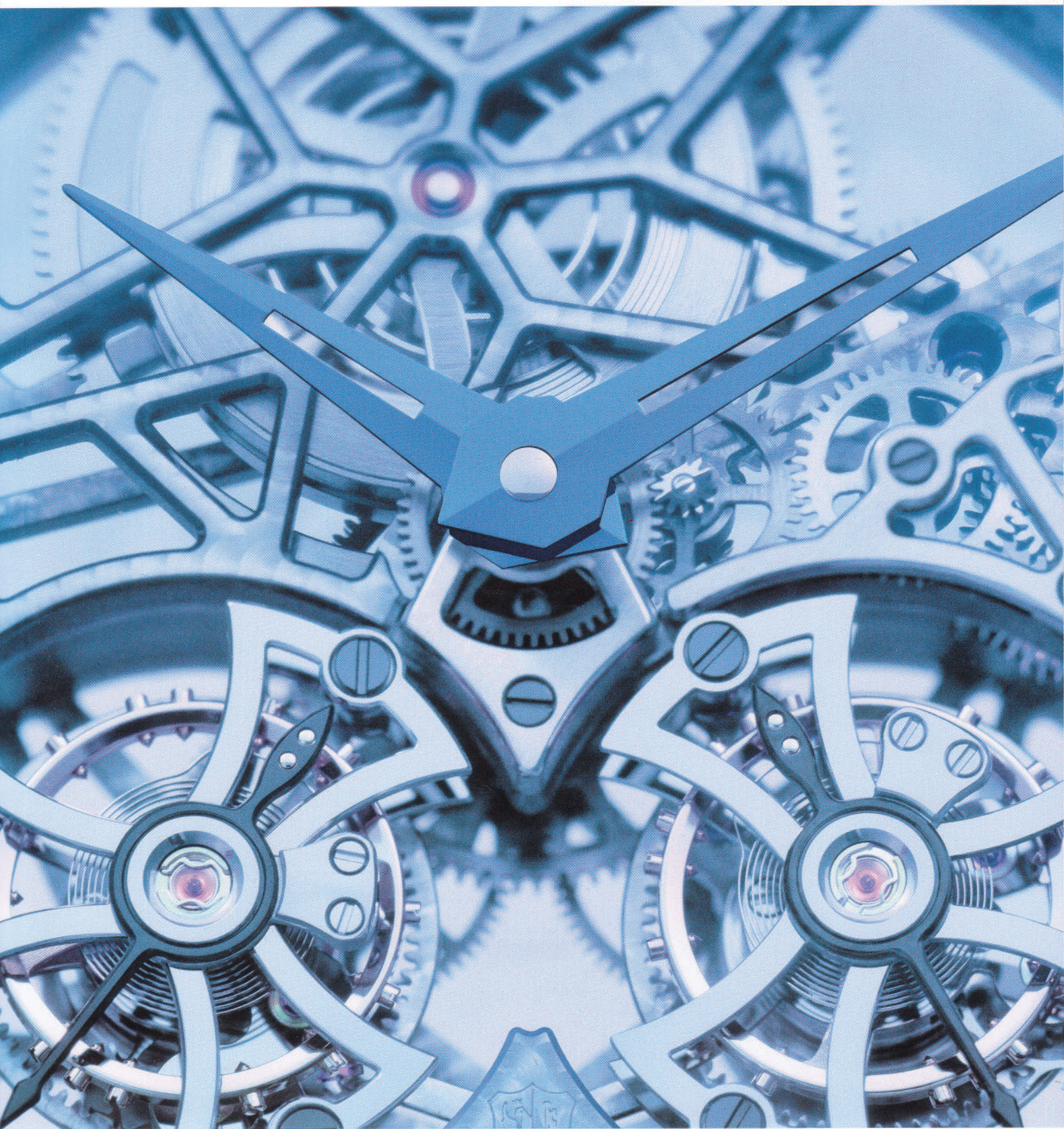


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## 2013 Gaia Award

**Franco Cologni, Elmar Mock, Robert Greubel, Pierre Donzé, Michel Parmigiani and Philippe Stern are among the great names of watchmaking to have received the prestigious Gaia Award. We have the lowdown on the 2013 edition!**

On 19 September, the world of watchmaking gathered at the International Museum of Horology (MIH) in La Chaux-de-Fonds to award the 2013 Gaia Award. Craft and Design, History and Research, and Entrepreneurship, are the three categories that this year required the deliberations of the jury, which included Swiss and foreign personalities from circles linked in various ways to the watch industry. The winners were, respectively: Andreas Strehler, Günther Oestmann and Ernst Thomke.

### Craft and Design

Andreas Strehler began training as a watchmaker in 1987 in Frauenfeld. His passion for his art and mechanics led him naturally to gravitate towards the design and development of complex mechanisms.

He started his career in the workshops of Renaud & Papi (owned by Audemars Piguet) in Le Locle, where in 1993 he

became project manager in charge of the prototype department. He then worked in collaboration with watchmakers such as Robert Greubel, Stephen Forsey and Giulio Papi. In 1995, he set up business as an independent watchmaker and watch repairer, dividing his time between restoring old timepieces and designing his own movements.

In 1998, at Baselworld, he presented his Perpetual Calendar, combining the features of a table clock and a pocket watch. This design immediately called to mind a modern version of the sympathetic clock invented in 1795 by Abraham-Louis Breguet. The following year he presented the Zwei, a wristwatch with a multiple display, similar to a digital watch, driven by differential gearwheels. In 2001, he became the youngest watchmaker to be admitted as a member of the Horological Academy of Independent Creators (AHCI). At the age of 33, Andreas Strehler, while remaining independent, became Technical Director of the company H. Moser & Cie.

In 2006 he won the Grand prix d'horlogerie de Genève in the Complicated Watch category, with his Moser Perpetual 1, featuring a perpetual calendar and a 7-day power reserve. In 2007, for Harry Winston, he created the Opus 7, combining a visible movement and a personalised display: the time is shown by a rotating disc, which can also indicate the precise minute by means of a lever on the winding-mechanism. In 2008, inspired by the Opus 7, Andreas Strehler presented his Papillon watch, followed by the Cocon watch in 2012. These two timepieces perfectly illustrate his philosophy of minimalist mechanical movements, designed as veritable living organisms. Their aesthetic codes constitute both a renewal and a reinterpretation of traditional watchmaking art.

### History and Research

The research conducted by Günther Oestmann relates to maritime history, the history of scientific instruments and clocks, and also astronomy, navigation and mathematical geography. His thesis led him to produce a remarkable work on the Strasbourg astronomical clock. Recently, he has studied the introduction of chronometers in the German merchant navy and Imperial Navy, and their manufacture up to the First World War.

Born in Bremen in 1959, Günther Oestmann began his working life by training as a watchmaker from 1979 to 1982. Between 1983 and 1990, he continued his university studies in history of art and history of science at the universities of Tübingen and Hamburg. In 1992, he obtained a doctorate by successfully defending a thesis on the astronomical clock of Strasbourg cathedral (Astronomische Uhr des Straßburger Münsters), a work for which he received the Philipp-Matthäus-Hahn-Award of the city of Kornwestheim in 1993.



Ludwig Oechslin & Ernst Thomke



During these years, he worked until 1994 as a volunteer at the Württembergischen Landesmuseum in Stuttgart, demonstrating his keen interest for museum work. He then worked as an assistant at the History of Science Institute of the University of Hamburg. He continued his studies by completing a postdoctoral thesis (Habilitation) and in 2001 published the monograph *Heinrich Rantzau und die Astrologie*.

In parallel with his research and university studies, he trained as a master watchmaker and in 2002 was admitted as a master craftsman (Meisterprüfung) at the Bundesfachschule für Uhrmacher de Karlstejn (Austria).

Widening his field of interests, he subsequently worked on the history of navigation, and from 2006 to 2008 was curator of the Maritime Department of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. Since 2009, he has been an honorary professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, History of Science and Technology at the Berlin Institute of Technology and, between 2010 and 2013, he was a research associate at the Deutschen Schiffahrtsmuseum in Bremerhaven. His current interests relate to the history, construction and use of the astrolabe.

### Entrepreneurship

Ernst Thomke stood out initially by his atypical career path which led him, after studying medicine and courses in management and marketing, to join Beecham as a pharmaceutical researcher, before becoming the group's European Marketing Director.

It was at that stage of his career, in 1978, that he was called in to rescue ETA SA. In 1982 he became Managing Director of Ebauches SA and was appointed to the board of ASUAG, the holding company of ETA SA. He then became the CEO of SMH from 1984 to 1991. After leaving SMH, he played an active role on the boards of many other companies in a variety of industrial sectors.

He was also the brains behind the Delirium, the first success in response to Japanese



*Ludwig Oechslin & Günther Oestmann*

competition during those years of crisis: today, the Swiss watch still holds the world record for thinness, with an overall thickness of less than 2 mm.

He is known above all however as the inspirer and father of the Swatch. The idea, floated in 1980, was to produce a revolutionary electronic watch, inexpensive and with an attractive design, capable of competing with the Japanese despite the crisis. Nicolas Hayek agreed to finance the venture. Since its launch in 1983, Swatch has made its mark as an outstanding brand, while the watches themselves have become a veritable fashion accessory.

It was thanks to Ernst Thomke that the Swatch adventure got off the ground. He allowed his engineers Jacques Mueller and Elmar Mock to see through a project that required radical changes to the nature of watch production as practised hitherto. We all know the rest of the story, as Swatch this year celebrates its thirtieth anniversary of existence and success.

### The Gaia Award

It was in 1993 that the International Museum of Horology of La Chaux-de-Fonds (MIH) created the Gaia Awards, singling out

personalities who have contributed or still contribute today to the renown of watchmaking, its history, its techniques and its industry. The only one of its kind, the award stands out by honouring only the very best of the best.

No one may nominate themselves for the award: applications, submitted by third parties, allow jury members to make a neutral evaluation of the contribution made by each individual and to select a laureate, or indeed several if the applications are mutually supportive. The freedom of the jury is guaranteed by its president, the curator of the MIH. 