

AED 30
KWD 2.5
QAR 30

0 3



Signe

SIGNE

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF CHOPARD'S LATEST HIGH JEWELRY COLLECTION, THE GARDEN OF KALAHARI.

LA VERA SPREZZATURA!

WE TAKE YOU ON A SARTORIAL JOURNEY TO DISCOVER THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN HUBLOT, ITALIA INDEPENDENT AND THE HOUSE OF RUBINACCI.

WITHOUT OBSTACLES

DISCOVER THE ALL-NEW MERCEDES-BENZ G500 AMG 4X4.



TROPICAL RACE

The annual regatta in St.Barthelemy, Les Voiles De St Barth, is a true test of endurance and seaworthiness featuring some of the finest boats ever to sail the oceans.

INDEPENDENT VISION

Christophe Claret is a man with a passion for the intricate mechanics of time. From the inception of his career to his vision for the watch industry, the watchmaker tells us all

Mehdi Mabrouk

————— Christophe Claret realized early in his life that the path he wanted to pursue was that of a watchmaker. He ventured into it at a tender age of 14, repairing old clocks in one of Lyon’s workshops. He later attended watchmaking school with the likes of Roger Dubuis and went on to graduate at the age of 20. With the dream of creating his own brand eventually, Claret started off in the world of watchmaking by restoring old watches. He set up his first enterprise as a service provider creating watches for other brands. After making timepieces for more than 60 brands, he decided to launch his own brand of watches in 2009. We had the opportunity to sit down with the renowned watchmaker on his recent visit to Dubai, to discuss his vision for the watch industry, the current crisis and the specificities of his brand.

Can you tell us more about the origins of your independent brand Christophe Claret?

I have worked with 65 brands and created 120 products in all, in a period of fewer than 30 years. Around 2009, there was a crisis; we went from having 25 clients per year to around 8. I always had this intuition about the market; I sensed this dive in business, and that is when I decided to decrease the dependency on external manufacturing activities and focus on my own brand. I launched my own brand in 2009, and I went from solely creating watches for other brands to creating products for my own brand. I also came up with a new business model that kept the

whole manufacture alive. Today we are a team of almost 70 people with 32 different specializations.

How did you approach the idea of setting up your own brand and what was the philosophy behind it? What were the major obstacles?

If you create a new and innovative product, you gain more credibility. For me, it has always been necessary to be innovative. My inspiration comes from aeronautics, magic, antiquity and nature and inspiration is therefore not limited to horology alone. That is why I create innovative products that have never been seen before.

If we take the Margot for example, it is a highly-sophisticated product for women. I proposed it to some retail clients, but it was turned down. I was personally convinced that there was a new market for this type of pieces. It was a small market, but still uncharted. Some brands make watches for women with modest complications. However, I created one with 731 components, one of the most complicated women’s watch on the market today. In a period of crisis, it was tough to do. But you can see today that there is a market, and other brands are starting to make complicated watches for women as well.

We are like a brand who traces a path in the jungle with a machete; the other just follow our footsteps. The greatest obstacle I had was my own clients saying, “You went too far Mr. Claret!”. But I am not

A portrait of Christophe Claret, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red and blue striped tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred interior with wooden paneling and a window.

“The market is currently demanding innovative products. There was an era when watchmakers used to have complete control over their brands, and at that time it was easier to be creative and to release innovative and iconic pieces.”

Christophe Claret



Christophe Claret X-TREM-1 StingHD



Christophe Claret X-TREM-1 StingHD

afraid to go too far. When you are a pioneer, you face many technical and commercial challenges, but you need to decide on how you plan to address them and act on your intuition.

Which markets and regions are most receptive of your creations?

It depends on the individual customer and not necessarily the market they're in. Sometimes, you will meet clients who want to show their status by wearing something very pricey on their wrist. Some customers might be more inclined to buy a commercial brand because of the prestigious name it carries, but a real collector would definitely consider a Christophe Claret. We create sophisticated products, and we have customers who buy complicated watches because they understand them and are passionate about them.

So, you can say our market is that of sophisticated clients. I always had this market intuition for demand of sophisticated timepieces. I would tell my retail clients that they would sell a certain number of watches and they always ended up selling more. They would order 12 pieces and then would end up coming back to me for more. If you take the X-Trem 1 for instance, I proposed it to some of my retail clients but their feedback was that commercially and technically it was impossible. We ended up selling 65 of them. I know the market, and I know that there are sophisticated clients who want something different.

How long does it take you to create a complicated watch?

It is not always the most complicated of watches that takes the longest time; some watches have taken us seven years while others were designed in less than a year. It depends on the types of products and the complications they carry. Our poker-themed watch, for example, took

five years to produce because we had to display 52 cards as well as the thousand different hands one can receive during the game. For some, it is a toy, but it is a very complicated piece of watchmaking. This model might have been easier to sell with the marketing power of a big brand name, but in the end, collectors will appreciate its value.

You mentioned big brands; do you think that marketing is the only way to sell watches?

The market is currently demanding innovative products. There was an era when watchmakers used to have complete control over their brands, and at that time it was easier to be creative and to release innovative and iconic pieces. But then again in that era, there was enough cash flow to manage the risks. Today it is not the watchmakers that manage the big brands; it's the finance department of a brand managing watchmakers. Big brands pay more attention to financial risks than to creativity and innovation. There are always risks when it comes to new products. Today you need to be able to inject more money into marketing, social media and overall with so many layers of marketing, it can get very pricey.

Too much money focus can kill creativity. In today's market conditions, word of mouth is your best marketing tool for an innovative product. For us to sell our product, we don't need to sell that based on our name. We sell on our innovative products. Clients are our greatest marketing asset. We talk directly to the collectors, and I talk to them with a passion. It is easy because they feel the same emotion and they can relate to our products. They are also very pleased to have the creator in front of them. That is why I go to events all over the world. Yesterday I was in Kuwait, tomorrow I will be in Tokyo, and then I have three other events in Shanghai and Beijing. We meet the collectors, and that is how we sell our products. ■