

MARCUS



Not your usual watch shop

By Emma Hickox

A walk down Bond Street W1 can take some time. One after another, beautifully designed shops house some of the most sought after and rarefied items money can buy. There are more royal warrant holding vendors on Bond Street than anywhere else in England. To stand out in this sort of company takes some doing. Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada and Patek Philip rub shoulders with Bulgari, DeBeers, Tiffany & Co and Cartier.

Nestled comfortably amongst all these world renowned names is a shop housing one of the most extraordinary collections of watches anywhere in the world. It bears the name of its eponymous owner, one 'Marcus' Margulies.

Margulies is the son of a Polish émigré. His father, a watch aficionado, was the creator of the 'Sekonda' brand of watches (now selling circa 1.75m watches in the UK a year), as well as Time Products, the luxury distribution arm of the company, and in 1999, Marcus opened the flagship store at 170 New Bond Street. Set over 4 floors, this 19th century shrine to haute horlogerie was interior designed by modernist Czech architect Eva Jiricna and is a gloriously modern and contemporary environment, worthy of the over 1000 time pieces housed there. Margulies believes that it is the most important collection of watches, including vintage time pieces, anywhere in the world, apart from those held by one or two manufactures, and includes upwards of 50 Tourbillion watches, possibly more than all the other watch shops in the UK combined.

This is not your usual watch shop, either by design or by content. Upstairs, there is a surround sound TV room with deep sofas to relax in, where until June you could smoke one of Marcus's cigars from the humidor, or have a glass of vintage Pétrus from his walk in cellar downstairs. Should you be lucky enough to be invited around for one of his infamous dinner parties, the food will be prepared in the kitchens designed by Marco Pierre White. There is a remarkably beautiful dressing table by Boucheron from the 1860's complete with ivory and enamel toothbrushes; when this came up for auction, "the under bidder was the Louvre" chuckles Margulies! In terms of distribution, Marcus's roll call of watches is somewhat impressive; with Audemars Piguët, Carlo Ferrara, de Grisogono, Pierre Kunz, Richard Mille, Hublot, HD3, Piaget, Vogard, Urwerk, Hautlence, Greubel Forsey and many more.



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How about the contents of the self styled 'most beautiful watch shop in the world'? Well, when asked, Marcus states the watches start at around the £3-4000 mark and stretch to what he will only refer to as well over seven figures. On entering, one quickly gets the impression that this is not a shop for the usual buyer. Marcus has a dislike of people who come to the shop stating that they are a 'Rolex' man, or a 'Patek' man. As he says, "if you're buying cars, you don't buy six Rolls Royces, you buy a Ferrari, a Range Rover, a comfortable Saloon and a great convertible. You buy different cars for different occasions".

The stocking policy of Marcus is unashamedly personal to the proprietor. It says much for the man that he is not prepared to stock in his shop a watch he would not be happy to wear. "Absolutely not!" he exclaims "I was offered Jacob watches but I turned it down because I don't like the watch, although I think I could have distributed it successfully. If you can't enjoy what your doing at this stage of your life, there is absolutely no point in doing it" Well... quite!

The relationship between cars and watches is well documented. Marguiles own tastes are clear "I used to drive Ferrari's, but then with marriage went to Bentleys" With the Jaeger-LeCoultre AMVox II Aston Martin Chronograph, Audermars Piguet Maserati and Panerai Ferrari watches, the relationship between the two looks set to continue. We are rather fond of the new Vogard range of F1 watches. With its carbon fibre face and bezel which features all major racing tracks with a reference 'GP' indicating whether a Formula 1 Grand Prix takes place during standard time or Daylight Savings Time (summer time). The patented 'timezoner' movement features a miniature high-tech clutch and a complex gear-train, which allows the wearer to re-set the watch in an instant, with no loss of accuracy.

When looking what makes a popular watch, it usually comes down to two things, technical excellence or style, which does he think is most important? "They are both equally important – hugely important – and they don't necessarily come together. I think the dream is a merger of both". "Probably the best marriage is between Audemars Piguet and the Royal Oak. At the moment, the Royal Oak range, including the Offshore

models are on fire".

Who else we wondered is currently getting this balance right? Marguiles singles out a couple more "Hublot is absolute genius; it's the best watch designer and promoter in Switzerland today" Hublot was of course the first watchmaker to dare to match gold and rubber, now there isn't a watch maker in the Joux valley who does not mix the two. In fact, the launch of the Big Bang series has been so successful that it has doubled the company's turnover. Frank Muller is another favourite of his, and whilst some seem not take them seriously enough, Marguiles is a dedicated fan. "We own the 'Frank Muller Egg' which is a back to front Tourbillion, the only one in the world. We have sold many Frank Muller Grand Complication watches. Few companies are able to make such watches". "Muller has a great concept and a great product and you underestimate them at your peril".

So what is at the top of this Horological gurus list of watches; not perhaps by value but what is closest to his heart, or by watch making significance? A quick reveal of his wrist provides the answer, it is a square, impossibly slim, elegant and delicate looking watch. It's an early 60's platinum Audemars Piguet Extra Flat. 'another watch that I own personally and consider truly important is also an original Audemars, this time a Royal Oak perpetual, probably the best luxury sports watch ever made and I don't think many people in the watch world would disagree'. 'Its design is still hot after 35 years'. And what is currently the best watch in the world? Admittedly an impossible question, but an answer is forthcoming 'In my opinion, Greubel Forsey makes the best watches in the world. The degree of craftsmanship is beyond compare and they can only be made in tiny numbers – the team will never get any marks for salesmanship, but they will for passion and to me that's what really matters.'



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