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MEASURING TIME in STYLE

HUNGARIAN WATCHMAKER ÁRON BECSEI



BY RÉKA A. FRANCISCK

No one denies the unparalleled, worldwide reputation of Swiss watches. Centuries-old watchmaking schools in Switzerland continuously train new generations of watchmakers who are able to master age-old techniques alongside state-of-the-art technologies, and understand the importance of innovation. In Hungary, however, things are a „little” different: “There is no watchmaking tradition here,” remarks Áron Becsei, who is the one and only exception: his independent brand, the Bexei is no less respectable than any of those of the greatest Swiss manufacturers. He became a worldwide known and recognized watchmaker when he created the Primus, a tri-axial tourbillon wrist watch that features an extremely complicated movement that utilizes no ball bearings. “This is a unique solution at this size and level of complication,” Áron says. “Because of the triple-oscillating system, it is ultra-precise no matter how the watch is positioned. It is patented, and as far as I know, only a handful of watchmakers have managed to create such a system. Also, Primus is the first wrist watch ever made in Hungary, and it is worth EUR 300,000.” When asked, Áron notes that his clientele do not often include Hungarians. In fact, 2014 was the first year he was commissioned to make a wrist watch for a Hungarian client. “Even he intended to give this watch to a foreign person as a present – so I’m not sure if that counts,” Áron says with a smile that turns slightly sad for a moment. “I’d love to make timepieces for the Hungarian market, but, to be honest, there’s no demand for these highly complex, luxurious timepieces.” This might be one reason why he, when creating his brand, decided to use a modified version of his family name. “It is ‘Bexei’, more or less, how foreigners pronounce my name,” he reveals. “The advantage is that the word is more symmetrical this way, which led my wife to come up with a great idea when designing the logo: the word written vertically takes the shape of an hour-glass.”

Independently

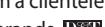
Most Hungarians don’t know much about him, but Becsei, in his decent and elegant way, builds Hungary’s reputation. He is considered a prodigy in contemporary watchmaking, worldwide. He is a member of the Zurich-based Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants (Horological Academy of Independent Creators or AHCI), and at 35 years of

age, probably one of the youngest members of the group that unifies only 33 watchmakers in total. The Bexei timepieces are available in a limited number. “It takes me at least six months to finish one, and I’m not capable of working on more than five pieces in parallel,” Áron reveals, adding that his clients receive a very personal experience as they work with him to co-create the watch they desire the most. “As an independent watchmaker, I am willing to entertain my clients’ ideas and personalize the watch to their specifications. It is part of the charm of purchasing a watch this way, I believe, and thank God, I’m not alone with this idea,” says Áron, who delivers the final product in person, no matter how far he has to travel – and usually the destination is on another continent. He says he would love to share his experience and vision with people who were open to learning from him. “My kids are too little to consider any kind of job, being 5 and 2 and a half,” he laughs. “But I feel I could use some help sometimes.” He is one of the few watchmakers who makes everything himself in his atelier, from the designing to the manufacturing. “All the parts including the bridges, wheels, screws, dials, hands, bezels, the crown and the buckle, too, except for the pre-case.” As for his passion and sensibility for



timepieces, Becsei follows in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. “It is probably in my blood,” he notes, adding that, however, they have never really built watches - they offered special repairs and restoration services. “Once I graduated from the Watchmakers program of the Service and Handcraft Professional School of Budapest, I started working at my father’s side. Soon enough, I felt the urge for deeper engineering knowledge. I continued my studies at the Faculty of CAD/CAM design at the University of Technical Sciences. While repairing and renovating, I had to replace missing parts many times, calculate their size, design and finally make

them. After a while, I realized that if I could make spare parts, I could create a whole horologe myself,” Áron recalls.

“I love having the ability to design and build a watch from the ground up, manufacturing my own movements,” he adds. Áron’s wife, Eszter describes his personality as “very much in line with the work he does. He is meticulous, patient, diverse and very creative – which is a lucky constellation.” They both follow the unprecedented “word of mouth” marketing concept – which seems to be working and has led to a growing number of orders coming from a clientele attracted exclusively to the prestigious brands. 

2003 – Becsei finished his first clock. This Miniature Double Pendule Zappler was fully his design and made by hand.
2004 – his first Tourbillon clock was finished. This complicated table clock has a calendar, moon phase, wind-up indicator, thermometer and a world time function.
2005 – Áron Becsei was granted admission to the AHCI as a candidate.
2008 – the first Bexei wristwatch was completed. The tri-axial tourbillon PRIMUS wristwatch was presented at Baselworld.
2009 – Áron became a full member of AHCI.
2010 – the Bexei timepieces were exhibited for the first time in Hungary.
2012 – Áron’s Tourbillon No1. table clock is awarded the title “Masterpiece of Hungarian Craft 2012”.

