

celini

STATUS



TURNING HEADS

BY SCOTT HICKEY



The Upside Down uses a patented complication developed by Ludovic Ballouard that displays the current hour right-side up and all other hours upside down (2 o'clock).

French-born watchmaker **Ludovic Ballouard** refined his craft for **more than a decade** while toiling behind the bench for some of the most **prestigious names** in Swiss watchmaking. Ballouard was at the **top of his game** in 2009 when he **stepped out of the shadows** and into the **limelight** to establish his **independent brand** in Geneva. Today, he is putting his own **playful spin** on the watchmaking tradition with his **company's debut**, the **Upside Down**.

With his daringly original design, Ballouard is the first to create a wristwatch whose numerals rotate so that the correct hour is right side up, while all the others are upside down. In other words, when the minute hand reaches 12 o'clock, the outgoing hour returns to its inverted position while the incoming hour simultaneously turns to assume the correct orientation.

Ballouard says the idea for the mechanism came to him in 2008, near the end of his seven-year tenure with F. P. Journe. "The global economy was in crisis and throughout the world, figures no longer made any sense or had any value. They were spinning us in all directions," he says. "The Upside Down symbolizes the fact that in whatever position, figures always have a sense and value of time."

He let the idea simmer for a year as he continued to assemble F. P. Journe's acclaimed *Sonnerie Souveraine*, a complex chiming timepiece only a few watchmakers in the world are capable of mastering. "Indeed, working on the *Sonnerie Souveraine* gave me constant pleasure and satisfaction. I was privileged," he says. "Finally, however, I felt that my future lay in independent watchmaking."



The clear caseback reveals the 12 Maltese crosses used to rotate the individual hour discs along with the movement, which is crafted from brass giving it a distinctive radiance.

In April 2009, he left his job and started his marque. When he began hiring companies to produce the parts for the Upside Down, Ballouard found a silver lining in the economy's dark clouds. "Suppliers weren't as busy as usual, which meant all of my components were delivered within six months," he says. "Before the slowdown, I would have waited at least two years. Instead, I was able to deliver my first watch in December 2009."

INSIDE OUT

Obviously the mechanism responsible for animating the hours on the Upside Down's dial represents a complex bit of engineering, but Ballouard made the feat even more difficult by choosing aesthetics over logic. Instead of hiding the system beneath the dial, its natural position from a technical standpoint, he opted to flaunt the mechanism by moving it to the back of the watch so it could be seen through the caseback. "Doing this was a lot more complicated and expensive, but I wanted people to be able to enjoy the mechanism and see it in action," he says.

It's hard to argue against the extra effort and expense after discovering the tantalizing results through the Upside Down's

transparent back. The view reveals a ring of 12 Maltese crosses that control the discs on the other side. Blink when the hour changes and you'll miss seeing two of the crosses complete their rapid rotations.

This exceptional movement is housed in an equally distinctive 41mm-diameter case made of platinum, the only precious metal Ballouard plans to use for his creations. Instead of the standard convex curve, the Upside Down's case middle is slightly concave. The uncharacteristic profile offers a subtle twist on convention intended to provide a unique tactile experience. "I think people will enjoy the smooth feel of the case's curved shapes under their fingers," Ballouard says. "I believe we've succeeded at making a watch that is complicated yet fun and something people will enjoy wearing."

After hitting the ground running with his Upside Down, Ballouard says he is already plotting his next move. "Plans are in the works for my next model, which I will unveil in 2012. After that, I expect to present a new model every two years. Thankfully, I have no shortage of ideas." ☺



The 41mm platinum case features a light gray dial whose restrained shade is punctuated by flame-blued steel hands for the minutes and small seconds.