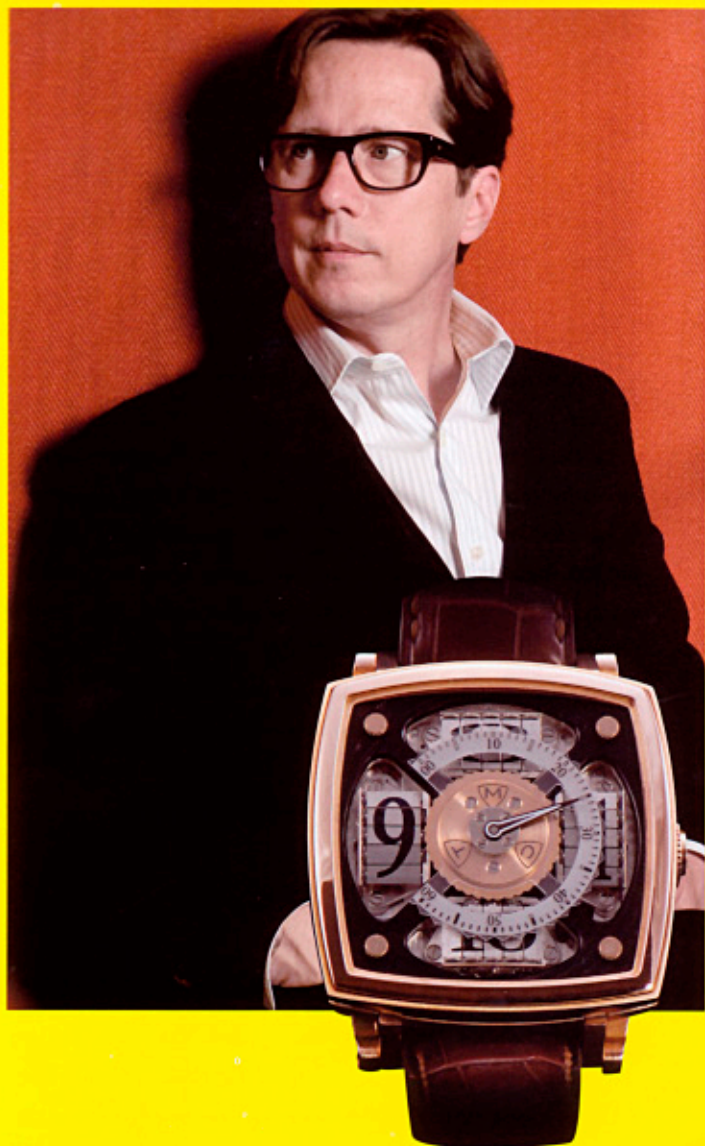


The names we remember from the history of horology have seldom been those of the artisans responsible for the design of watches — horological historians revere the names of the great technical innovators, of such scientist-horologists as Christiaan Huygens and Robert Hooke, A. L. Breguet and John Arnold, Ferdinand Berthoud and the Nobel laureate Charles Guillaume, whose nickel-steel alloys made modern watchmaking possible. While these individuals were all as much artists as scientists, it was not until relatively recently that industrial design, as a separate discipline, came to be practiced in watchmaking. For much of the early phase of the industrial design of watches, designers labored in obscurity — Gérald Genta, one of the first true watch designers, has told REV★LUTION in past interviews that he became famed as the designer of the Royal Oak and the Nautilus not due to the candor of his clients, but rather, due to the curiosity of collectors and the persistence of journalists.

But today, the watch designer is a celebrity, and a veritable force to be reckoned with.

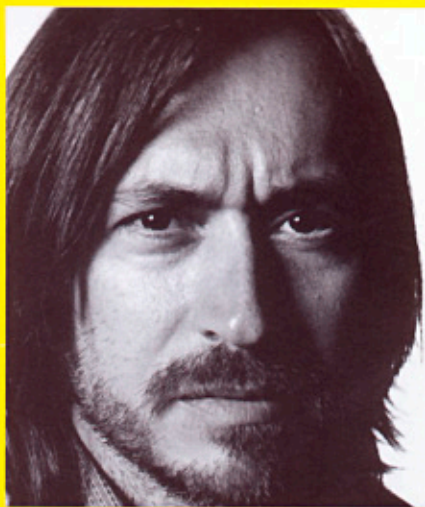
WATCH DESIGNERS THE MINDS WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD

Creative talents behind watch designs used to have their identities concealed by their clients. But with the rise of the notion of the watch as high industrial art, the concept of the watch designer as celebrity has at last come of age **BY JACK FORSTER**



ERIC GIROUD

Eric Giroud's youthful appearance and enthusiastic mannerisms belie the depth of his experience. One of the most paradigmatic exemplars of the new breed of horological artists, Giroud's name is connected with some of modern watchmaking's most audacious designs. His resumé with MB&F alone is impressive; Giroud is the actual designer of every Horological Machine to date, and his work also includes designs for Universal Genève, Harry Winston Rare Timepieces (the Opus 9) and also, very notably, a collaboration with Denis Giguet and Jerome Marcu on the Manufacture Contemporaine du Temps Sequential One (pictured above). Initially trained as an architect, it is perhaps natural that for Giroud, the extension of the form of the watch into the third dimension — a preoccupation of Büsser as well — would be a logical consequence of the ability to think in a manner that is essential in visualizing architecture. Giroud has revealed that the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century was a particularly exciting period in architecture — a source of inspiration for his designs, which seem nourished by the artisanal heritage and industrial dynamism of the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively.



MARC NEWSON

Marc Newson is a different breed from many of the new-gen watch designers; here is a designer whose work extends to watches, rather than a designer whose primary focus is watches. Newson's trademark aesthetic is the deployment of biomorphic forms into the world of everyday objects, which take on, under Newson's hands, peculiarities of scale that play the objective knowledge of an object's dimensions against the perception that an object's lines might extend into infinity. The wit of his designs is to make the limited appear limitless, and this is especially apparent in his Ikepod watch collections: the Hemipode (pictured above), the Horizon and the Solaris. His work has the quality of the graphic artist M. C. Escher — minus the fanatical orchestration of geometry, in place of which Newson substitutes sleek, pebble-like ovoids that project mass and lightness, materiality and vitality, all at once. Intriguingly, the Solaris toys with one of watchmaking's strongest visual conventions: that a watch has two sides, and it is the latest example of Newson's playfully subversive approach, the deconstruction of cognitive presumptions whose overturning is his stock in trade.