

Starting a watch brand is a risky business, no matter what the economic climate. Revelation proves that, with the right mix of experience, contacts and faith in the final product, even an ambitious concept can work its way through the tumultuous path to successful completion. *James Gurney*

# A NEW REVELATION

**S**ometimes you have to just accept that the end product is worth it and stop worrying about how the watch you are looking at ever made the long journey from after-hours discussion fodder to the funky machined and reassuringly expensive metal that you hold in front of your eyes.

For a product idea to be worth quitting the day job for, to attract investment in time and money and to build a company around, you would think it would have to be an obvious winner. The basic USP that Revelation is taking to market is not that winner. It's nice, it's intriguing, but enough to take such risks on? Who kept saying yes, who didn't point out that Revelation is a US suitcase-maker whose heyday was in the 1980s? Who kept on believing when things started to go wrong?

The end result was, is, worth it. A collection of watches that pair exceptional, high-end movements with dials that are made from a pair of crystals that are polarising filters – lined up one way they actually become opaque, another they



The unique concept of the R03 means that it essentially has two faces – the dial changes from transparent to black with just a twist of the bezel. The morphing dial is down to the superposition of two polarising glasses, whose nanostructures either block or let light go through the movement.

**Opposite:** Anouk Danthe and Olivier Leu, the individuals behind the brand.





• reveal the movement below. You can see the attraction of the idea, but how ever did such a project get off the ground?

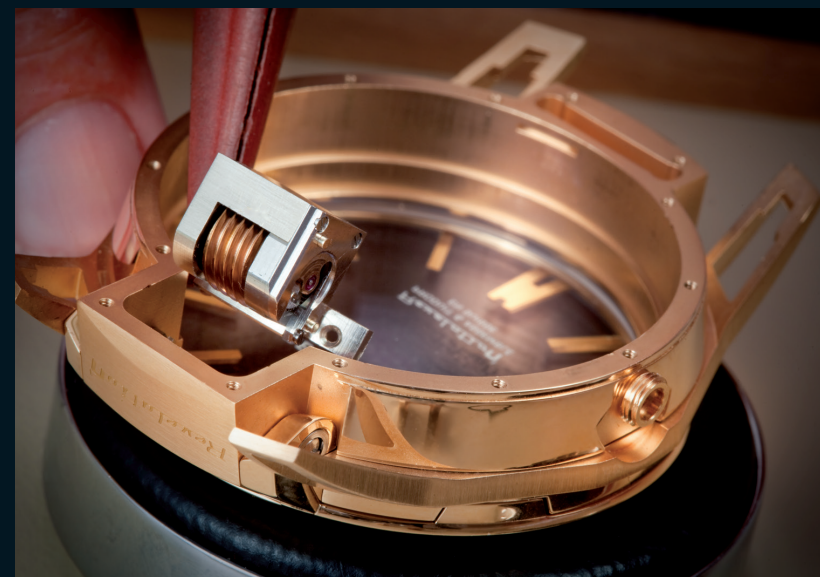
#### OLD ACQUAINTANCES

A glib answer is timing. Anonk Danthe and Oliver Leu began the project in 2005 and formally set up the company in January 2007, a time when their concept was almost boringly pedestrian given what else was being treated seriously at the time. More seriously, both Danthe and Leu had forged good reputations working on projects for serious players ranging from TAG Heuer to Richard Mille; the watch industry is small enough that reputations can be quickly and reliably checked. The pair had first met at a design college near Montreux in the early 1990s, but then followed different paths. Danthe went to Jaeger-LeCoultre, and then Audemars Piguet, where she was Product Manager for the Royal Oak Concept, a role that brought her into close contact with Giulio Papi of AP Renaud et Papi. Leu, meanwhile, went to work for Jorg Hysek, where he worked on the TAG Heuer Kirium design and then set up a design company concentrating on retail and presentation environments for watch brands. Along the way they picked up both experience and trust. The people they needed to work with to make Revelation a reality already knew them and were prepared to listen and help solve some difficult questions.

The first hurdle to overcome was turning the polarising idea into reality. The concept is simple enough – have two polarising layers for the dial, one of which is fixed, the other mobile. Orientated one way the dial is see-through, but twist the mobile layer and the filters combine to make the dial opaque. In the first watch this process is hidden as the rotation happens when the dial ring is lifted (thanks to a highly-

**Above:** The company was founded in 2007 in the village of Lully-sur-Morges, between Geneva and Le Brassus, in the heart of the vineyards.

**Right:** To ensure the polarising discs play their on/off role correctly, the vertical bezel opening movement had to be transformed into a rotating movement using a mechanism based on the Archimedes screw.



**Left:** Like the hood of a car, the dial of the R01 lifts up to reveal the mechanism inside, made possible by its ingenious system of polarising glasses. The inspiration comes from 17th-and-18th century pocket watches that open to reveal the time and mechanisms beneath.

complicated arrangement with an Archimedes screw in the hinge) while in the next two series the rotation is via the bezel. The filters were designed by the CSEM (Centre Suisse d'Electronique et de Microtechnique) and involve nano-scale etching of the surfaces – the effect is to block light at particular orientations.

#### TWISTS AND TURNS

That five economically troubled years have elapsed between founding the company and full production of the watches gives some idea as to the complexity hidden in the outline above. And while Danthe and Leu were able to show a prototype in 2010, the initial design failed at the production phase, requiring an almost entire redesign – some 200 components were changed in the end. The RO1 production model was finally completed in 2011.

While RO3 is a chronograph based on a Dubois-Dupraz and is, therefore, available at an accessible €10,000 plus taxes, the original watch uses an entrancing Carousel-type tourbillon developed by Anouk Danthe.

They refer to it as their 'Tourbillon Manège', which suggests the image of a horse being schooled on a lunging rein, which is quite close to how the movement works with the escapement assembly mounted on a moving arm that travels round the dial once per minute. Beautifully furnished, it reveals quite strongly the influence of Danthe and Leu's previous work at APRP. Needless to say the finish is exceptional and visually the Manège is a treat.

That Revelation has survived the financial shocks that erupted within months of the company's foundation bodes well for the future and the watches are a real pleasure to examine. The digestifs in those Vaudois restaurants must really have something.

Further information: [www.revelation-watches.ch](http://www.revelation-watches.ch) •

