



FACES
REVELATION

REVOLUTION ★ 1

INTERVIEW BY CHARLENE CO

A timely revelation

THE COUPLE BEHIND THE NASCENT BRAND, REVELATION,
BUILDS CONFIDENTLY ON AN INVENTIVE YET PRACTICAL WATCH DESIGN



The concept behind the complex mechanism that Swiss owners and watch designers, Olivier Leu and Anouk Danthe, developed through a pioneering watch is actually very simple. They had wanted to offer a watch that was highly complicated but does not sacrifice the very function of a wristwatch, which is to easily tell time.

Can you tell us a bit about Revelation? How it got started?

Anouk: Olivier and I first met at design school and a few years later became a couple. We are both by profession, industrial designers for the watch industry. Prior to starting our own company, Olivier was a freelance designer for watch brands like Hermès, TAG Heuer and Piaget, while I previously worked for Jaeger-LeCoultre, Omega and Audemars Piguet.

During this period, we created a lot of models and sketches, and came up with a number of creative ideas for other brands. Finally one day in 2005, we decided to keep one of these ideas and develop it into a product, a brand. We were convinced that it was innovative and avant-garde enough to build a brand from. In 2007, we founded a company called “Les Créations Horlogères de Lully” and eventually developed the “Revelation” brand.

Of the many ideas you’ve come up with, how did you know that this was THE idea to go with?

Anouk: We reviewed the market and realized that on one hand, you have these high-end, well-established brands, and on the other, independent watchmakers who are relatively newcomers but have these amazing and highly innovative ideas. We obviously fall under the second type and we believed that this was the idea to build a brand on.

Olivier: Many brands these days tend to be so overly caught up with complications and showing it off that the very purpose of watches, which is to tell time, is heavily compromised. To reveal the mechanism, many of today’s models are made without dials, with open-worked or translucent dials on top of the already numerous features – time is hardly legible! Thus we came up with a design that can accommodate both requirements: boasting the movement and making the time legible. We were inspired by pocket watches of the 17th and 18th centuries that can be opened to reveal the movement.

So thrilled and proud were they of the outcome that as soon as the first prototypes were finalized and tested, they flew to Asia to personally show and explain the workings of the novelties. The couple sat down with REV★LUTION to talk about their new company, and the exciting and highly innovative design that is driving it.

We wanted to come up with a very classical and clean watch, but which can be opened so that the owner can appreciate the movement.

So how exactly did you reconcile these two? What makes this watch special or different from those in the market?

Anouk: We created a state-of-the-art case, which on its own is a horological breakthrough, as it marries the mechanical world with the exterior – something that has never been done before.

The case and the movement are not treated as two separate parts but as an “invisible whole” if you will. The case alone is made out of 71 parts and the yellow gold version, which uses about 1.5 kilos of gold [for raw material], weighs some 154 grams.

Its glass is made of a special optical system coupling the rotation of two polarized glasses. We combine two polarizing filters with opposite nano-metric structures, thus blocking the light from entering, rendering the glass completely black, revealing only the time. For this, we took on the services and expertise of the Centre Suisse d’Électronique et de Microtechnique (CESEM) to create the polarizing discs because no such glass exists in the market. They developed customized surface structures for the watch’s discs. CESEM in fact provides the holograms for the bank notes in Switzerland.

Making the case was a highly technical challenge that took quite a long time to accomplish, but Olivier succeeded.

Olivier: One disc stays in the same position – it’s static – and the other disc pivots when the watch bezel is opened. When the mobile disc turns, its polarized surface is aligned with the static disc, enabling light to come through and in effect reveals the movement and the secondary displays beneath. Everything had to perfectly fit and placed in the right position, with parameters carefully calculated and considered.

And you coined this the “Revelation System?”

Anouk: Yes, we patented the Revelation system in fact because no one has done it in the industry. This system provides you with a clear, time-telling piece that will also allow you to appreciate the workmanship and complexity of the movement.

Do you discourage constantly opening and closing the discs though? Can doing this too often damage the watch or accelerate its wear and tear?

Anouk: We actually tested it, opening and closing the system for around 3,000 times and the watch still works perfectly after that. We’ve also presented these watches to a lot of people in the past weeks and have allowed them to examine the workings of the watch and still, the watches are in perfect working condition. This is mainly because there is zero friction in manipulating the discs so no harm is done even after constant manipulation.



Revelation 1 is the brand’s first collection and is highlighted by the Revelation System

Can you tell us about the movement?

Olivier: When we started, no company wanted to sell us a movement so we had to make our own, which I guess was a welcome challenge since we are watch designers after all. We decided to make a carousel tourbillon, which is the less common type compared to the traditional or Breguet tourbillon. We labeled the movement, TM01 Tourbillon Manège – “manège” being French for “merry-go-round” – because the entire movement is like the cars and horses rotating on a platform.

Normally, you would have the escapements on a cage and the cage turns by itself, but we decided to blow out the mechanism and put the balance and escapement on a certain angle and put those on a plate, making it look like a merry-go-round. That was the beauty of having our own movement; we can design the bridge the way we like, and play with the movement as we wish.

“Revelation” is an interesting name, which I guess is rather apt given the concept of the watch. Can you let us in on the story behind it?

Anouk: Revelation was a rather obvious choice as we were creating the model; it was a perfect embodiment and description of the piece.

The logo, too, we feel reflects our approach of balancing and combining feminine and masculine qualities, and looking back and paying homage to the watchmaking pioneers, while at the same time looking to the future. It was like traditional watchmaking meets new trends.

What are some of the manufacturing/technical challenges you encountered in making the watch?

Olivier: Given the complexity of the watch, we had to do a lot of coordination. We have 40 different suppliers specializing on different areas.

For instance, we have separate suppliers for the balance, bridges, wheel, and we had to buy the tooling for the teeth of the wheel because the teeth in the watch were made in such a way that the energy is optimized – to go from the barrel to the tourbillon. We also had to calculate the spring that goes into the barrel, and for that we had another specialized supplier. Even the screws are specially made because we designed them – they were of different sizes and varying thickness.

There are about 300 components in the watch, so sourcing them all was a challenge. However, the assembly of the watch is done by one watchmaker.

Of course it goes without saying, developing and designing the case and movement were themselves tremendous feats. After all that, we finally got to finish the first prototypes and were so proud and pleased with the result that we decided to go and show them to the market and to the press.

So this is your first “tour” and interestingly, you decide to go to Asia?

Anouk: We decided to do a week in Singapore and a week here in Hong Kong because we believe that indeed, Asia is the leading market for luxury goods these days. We have met a few re-





LEFT
Revelation approached to Centre Suisse d'Électronique et de Microtechnique to create polarizing discs for the Revelation System

BELOW
Calibre TM01 Tourbillon Manège

WE CAME UP WITH A DESIGN THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE BOTH REQUIREMENTS: BOASTING THE MOVEMENT AND MAKING THE TIME LEGIBLE.



tailers who are quite interested in our product so those look very promising. Asia is such a dynamic region and market to be in at the moment.

Who do you think will be attracted to Revelation watches?

Olivier: Revelation watches are for people who want to be more discreet with their watches, but at the same time have that knowledge that they can simply open it and appreciate its complexity. We have had some requests though to make versions that do not have the Revelation system, exposing the movement. It is actually quite a sight given the size of the tourbillon; it is easily visible from a distance so I can understand why some people would like to see it and be seen with it all the time.

Anouk: For the watches with the Revelation System, we are targeting collectors who already have all the brands – your Patek Philippes, Vacheron Constantins – and who are ready to take a risk with a less known brand that is first and foremost about the beauty and innovation of the product. The pieces without the Revelation System that expose the movement are meant for the more regular customers or the newer collectors. This version

is in fact easier to market because it is not very different from the watches already in the market; the newer collectors seem to like watches that look highly complicated, something that is very visible. Some people can't even tell the difference between the balance and the tourbillon. But with this watch, even people who are not very knowledgeable can appreciate its complexity.

What challenges do you anticipate in the first few years of doing business?

Olivier: The difficult part for us now is that we are not a known brand; we are basically building from nothing. We are aware that it will be a long journey of informing and educating people about us and about our product.

Having said that, we feel that it is very important to go out there to personally explain and show the watch to the people and the media given that it is quite complex. It takes time to explain how the watch operates and make them understand the level and kind of work that was put into it. We could not just simply send out the press kits and have them figure it out themselves; this would simply not do the watch justice. ★