

CHRONOPASSION

Presse Kit



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In a nutshell

Innumerable similes have been used
to describe Chronopassion,
the nexus of all kinds of horological fantasies:
Ali Baba's cave;
a den of timepiece maniacs;
a temple of wanton watchmaking; the list goes on.
This is the stuff urban legends
– and indeed entire mythologies –
are made of. But at the end of the day,
it's quite straightforward:

Chronopassion is simply
an independent watch gallery.





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Recommending the watchmaking emotion that's just right for you

At Chronopassion, you won't find mass-marketed trinkets or the fruits of assembly-line production. Just as in an art gallery, most of the timepieces displayed are limited editions, or even unique items. The aim is not to please the public or stand out from the crowd: Laurent Picciotto, CEO and founder of the establishment, likes things that are singular, beautiful and rare – and shares them in his own inimitable way. His selection is a reflection of his personality, and his convictions: there's a narrow road reserved for the watchmaking elite, and its way leads to Chronopassion.

Some words will never be heard at 271 rue Saint-Honoré; words like “collection”, or “range”. Before being placed in its mobile showcase (also one of a kind), each watch is examined, tested and controlled in the firm's workshops by a qualified watchmaker. Most of the time, these tests on arrival don't reveal any defects. But at Chronopassion, “most of the time” is not often enough: exceptional pieces deserve exceptional service. And Laurent Picciotto will be the first to tell you that he doesn't see this as a little extra something provided by the store, but an absolute minimum.



Entrance examination

Each client is unique – and so is each watch. At Rue Saint-Honoré, each client is known personally and individually. Why? Because unique watches aren't for your average client. Each Chronopassion regular is accompanied in line with their tastes, their existing collection, and the events in their lives – both major milestones and chance encounters. Fine horology is a road less travelled – but one that Chronopassion has been mapping out for the best part of thirty five years. Anyone who sets out on it can count on this unique wealth of experience.

Does this mean there's something for all tastes here? Quite the opposite: each watch is chosen because it adds something new to the watchmaking world. It could be from an institutional player or a fully independent brand, a well-established manufacture or young startup: whatever the pedigree, the only thing that counts is the finished timepiece. There's just one criterion for admission: a contribution to developing the art of watchmaking. This may be a groundbreaking design, a completely new complication, an exclusive material, or a new ethos. Form is never imposed, but the added value of each timepiece must be without contest.





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Beyond conventions

“Independent” is the firm’s watchword. This shows first and foremost in the selection of the timepieces: many of them come from brands that are also independent. The fact is that there’s mutual understanding and respect between watchmaking entrepreneurs. The close relationship that Chronopassion maintains with its brands is unique in these circles.

Independence is a state of mind, too. For thirty five years now, Chronopassion has been blazing new and unthought-of trails: outlets co-managed with certain brands, the development of special “Chronopassion” editions, a wide range of accessories, a palette of group and independent brands, singularly disruptive communication in the media,

personal investment in the creation of watchmaking startups, and more: these things are now to be found throughout the watchmaking ecosystem, but they were all originally invented by Chronopassion – fully independently.

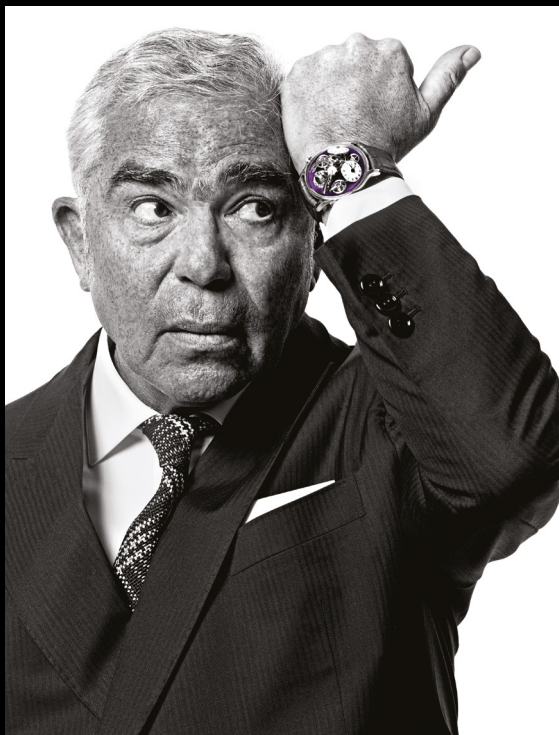
Lastly, independence is also a status. Chronopassion does not depend on anything or anybody. Its business model, distribution model, and choice of timepieces are all fully autonomous, valid only at 271 rue Saint-Honoré. Is it all done according to proper convention and prevailing standards? The question is irrelevant: what matters is that it’s all done the Chronopassion way – and that’s fulfilled the expectations of a carefully targeted audience for the past thirty five years. Convention can wait.





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Laurent Picciotto

Almost apologetically, Laurent Picciotto admits that ***“Chronopassion’s fame sometimes outstrips the reality of its actual place in the market.”***

False modesty and media posturing? Yes and no. A self-made man and self-confessed ***“disorganized dunce,”*** Laurent Picciotto has achieved everything without any qualifications – not even the Baccalaureate. He’s never lost sight of his goal: working. He started at 19, and has never stopped since. He tried his hand at a whole host of different jobs including banking, insurance and promoting the very first CDs. The common point of all this clear: doing business, and having direct contact with the client.

Why didn’t he settle down in one of those sectors? Simply because he soon admitted to an immoderate appetite for objects. And in 1986, Laurent Picciotto opted for

watches: toys for adults to which his father, an experienced businessman, had already introduced him – without ever imagining they were to affect his son’s entire life.

“The retail business was at a turning point,” he recalls today. ***“The neighbourhood watchmaker and jeweller had had their day, but multibrand watch retailers had not yet emerged on the scene. Chronopassion arrived ahead of its time. That’s why I went to see the brands to suggest retail distribution of their watches. I was 26 and had no experience. They looked at me as though I was from another planet.”***

However, one by one, firms did come on board. Within a short space of time, Chronopassion went from having a single brand to distributing fifteen or so. Laurent Picciotto bought, bought, and bought some more... without being sure of selling even a quarter of his stock! Fortunately, it was not long before his selection proved to have hit the mark and started to bear fruit: with Audemars Piguet, Breguet, Corum, Panerai, and the like, 271 rue Saint-Honoré doubled its sales almost every year, acquiring mature, connoisseur clients. The system was up and running.

Between 1995 and 2000, Laurent Picciotto detected the first signs of the watchmaking boom that was to last until 2008. ***“Suddenly people started arriving from all quarters: traders, golden boys, emirs, princesses barely out of childhood, and dotcom fortunes. Watchmaking culture was in its infancy, but they would spend €250,000 on a minute repeater without even blinking.”*** Chronopassion, already ten years old at the time, made the most of this extravaganza. In some years, the boutique recorded sales growth of up to 45%.

It was around then that Chronopassion opened its first co-managed boutique with Audemars Piguet. “That was a first: two brands, and two stores, adjacent to each other at the same address. The clients quickly understood that we had no imperative to offer an Audemars watch – or any other. We created genuine intellectual trust. So much so that I did the same thing again a few years later, with Hublot.” The joint adventure with Hublot continues at 271 rue Saint-Honoré, Chronopassion’s historic address since September 1988, which has now housed a brand new MB&F Lab since September 2022.





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Epilogue

Thirty five years later, things haven't really changed that much. Mr Picciotto Senior, now in his eighties, still drops by every day and gently lectures his son who, at this stage in his career, should apparently "have at least 140 outlets worldwide." To which his son replies that his calling lies elsewhere: "I'm a small businessman at heart, and I've always loved the idea of running a toy shop," explains Laurent Picciotto. "I like the idea of getting up every morning without knowing what the day holds in store – no more than our clients do. And despite these unknowns,

sooner or later one of them will walk through the door, and in a reasonable act of madness, allow themselves be swayed by their feelings and wager everything on a watch that really stirs them. And that never grows old for me: it's a great feeling, every time; that's just the way I am."

Now, exactly as he took embryonic watch brands under his wing, Laurent Picciotto is investing in the development of a brand of guitars, one of his other great interests. There are no well-worn paths ahead.





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