

Honouring timeless traditions

Founded in 1775, Urban Jürgensen is one of the names that echoes throughout the annals of horological history. The people behind its modern incarnation are doing the name of this legendary watchmaker justice in the modern era. Mr. Søren Jenry Petersen, President & CEO Urban Jürgensen, highlights their latest collection with includes the Ref 1741, with completely new developed in house movement, and Grenage dial: it's a rare Perpetual, in that it has a sweep central seconds which shows "life" even at a short glance. "We are all about honouring timeless traditions, and our designs and identity is classically subdued and understated. The style is one of honest use of materials, meaning we typically work in precious metals and stainless steel, and we do not create "bling" pieces, but rely on the visible signs of handcraft to tell the unique quality story."

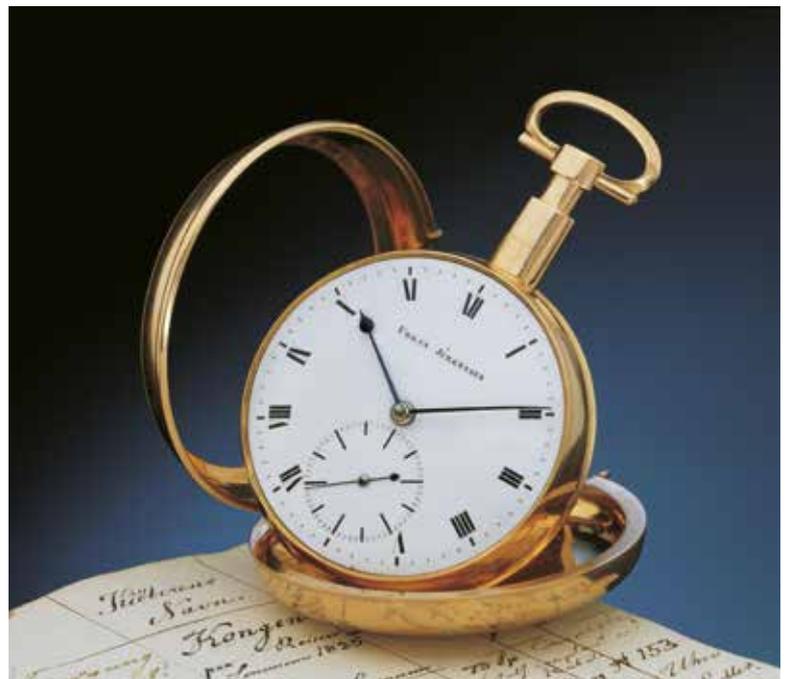
With a rich history dating back to the 1770s, Urban Jürgensen has its roots in the Danish Urban Jürgensen & Sønner (UJS) brand. Members of the Jürgensen family, notably Urban and Jules, were among the world's greatest watchmakers of the 18th and 19th centuries, working alongside other horological geniuses such as Houriet, Breguet, Berthoud and Arnold. They have greatly contributed to the development of horology. The founder of the dynasty was Jörgen Jürgensen, whose descendants Urban (1776-1830)

and Jules-Frederik Jürgensen (1808-1877) continued their father's Denmark-based business by founding Urban Jürgensen & Sønner in Switzerland.

The company has gone through ownership changes but returned to Denmark when Mr. Petersen and his colleagues acquired this venerable company in November 2014. "Since then we have been carefully evolving the collection, developing new movements, and investing in people and our marketing to become more widely

known," he says. Mr. Petersen has many years of senior level management experience, notably at Nokia, and in international consultancy. The cornerstone for the strategy he has mapped out at Urban Jürgensen is remaining independent and fiercely dedicated to handcraft, and executing timepieces of immaculate perfection in classic restrained designs honouring the timeless traditions of Haute Horologie. "We manufacture atelier made timepieces for collectors and connoisseurs, and we will never aim to become a marketing company, but stay true to the core of creating handmade collector grade time pieces for the discerning client," he says.

The company designs its own watches, and Mr. Petersen himself is in fact very hands-on where this is concerned. "We have a very small collection count, and make very few selected designs in limited volumes, and it is a responsibility I cannot put on someone else. We





assemble our watches ourselves, and of course work together with a select array of the best partners for specialists components.”

Honouring the fine traditions of high-end watch making does not mean that they don't want to innovate, Mr. Petersen stresses. “We have relatively recently launched the unique pivoted detent escapement – for which we have the world patent. However we rely heavily on old handcrafted methods and in some cases even ancient skill sets. Our 2016 Basel World reintroduction of the handmade Grenage dial is a good example of this. This is a technology almost forgotten as it cannot ever be produced in any kind of volume, but only dial by dial. We treasure these old skills and methods, because they together create a timepiece which is unique, and have its own soul. Most other manufacturers produce clones of same model, where our pieces typically have their own distinct “feel”.”

Mr. Petersen says that many of their customers are collectors who have small collections of the big known brands, and have started to understand the real traditions and handcrafted methods

that go into our products. “Then they acquire a piece from us. In rare occasions a piece is gifted from a father to the son, and in few occasions we now see young people who really do their homework, and make a choice to shy away from all the prevailing marketing brands, and choose an Urban Jürgensen for the rarity and craft, and because as one said “when I make this type of investment, I do not want it to go out of style in the next 20 years, or see it traded on the internet as a pawn”. We have many clients in Japan, England and US, and for historical reasons also in Denmark and Scandinavia – but sales in Asia and Europe overall are picking up nicely. We have just recently started to develop our presence and we see nice interest from many who would like to work with a traditional high end independent brand.”

Mr. Petersen expects that while many mainstream watch brands will feel the pressure as the popularity of the smart watch continues to increase, high end mechanical watches will never lose their attractiveness and collector value. “Smart Watches will effectively wipe out the value offered by lower end mechanical watches, and this value will

never be regained,” he predicts. “A lot of industry restructure will be needed in certain places, and some brands lose value by the hour.” With his Nokia background he has been a close witness to similar value shifting turbulence in the telecoms industry. He remains confident in the future of Urban Jürgensen however, as the company focuses on making watches that last for generations, and that likely will increase in value over time. “We target a market of discerning clients that will be there long term, a market that is showing steady growth on an absolute and global basis, so we humbly work at continuing the company legacy for another quarter of a millennium.”



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