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On Time and Design

with Sebastien Bottinelli

by Marco Gonzalez/ Sherry Williams



In our ever changing world, we are becoming more aware how time is change, and change is inevitable. We watch it affect every aspect of our lives, even our own sensibilities for the design of luxury. But how does one navigate the maze of inevitable changes, and still stay relevant? Upon meeting Sebastien Bottinelli, a member of a prominent family of entrepreneurs responsible for the Audermars Pigeat watch brand, one finds inspiration for the proper attitude towards change – change is best managed with eyes wide open.



Sebastien voraciously consumes massive amounts of information. He will travel extensively in order to experience the world around him. He absorbs details like a sponge, sorting out information and ideas, then filling them away in his impeccable memory. In the course of correlating all this information, what Sebastien is actually doing is monitoring changes in the world. He then factors in his knowledge, experience and personality into the delivery of his works.

He is arrestingly modest and unassuming, which elegantly contrasts with the fact that this is a man of prominence and influence with a bent to be dynamic and creative. He certainly has the business acumen and the resources to adapt to the changes around him through strength, yet he seems more enthused by the art of design. Perhaps he discovered at an early age that thoughtful design can be quite rewarding and transformative, when he built and designed his own hut in the back of his family's home at the age of 12.

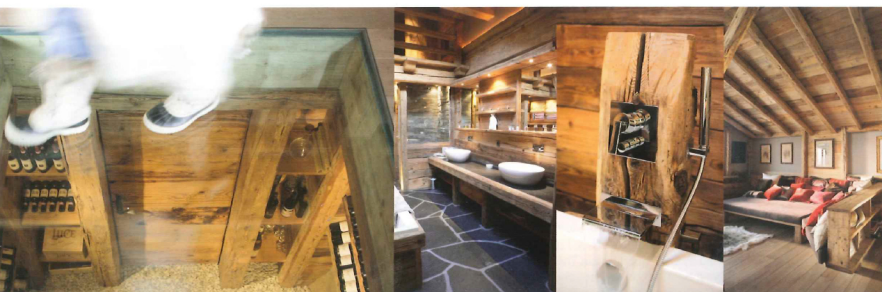
Along with his design sensibilities, he brings a bold, yet socially-responsible style of entrepreneurship. Transformation is an underlying theme in his design projects as well as his business ventures. Among his many responsibilities, he owns a number of companies focused on eco-friendly initiatives. On the day we met with Sebastien, he showed us one of his favorite ventures, Senso Restaurant in the heart of Geneva.

Senso Restaurant was designed by Sebastien. Within the mid-century building is a renovated space in which each seating area was designed to bring a timeless experience of luxury. The restaurant has vestiges of man himself, reflecting his personal experiences and travels. It provides the citizens of Geneva with a prime social *milieu* and fine dining, thereby contributing to the lifestyles of the citizens of Geneva, and elevating their moods. It is this effect that inspires Sebastien – how atmosphere and environment affects peoples lives and emotions.

Senso has developed a reputation as one of the chicest restaurants in Geneva. Clearly, Sebastien enjoyed the process of transforming the restaurant, so much so that he repeated the process to establish a Senso in Cran-Montana, then again in Singapore. At the Crans-Montana location, he added an innovative twist to his business model, he made everything in the restaurant available to his customers, including the furniture.

Sebastien has a broad sense of aesthetics, and his design work shows juxtapositions of styles, particularly in relation to time periods. He appreciates the expression of beauty throughout the ages, and as he sets out to create atmosphere, his inspirations are places he has been and people he has known. And through this process, his work becomes quite personal and unique.

"Design is memory of time.
Time become incarnate by design"



Apart from Senso, he also applies his talent for creative transformation to retail and residential spaces. He formed a company for this purpose called BSM Casaling. He designed the flagship store for his family's watch brand, and is currently developing *Residence Les Terrasses du Léman* a Crans-près-Celigny by Geneva, a real estate project using eco-friendly Minergie standards.

Sebastien owns a number of companies working towards innovative purposes. One of them even seeks to solve the problem of what to do with used car tires. He has proven to have the courage to take risks, and is able to advance his inspirations forward. He will most likely continue on with new and innovative projects.

When not at work, Sebastien is likely to be enjoying one of his many hobbies. He has a keen appreciation of nature, loves cars, gastronomy, watches and Italian wines. He also paints and draws. All the while, continually discovering, experiencing, tasting, and contemplating. He maintains quite a healthy sense of humor. When asked what kinds of projects he would like to accomplish next, he nonchalantly quips, "A hotel for dogs, an elevator to the moon, an underwater city, a giant ventilator to dispel clouds, a suction fan to clean radioactivity and pollution". While such a response from someone else would simple be dismissed as a joke, with a person such as Sebastien, one has to think twice whether or not he was serious.

Sebastien demonstrates that not only can change and transformation be quite profitable and rewarding, but also quite enjoyable. As he discussed his works and inspirations, it became apparent that he loves his work. Clearly, he will be accomplishing many more interesting things, as he has demonstrated a pattern and willingness to do it again and again. We look forward to seeing what Sebastien has in store for the future.

