

The Wristmonification of (the Stoic) Seneca

Konstantin Chaykin's wristmons are a way of looking at watchmaking from an unexpected angle. Also from a philanthropic point of view.

Konstantin Chaykin believes that supporting charitable initiatives is one of the missions of modern watchmaking. The watches that Konstantin Chaykin makes for charity are undoubtedly attractive to watch connoisseurs because he approaches such projects responsibly and thoughtfully. He always offers unique pieces that have no equivalent in the regular collection which makes offer even more attractable for a collector. Incidentally, this does not only apply to the design: Chaykin often develops new movements for such watches, which was particularly the case with the Joker Selfie and the Martian Tourbillon. With these and other watches, he has been supporting the Association Monégasque contre les Myopathies since 2017, for which he donated the unique Joker Sandmann this year. On May 10, 2024, this watch was sold at Christie's for 110,000 Swiss francs. One of the most recent examples of Chaykin's philanthropy is the Joker for Encore Charity watch, which was sold for around 435,000 US dollars at the Encore Charity Auction in Moscow on March 16, 2024. This is currently the highest amount ever paid for a Konstantin Chaykin wristwatch.

The independent watchmaker's responsible approach to developing watches for charity is also reflected in its latest project: the Seneca Pièce Unique watch, which is being offered for the benefit of the European Leukodystrophy Association (ELA). This watch, which will be sold at a special Christie's auction in Geneva on November 11, 2024, is unique in its concept, complications and design.

Why Seneca?

With the new Seneca wristmon, Konstantin Chaykin continues the series of his philosophically charged watches, namely Carpe Diem and Genius Temporis. However, the Seneca also has brothers among the wristmons that can also be classified as philosophical - these are the Joker Selfie, Joker 'Fiat Lux', Stargazer and Calavera.

But what prompted Konstantin Chaykin to turn to the figure of Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger, a stoic philosopher and moralist of ancient Rome? One possible answer is that in many of Seneca's sayings we find advice on how to overcome life's difficulties with wisdom and virtue. The independent watchmaker has used one of Seneca's sayings for the design of a watch dedicated to the thinker: Recte facti fecisse merces est - "The reward for a good deed is its accomplishment." Isn't that the essence of charity?

An allusion to the Roman calendar

But Konstantin Chaykin is far from designing the Seneca watch purely for edification. In his creations, he often looks for links between philosophical and design ideas and the development of watchmaking to add new dimensions to the project. When he developed the design of the Seneca watch, he decided to emphasize that the origin of the modern calendar goes back to ancient Rome and that all the important events related to its introduction took place around the turn of the first millennium, the time when Lucius Annaeus Seneca lived. The generally recognized 12-month system, whose month names have survived to this day, was introduced thanks to the reform of Julius Caesar in 45 BC. More or less at the same time, the Romans adapted the seven-day week, creating the exact combination that characterizes the modern calendar.

It is assumed that the Roman Republican calendar, which preceded the Julian calendar, was introduced by Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome. This calendar was based on the lunar month. Konstantin Chaykin therefore decided to equip the Seneca watch with both a date display and a moonphase. The lunar smile created by moonphase display, which is upside down compared to the traditional orientation, has been featured on wristmons since their introduction - since 2017, when the Joker caused a stir. Later, since 2019, some wristmons have been equipped with a day of the week display, but never with the date. The Seneca watch is therefore the first to display a date. As if that wasn't enough for Konstantin Chaykin, he complicated this display on the Seneca by weaving Latin letters into the date numerals so that these letters form Seneca's phrase "Recte facti fecisse merces est" - "The remuneration for a deed well done is to have done it" - over the course of a month. As this is a unique combination of complications for the Wristmons collection, Chaykin developed a new caliber for this watch, the **K.18-23**.

The unexpected facets of Seneca

When Konstantin Chaykin familiarized himself with Seneca's legacy in preparation for this project, he was surprised to discover his statement about timepieces. It appeared in a satire on the Roman emperor Claudius, Apocolocyntosis (divi) Claudii - The Pumpkinification of (the Divine) Claudius, the authorship of which scholars tend to attribute to Seneca: "Horam non possum certam tibi dicere, facilius inter philosophos quam inter horologia conveniet" - "Which time it was, I cannot tell you exactly: it is easier to reconcile the philosophers than the horologes." Apparently this is a fairly common irony for the time, when the Romans only had sundials and clepsydras - neither of which were very accurate at the time.

There is no doubt that the title of this opus made Chaykin sit up and take notice. He is no stranger to pumpkinification: he did just that in the fall of 2017, when he presented the Pumpkin Head watch for Halloween, the first radical change to the original Joker design. With the Seneca watch, he didn't try to create something that resembled a Roman coin or followed any other common path, but instead gave Seneca the Wristmon the look of a golden mask. Since Seneca the Younger was one of the greatest playwrights of ancient Rome, where the actors almost always had to appear on stage wearing a mask, a mask for Seneca the Wristmon seems quite natural. As is usual with ancient masks, Chaykin has opened the mouth of the mask into a smile and torn open the eyes, through which we can see parts of the mechanism that brings Seneca the Wristmon to life. Indeed, there is no figure that Konstantin Chaykin could not be able to wristmonificate.

As with the Minions and Panda wristmons, he has also dispensed with digital markings around the eyes on the Seneca watch. This naturally leads to a certain amount of blurring when determining the time on the dial of this wristmon. The owner has to remember that the hour display is on the left and the minute display on the right, but this should not be a problem because the arrangement of the displays corresponds to the natural order in which time is written from left to right in the European tradition, i.e. the hours are written first, then the minutes.

Seneca Piece Unique

Technical specifications

Movement	Caliber K.18-23 with automatic winding
Joker indication module	Developed and made by Konstantin Chaykin manufacture
Base movement	La Joux-Perret G200, Swiss made, modified for the Konstantin Chaykin manufacture
Movement dimensions	Diameter 33.4 mm, thickness 7.85 mm (with module)
Escapement	Swiss lever escapement
Balance frequency	28'800 vibrations per hour
Power reserve	68 hours
Number of jewels	32 (base movement - 24 jewels, module - 8 jewels)
Number of module parts	85
Functions	Joker-indication with hours (left, at 10 o'clock), minutes (right, at 2 o'clock), moonphase at 6 o'clock, date at 12 o'clock
Case	Stainless steel, exhibition caseback secured with 6 screws
Case dimensions	Diameter 40 mm, thickness 12.2 mm excluding lugs (12.55 mm with lugs)
Crystal	Sapphire crystal with anti-reflective coating, diameter 33 mm; sapphire crystal of the caseback with anti-reflective coating, diameter 25.5 mm
Number of case parts	54
Dial finishings	Sandblasting, polishing, bevel polishing, circular brushing and straight grinding, gold plating and rhodium coating; multi-layer varnishing

Number of dial parts	13
Strap	Black leather strap
Buckle	Pin buckle, in stainless steel, made by Konstantin Chaykin manufacture