

HARRY WINSTON

OPUS 3

A
HARRY WINSTON
PROJECT
DEVELOPED WITH
VIANNEY HALTER

OPUS 3, a departure from anything known;
a world premiere in movement, function and form

At the 2003 Basel Fair, Harry Winston Rare Timepieces presented Opus 3, the third chapter of its unique creative adventure in the field of fine watchmaking. Each Opus results from the merging of two DNAs: that of Harry Winston and that of a talented independent master watchmaker. After Opus 1 with François-Paul Journe and Opus 2 with Antoine Preziuso, Harry Winston has chosen the visionary watchmaker Vianney Halter. Working with him clearly meant that Opus 3 would be the departure to uncharted watchmaking territories, since for Vianney, nothing is ever impossible. The result is a complication never seen before, in a shape never seen before. A watch that will leave no one indifferent. A new way of reading time.

THE CONCEPT: NO TRADITIONAL PATTERN

Opus 3 is both true to the principles of fine horology and a totally new vision of time. Its movement is unique, the first complicated mechanical movement to provide a full digital display, with jumping hours, minutes, seconds and date – with each digit indicated separately.

The way of reading the time is also unique: 6 “portholes” through which 10 discs, rotating independently, show us the hours (top outer portholes), the minutes (lower outer portholes) and the date (center top and center lower porthole). In addition, before a change of hour or minute, the upper date aperture displays a countdown of the final four seconds of the minute.

A shared obsession with detail led the partners to conceive and develop a world premiere winding system. Instead of the traditional vertical winding stem, the Opus 3 presents, for the first time, a horizontal crown that adjusts upwards and downwards to four setting levels.

Achieving what was supposedly impossible took a year and a half of development. Furthermore, 98% of the watch (movement and case) has been painstakingly developed from scratch and crafted specifically for this watch. The case comprises more than 50 parts and the movement, more than 250.

Opus 3 will be created as a limited series of 55 pieces, 25 in 18-carat rose gold, 25 in platinum 950PT and 5 in platinum 950 PT set with white Harry Winston diamonds.

THE MOVEMENT: ENTIRELY RE-THOUGHT

The priority for the movement of Opus 3 was that everything about it should be unique. Visually, it is a shaped calibre and not a classic round movement placed in a shaped case. Mechanically, the entire configuration is different from what one would find in a traditional complicated watch.

Separate “time” and “function” techniques

The movement comprises two distinct mechanisms: one for “time”, the other for “function”. The time mechanism provides what may be described as the “inherited” elements i.e. the twin barrels, the train, the escapement and the balance wheel, combining to measure units of time. While the principles may be age-old, the physical arrangement of the parts had to be entirely re-thought, from bottom plate to gears. The function mechanism, totally independent, drives the discs that carry the numerals. It is extremely rare for a watch to combine separate “time” and “function” techniques. This is essentially what makes the Opus 3 movement nonconformist.

10 stacked discs in a very small space

The “function” mechanism is composed of ten stacked and overlapping discs, each one linked by its axis to the “time” mechanism below. The discs carry a total of 47 Arabic numerals – from three to six numerals per disc – and rotate on their axes at different speeds to display the hours, minutes, seconds and date through six apertures in the form of portholes in the cover of the watch. As the top disc had to be smaller because of the shape of the case and cannot house all the figures that it is required to display, it has an open space or “lumière” in the place of one of the numerals, through which the rotating figures on the disc below may be seen. One of the difficulties of

designing the movement lay in housing the stacked discs in such a small space, leading the creators to work to tolerances of within a micron.

98% of components custom made

The Opus 3 movement requires more than 250 components, of which 98% are made by Vianney Halter himself. This was more efficient because he knew what would work for him. It also gave him freedom to experiment and to change his mind more quickly. Some of the parts are classic designs, such as wheels and screws and components of the escapement, but others do not exist outside of his workshop.

Complementary expertise

Vianney Halter freely admits that this is not a watch that he would have conceived ten years ago. In designing Opus 3, he worked in partnership with the head of research and development at Harry Winston specialised in design engineering of watch cases.

Based on Vianney Halter's original model, which gave him the basic volume, he created the dozens of highly detailed plans and elevations that would enable the watch to be produced. Since all Harry Winston's watches are crafted by hand, he understands the master watchmaker's special approach to building, assembling and finishing a watch. He was therefore able to push Halter's ideas further, by foreseeing how they would perform in reality.

THE CASE: INSEPARABLE FROM THE MOVEMENT

The case of the Opus 3 is as technically complex as the movement. In fact the movement could not be housed in any other case and the case is completely adapted to the concept of the movement. That relationship is one of the features that make Opus 3 unique.

The key question: how to read the time ...

Unlike other digital displays, the figures on the Opus 3 are physically separated. They are read off through two rows of three "portholes" – a shape that makes subtle reference to the marine chronology of the nineteenth century. The hours appear on the two outer portholes of the top row and the minutes directly below, with the date displayed vertically on the two portholes in the centre. Before a change of hour or minute, the upper date aperture displays the final four seconds of the minute, one of the watch's world-premiere features.

... and set the time

Another feature that makes the case an integral part of the concept is the unique toothed winding crown, part of which is built directly into the case. The crown is flat and is positioned horizontally,

instead of perpendicular to the movement as it is customary. It does not pull out to wind or set the watch, but is moved up or down between four levels, clicking in at the required level while the adjustment is made. The four notches for adjustments are: date 4th notch, hour 3rd notch, minutes 2nd notch and winding 1st notch.

Yet another untraditional feature: front closing

The creators of Opus 3 speak of its exterior not as a case but as a “container”: a receptacle in which the complex technology is placed. This refers to the fact that, where most timepieces close from the back with a shallow case back, the Opus 3 is placed deep into its shaped case and closed from the front. This was necessary in order to protect the delicate layers of stacked discs whenever the timepiece is opened. For the case alone, the design team produced over thirty plans and elevations.

Opus 3 is a complete break with the classic image of the fine watch. It is also a break with the image of the House of Harry Winston, where technical innovation is usually accompanied by understated styling. It may seem unreasonable to devote so much effort to a timepiece that will only ever be produced in fifty-five examples. On the other hand, as the technical information reveals, the experience was rich in discovery. As Ronald Winston, Chairman and CEO of Harry Winston often states: *“We are “condemned” to creating rare timepieces. Our clients expect it of us”*. Looking happy for a condemned man, he adds, *“we also create the exceptional because that is the finest motivational tool that I can offer my team. That is what gets us going. People come here because they want to dream”*.

Technical specifications

Movement: manually wound mechanical movement in German silver with full digit display and no hands, by Vianney Halter. Shaped calibre 28.80 x 29.60 [mm] and 7.50 [mm] high. Power reserve of 40 hours.

Mechanism with 2 going trains and twin barrels (21,600 vibrations/hour). 53 jewels.

Digit display by means of ten discs incorporated into the bottom plate.

Horizontal winding crown with 4 winding and setting positions: date (4th notch), hour (3rd notch), minutes (2nd notch) and winding (1st notch).

Countdown of the final 4 seconds before the minute jumps.

Indications: jumping hours, minutes, seconds and date.

Case: shaped case 36.00 x 52.50 [mm] and 13.70 [mm] high. Available in 18-carat rose gold (25 pieces), in 950 PT platinum (25 pieces) or 950 PT platinum set with baguette and brilliant-cut diamonds for a total weight of 4.44 carats (5 pieces).

Crystal: 8 sapphire crystals with anti-reflection treatment, including two shaped sapphire crystals, on the front and back of the case.

Dials: 10 discs indicating the hours, minutes, seconds and date.

Strap: hand-stitched, genuine crocodile leather with folding clasp.

Water resistance: 30 metres (3 ATM).