



LIFE & TIME UPSIDE DOWN

IB

In the picturesque Swiss village of Athenaz, just a short distance from another renowned independent watchmaker, Antoine Preziuso, stands a building that once served as a post office. Inside, Ludovic has his workshop, where he creates only twelve watches per year.

**LUDO IS
UNDOUBTEDLY
WORKING IN
HIS WORKSHOP
IN THE SWISS
COUNTRYSIDE
NEAR GENEVA
AT THIS VERY
MOMENT.**

There are many amazing watchmakers in the world who are not entirely in the spotlight. Ludovic "Ludo" Ballouard is undoubtedly one of them. However, once you take a closer look at his craft, a story full of twists and, above all, unique watches unfolds before you.

FARMER LUDO

Ludovic was born in 1971 to a French father and a Dutch mother and spent his childhood in a remote coastal area of Brittany. Life there revolved mainly around farming and animal husbandry. Ludovic's father was a farmer through and through, working the fields with heavy agricultural machinery, while his young

son was drawn to the skies. It wouldn't have taken much for young Ludovic to follow in his parents' footsteps and become a farmer. However, fate had different plans for Ludo, and they were far from straightforward.

TO THE HEIGHTS

Young Ludo wasn't just a dreamer in his thoughts; he was particularly fascinated by the sky and radio-controlled model airplanes. As Ludovic himself recalls, he built Airfix models and remote-controlled planes from an early age. This passion truly captivated him.

UNWANTED

At the age of fifteen, Ludo trained as a stenographer and dreamed of becoming a

dental technician. However, fate had other plans. His application to study was rejected.

Reflecting on this time, Ludovic said, "I wanted to become a dental technician because I enjoyed working with miniature components. Naturally, I thought this job was perfect for me."

One day, a school counselor noticed Ludovic's exceptional skill in assembling and disassembling airplanes made up of countless tiny parts. The counselor suggested he try enrolling in a watchmaking school. Inspired, Ludo applied to the watchmaking school in Rennes, which accepted only thirteen students. Sadly, his name was not among them once again. With tears in his eyes, young Ballouard returned to the farm.

But he didn't give up. Shortly afterward, he brought a handmade model ship to the school. A moved teacher, impressed by his craftsmanship, granted him an exception and admitted him immediately. Ludo went on to complete the three-year watchmaking course.

A WATCHMAKER IN SNOWY SWITZERLAND

Anyone expecting the young watchmaker to finally settle down would be sorely mistaken. Although he found a job in Lorient, Brittany, with a local watchmaker, he didn't stay long. The work mainly involved replacing batteries in quartz movements—it was the 1980s, after all. Ludovic found the job devoid of challenges and, in his own words,

uninteresting.

Determined to find something more fulfilling, he decided to try his luck in Le Sentier, Switzerland. There, he joined Lemania in the Vallée de Joux, assembling chronographs. Ballouard was genuinely happy there, gaining his first real experience as a watchmaker.

However, as we already know, Ludovic's story is full of twists and turns. Unfortunately, the harsh conditions, particularly the biting cold and heavy snow, didn't suit him at all. After just six months, he voluntarily left the heart of watchmaking behind.

SELF-PROCLAIMED AVIATION TECHNICIAN

Ludovic Ballouard returned to his native Brittany, where he spent eight years working at Dinard Airport as a maintenance technician for cockpit instruments. Despite lacking the necessary qualifications—no papers, no certifications—he was hired.

Reflecting on this period, Ludovic said: "It's true that I had taken a few flying lessons, but I never passed the test. On the other hand, airplanes and their components are like Lego to me. I suppose I have a gift for immediately understanding how parts work as soon as I see them."

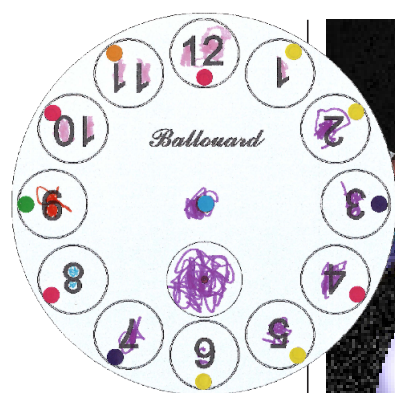
This natural talent was likely one reason why his little "big" deception regarding his missing qualifications went unnoticed. As he once >>>

LUDOVIC BALLOUARD Upside Down Series Gaga (edice Grail Watch)

- ◆ **Strojek:** mechanický s manuálním nátahem
- ◆ **Kalibr:** manufakturní B01
- ◆ **Frekvence:** 28 800 polokmitů/h
- ◆ **Rezerva chodu:** 40 hodin
- ◆ **Funkce:** Jumping hours, minuty a male sekundy
- ◆ **Pouzdro:** ø 41 mm, výška 11 mm, platina
- ◆ **Číselník:** Avanturín; Breguetovy číslice nebo čínské číslice na discích se skokovými hodinami
- ◆ **Sklíčko:** safírové sklo
- ◆ **Řemínek:** kůže z aligátora nebo alcantara
- ◆ **Cena:** od 108 000 CHF
- ◆ **Limitovaná edice:** 12 kusů (4ks s breguetovými číslicemi. 4ks s čínskými číslicemi a 4ks s východními arabskými číslicemi)



ASTONISHING CALIBR B01



THE DIAL OF THE SERIES GAGA WATCH TELLS A STORY OF PARENTHOOD.

IT TOOK JUST A LITTLE AND LUDOVIC MIGHT HAVE BEEN CRAFTING DENTAL PROSTHETICS INSTEAD OF WATCHES.



admitted, he didn't tell anyone about it at the time. Working on Boeings and Airbuses was a dream job for Ludovic. Additionally, one of his colleagues was a former watchmaker, and the two often chatted about the world of horology.

Although Ludovic was content with his work, he asked the airport for a modest pay raise, which was denied. Frustrated by the rejection, he decided to quit—once again.

THE FAITHFUL CATALOG

Perhaps out of boredom, Ludo once started flipping through watchmaking magazines and decided to send his CV to a watchmaker producing the most expensive watch in the catalog. A quartz watch adorned with diamonds, priced at 2 million Swiss francs, belonged to the brand Franck Muller.

To his surprise, Ludovic received a very quick response, inviting him to a trial. When he arrived in Genthod, he was handed ten Lemania chronograph movements that needed to be disassembled, cleaned, lubricated, and reassembled. Despite his limited experience, he completed the task in just four days.

Ludovic was hired with a salary of 4,500 Swiss francs—far more than what he had earned in Dinard.

CRAZY TIME

At the beginning of 1998, Ballouard started working in the service department at Franck Muller. He grew fond of life around Lake Geneva. Although he has fond memories of this period, it also holds a bittersweet chapter in his life.

During his time there, he came up with the concept that laid the foundation for Franck Muller's iconic Crazy Hours collection. Unfortunately, he never received proper recognition for his innovation. As a result, when the collection was launched, Ballouard



HARRY WINSTON COMPANY ENTRUSTED BALLOUARD WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS OPUS XIII WATCH. (2013)



A HAPPY FAMILY: PROUD DAD LUDO, MOM FLAVIA, AND SON GABRIEL.

parted ways with the brand.

INDEPENDENT

When Ludovic decided to leave, he called a friend working at F.P. Journe one afternoon. As fate would have it, a highly coveted watchmaker position had opened up that very morning.

"My dream was to be entirely independent of any brand, so I called F.P. Journe to see if there was a chance to work and learn there. At the time, I didn't realize everyone wanted to work there. To my surprise, they told me I could come in," Ludovic recalls.

Originally, Ludo was supposed to work for François-Paul Journe for only six months, but he ended up staying for seven years. During his last three years there, François-Paul assigned him to produce tourbillons. However, just a month later, he changed his mind and asked Ludovic to take on the production of the Grande Sonnerie.

The goal was to complete one watch every three to four months, but Ludo managed to

produce six to seven per year. His exceptional work on these timepieces proved that he was, and still is, an extraordinarily talented watchmaker.

A WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

In 2009, amidst the global financial crisis, Ballouard took a bold step toward independence by founding his own brand. His decision was driven by a desire to create watches that were not just precise but also told a story and encouraged the wearer to reflect on time and its value.

"It was a difficult time. Everywhere you looked, it was all about numbers. Everyone was watching graphs—one moment they'd climb, and then they'd crash down steeply. People kept saying the world was going to collapse. I felt like people were losing hope. What matters is living here and now, living in the moment. That's when I thought: what if I made a watch where all the numerals were upside down except for the current hour?" Ludovic recalls.

On the Upside Down watch, all numerals on the dial are displayed upside down, except for the current hour. This serves as a reminder of our limited control over the past and future, emphasizing the importance of focusing on the present moment.

HALF TIME

Driven by his original ideas and philosophy, Ludovic Ballouard introduced his next model, the Half Time, in 2012. The Half Time is even more complex than its predecessor, yet it retains the same core philosophy by featuring a dial that, while unconventional at first glance,

allows for straightforward time reading. The numeral indicating the hour is fully displayed at the 12 o'clock position, while the others are split in half, serving as a constant reminder that the present moment is what truly matters.

AHCI

Thanks to his unique approach and innovations, Ballouard became a member of the prestigious AHCI (Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants) in 2018. Membership in this organization represents the culmination of Ballouard's skills and serves as a testament to his significance in the world of watchmaking.

Not only does Ludo continue to work on new projects, but he is also dedicated to refining his craft and pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved in horology.

DELIGHTFULLY

In French, "gaga" refers to something crazy. It can also be a diminutive of the name Gabriel. Or, it might just be the name of a quirky watch. In the case of Ludovic Ballouard, all three interpretations are correct.

Ludovic's latest watch is the creation of none other than his four-year-old son, Gabriel. This unique timepiece embodies a story about what it means to be a parent. Ballouard transferred Gabriel's crayon drawing onto an aventurine dial using contact printing, giving birth to a new sub-collection of the Upside Down series: the "Series Gaga."



FLASH INTIE with Jura Marek

What do you do when you're not working?

I spend time with friends flying radio-controlled model airplanes outdoors.

Where do you draw your inspiration from?

From my everyday life.

Favorite movie?

The Goonies (1985)

Favorite book?

Unfortunately, I never find time to read.

What music do you listen to, and do you listen to it while working?

Every day in the workshop, I listen to songs from the 80s. Who is your watchmaking guru, if you have one? Who or what inspires you?

John Harrison, because he was self-taught. His horological creations are incredible and can still be seen at the museum in Greenwich. Do you follow aspiring watchmakers?

No, I intentionally settled in the countryside, far from other watchmakers, so I wouldn't be influenced by their work and wouldn't influence others with mine.

Could you still recommend one to our readers?

All the watchmakers of AHCI.



MODEL HALF TIME