

# The world of *creation*



The *atelier* of François-Paul Journe- *alma mater* of the brand that bears his name - is at the forefront of the watchmaking world; an example of sobriety and sophistication that has been awarded as few others have. To find oneself walking down its halls is an unspeakable luxury.

In the centre of Geneva an old factory from 1862 has been since 2002 the headquarters of the *enfant terrible* of contemporary watch making. In contrast to most of the leading Manufactures of exquisite mechanical watches, who settle in bucolic landscapes such as the *Vallée de Joux*, *Le Locle* and *La Chaux-de-Fonds*, the *atelier* of François-Paul Journe, *alma mater* of the brand that bears his name, could not be anywhere but in the eye of the storm of world high-end watchmaking.

▲TXT+ PHOTOS: SERGIO ZAGIER



## A POETIC RAPTURE

The arrival of the perpetual calendar to watch making was the result of the long work of master watchmakers, who finally found the way to include this function to keep track of the date over the years. A poetic game, where the concept of eternity could finally fit inside a case with incomparable machinery.

In honor of this technical feat, comes the new F.P. Journe *Quantième Perpétuel*. It introduces a distinctive touch in the design of its protagonist, the perpetual calendar: two large Windows for the date on the dial. Another characteristic of this chronograph is its ease of use, as corrections are made by moving the crown to three different positions. The month is set using a separate corrector- a sort of shortcut- a lever which remains protected.

The movement is self-winding and boasts a powerful 120-hour power reserve. *Quantième Perpétuel* is available in two versions: with platinum or gold case. It measures 40 mm or 42 mm in diameter, depending on the model. The dial is red or white gold with a silver chapter ring on which the twelve Arabic numerals are read. The hour and central minutes hands are blue, and on a half arch between 8 and 10 the power reserve is indicated. The openings of the perpetual calendar are two pairs of windows, at 12 for the day of the week and month, and at 6 for the date.





F.P. JOURNE  
Invenit et Fecit

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Those who know François-Paul in person or have read about him surely agree that that is the right place where to unwrap all his energy. A low profile is not what characterizes him, but rather daring and constant innovation. *Invenit et Fecit* (we invented it and we did it) is their motto, and it accurately describes both François-Paul and his company. With an extended track record of highly innovative creations and a superlative mechanical quality, the few pieces they annually produce—around 900—are disputed by high-level collectors and exquisite followers of the brand. In this context, the only space F.P. Journe has in all of Latin America was awarded to the boutiques of Simonetta Orsini.

At the reception of the firm we meet Brigitte Bocquet-Makhzani, head of Public Relations and a sympathetic and determined woman who walked us through this space decorated with museum pieces. An impressive 19th-century astronomical clock mesmerizes us. In the different spaces, absolutely austere, few watches are assembled from the beginning to the end by the

same expert; and almost all of the components are produced in the firm's own workshops, with exquisite precision and finish, as if they were unique works of art.

Leaving aside the fact that F.P. Journe watches frequently feature on the cover of specialized magazines and are favorite pieces for high-end collectors, they truly are wonders in a saga which started some centuries ago and which revived in the past two or three decades. Each novelty the brand presents is not merely an aesthetic or marketing effect. Contrary to this, underneath an original and sober design that unifies all collections we find the work of a genius, at the level of Abraham-Louis Breguet or George Daniels. From chronometers that discern 1/100 of a second up to double balances which resonate, to large chimes which take three months of work and, to top it all, the brand new chronometer without lubrication, about which its creator says without any modesty: "It incorporates the finest components in the history of watchmaking".



#### THE MOST ANTICIPATED MEETING

Although we did not have the privilege of seeing Journe working in his atelier we met him several times elsewhere. His creations are well-known both in watch making competitions and specialist auctions, winning awards and prizes as well as unusual deals for his watches from auction houses such as Christies, Bonhams or Antiquorum.

In 2002, F.P. Journe received at the *Grand Prix D'horlogerie in Genève* the *Special Prize of the Jury* for the *Octa Calendrier* and has since become one of the most awarded brands, winning awards nearly every year. Stand outs are its *Three Golden Needles*, the *Oscars of Haute Horlogerie*, the *Tourbillon Souveraine* (2004), the *Sonnerie Souveraine* (2006) and the *Centigraphe Souveraine* (2008).

On our last trip he was a regular at auctions, with his usual casual dress code, watching how bidders from different parts of the world pushed for his pieces. He was also present at the *Salon Belles Montres* in Paris, in November 2012, for the presentation of the *Chronomètre Optimum*, a new achievement in the history of universal watch making: a twin barrel coupled with a remontoire of titanium to maintain a constant force on the biaxial escape, which works without lubrication and up to a 70-hour power reserve.

When everything seems to have been invented, F.P. Journe will undoubtedly pull something out of its top hat to honor their motto, *Invenit et Fecit*.