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19

REBEL WITH A CAUSE



Laurent Picciotto, the eccentric and trailblazing founder and owner of Paris-based retailer Chronopassion, has never shied away from taking risks. He's played a pivotal hand in the development of new and established brands, which is reflected in his personal watch collection.

WORDS JEAN MUN-DELSALLE
PHOTO SARAI SUÁREZ

"MY FATHER WAS very interested in watches and sometimes I was with him for purchases. I was 12 years old and just a spectator, of course. Don't even think I was able to touch a watch! Then I started to be fascinated by this subject. I remember a visit to the first floor of Chaumet, to the 'temporelles' boutique (a multi-brand shop at the time), with my father to look at Audemars Piguet's Royal Oak – what a shock! My father bought it in 1974, two years after the launch. Because it was very expensive and I was in love with this watch, I would become an Audemars Piguet dealer some years later, but somehow it was not so weird, considering the emotion I had. For years and years, I followed the subject and, of course, I used to buy watches that I could afford from time to time. For years, it was cheap watches and, when I started to become wealthier, I was already familiar with the value of watches.

I started to collect more 'seriously' some years after I opened Chronopassion, first because I was at the centre of temptation and also because the trust of my customers was many times more evident when they saw what I was wearing.

The fact that I have had made special Chronopassion limited editions makes it almost impossible 100 per cent of the time to resist buying one piece for myself. There is no rhythm to the way I buy; it is just when I fall in love with a piece and am able to afford it, because of course it is an expensive passion. I own around 40 watches. Brands I own are Richard Mille, Audemars Piguet, Hublot, Panerai, Alain Silberstein, Girard-Perregaux, Strom, MB&F, Urwerk, Corum, Giuliano Mazzuoli, Ikepod, Perrelet, Snyder and, of course, most of them are brands I carry in my shop. I store them in a secret place because I have been robbed in the past.

I don't remember my first watch precisely, but a long time ago I bought a Breguet 3137, power reserve, date, moon phases, yellow gold, with a lot of emotion because of its vintage look and the perfect symmetry of the indications on the dial. I wore it for a very long time.

My first Gerald Genta was also on my wrist for years. It was the bronze Gefica Safari with slate dial, day-date, moon phases, alarm and a

little compass on the buckle. This watch was so weird and confidential (1988-89) that I felt that I was unique to wear such a 'freak' watch. My rarest watch is probably my Richard Mille RM 008 Chronograph Tourbillon with black coating. This is a unique piece (that is also engraved). It was part of my way out of the Richard Mille company after five years as shareholder and cofounder. Ninety per cent of the time I buy from my own Chronopassion shop, and sometimes from other shops.

How do I decide which timepiece I want to buy next? It's quite impossible to answer precisely – I just know it. It is very instinctive after several years of buying thousands of watches for Chronopassion – I just crack, my decision is like a storm.

Of course, it is a mix between design and technique; sometimes rarity can push your desire further. But the feeling is really savage. I think because of my profession, my tastes have evolved to become more complicated, weirder and rarer. A Greubel Forsey is one of my dream watches, but its price makes me patient. The GMT could be the real dream.

Your watch follows you all the time. There is



an intimate relation with this object; even when you're naked, you keep your watch on and behind it is a human relationship, discussions and new people you started to talk to because they are part of a passionate family. Being at the centre of the watch storm, I see watches and people passionate about the subject every day. There is no way for me to be free from this passion, but I'm not complaining, of course."