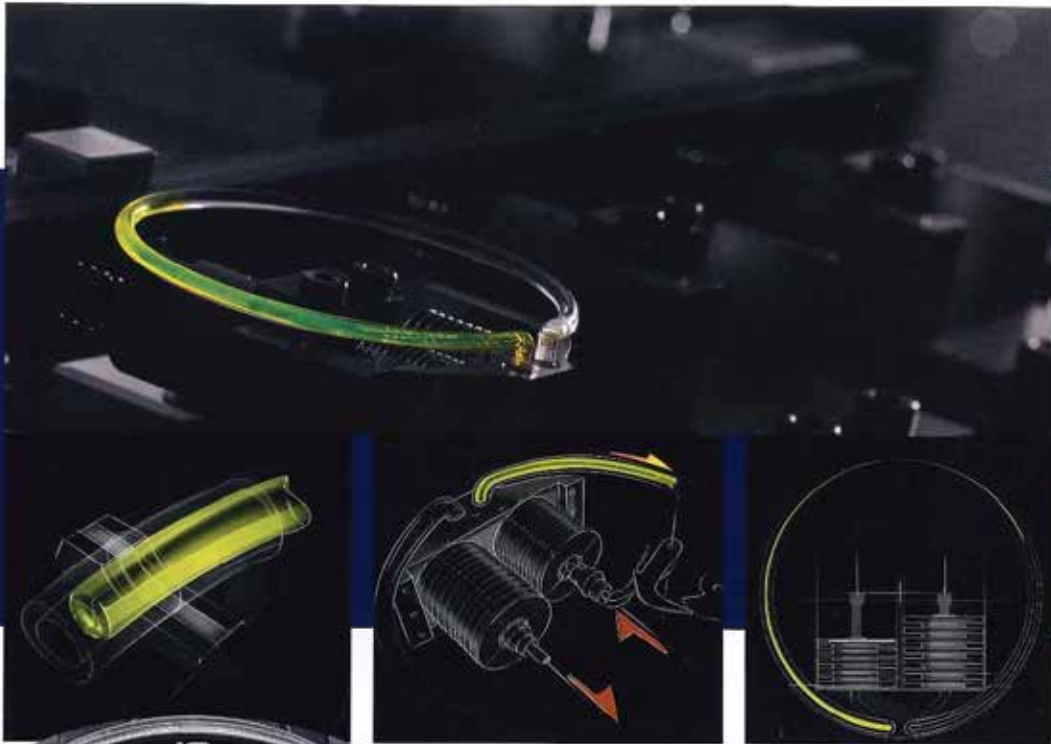
We have two points of sale in Hong Kong, in Central IFC, and at Ocean Terminal in TSI, with Elegant. We expect to have the third open this year as well. Performance is very stable.

What is the main difference between the H1 and H2?

The principle of the H1, physically you have two pistons that are straight, and when you see the H2, the watch is different

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because you see the movement – it is open – and you see the V-shaped configuration for the pistons. We worked with Chronode to manufacture the movement [of the H1], while the H2 was done with Audemars Piguet Renaud & Papi.

How difficult was it to achieve the new colors for the liquids?

What you have to understand is that it took four years of development to achieve these colors. It was a complete nightmare to manufacture this because on the one side you have the watchmakers, and on the other you've got the chemists, and they work with different minds, different brains; to make them work together was a real challenge. When you go into the liquid, it's not like a simple mechanism that you can master and control, like when you have two wheels, you make them work and that's logical. With liquids, evaporation, pressure, temperature those are the big challenges— and also of course gravity. If you move your hand, the liquid has to be in a stable state to tell the time accurately.

Those two pistons — we call them bellows — and we manufacture them in the US with a company that works within the space industry, helping build space shuttles. To find those guys and work with them was a real achievement as well.

Another challenge was the coating for the capillaries, or the tubes that the liquid travels through: The liquid is a combination of oil and a special "water," which means they will never mix. One of the big challenges in the color was staining.



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The blue liquid of the new H1 Iceberg highlights the intricacies of the movement, while giving the collection a breath of fresh air. This model is limited to only 50 pieces.

We had to use eight different types of coating material for the internal side of the tube to avoid color retention. It is another company that specializes in this; and then we have to create the “water” with the right mix of different elements. So just to change the color from green to red, it’s about US\$100,000 to 150,000 in development, it’s possible; but it takes a lot of energy and funding.

You had mentioned in a past interview that this technology had medical applications, can you elaborate on that?

The basic idea started a few years ago and one of the gentlemen who put some money behind it, Patrick, came from the medical industry. When you move liquids you can either decide to display it, which is what we’ve done with the hours, minutes, seconds; or you can inject it, like medicine into your body. And when you master the speed and quantity of micro liquids in motion, you can control it. If you can imagine having a patch that you can put on someone with diabetes for example, and that patch has insulin, and instead of injecting it, the patch transfers the liquid into the body at a controlled time and speed – the potential is enormous. The thing is, the speed to market in the medical industry takes 10 years because of all the approvals

and certifications; it’s a very long adventure. So we decided to go first with HYT. We said, “We are in Switzerland, so let’s use it to display time.”

Patrick and Lucien, the originators of the project, went to the Basel fair, with their backpacks, and said, let’s look for people who know their watches – and this is how it all started, in fact. They talked to people in the trade, showing their invention and asking about who can help them start, or who will be interested in it. Three or four months later, I met Lucien because they’ve heard about me and of my background and they told me about this invention and how it can help me take things beyond what I’ve done so far.

What’s in the pipeline for HYT? What are your plans for the H3?

We only really started to sell watches in September 2013 and to come up with an H3 this year would have been very early. We’ve been trying to catch up to our orders and deliveries. So this year, we stretched the collection with different colors and materials, we did the basics and moved from five references to 19 now, and in 2015, we will come out with H3. ★