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Apple Watch traces the affordability, reliability and personalization journey of horology

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Apple-Watch

By JEN KING

FLORENCE, Italy - Luxury goods are described as made by the hands of skilled artisans, but Sir Jonathan Ive of Apple argued at the Condé Nast International Luxury Conference April 22 that all devices, even those in the technology space, have handcrafted elements.

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Whether the Apple Watch will prove disruptive to the traditional watch industry has yet to be determined, but the degree of quality behind Apple's first wearable technology is clear ([see story](#)). Apple extensively researched the materials for the watch, especially its gold components, and feels that it is a false assumption to assume those in the technology space do not dedicate the same sense of quality to products as traditional luxury houses.

"At Apple we don't look at the world from a predetermined market opportunity or a description," said Sir Jonathan Ive, senior vice president, design at [Apple](#), Cupertino, CA.

"We have looked at the world through our products, and what we have tried to do is invest tremendous care and attention in their development," he said. "I think what's important is that we view the making of a product as important, not just a necessary evil."

Opportunities on the wrist

During the Condé Nast International Luxury Conference, Sir Jonathan and designer Marc Newson sat down for a conversation with Vogue International editor Suzy Menkes to discuss the Apple Watch and its implications for luxury and technology ([see story](#)).

Ms. Menkes began with the notion that many consumers do not consider tech goods as being handmade and that many see the Apple Watch, and similar products, as machines.

However, Mr. Newson explained that, yes, the Apple Watch is put together by machines, but those machines are the tools of its craftsman just as a watchmaker has a tool kit and a seamstress a needle and thread.



FLORENCE, Italy - Suzy Menkes in conversation with Apple's Sir Jonathan Ive and Marc Newson

Apple's machines ensure that its products are consistently of a quality on par with its brand and consumer expectation. Sir Jonathan said that he finds a significant source of joy when designing products and it is that joy that informs the way Apple designs.

He noted that Apple does not think of its business as being part of the luxury landscape, since its focus has always been on designing better products.

He explained the motivation behind the design of Apple products using an anecdote about the iPhone. When the iPhone was under development, ideas came from a dislike of what was currently available on the market, but with Apple Watch the motivation was not displeasure with traditional timepieces.

Instead, the motivation was the idea of building a watch that could compete with what was already available. What Sir Jonathan saw was a fabulous place and opportunity for technology, which is very different from the reasons behind Apple's smartphone.

The space, meaning where a watch is worn, not necessarily horology as a whole, was explained by Mr. Newson as being "the best place on the body to put an object," and wanting to put an item on the wrist is part of a larger evolution of technology.

Horology's evolution from town center clock towers to table clocks to wristwatches, where the technology more or less has stayed, has been a journey in affordability, reliability and personalization. This journey, the backbone of the Apple Watch's design, had to be understood for Apple.



Apple Watch

Above all, it is Apple's hope that the Apple Watch will introduce horology to a new generation of consumers, many of whom have not matured in a climate where it was commonplace to wear a wristwatch due to the advance of smartphones being used as timekeepers.

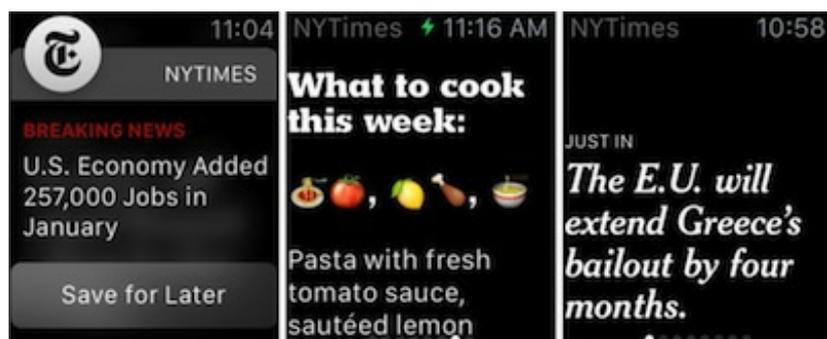
Mr. Newson said that the Apple Watch is the first interaction his young daughter has had with a timepiece in a traditional sense, showing that Apple's foray into wearables will reintroduce horology to the world of watches.

Collectable tech

As with all things tech, there is room for updates which to many horology purists defeats the collectability of traditional timepieces.

Sir Jonathan says that the functionality and capabilities of Apple Watch cannot be compared to mechanical timepieces because of the underlying software.

Thousands of applications are being developed for the Apple Watch, with Starwood Hotels & Resorts, automaker BMW and news outlet The New York Times leading the way ([see story](#)), making the wearable's personalization capabilities immense.



New York Times app for Apple Watch

With personalization comes usefulness and consumers will use the Apple Watch in a variety of ways from health and fitness to subtle and nuanced communications. Wearers will be intimately connected to others in a way that a smartphone is unable to do let alone a traditional, mechanical watch.

“It is still a timepiece, it qualifies as a watch, but it is so much more than a timepiece,” said Marc Newson, designer, Apple, Silicon Valley, CA. “[Apple Watch] is the beginning of a long journey and it will evolve in ways that we cannot yet understand.”

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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