



# DE BETHUNE

L'ART HORLOGER AU XXI<sup>E</sup> SIÈCLE



Denis Flageollet

## **Master watchmaker & Creative Talent**

Denis is the son, grandson and great-grandson of watchmakers.

Known today as one of the finest watchmakers of his times, he promotes a contemporary vision of watchmaking: that of the founding fathers, meaning the mastery of a perpetually changing art. It is a case of age-old expertise dedicated to constant innovation. For him, tradition is not just about building conventional watches, but rather about remaining innovative on a daily basis while following tradition. He aims to continually rejuvenate the spirit of mechanical watchmaking.

A lover of science, culture and art, he is passionate about mechanics and quality workmanship, constantly building on the past while looking firmly to the future.

It is in this spirit that he founded De Bethune in 2002 with David Zanetta. Their creative inspiration continues to be nurtured by several centuries of watchmaking history, interpreted through the prism of contemporary culture. Since its foundation, De Bethune has been distinguished by its capacity to create mechanical timepieces featuring vanguard technology. It has also demonstrated its ability to imagine a



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contemporary aesthetic. In bringing these watches to life, each mechanism is assembled with that same vision of marrying new technologies with the beautiful watchmaking expertise of bygone years.

Having majored in science at secondary school in France, he went to Switzerland to study watchmaking and micro-engineering. He then completed his training by joining the “Musée du Locle” as a technician in antique watchmaking.

He finally decided to launch his own method, and in 1989 he co-founded the THA society with François-Paul Journe. Together, they created the first “sympathique” clock inspired by the work of Abraham-Louis Breguet. During these twelve years spent developing THA, he set up the mechanical and watchmaking production workshops, handled technical management, as well as heading the R&D workshop where more than 120 watchmaking developments were successfully undertaken in the fields of watch exterior components, jewellery and horological mechanisms, including the development of a numerous calibres.

Alongside his passion for manual and traditional technical work throughout his career, he has taken further watch construction training with a focus on learning 3D computer-assisted design (CAD) technology and he was one of the first to use it for watchmaking purposes. He has been lucky enough to live in a pivotal period enabling him to learn from the master engineers, watchmakers and jewellers, who in turn have helped him master the production of one-of-a-kind models or prototypes using traditional methods and machines. At the same time, he has shown a consistent interest in state-of-the-art technical progress, which has enabled him to leverage modern CAD and CNC technologies.

He has indeed developed his own method through which he combines necessary know-how and contemporary techniques in order to develop his design and prototypes. This applies both to the movement and to watch exterior components.

His work with De Bethune has been rewarded by two national prizes, 15 international prizes, and his research has resulted in eight patents and two registered designs.

Today, in working to build a training course on “Mécanique d’Art” (artistic mechanics) with his fellow artisans, alongside his engagement with De Bethune, his main aim is to pass on his experience and knowledge to watch enthusiasts and the up-and-coming generation of watchmakers.

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