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Roller Guardian Time  
(RGT) in white gold



BY Y-JEAN MUN-DELSALLE

LADOIRE GENÈVE is of a new generation of haute horlogerie watchmakers who seek to break rules and create ultramodern aesthetics

# AVANT. GUARDIAN

Launched in 2007, a time when myriad new brands entered the haute horlogerie market, Ladoire Genève took its chances in a crowded market. Seeking to create new ways of telling time while upholding traditional Swiss watchmaking, the brand this year unveiled its first timepiece, the Roller Guardian Time (RGT).

The watch is a futuristic, other-worldly time machine with a Franco Sbarro-like style of empty circle design and featuring one of the most complicated movements seen in recent years. The brand designed, developed, manufactured and commercialized this high-end complication timepiece, creating its own movement with ASXP as its manufacturer and RHR and SR Horlogerie as its “performance tuners.”



A side view of the RGT showcases the curved sapphire crystal, sturdy strap and GMT fast-correction regulator

View the mechanical magic of the automatic Calvet/01/RGT movement with micro-rotor through the transparent case back.





Lionel Ladoire, founder and CEO of the eponymous brand Ladoire Genève

## Interview: Lionel Ladoire

### *How does your jewelry-making background shape your watchmaking vision?*

Jewelry is the art of transforming of a piece of fine material into a jewel. I used this art and my know-how to shape a timepiece with a unique aesthetic and strong personality. I have the ambition to infuse haute horlogerie with this art and to bring a new dimension to watchmaking.

### *Where did you get the inspiration for RGT's unique time display system?*

I perceive my work in watchmaking as similar to that in haute couture. Each detail must be in perfect harmony with the whole and reflect the personality of the wearer. The design was directly inspired from a ring I designed for my wife just before the birth of my first son: three rings of different diameters enlacing. The three rings for hours, minutes and seconds were inspired by the trinity, due to its connotation with life and spirituality. One can maintain that the three measures of time put emphasis on three rhythms (slow, smooth, fast), as in life (dream, cogitation, action or young, adult, old). Artists such as Andy Warhol, Philippe Starck, Jean-Paul Gaultier and Christian Lacroix have an indirect influence on my work. The Ladoire team much appreciates their visionary, out-of-the-box thinking. Their approach contributes to feeding creativity into our brand. Their style does not influence ours, but their perception of reality amazes us.

### *Tell me about the development of the RGT caliber.*

We needed a caliber having enough force to drive the H M S planetary complication. Developing a caliber with a micro-rotor is a technical challenge. For our credibility and for the authenticity of this concept, we had to create our own caliber. The next Ladoire timepiece shall host this caliber as well.

The watch is a non-conformist, postmodern alternative to conventional watchmaking, and it follows the lead of the firm's 36-year-old founder and CEO Lionel Ladoire, an enthusiast of micromechanics and a watchmaker with a penchant for surfing and drumming. Ladoire comes from a family of four generations of jewelers. After two decades of experience in fine jewelry-making, he naturally gravitated toward the art of watchmaking, already a skilled craftsman with a flair for creativity accustomed to working with precious materials. Inspired by contemporary culture from the worlds of design, art, fashion and music, he says, "Rock music and the underground universe give me the pulse. Music is a daily inspiration."

His firm is called Helvet Manufacture, consisting of himself, vice-president Richard Piras, who is in charge of marketing and industrial development, and watchmaker Frédéric Esnault, who assisted in the final development stage of RGT, assembling and debugging the prototype to arrive at a reliable caliber.

Realizing that it was strong DNA and exclusivity that would ensure its success, Ladoire Genève presented RGT as a showcase of its expertise through the development of a new movement. The first sketches were conceived in early 2004 with final validation in December 2008.

So promising is this new brand that European capital development company Aurinvest Capital 2, which seeks out young companies with

strong potential, lost no time in allying itself with Ladoire Genève to assist in its growth strategy. The brand notes: "Our forefathers have marked their times, we will invent ours..." Ladoire Genève feels it is destined to shake up the watchmaking world, as it deems nothing taboo.

"I wish to keep my philosophy and an open mind, and always keep listening to domains that inspire me," promises Ladoire.

### **Roller Guardian Time**

Nominated for Best Watch Design at the 2008 Asian edition of the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève, the RGT's gold and titanium alloy case measures 45 mm in height, 56mm in length and 16.3mm in thickness.



A front view of the RGT in pink gold reveals three rotating rings housed within a circle



The atelier of Frédéric Esnault, who helped in the final development stage of Roller Guardian Time

“The concept of this timepiece’s complication is revolutionary—entirely set on micro ball bearings, RGT has no hands, besides the off-center hand for the GMT. Each component of the movement has been thoroughly thought through, conceived and industrialized specifically for Ladoire.”

We find three interlinked rotating discs indicating hours, minutes and seconds mounted on lubricant-free ceramic ball bearings (which was awarded a worldwide patent), like three planets revolving upon their axes, powered by a Ladoire-manufactured 44-hour power reserve automatic Calvet/01/RGT movement with micro-rotor.

Close friend of Guillaume Têtu and Renaud de Retz of Hautlence fame, Ladoire started developing

the movement together with them before following a separate path for its completion. More than twenty industrial haute horlogerie partners situated throughout Switzerland were involved in the birth of the movement, with each one contributing its expertise and dedication to the project behind the scenes.

The haute couture premise of “made to order” may be applied to the watch’s singular appearance: the unusual asymmetry, contours and dimensions of the case are counterbalanced by a slender fuselage, giving off an air that is both robust and luxurious. Time setting is performed through the crown at eight o’clock, while the GMT function is presented by a hand outfitted with a fast-correction regulator between two and four o’clock.



Exploded view of the RGT watch and movement

So uncompromising is the brand in its approach that technical difficulties such as the development of the ball bearings, miniaturization of the GMT and integration of the unusual bracelet (which required seventeen prototypes) did not discourage it, but only served to strengthen its resolve. RGT is a true guardian of time set to appeal to those with avant-garde sensibilities and uncommon aesthetic tastes. Prices start at \$110,000 for the red gold and titanium model. ☺