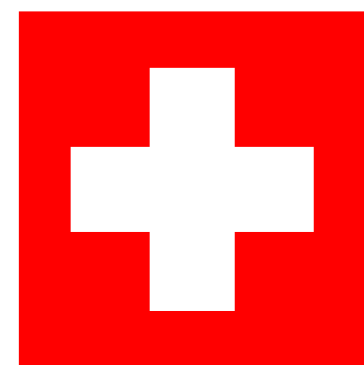




SWISS NOMOS



EVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS OF THE YEAR

As Baselworld watch and jewelry fair arrives, Michael Clerizo highlights some of 2017's new collections and new thinking

NOMOS

In the watch world, tradition usually refers to the workbench practices of watchmakers: guilloché dials, Geneva stripes or bevelled edges on movement bridges.

For the wider world, tradition—though still in relation to timepieces—often alludes to the practice of giving a watch to mark a rite of passage, such as celebrating graduation. Such giving possesses a particularly appropriate meaning: Time spent studying in academia is somehow not your own. You are under the aegis of an institution that sets schedules and determines the metrics of success while your parents or some other munificent benefactor may be footing the bill.

A watch is a way of saying that after graduation you have truly left your family home and the home of your education, and now, your time is yours. What better gift to commemorate such a clear demarcation in life?

The German brand Nomos has launched a collection of watches entitled Club Campus intended for this purpose.

The watches are simple hours, minutes and seconds only, in subdued, round stainless-steel cases in two sizes (36mm and 38mm). Two dial colors are available: white and anthracite. The dials display hints of daring. The first is a combination of Roman and Arabic numerals. On the anthracite dial, the numerals are blue, and on the white dial either blue or rose. All dial markings are coated with Super-LumiNova and edged by a thin line of contrasting color. It's a good idea: Sitting in your first apartment with the lights out to save on the electricity bill, you'll still be able to tell the time. (\$1,500)

HUBLOT

Followers of evolutionary science enjoy speculating about what comes next.

In 2005, Hublot introduced the Big Bang. Since then, watch prognosticators have spent hours wondering what's next for Big Bang. The question is never easy to answer, as in 12 years Hublot has produced more than 150 versions of the watch—not to mention the brand's penchant for unexpected collaborations: the art rock group Depeche Mode, Usain Bolt, Ferrari, whisky brand Johnnie Walker, Chinese actor Jet Li, Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, and Italian entrepreneur Lapo Elkann. There is even a Big Bang that commemorates the U.S. Constitution.

So, watch nerds were surprised, but not too much, when in 2016 Hublot announced a new Big Bang created with Swiss-born, London-based tattoo artist Maxime Büchi, and named for his studio, Sang Bleu.

Hublot's Big Bang is an icon (yes, a much overused word), but the Big Bang Sang Bleu proved the brand is



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GRAFF

Evolutionary changes are also evident in a new watch from Graff, the MasterGraff Structural Skeleton Automatic, with flying tourbillon. Many Graff watches are diamond-laden confections that reference the brand's origins in jewelry, while the MasterGraff collection shows off its haute horlogerie skills. A distinguishing feature of the new MasterGraff is space. Even with a complex mechanism like a flying tourbillon, the watch



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JACOB & CO.

People seriously interested in evolution are fascinated by Australia, the home of fauna not found in the rest of the world. The "Australia" of the watch world is, this year, found in Jacob & Co., the New York-based brand with a Swiss component that consistently creates watches unlike any others.

In 2014, Jacob & Co. introduced the Astronomia Tourbillon, a triple-axis tourbillon with a massive, mostly sapphire crystal case with a precious metal outline rendering the complex tourbillon mechanism visible from every angle. This year, the Astronomia appeared without the precious-metal case outline. The new monoblock case is fashioned entirely from sapphire crystal, even the lugs and—OK, not part of the case—the strap buckle.

A prime feature of all the Astronomias is delight in the mechanics, the pleasure of viewing the tourbillon rotating on three axes: one rotating in 60 seconds, another in 5 minutes, and the third—the central axis—in 20 minutes. Then there's a magnesium-lacquered globe rotating in 60 seconds on two axes; a round ("Jacob Cut") white, 1-carat diamond rotating on two axes every 60 seconds; and the hours, minutes dial that circles the case every 20 minutes. To hold that much mechanical hardware, the domed case is a huge 50mm x 24.45mm, and requires nearly 37 weeks to complete. No one said evolution is easy.

But there is another feature of the new watch, the Octopus. Yes, that's right: a hand-carved titanium octopus, with a dusting of rose gold, that also rotates. The Astronomia Octopus is a unique piece and its price is only on request.

has a more expansive, uncluttered look than previous models. Several features contribute to the sense of airiness: a big 46mm rose gold case surrounded by a lacy outer ring of diamond-inspired shapes, clear sapphire bridges on the exposed movement, open-worked hands and a small offset rotor that reveal as much of the inner workings as is possible on an automatic. As is the norm with Graff, the price is available on request.

BULGARI

A seldom-heard word among watch aficionados is evolution. But evolution, meaning the gradual development of the movement by adding complications, or changes to the appearance of successful models by introducing dial colors, or these days even case colors, is a common occurrence. Like evolution in the natural world, it's often a good thing.

Take the Bulgari Octo Ultranero, first introduced in 2016 as a further development of the already established Octo collection. The new model has the eight-sided case with a round bezel common to all Octos. The combination of these two forms gives the watches a decidedly architectural look. Viewed from the side, the 5mm-thick case resembles the base of a column, while the bezel recalls the column's shaft. This comparison is not too far-fetched if you consider that Rome, Bulgari's hometown, has more inspiring buildings with classical columns



SWISS BULGARI

than its eateries have gelato flavors.

This year's launch features striking brake-light-red hands and hour markers.

Previous Ultranero watches were subtle and discreet; this one has developed the ability to stand out in a crowd. (\$7,150)

not afraid to mess with the elements that earned the watch that status. Slices were cut from the round bezel until it became a hexagon. Hour and minute hands, almost always a feature on Big Bang, are replaced by an elaborate geometric sculpture: three discs with lines forming squares, triangles and octagons, resembling the sections of a Chinese puzzle box. The outer disc functions as the minute hand, with two white triangles pointing at the hour numerals located on the flange (a millimeters-tall ring that surrounds the dial). The middle disc with similar triangles aligns to

the minute numerals located beneath the sculpture. A central disc, which completes a rotation once a minute, serves as the seconds counter. The motifs of the sculpture continue on the case and the strap. Last year Sang Bleu appeared in a titanium case with a matching sculpture and a

black leather or rubber strap, a somewhat subdued look.

This year's model, the Big Bang Unico Sang Bleu in King Gold, boasts a far punchier dusky rose gold 45mm case and sculpture from the "King Gold" patented process.

Matched with a black rubber or leather strap, the watch has evolved to be more noticeable. (\$39,900)



PHOTOGRAPHY: NOMOS, HUBLOT, JACOB & CO, GRAFF, BULGARI