

High-End Horology Made in Tokyo by Hajime Asaoka

by [Michele](#) - [Orologi di Classe](#)

Many times during life clichés prevent us to accept new hypothesis, thesis, concepts or cultures, just because they're different from our vision.

Horology is not immune from these clichés and when we think at it, our mind suddenly jumps to Switzerland. It's spontaneous to consider that “here” (in Europe) everything walks around “Swiss Made”, but of course we cannot affirm that all this ancient art is enclosed to this small area.

Saxony watchmakers, particularly in Glashütte I/SA village, had always shined and actually their vision is settled on Olympus. Nowadays many clever watchmakers work all around the world, but they can only get in the market manufacturing niche timepieces at a higher quality. However, sometimes this is not enough to avoid banalities mindset.

If we think at Japan, clichés make us suddenly think at their good quartz watches with digital displays, whereas Japan gave a big contribution in watchmaking history.

Today I would like to bring your attention to a Japanese watchmaker whose name shines in the High-End Horology universe.
His name is Hajime Asaoka.



[Hajime Asaoka caliber Ti-16a](#)

When in the last January I saw for the first time his new caliber, I just think: amazing!

What such a wonderful big balance wheel! I remember the words of a friend of mine. He said me: ---“Michele, it's fabulous just to look at it. A titanium balance wheel, alone and so enormous! When I saw it I get so excited! Also the watch's design seems really very nice as the finishings: they're very accurate but reinterpreted. It would be very nice to know something more about”--.



[Hajime Asaoka Titanium Balance 16 mm watch](#)

Concerning my friend's words “I get so excited when I saw it” I think there's nothing more to explain, but to whom are getting curious I can say that the balance wheel has a diameter of 16 mm and all the caliber is located inside a 37 mm case.

Technically, the wider is the balance diameter the more is the inertia, and by the way also the resistance to external forces it's also higher, and finally it's really wonderful look at it while he beats!

Hajime went assembling this new watch that has some great details, as the titanium balance wheel and a plate – also of that light material – to hide the regulator mechanism getting everything in the scene cleanest as possible.

[Ti-16a Caliber Video](#)

I must also evidence the particular finishing of a skeleton wheel with “octopus elements” that certainly reminds – for the deep resonance – at the one used by Patek Philippe in the 5016 Reference.



“Octopus wheel”

Asaoka didn't study as a watchmaker, but as an industrial designer. Nevertheless he suddenly demonstrate his extraordinary skills like when he presented his first timepiece a few years ago, a beautiful tourbillon with off centred dial. This watch has been produced in a few pieces, also due to the huge manual work that Asaoka had to apply to manufacturing each piece. With this tourbillon, named T1001, Hajime has expressed the best of his potential, reinterpreting one of the most fascinating mechanical complication.



Hajime Asaoka Tourbillon T1001

Perhaps I have spent all my words describing mechanics and it would be right to also talk about the design of these watches, but you know.. aesthetics are so much individual. Here, is quite simple and without many frills as those vertical and parallel lines on the T1001 dial.

In some ways perhaps they're away from our European taste, but this should not make think to a simplified product, it's just a matter of culture – different from ours (although if I personally do not find it so far away from the aesthetics of our timepieces, because T1001 it's inspired by the Art-Deco style) but if something is far away from our culture, or style, this doesn't mean that it isn't equally or even more sophisticated, or refined with a tradition deeper than ours (the workings of these dials are technically a challenge: the images doesn't make enough justice). Perhaps, from the Europeans, an Hajime Asaoka product should be judged more by the substance and its beating heart.. In other words the mechanical movement. Or maybe we have just to try to never be overtaken by clichès.

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