

Hajime Asaoka

Hajime Asaoka is an independent watch maker in Tokyo, Japan.

Since Hajime realized his first tourbillon in 2009, he has been considered as one of the leading watchmaker in Japan and Asia. Utilizing his hand craft technique and modern technology such as CAD/CAM (He program path to cut by himself), he designed whole watches and manufactured not only movement, but also case and dial in house.

Hajime Asaoka was born in 1965 in Kanagawa prefecture, suburban of Tokyo.

Because the ancestors of his fathers are Japanese sword smith "katana-kaji"(刀鍛冶), he saw lots of beautiful swords when he was childhood. On the other hand, he used to see how lathes and milling machines are working because his mother's home business is manufacturing small parts for electric industries. Under this environment, it was so natural that he was interested in aesthesis and manufacturing things. In his era of teenager, he was enthusiastic to read "Manufacturing method of sailing boat new edition" (新ヨツトの工法), a book for manufacturing actual sailing boat. Referring the book, he started to build models of sailing boats. He told that what he had learned from the book has become the basis of watch manufacturing. His passion for aesthesis and manufacturing drive him to get into school of industrial design of Tokyo University of art.

In 1992, after graduating the school and worked as assistant researcher in college, he founded "Hajime Asaoka Design Office". He is one of the first designer to realise 3D rendering in Japan. He did everything including photograph shooting, compositing of CG, photo retouching, and checking of image so that he was eager to control quality of everything by himself.

As a designer, he designed some watches. However he found restriction such as limitation of cost to realise what it should be. Consequently, he strongly demanded to make watches not only designing but also manufacturing and control everything by Asaoka himself.

From the start as an independent watchmaker, he controls everything by himself. Regarding movement, he manufactures base place, wheels, pinions, pallet forks, escapement wheels and even balance wheel. Not only he is manufacturing movement parts, but also he cuts, paints and prints the dial, and polish the case by his hands.

In 2004, He started to research for watch making. Before he started to manufacture watches, he started to research for precision manufacturing for three years because Asaoka thought mastering of watchmaking is to conquer precision manufacturing. He has no experience to learn watchmaking in school or from someone but just read George Daniel's "Watchmaking" and disassembling watches that he has.

In 2009, He created his first watch "X-1 Tourbillon." (The watch was for R&D purpose and not for sale) He challenged his first creation as tourbillon watch because if he can master to create tourbillon watch, He thought he would go to other field of watches easily and that was realised.

In 2011, He has created "Tourbillon 1", the first watches for customers. It has balance with huge moment of inertia and free sprung. Free sprung watch is good for shock resistance and time keeping precision. But it needs much more precision manufacturing because much less span for regulating compare to the watch with regulator. In addition to that, to rotate huge tourbillon carriage with also huge balance wheel smoothly needs parts manufactured perfectly and these parts must be assembled with astounding precision. Asaoka's ultimate precision manufacturing makes it possible.

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In 2012, Asaoka created "Tsunami" watch. That is a simple three hand watch with huge balance. He put the parts of movement very carefully to install huge 15mm balance.

In 2014, Asaoka created "Project T", another tourbillon watch. Project T was realized with cooperation of Yuki Precision, manufacture for aerospace industries and OSG, one of the best tools Manufacturer on this planet. The special feature of Project T is that it has 13 ball bearings. Especially, the ball bearing for tourbillon carriage is the smallest in the world. Utilizing ball bearings improves endurance and resistance

to shock. This watch is constituted by 2 modules, one is power pack provides power from main spring and another is regulation module. That makes maintainability better and positioning of each axis more accurate. Consequently, it also improves endurance and timing accuracy. Beautifully polished case and abyss of black dial of DLC are also attractive.

In 2017, Asaoka created "Chronograph." He loves traditional chronographs. He has revived the spirits of them by creating "Chronograph". The Chronograph has factors that 1950's to 60's masterpieces possess such as column wheel, horizontal clutch with carrying arm, brake lever, 2 buttons, sliding gear without omitting them. Asaoka has positioned chronograph mechanism on the dial side to show how the parts of chronograph move when they are operating and running. Of course, contrast of complicated dial side and simple back side shows the modern style of Hajime Asaoka. It has huge 15mm diameter balance wheel and also has huge barrel. That minimizes the decline of amplitude of balance wheel and keeps timing accuracy even when chronograph mechanism is operating.

Even today, he is eager to realise his ideas stays with explosive energy in his mind.