

MB & F

MB & F - Horological Machine No.4 Thunderbolt [Only Watch 2011]

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Children's dreams soar free on an enchanted HM4 for Only Watch

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While we dream throughout our lives, there is one specific dream that children experience more frequently than adults: the ability to fly! It isn't known why dreams of flight diminish from adolescence; however, it may be that adult imaginations become more constrained as they are rooted in the realities of everyday life. Children with Duchenne muscular dystrophy suffer from progressively diminished mobility leading to paralysis; however, while their bodies may be trapped, their young spirits can escape in their dreams and imaginations. HM4 Only Watch offers children a flight of fantasy, a reason to smile, and a wild ride through time and space!

This MB&F piece for Only Watch transports us to a fantasy dream world with a friendly panda piloting a unique space-age HM4 jet. While visiting an art gallery a few years ago, MB&F founder Maximilian Büsser noticed a painting of a panda flying on a rocket that lifted his spirits so much that he bought it. That painting was by Paris-based Chinese artist, Huang Hankang, and for Only Watch, Huang used HM4 as his canvas to convey a childlike liberation of the spirit.

When Huang was asked if he was interested in collaborating with MB&F on the Only Watch project, it only took one glance at HM4 Thunderbolt for him to realise that while this was an artistic medium he had not considered before—or even knew existed—he relished in the challenge and the cause. Huang first imagined and then painted a delightful, carefree panda bear flying free on top of HM4 and MB&F set about transforming Huang's painting into a horological expression. Huang's original painting accompanies the HM4 Only Watch.

As Huang relates, "I saw MB&F's work as art, not watchmaking. It comes from unfettered imagination, just like my paintings."

HM4 Only Watch features the dream-world scenario of a solid gold panda bear riding on top of the HM4 jet, which he controls with reins made of twisted gossamer filaments made of gold. The panda was hand-carved and then cast in 18k white gold using the "lost wax" technique. And while the HM4 Only Watch is a celebration of the fantasy of children's dreams, there is also a feature for those obliged to ground their feet in reality from time to time: the panda and his reins have been micro-engineered to be completely detachable so that HM4 transforms from a flying machine into a Horological Machine.

In collaboration with American artist Sage Vaughn, MB&F expressed an emotionally powerful sentiment at Only Watch 2009. The 2011 HM4 Only Watch continues this praxis of creating compelling messages by seamlessly blending art and horology.

Horological Machine No.4 Thunderbolt

Inspiration and realisation: A long childhood passion for assembling model aircraft had Maximilian Büsser's walls, cupboards and ceiling covered in small aircraft of every description. Planes were the last things he saw at night and the first things he saw each morning. As Büsser the boy became a man, something of the child and his planes remained, quietly waiting until... HM4 Thunderbolt!

Many boys sketch supercars and fast planes, but few have the drive and determination to make their dreams come true. Büsser created MB&F to do just that. HM4 Thunderbolt was born of the child's fantasy and the man's tenacity.

Engine: Each of the Thunderbolt's movement's 311 components was developed specifically for it; no off-the-shelf mechanisms or parts were used at all due to the extreme nature of its architecture.

Two mainspring barrels connected in parallel provide 72 hours' worth of energy, and they transfer their power to the dual jet turbine-like indication pods (one displaying the hours and minutes, the other the power reserve) via vertical gear trains.

Visible through a shaped sapphire display panel on the top of the case, a distinctive streamlined cock supports the balance, its centre cut away to reveal as much of the oscillating wheel as possible and validating the "kinetic" in MB&F's "kinetic art."

Indications: On the left pod, the amount of fuel in the tanks, or power reserve, is clearly indicated by a skeletonised hand echoing MB&F's battle-axe motif. On the right, hours and minutes are displayed by bold, arrow-tipped Super-LumiNova-filled hands. Each of the two instrument-styled aviation dials is directly controlled by its own crown, one to wind and refuel the tanks, the other to set the time, providing direct and instantaneous feedback of the action performed.

Case: Inspired by aviation, HM4's case imparts speed, power, technology, and refinement in equal measure. Visually, the case is composed of three parts: two streamlined jet turbine-styled pods supported by a horizontal section housing the engine, which is clearly visible through transparent sapphire display panels; and the central section of the case itself.

Technically there are also three main sections, but these comprise a fore section in titanium, which includes the dials and articulated front lugs; a central section in sapphire offering unprecedented 360° access to the superbly finished engine; and an aft section tapering down to the dual crowns and framing the animated balance, which is supported by an aerodynamic cock.

Beginning with a solid piece of sapphire, more than 100 hours of intricate machining and meticulous polishing are required to turn an opaque block of crystal into the clear, light-filled atrium of the central case section, which reveals part of the Thunderbolt's engine and engineering details.

The contrasts of matte with highly polished surfaces, titanium with sapphire, straight lines with seductive curves, and rigid forms with articulated arms endow Horological Machine No.4 with a life and vibrancy that sets it apart from anything that has ever gone before.

HM4 Thunderbolt is the quintessential machine as three-dimensional kinetic art.

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Technical Specifications:

Features

A detachable 18k gold panda and reins on top of Horological Machine No.4 with the signature of the artist, Huang Hankang, on the sapphire glass display panel.

Case

Grade 5 titanium and sapphire with a detachable 18k white gold panda holding gold reins

Dimensions (without panda): 54mm wide x 52mm long x 24mm high

Number of components: 65

Articulation of the lugs: 3°

Functions

Hours, minutes, and power reserve indicator

Hours and minutes on the right dial; power reserve indicator on the left dial

Separate crowns for time setting and winding

Engine

Three-dimensional horological engine developed 100 percent by MB&F

Manual winding with two mainspring barrels in parallel

Power reserve: 72 hours

Balance frequency: 21,600bph/3Hz

Number of components: 311

Number of jewels: 50

Sapphire crystals

Five sapphire crystals: 2 for the dials, 2 for the display panels (top and bottom), and 1 for the central case section

Strap and buckle

A black hand-stitched calfskin strap with a titanium/white gold custom-designed deployment buckle attached to articulated lugs

Painting

The HM4 Only Watch is accompanied by the original watercolour that artist Huang Hankang painted to express his message with MB&F's Horological Machine No. 4.