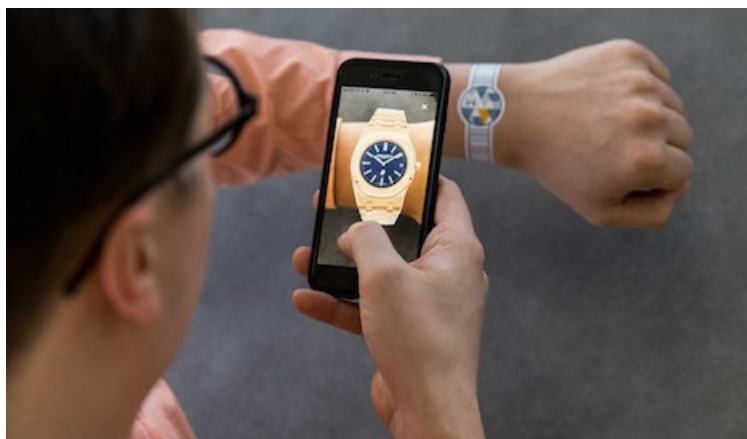


JEWELRY

Watch design could be the next frontier for AR

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"Try-on" a watch through the WatchBox mobile app. Image credit: WatchBox

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Despite a long history of sticking with traditional marketing tactics, jewelry and watch brands have been leaning more into augmented reality, with some even making a case for using this technology in the design process.

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Swiss watch and luxury timepiece brands were previously slow to adopt digital marketing, ecommerce and social media, but more recently this has changed. The use of AR is becoming more prominent with these brands, allowing them to make a deeper connection with consumers by immersing them in the making of their timepieces.

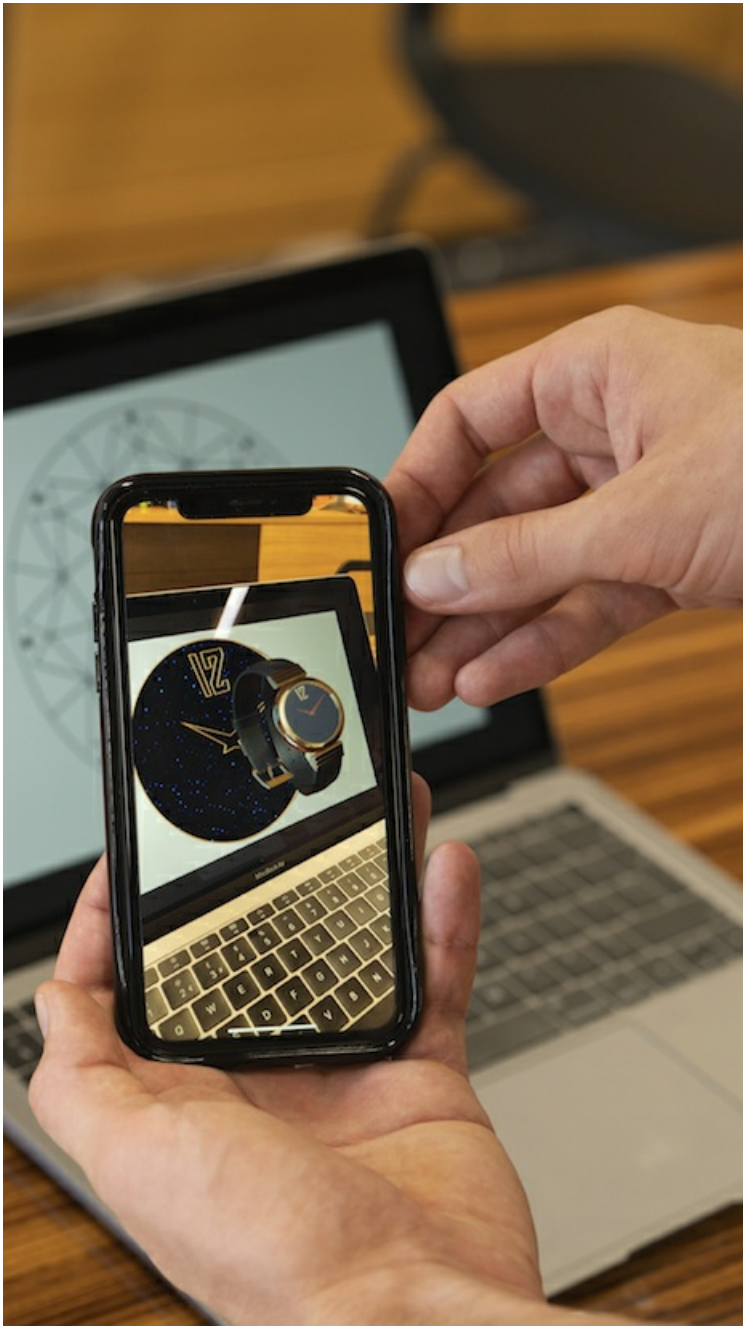
"Very much like in the automotive world, the ability to visualize a piece accurately and in context will open wonderful opportunities for watch designers and for creation as a whole," said Alexandre Meerson, founder of **Meerson Watches**. "From a technical perspective, new movements and complications will be engineered and tested at a much quicker pace and permit incredibly beautiful and innovative movements to be brought to market.

"In terms of design, and at all levels of craft, technology will allow designers to create virtually unique pieces for each client very easily whether 3D printed or handcrafted," he said. "This is going to open a world of creative ideas, where talent and style will be rewarded more than technical expertise. Exciting."

Watching AR growth

Meerson Watches is one brand that brings customers into its design process using the technology of AR. Owners are able to view a sophisticated digital version of their watches as they work with the watchmakers to design their special piece.

When designing, Meerson's application and AR technology allows associates to gain a more advanced picture of accurate sizing. After the watch's completion, customers will be able to use the AR features in the app as an interactive manual.



Meerson's AR Watch preview. Image credit: Meerson Watches

Along with the design process, watchmakers are using AR to help consumers discover what went into their timepieces.

Swiss watchmaker Ulysse Nardin recently infused the timepiece buying process with augmented and virtual reality through a pop-up at Watches of Switzerland in New York.

The temporary outpost is the first in the United States to use Leap Motion software, which will let consumers visualize the mechanics behind the brand's watches. The pop-up brings digital and physical experiences together in an exclusive retail partnership ([see story](#)).

Fine watchmaker Girard-Perreguax was one of the first watchmakers to introduce a virtual try-on app through the use of AR in 2010.

At Baselworld last year, Rolex launched an AR try-on app that offers a high-end viewing experience for customers to gain a clear picture of what it would be like to wear the product on his or her wrist.

Using the same technology, resale platform Watchbox has released a feature on its app with the inventory of available watches. Users must print out a paper that acts as an anchor for the technology to get an accurate and realistic experience.

"Technology plays a crucial role for WatchBox and our omnichannel approach," said Danny Govberg, cofounder of

WatchBox. "But it's not just technology for technology's sake.

"Every innovation we pursue always has the end goal of providing personalized service, education, expert council and convenience for our customers," he said. "Our investment into augmented reality is for our ecommerce customers to feel confident in their online purchase."



Virtual Showroom features a Rolex watch. Image credit: Chrono24

A variety of other apps such as Chrono24's Virtual Try-On feature similar experiences.

Moving forward

Luxury conglomerate Richemont recently helped visitors to the immersive Shops and Restaurants at Hudson Yards step into its brands with a special installation.

Brands such as Cartier, IWC, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Montblanc, Panerai, Piaget, Vacheron Constantin and Van Cleef & Arpels are getting their stories told through a 3D experience in New York, dubbed "Arcadium." Open from July 12 to 25, Arcadium hosted a series of events and tech demonstrations in addition to jewelry and watchmaking workshops ([see story](#)).

The experience, similar to Ulysse Nardin's, used augmented reality technology in its exhibition.

In the future it is likely that AR will be used more in the design process, in addition to 3D printing.

"Our view is that technology, and AR in particular, can help nurture the intimacy between the owner, the designer and the artisans," Mr. Meerson said. "This is part of the essence of our work in luxury.

"Beyond marketing and even sales, there is a huge opportunity to involve the owner at every stage of creation and manufacturing and even after delivery to craft the most unique and pleasurable experience," he said.