



THE GRÖNEFELD BROTHERS

Dutch brothers Bart and Tim Grönefeld, both veterans of WOSTEP and Audemars Piguet (Renaud et Papi), launched their watch brand in 2004. They achieved acclaim with their dead beat seconds watch the One Hertz, and last year won a GPHG award for their Parallax Tourbillon. QP spoke to Bart on the eve of Grönefeld's return to SalonQP

QP: Your most recent watch, the Parallax Tourbillon, won last year's GPHG award for a tourbillon watch. What effect has that had?

Bart Grönefeld: It's been fantastic. It has given us a lot of publicity, but perhaps more importantly it's given confidence to our customers and our future customers that it's not just a marketing story we tell. When true experts and professionals look at what you do and reward it, it tells people it's worth going into the adventure of buying a Grönefeld.

QP: How did the idea of the Parallax Tourbillon come about?

BG: It took about three years to develop. My brother Tim, he loves tourbillons, and we've built many tourbillons for many different customers. And every time we'd think "okay, another tourbillon cage at 6 o'clock in a precision instrument for which you cannot set the time correctly, because the tourbillon doesn't stop."

With a precision instrument you should be able to stop the cage. And we wanted to have a

large seconds hand to show this precision, so we came up with the idea of adding another wheel and pinion to add a direct drive to the cage.

The other thing that's important is that it's durable, which is why we used stainless steel in the tourbillon cage and bridges. Steel is naturally much harder to finish, and takes a lot longer in the finishing process – but because it's more durable, it's less likely to come back to after-sales too soon, so we get that time back.

QP: Is it hard working with your brother? What are your different responsibilities?

"My brother is my best friend; if we have an argument it's settled over a cup of coffee – or about 20 beers!"

BG: My brother is also my best friend – we could have been twins, but there's three years between us. We have a very good relationship, and we sit right opposite each other at the bench. If we ever have an argument it's usually settled over a cup of coffee – or about 20 beers!

We see things the same way: we love traditional watchmaking, we hate all those modern materials like carbon fibre and titanium – we think those are just marketing talk. We want to make watches that last hundreds of years.

QP: You and Tim grew up in a family of watchmakers and jewellers. Did you both always know you'd become watchmakers?

BG: We were both very much into mechanics since we were five or six years old. Our parents had a jeweller's shop, selling watches that of course needed servicing, and we were meant to take over the business one day. So we both became watchmakers, and we both studied watchmaking in the Netherlands; first me, then Tim.

The Gronefeld brothers Tim (left) and Bart (right) at their workshop in Oldenzaal, in the Netherlands



