

JEWELRY

FHH's new metrics label 64 watchmakers as true haute horologists

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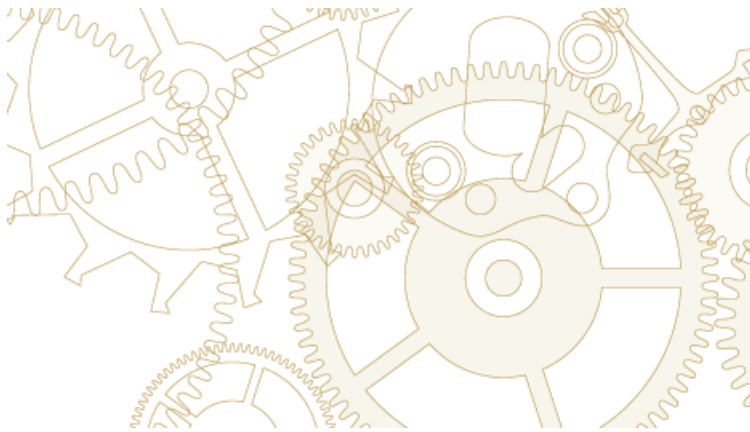


Image courtesy of Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie

By STAFF REPORTS

NEW YORK The Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie has worked for three years to develop a comprehensive brand evaluation method to define what constitutes fine watchmaking.

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Established in 2005, the FHH was formed to promote fine watchmaking worldwide through its mission to inform, train, recognize and organize those in the sector and consumers interested in horology ([see story](#)). Since its founding, the FHH has been asked time and time again by industry professionals what determines a fine watchmaker and how that criteria can be leveraged.

Haute or not

The FHH's brand evaluation method is similar to the guidelines set in motion by the Fédération Française de la Couture du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode. The guidelines placed by the French federation determines which houses are considered true haute couture designers.

In its "White Paper of Fine Watchmaking," the FHH gives an overview of the process it has undertaken to judge the numerous watchmakers on the market. Those who meet the exacting criteria can then boast the title of fine watchmaking, or haute horlogerie.

To start the FHH examined 86 contenders, dividing the brands into 4 segments. The segments include Historic Maisons, Contemporary Brands, Luxury Brands and Artisans-Creators.

Then the brands were evaluated by the FHH's Cultural Council, broken into 7 groups of passionate watch connoisseurs, who judged a specific areas of expertise. The 7 areas include: R&D - Production and Technical Expertise; Style, Design and Artistic Expertise; History and DNA; Distribution and After-Sales Service; Connoisseurs and Collectors; Brand Image and Communication and Training.

The Cultural Council also judged the brands subjectively based on prior knowledge, for a objective (65 percent) and subjective (35 percent) evaluation.

Based on the objective determinations, watchmakers were given a score from 1 to 10 based on each area of

expertise. Those with an average score across each area of more than 6 can be considered a fine watchmaking brand.

Of the original 86 watchmakers examined, only 65 received a final score of 6 or more. Those below are not considered fine watchmakers, but if improvements are made they may be reconsidered when the next evaluation period, approximately 2 to 3 years, begins.

Not wanting to be the "Michelin rating of watchmaking," the FHH has only shared the final scores directly with the brands in question, and has no intention of making the evaluations public.

If the watchmaker wishes to share its final score publicly, it is the FHH's hope that the haute horlogerie rating system offers industry transparency and jumpstarts future discussion.

In the future, the FHH is likely to design a visual aspect for brands to promote their rating within marketing communications. One option being considered is a seal that may be placed on authentication documents, for example.

Additional information on the members of the Cultural Council, the overall process and specific areas expertise considered, please click [here](#).

The FHH shared the methodology of its brand evaluation system with the press April 26 at the Park Hyatt Hotel in New York.

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