The Future of Presentations

Dietlin Artisans Métalliers of Romanel/Lausanne in Switzerland uniquely combines metal construction and design in its attractive offerings, which range from window frames and metallic facades to presentation cases for valuable jewellery and watches. However, it is the revolutionary watch presentations that have helped the company to achieve a reputation as one of the most innovative designers in its field.

The Dietlin Artisans Métalliers showroom near Lausanne, Switzerland

Dietlin Artisans Métalliers is an enterprise steeped in tradition. The company was founded by Xavier Dietlin in 1854 as a local plating and blacksmith's shop and evolved into a metal construction business with a difference: while the majority of metalworking companies manufactured relatively pedestrian products, Dietlin Artisans Métalliers established itself as a leading Swiss metal design enterprise working and has worked with some of the world's most famous watchmakers.

Today, the company is led by Hubert Dietlin, the founder's grandson, together with his two sons, Xavier and Nicolas; all three are master metalworkers by trade. Our interview partner, Xavier Dietlin acts as CEO and is the company's chief designer. He was trained as a metalworker in the city of Bern for four years, an apprenticeship which included a comprehensive business course as well. After this, he trained to be an industrial designer. *"It was here that I developed a feeling for design and how to transform drafts into reality"*, recalls Xavier Dietlin.

Of course, he went on to join the family business and continued the Dietlins' tradition of metal construction design, which at the time primarily extended to steel constructions for buildings and windows. In the early 1990s, Xavier Dietlin's father had already dabbled in the design and construction of watch presentation cases for the famous Cartier Company, a project which laid the foundations for Dietlin Artisans Métalliers' future success in this field. *"This project was so successful that we decided to pursue this line of work more intensely"*, Xavier Dietlin reports. *"Therefore, we approached a number of renowned watch makers with our novel ideas on how to present valuable watches in a revolutionary way - our high-tech show cases. Until that point, watches had been presented in very traditional cases, which did not express or promote the high value and technology of these products. Our show cases changed all that."* Today, the company employs twelve members of staff and exhibits an annual turnover of three million Swiss Francs.

Today, Dietlin Artisans Métalliers' business is in three areas. Hubert Dietlin is in charge of the company's steel construction activities. This department designs and manufactures all manner of building-related steel and iron products, from doors, gates and windows to com-

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The "Raptor" show case - innovative design and technology

plete facades, arches, large glass frames, separating glass walls and many others. The experts utilise numerous special techniques such as acid treatment, metallization and ferric oxide coatings, as well as zinc-titanium glazing, a technique especially developed by the company's specialists. Nicolas Dietlin is responsible for the company's specific window design and manufacturing activities.

Xavier Dietlin heads the department dedicated to the design and production of presentation cases for valuable items, purpose-designed lighting and sheet metal furniture for private individuals. With its show cases, the company incorporates revolutionary technology both in terms of presentation and security, for instance highly-focussed lighting (including state-of-the-art LED technology) spy mirror glass, LCD displays and various others. The "Raptor" series of show cases, for example, was originally developed for the famous watchmaker Hublot. *"The pedestal is essentially a monolithic column, on top of which the watch takes pride of place"*, explains our interview partner. *"There is no glass between the viewer and the watch, but if someone reaches out to touch the exhibit, it will retract and disappear into the column. The show case is connected to a computer which controls all of the parameters, such as retraction and ejection speed, lighting settings and so on. Furthermore, several columns can be synchronised to change parameters together. The 'Raptor' can also be connected to an alarm system."* Interestingly, the column also features a magazine in conjunction with the retraction mechanism which can be used for displaying up to four different watch models or styles. *"Presently, around one hundred 'Raptor' columns are installed in shops around the world"*, reports Xavier Dietlin. He continues: *"All product lines are unique."*

Another revolutionary case design is based on spy mirror glass. *"The viewer steps up to the show case and sees nothing but a mirror screen. Suddenly an LED lights up and the watch appears out of nowhere"*, says the CEO. *"All of our concepts have been created to place the product in the centre of the stage - they are basically theatrical orchestrations for the presentation of valuable items."* Some show cases even feature "guided tours", automatically conducted by LED lights which guide the viewer through the important aspects and features of a watch. *"An ever growing number of watch manufacturers are using these new possibilities for putting some life into their presentations"*, as Xavier Dietlin points out. *"The watch making and jewellery industry needs a platform where the high value of the exhibit is already expressed in the presentation tool. At Dietlin, we have found an innovative solution away from traditional displays. The future of show cases will be characterised by intelligent interaction between automation, electronics, security and gentle movements."*

Dietlin Artisans Métalliers sells its products directly to its customers. In terms of marketing, the company operates its own presentation room and offers a web presence at www.dietlin.ch.

Dietlin Artisans Métalliers show cases in Tokyo

A detailed view of the "Raptor" show case - note the innovative retraction mechanism hatch

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