



New *Beginnings*

Industry INSIDERS' wish list for 2011.

01

MEEHNA GOLDSMITH,
THE FINANCIAL TIMES CONTRIBUTOR

Last year, affected by the global financial apocalypse, watch brands big and small embarked on a path of sobriety. Watch designs were tamed, while chunky timepieces went out of favour. As we usher in the new year, and with the world economy well on the road to recovery, horolophiles can't help but be excited with

what is in store. Will the companies stick to the tried-and-tested classic theme? Or will they push the horological envelope further this new year? Is there a new material that will become the industry's darling? Come the annual fairs in Geneva and Basel, these questions will be answered. Here, *Style:MEN*, along with four industry insiders, list their wishes for 2011 — and pray that they come true.

Plagiarism is too harsh a word. But there has been a bandwagon of brands presenting updated versions of archived designs. Think the Tudor Heritage chronograph, Porsche Design Heritage collection and the Omega Seamaster Ploprof 1200M (above); they are excellent timepieces but they lack that dose of originality. Which is what gets Meehna Goldsmith's goat. "I wish that brands would stop raiding the archives and presenting vintage copycats with cosmetic facelifts as new, exciting additions to their lineups," she tells *Style:MEN*. "I'd like to see a bit more guts and exploration with designs that follow the established DNA but that also surprise us with innovation and creativity in the presentation and not just the technology of the 21st century."



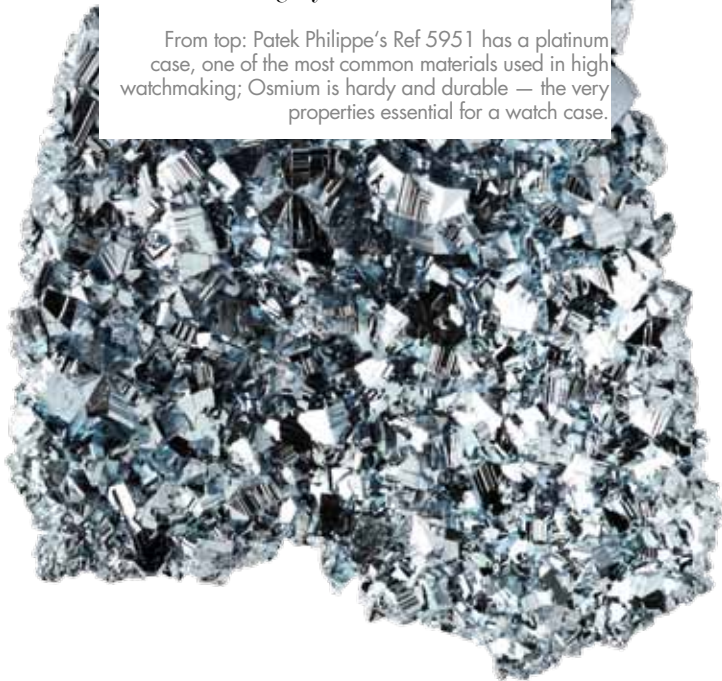
02

ALON BEN-JOSEPH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ACE JEWELERS FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Materials featured prominently the last decade in the watch industry. But Alon Ben-Joseph wishes to see more. “I wish for more hybrid or

experimental material usage for watches,” he says. “I would love to see cases made out of ruthenium, rhodium, osmium and/or iridium — the other family members of the platinum group.” Currently, most watch marques are only using platinum to manufacture cases. Ben-Joseph hopes to see a case made out of osmium, a material found naturally in platinum ores. Employed in fountain pen tips and instrument pivots, an osmium case will be able to withstand stress and is sturdy and durable. “It is hard and has an interesting colour: Blue-grey or metallic blue-black.”

From top: Patek Philippe’s Ref 5951 has a platinum case, one of the most common materials used in high watchmaking; Osmium is hardy and durable — the very properties essential for a watch case.



03

ELIZABETH DOERR, CO-AUTHOR OF *WRISTWATCH ANNUAL*

Before the economy came crashing down, the majority of the watch marques was performing better than expected with sales hitting unprecedented highs. This led to brands trying to outdo the competition, gaining one-upmanship over their rivals. They pushed the watchmaking limits, and as a result, created many unique timepieces that Elizabeth Doerr terms as “monstrosities”. “This is one trend that I have personally not appreciated in the last few years.” Quoting the Concord Quantum Gravity (above) as a prime example, she says: “I can appreciate the technology and ingenuity that went into its making, but for me this watch represented the epitome of a search for uniqueness in watchmaking that bordered on the absurd and questionable taste.” At the last *BaselWorld*, Doerr remembered seeing a variation of this original model — name withheld — with no particular technical improvements but simply set with gems and stones. She feels particularly disappointed and wishes for such absurd watches to be “replaced with wearable, aesthetic mechanics that are also original”. “They don’t have to be conventional, but my plea is simply for good taste.”

04

JOE THOMPSON,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
OF *WATCHTIME*

A balance spring, or more commonly known as hairspring, is an essential part in mechanical timepieces. Together with the balance wheel, it controls the speed of movement of the parts in the timepiece. Currently, most watch brands—even among the bigwigs—buy hairsprings from manufacturers like Nivarox. There are but a handful of marques, which produce their proprietary hairsprings. This is something that Joe Thompson hopes to see in the new year. “I hope that the tiny trend toward producing in-house hairsprings à la Rolex, Roger Dubuis, and A. Lange & Söhne will pick up steam with other brands joining this so-far very exclusive club.” If Thompson’s wish comes true, it will make the brands less dependent on suppliers, which is always a good thing.



Right: A. Lange & Söhne is one of those who manufactures its own hairsprings. Left: The parachrom hairspring from Rolex.



05

TERENCE LIM, SENIOR WRITER
OF *STYLE:MEN*

Fashion brands have gone on offensive strategies in recent years to prove themselves as true watchmaking marques: Chanel’s J12 comes in chronograph, GMT and even tourbillon versions, while Louis Vuitton has its Tambour Tourbillon and Tambour Mysterieuse. These impressive watches were not just sleekly designed cases housed with procured movements; they are an indication that fashion houses are taking horology seriously. Which is why the industry needs to shift its mindset; people are still not talking about fashion watch brands in the same breath as the true watchmakers. But these fashion houses are putting in extra effort and resources to do things the right way, which I think is definitely worth the recognition. ■

Chanel’s intent on becoming a horology superpower is evident with its J12 Tourbillon Retrograde Mysterieuse; more fashion houses should employ the same strategy too.

