



#### STORY

Hervé Genoud,  
introduced by  
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Conventional thinking may have once considered Patek Philippe a conservative watchmaker, the epitome of understated elegance. However, since the time when Thierry Stern was head of creation and then became president, the company has become something of a disruptor as well, mixing an abiding respect for the best traditions of Swiss watchmaking with an innovative and, at times, unexpected approach. The following pages show a selection of watches that are some of the most meaningful to Thierry Stern and are significant contributions to the Patek Philippe canon since 1999. When the watches are seen together, certain patterns emerge. Immediately apparent is the love and respect Thierry has for his father, the importance of intergenerational transmission, a sensitivity to aesthetic subtlety and beauty, a love of shaped cases, and of daring. The fil rouge that links all these aspects of his horological self is, of course, Thierry's profound reverence for the hallowed name of which he is the current steward.

PHOTOGRAPH: FREDERIC ARANDA

You never actually own the Patek Philippe manufacture; you merely look after it for the next generation. This paraphrase of the famous advertising slogan coined in 1996 could be the motto for all the presidents of the family-owned Geneva company, because each successive generation inherits a rich tradition and heritage to nurture. But being the guardian of the Patek Philippe spirit does not mean following a well-trodden path and changing nothing. For Thierry Stern, who is passionate about creation, the point is also to innovate; to begin his own tradition (to cite another company slogan); to leave his mark, his imprint, his style, just as his grandfather Henri Stern, and his father, Philippe Stern, have each done. Whether developing a new timepiece or reinterpreting an existing model, the manufacture's current president has always had the art of striking a balance between tradition and innovation, respect and audacity, the familiar and the unexpected. His trust in his intuition and intimate knowledge of the brand is clearly attested by some of the timepieces that he considers to be significant in his career.

Our survey begins in 1999, when Thierry Stern was already the head of creation for

the manufacture. “My father and I wanted Patek Philippe to devote time and energy to becoming a major player in the women's market,” he says. “That is how the Twenty~4 *manchette*, or cuff-style, REF. 4910/10A was born. It launched in steel set with diamonds – a revolution for the time.” Already that same year, with the REF. 5056P, Thierry had shown his interest in dials by reinterpreting the patented Annual Calendar that had launched three years earlier. “This charcoal gray dial, unusual at the time, signaled the arrival of colored dials with a younger, more modern style in our collections,” Thierry remembers. “It was also our first platinum model, set with a diamond between the lugs to distinguish it from models in other white metals – a brilliant idea from my father.”

In 2004, Thierry chose to reenergize the annual calendar REF. 5135G, this time putting it in a large tonneau-style case with a choice of charcoal gray or silvery white dial and day, date, and month displays in three apertures arranged in an arc. “I wore this Gondolo Calendario for a long time,” he recalls. And that same year was marked by the birth of a new classic: “The quintessential Patek Philippe complicated watch, the



1999 REF. 5056P-001 ANNUAL CALENDAR The 36.5 mm REF. 5056P was notable for two design features: the charcoal gray color of its dial, which was a starting point for colored dials of a modern style in the collection, and for being the first platinum watch to have the diamond set into the caseband, which became a distinguishing mark for platinum models across the collection



1999 REF. 4910/10A-010 TWENTY~4 The 30 mm x 25.1 mm REF. 4910/10A launched the Twenty~4 series, becoming one of Patek Philippe's most popular designs. As Thierry Stern once said, “The timeless design of the Twenty~4 has become a modern classic.” The series has been enhanced over the years with models that include the Haute Joaillerie automatic version (below)



2019 REF. 7300/1450R-001 TWENTY~4 HAUTE JOAILLERIE The Haute Joaillerie version of the 36 mm round-cased automatic ladies' Twenty~4 was created in celebration of the watch family that began with the model seen above. Here, the bracelet, crown, bezel, and dial are all paved with diamonds, set in a “snow” or random pattern, that enhance the celebratory luxurious effect



2004 REF. 5135G-010 GONDOLO CALENDARIO The Gondolo had been made as time-only watches for more than 10 years when the Gondolo Calendario (38 mm x 51 mm) brought the first complication to the family in 2004. The annual calendar complication had itself only appeared inside round-shaped models since its launch in 1996. The REF. 5135 combined art deco design with a complication



perpetual calendar chronograph REF. 5970R. This model represents my greatest challenge to date, and it is the creation of which I am most proud, as is my father.”

When Thierry Stern became president of the company in 2009, Patek Philippe was preparing to launch its first manually wound chronograph movement designed and built entirely in-house. “Everyone was expecting a men's watch,” says Thierry, “but I opted for the more daring choice of a women's model.” The aptly named Ladies First Chronograph REF. 7071R (see opposite and right, second from top) also stands out for its elegant cushion-shaped case with rounded corners and its original ornamentation of diamonds set beneath the sapphire crystal. From 2010, men, too, could have their own manual Patek Philippe chronograph, the REF. 5170.

Six years into his presidency, in 2015 Thierry Stern again caused a stir, this time by unveiling the Calatrava Pilot Travel Time REF. 5524G (see page 46), a model inspired by two aviator watches on display in the Patek Philippe Museum. “When I launched that model, some people said that it did not look like a Patek Philippe,” he remembers. “But since then, its atypical pilot-style design has become established in our collections, and we now have an entire family of these timepieces.” Today, the line includes a self-winding chronograph, the REF. 5924, and the Alarm Travel Time (REF. 5520).

The same year, 2015, also saw the launch of the Volutes and Arabesques Calatrava REF. 5088/100P, a platinum model with a dial that combines hand engraving with *grand feu* champlevé enameling, two of the



2004 REF. 5970R-001 PERPETUAL CALENDAR CHRONOGRAPH Ancestors of this 40 mm hand-wound Patek Philippe perpetual calendar chronograph with moon phases include the well-known REF. 2499 from the 1950s. It was with great respect for this heritage that Thierry Stern approached the creation of this new watch, a modern classic for the company



2009 REF. 7071R-001 LADIES FIRST CHRONOGRAPH The 35 mm x 39 mm Ladies First Chronograph was a pioneer in many ways, not least for containing the first in-house-made manual Patek Philippe chronograph caliber, which can be seen through the sapphire crystal caseback (see opposite). The setting of diamonds on the dial under the sapphire crystal was also original



2015 REF. 5088/100P-001 VOLUTES AND ARABESQUES CALATRAVA The 38 mm REF. 5088/100P brought the skills of the rare handcrafts into the current collection, augmenting this Calatrava model with hand engraving and *grand feu* champlevé enamel and creating a magnificent evening watch. Over the years, this approach would be applied to other classic models; one is seen below



2021 REF. 5738/51G-001 GOLDEN ELLIPSE Like the Calatrava of 2015 (above), this watch was the first model to introduce a classic Golden Ellipse with rare handcrafts into the current collection. The 34.5 mm x 39.5 mm REF. 5738/51G with *grand feu* champlevé enamel work and hand-engraving renewed the Golden Ellipse family (see above left, and pages 32–37 for further discussion)

## FOR THIERRY STERN, THE POINT IS TO BEGIN HIS OWN TRADITION, AS HIS GRANDFATHER AND HIS FATHER DID





2015

**REF. 5524G-001  
CALATRAVA PILOT  
TRAVEL TIME**  
For another reimagining of the Calatrava family, Thierry Stern was inspired by a pair of aviator watches made by Patek Philippe in 1936 (now in the company's museum). When launched, the 42 mm REF. 5524's design caught attention for its divergence from the classic Calatrava, but it quickly became popular (also see right)



2016

**REF. 5496P-015  
PERPETUAL CALENDAR  
RETROGRADE DATE**  
For this 2016 version of the 39.5 mm REF. 5496 (first launched in 2011), Thierry rejuvenated the perpetual calendar with retrograde date through design enhancements that include the gold numerals on the date arc. He said they "took years, but my gold hand-set numerals make a difference to the beauty of this watch"



2023

**REF. 5316/50P-001  
TRIPLE COMPLICATION**  
As with the watch above, Thierry Stern has worked to reinvigorate complications models with innovative, contemporary design ideas. Here, on the 40.2 mm REF. 5316/50P, the unique smoky-effect transparent dial offers a view of the watch mechanics without distracting from the display (also see opposite for a closer look at the dial)



2017

**REF. 5320G-010  
PERPETUAL CALENDAR**  
Perhaps one of the most personally satisfying design rejuvenations for Thierry was the 40 mm Perpetual Calendar REF. 5320, which he and his father wanted to wear when it was released. The dial is simplified with one sub-dial for date and moon phase and the day and month in apertures. The syringe hands refer to the past but with a modern feel



traditional skills being carefully preserved by Patek Philippe. Thierry says he "chose this watch to introduce the rare handcrafts into the current collection."

A key part of Patek Philippe's collection is the grand complications, and in 2016 Thierry Stern reinterpreted one of the manufacture's flagship models, the Perpetual Calendar Retrograde Date REF. 5496P. The updated model has a pure, understated style, with the date numerals arranged on the dial in an arc of gold micro-appliques, made by a process that took four years to develop.

In 2017, the new version of the Perpetual Calendar REF. 5320G was released, which Thierry describes as "a classic complication revisited in a modern vintage style, with a cream-colored dial that is a model of balance and legibility." He continues, with a smile, "My father and I broke our usual rule by both wearing it as soon as it came out. It is a true link between the generations."

Two years later, with the Calatrava Weekly Calendar REF. 5212A (see page 49), Thierry Stern again strayed from the conventional

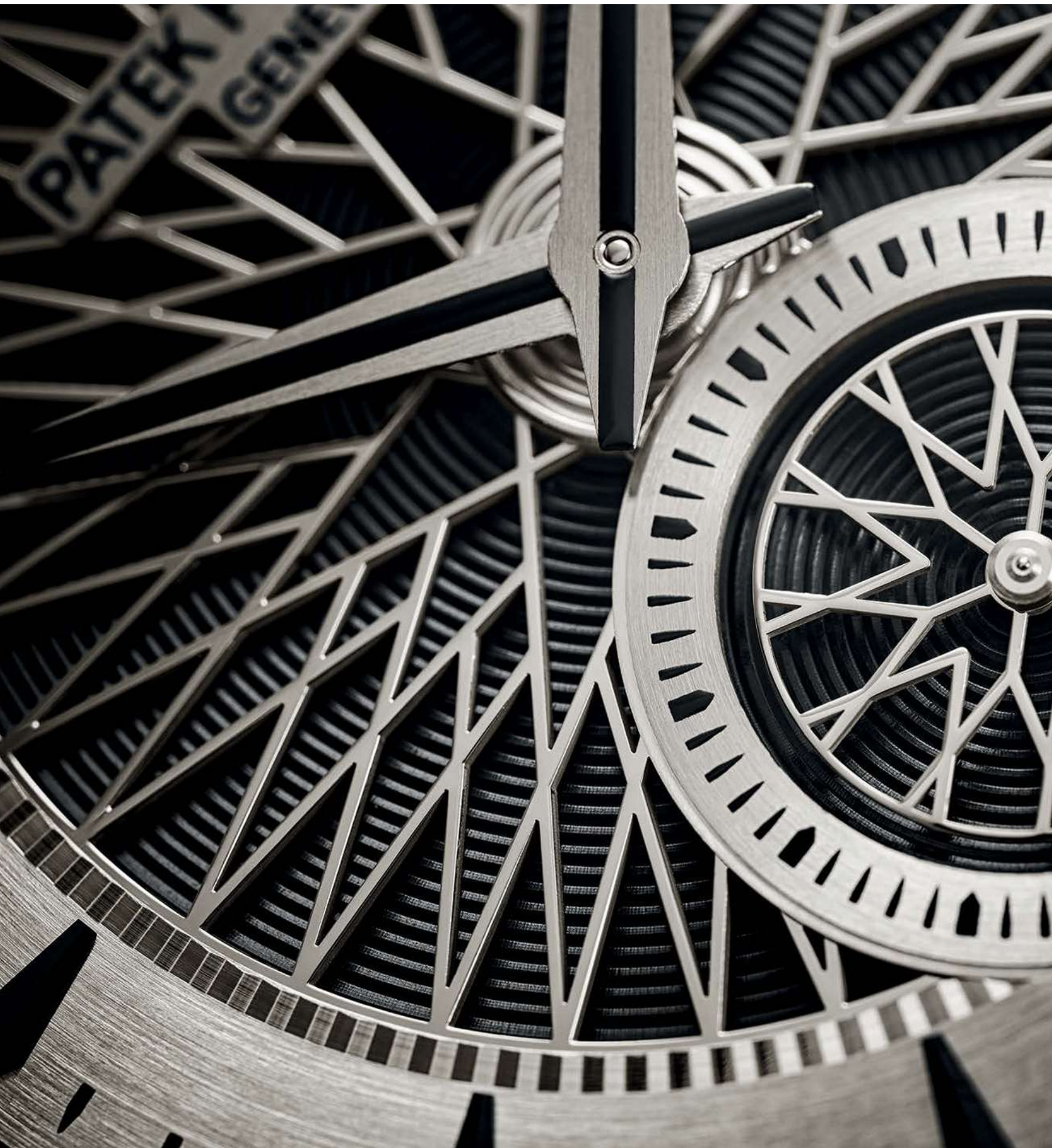
aesthetic code of haute horlogerie. To refer to classic paper desk diaries on this new steel complication with day, date, and number of the week, Thierry wanted to use typography that replicated handwriting. "I loved the result," he says, "and so did our customers."

In the fall of 2018, women's watches had been in the spotlight with the launch of the Twenty-4 Automatic in a round case, and this stylish, timelessly elegant model was enriched for 2019 with a total of 3,238 diamonds for the Haute Joaillerie version, REF. 7300/1450R (page 44, third from top).

The birth of the Calatrava REF. 6119 came in 2021, in rose gold (page 49) or white gold, with the new hand-wound caliber 30-255 PS. Thierry refers to this timepiece as the "rejuvenated version of the great classic REF. 3919 created by my father, with the guilloché Clous de Paris bezel." He says the model's evolution is "a fine example of transmission, from the third to the fourth generation." For the minute repeater REF. 5750P (see pages 48 and 49), meanwhile, Thierry explored new technical and aesthetic approaches. He

PHOTOGRAPH: JP CATTIN





says the idea for this model's dial came to him while he was cleaning a spoked wheel in his garage. "The avant-garde style is perfect for this Advanced Research Fortissimo series with a patented mechanical sound amplification module and a handleless small-seconds counter." Also in 2021, Thierry Stern created a unique pairing of the iconic Golden Ellipse design with the beauty of rare handcrafts techniques. The REF. 5738/51G (see page 45), he says, "is a magnificent dress watch in a modern, refined style." The timepiece features a dial that combines the artisanal expertise of hand engraving with *grand feu* champlevé enameling.

We have reached 2022, a year that was marked by the launch of the Annual Calendar Travel Time REF. 5326G and a version with hours, minutes, seconds, and date: the Calatrava REF. 5226G. The casebands of both watches are adorned with the emblematic guilloché Clous de Paris motif (see left), framing a vintage-style dial that is reminiscent of old photographic cameras. The REF. 5226G "was the first watch on which I worked with my two sons," says Thierry.

Another surprise awaited in 2023. For the launch of the REF. 5316/50P (see pages 46 and 47), the platinum model of the reference that includes a minute repeater, tourbillon, and a perpetual calendar with retrograde date display and moon phases, Thierry Stern reinterpreted another great Patek Philippe classic in a contemporary style. The blue metallized sapphire crystal dial creates a smoked-glass effect that allows a veiled glimpse of the mechanical heart of the watch. Creativity certainly seems to have a bright future at Patek Philippe. ♦

*Translated by Barbara Caffin*



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**2019** REF. 5212A-001  
CALATRAVA WEEKLY CALENDAR  
The 40 mm REF. 5212 was the first Patek Philippe to display the week number as well as the day, month, and time, which are all indicated by five hands, and it has the date in a window. Thierry asked the designer to hand draw the lettering, saying later, "Each letter and each numeral is different and unique...giving the dial a vintage and poetic look." (For a closer look, see left)



**2021** REF. 6119R-001  
CALATRAVA  
The Patek Philippe REF. 96 began the Calatrava story in 1932. Then the REF. 96D added the Clous de Paris bezel design in 1934 and, in the 1980s, the REF. 3919 rejuvenated the classic. For the next century, Thierry made the 39 mm REF. 6119, saying, "When I look at the 3919, I see my grandfather; when I look at the new 6119, I am looking at my sons"



**2022** REF. 5226G-001  
CALATRAVA  
In continuation of the Calatrava line (see above), Thierry Stern and his two sons worked to find a new way to enhance the tradition for the 40 mm REF. 5226G: they placed the Clous de Paris bezel decoration on the caseband instead, in an understated but complex design. The Clous de Paris wraps around the case, even under the lugs (see left)



**2021** REF. 5750P-001  
ADVANCED RESEARCH MINUTE REPEATER  
Recent decades have seen innovatively designed Patek Philippe watches that unveil the pioneering work of the Research and Development department such as the 40 mm REF. 5750P, for which a purely mechanical way to amplify the time strike was found. The design embodied Thierry's inspiration from a spoked wheel (see opposite)