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ArtyA: Infusing art into the world of haute horlogerie

Dec 16, 2010



Yvan Arpa

Singer-songwriter Phil Collins, ace boxer Mike Tyson and influential Singapore watch collector Dr. Bernard Cheong are among the celebrity fans of fast emerging Swiss brand ArtyA, a non-conformist and radical watch brand that is unusual in the world of haute horlogerie. ArtyA purports to mingle maverick, individualistic art with horology, an uneasy marriage of convenience that has raised eyebrows in the industry and continues to create waves. The brand has been in operation for only eight months (at the time of writing) but was already nominated for the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Geneve (GPHG).

ArtyA is the brainchild of diehard, accomplished artist Dominique Arpa-Cirpka and her equally innovative spouse Yvan Arpa. The duo has spawned a new generation of abnormal yet very unique and remarkable watches that defy category or stereotypes. The miniaturized watch dials have been transformed into work of art with hand paintings and creative artistic renditions. One of their latest releases 'Oh My Dog' features a friendly canine face on the watch face. In Yvan Arpa's own words- "ArtyA's message of artful watchmaking is perfectly clear when a watch dial becomes a painting itself".

Day & Night caught up with Yvan Arpa for a rendezvous in Geneva and provided us an update

Q: So, what is ArtyA all about?

A: ArtyA is all about making creative watches. ArtyA is my secret garden and the DNA is creativity, which admittedly can also be very extreme at times. All our pieces are unique and one-of-a-kind art pieces. The case, dial and hands are all different, all hand-made and individually produced. We make only one piece a day and our production is constrained to only 360 annually. Our watches do not fit into any specific mould and in a sense defy definition.

Q: You have dwelt at length on the artistic 'temperament' of the watch. How are you positioned on the technological side?

A: That is a good point. ArtyA watches are also technologically sophisticated and savvy. It is powered by the 'Quadri Rotor' movement, the first of its kind in the world. It is a small automatic movement with transparency all around it. If you look through it you see four rotor-figural shapes performing a kind of dance movement, figuratively speaking. We have also developed a skeletal tourbillon all contained inside the watch.

Q: Who is your target audience?

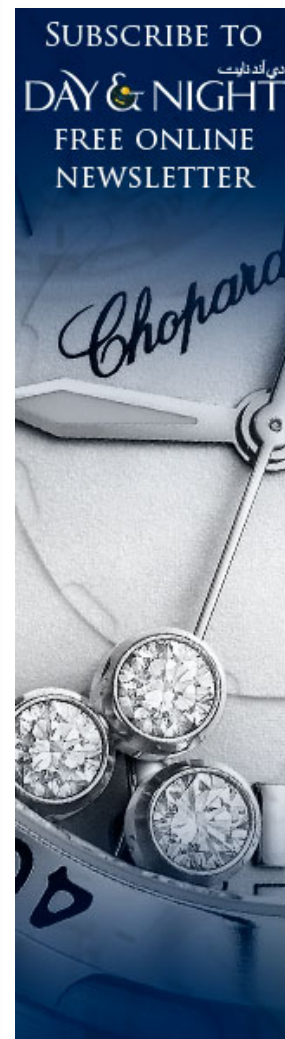
A: We cater to anyone who would like to wear a unique watch at affordable prices. What better way to demonstrate your individuality than to wear a unique watch. ArtyA is different from others.

Q: What is your retail strategy for the Middle East?

A: The Middle East will certainly be a priority market for us. I have considerable plans for the Middle East.

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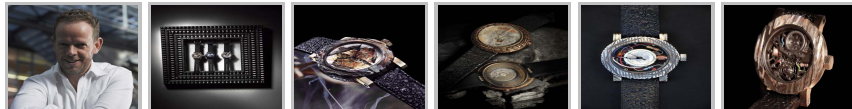
ArtyA is available selectively with some dealers in the region, but our production is low and demand is high-so with increased production we should be able to have a more robust distribution network in the region. I want to grow the brand steadily not rapidly. I want the brand first developed at the grassroots and then as it develops legs to whole the whole nine yards. I have a dedicated team in place and our strategy will be determined by research and prevailing market situations.

Q: What is the next big thing for ArtyA?

A: I have many interesting ideas for the future. For example we currently have a line where we put desiccated spiders on the dials for the Halloween. This will be followed by more animal encasings as well as watches that are technologically advanced.

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