

# MIH Gaïa watch

## Press kit



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## Press release

# The Musée international d'horlogerie unveils the MIH Gaïa timepiece

***La Chaux-de-Fonds, 17 September 2019.* As the 25<sup>th</sup> Gaïa Prize ceremony approaches, the Musée international d'horlogerie has unveiled its new creation: the MIH Gaïa watch. The museum's second timepiece has been exclusively developed by in-house experts and produced with the help of local businesses and artisans from La Chaux-de-Fonds. The idea behind this creation was to finance exceptional workmanship with the aim of preserving horological heritage. This funding effort, which – as it takes the form of subscriptions – is unconventional to say the least, showcases the expertise of an entire region, united by the MIH around this new project.**

The MIH Gaïa watch will be unveiled and released on 19 September 2019 – on a subscription basis – in honour of the eponymous prize, the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of which will take place that day. The Musée international d'horlogerie introduced its first MIH watch back in 2005, which came with an innovative annual calendar feature. Almost 15 years on, the museum's latest creation pursues two aims: to raise public awareness of the safeguarding of watchmaking heritage, by funding different projects to restore, document and showcase the museum's collection, and to promote the expertise of regional watchmakers. The funding will primarily go towards restoring the Grand Magicien, an iconic automaton timepiece in the collection which was made by Jean-David Maillardet of Neuchâtel and his son Julien-Auguste in 1830 and the François Ducommun's Tellurium (early 19th century).

### **A truly inspired watch**

The MIH Gaïa watch bears the imprint and character of the places that have shaped it. With its original form and display, this timepiece takes inspiration from the architecture of the museum: a Brutalist building whose subterranean structure, designed by Georges-Jacques Haefeli and Pierre Zoelly, surprises the viewer as it alternates between empty space, concrete and light. This game of hide-and-seek provided the inspiration for the watch case, which combines intricate curves and straight lines. The domed dial echoes the spherical form of the Gaïa Prize trophy, as well as the architectural space. In an effort to move away from a traditional analogue display without affecting readability, hours and minutes are indicated by two discs instead of hands. Lastly, in homage to the Grand Magicien, the reverse of the watch has a hidden secret: the case back allows a glimpse of the winding oscillating weight, which is engraved with the name "Musée international d'horlogerie".

Images available at  
<http://bit.ly/MIHGaia>

### **One museum, one city, eight partners**

The MIH Gaïa watch is the product of close collaboration between local businesses and artisans,

all from La Chaux-de-Fonds, and all experts in their fields recognised around the world for the quality of their work. Atelier XJC came up with the design; Sellita brought it to life with their movement; the designers at Timeforge developed the technical plans; Singer built the dial; Stila provided a bespoke case; Brasport fitted a leather strap; Cornu & Cie made the buckle; and Laboratoire Dubois ensured its reliability by carrying out a series of tests. In partnership with the MIH and the artisans from its antique watch and clock restoration studio, each of these experts redoubled their efforts to create a beautiful, high-performance watch that is decidedly unique.

### **How can I purchase an MIH Gaïa watch?**

On a subscription basis. It is available online from now until 19 January 2020, at [www.montremih.ch](http://www.montremih.ch). The cost of this very special piece, made in La Chaux-de-Fonds, is CHF 2900. There is a discount of CHF 500 available to the first few subscribers who kickstart the production process by supporting the museum. An initial payment of CHF 1000 will be taken when orders are placed, with the balance to be paid upon delivery in summer 2020. If subscriptions do not reach the levels expected, those investments will be refunded in full. The MIH Gaïa watch will also meet demand from museum visitors seeking to own an item that has been produced entirely in the local area when they visit this UNESCO World Heritage site. For this reason, it will be available in the MIH shop. We also think it would make a perfect gift for a connoisseur, or a corporate gift for a VIP guest.

### **About the Gaïa Prize**

Since 1993, the Musée international d'horlogerie (and, by extension, the city of La Chaux-de-Fonds) has been handing out this prestigious award to leading figures in the industry, from artisans and historians to researchers and scientists. It symbolises the recognition by their peers of the spiritual heirs to the watchmaking culture embodied in the museum's collections.

### **About the Musée International d'horlogerie**

The MIH is a shrine to the measurement of time, from its earliest origins to the present day. It holds the world's largest collection with around 10,000 artefacts, of which some 3000 are on display, along with tools and machines used for measuring time. The museum has three main sections: exhibitions, documentation and research, as well as restoration of antique pieces.

### **Contact details**

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# A few words from the curators

## The MIH Gaïa watch is...

a watch that exemplifies our ambition to raise the MIH's profile through an iconic object which embodies our identity and values;

a watch that is the product of collaboration between artisans and businesses based in La Chaux-de-Fonds, and that truly showcases the exceptional individuals and skills we have in this city;

a watch that bears the name MIH Gaïa, in tribute to the Gaïa Prize which the MIH has been awarding since 1993 to those who have devoted their careers to measuring time, be they artisans, researchers or entrepreneurs;

a watch that pursues two aims:

- to promote the MIH and thus the preservation and enhancement of horological heritage in the broadest sense,
- to allow the funding of one-of-a-kind restoration, documentation and research projects for the MIH's unique collection with the profits generated.

Our thanks to all those who have been involved in this ambitious project; we are proud that today we are able to present to the public a key milestone towards making it a reality.

Régis Huguenin	Nathalie Marielloni
Curator	Vice Curator

# A watch designed to preserve watchmaking heritage

## The first MIH timepiece

In 2005, the Musée international d'horlogerie designed and produced its first watch, at the initiative of the museum's then curator Ludwig Oechslin. It was functional and easy to read and featured an innovative annual calendar, and it remained popular with collectors all over the world for more than ten years.

## The MIH Gaïa watch

The MIH Gaïa watch, unveiled to the public on 19 September 2019, is the museum's second in-house creation. It continues in the same vein, with a minimalist design and local, authentic development. This watch pays tribute to the Gaïa Prize, which is celebrating its silver jubilee; it features an unconventional design echoing the spirit and architectural codes of the MIH. This example of quality local watchmaking demonstrates the MIH's dual aim: to raise public awareness of horological heritage, by funding different projects to restore and document the museum's collection, and to showcase regional expertise. By purchasing an MIH Gaïa watch, devoted patrons will be helping specifically to fund the restoration of the Maillardets' Grand Magicien and of François Ducommun's Tellurium, two of the museum's key pieces, which were created around two centuries ago.

## Restoration goals

The funds generated by the MIH Gaïa timepiece will primarily enable the museum to examine and restore a number of iconic artefacts, and also to index, categorise and itemise the records associated with them. When restoring antiques, extensive investigations need to be made to identify them: the date they were made, renovation history, provenance, etc. After this comes the actual work on the piece: disassembly, cleaning, repairs, checks, adjustments, and reassembly. Due to the demands of restoration, it is also necessary to partner with experts (specialist craftsmen, archivists and researchers from outside the museum). Restoration projects therefore take several months and require major investment. Two of the MIH's iconic pieces produced in Neuchâtel most urgently in need of restoration are the Grand Magicien and the Tellurium.

## The Grand Magicien

The Maillardet family created the Grand Magicien around 1830. It is a clock with an automaton on the top, in the form of a magician. The automaton holds a wand and wears the traditional clothing of a soothsayer – a pointed hat and a sweeping ceremonial robe. He is seated at a table on which the tools of his trade can be seen: a book of prophecies, an incense burner and a telescope. When a visitor comes in search of sage advice, they may ask him a question in Spanish by inserting an oval plate into a drawer. After taking a few moments to reflect, the learned man stirs, stands up, directs his gaze to the assembled company, and then, following a series of exaggerated gesticulations, waves his wand towards an oval window above his head.

The two shutters open, and the answer appears. And then, with his task complete, the magician can return to his seat. While all of this is happening, two tulips unfurl and then close at the corners of the stage.

Below are some of the questions and answers:

"What is the food of the soul?

– Truth and justice.

What is the most useful thing to save?

– Time.

What is the noblest value of science?

– To illustrate ignorance.

How should we consider morality?

– As the health of the soul."

The main elements of the mechanism are located in the base. Two springs, housed in a barrel, supply the driving force. A dual wheel maintains the regularity of movement. Cams and levers control the motion of the automaton. The base also has space for the movement of a pendulum, with the clock face displaying the time in Roman numerals in the centre of its façade.



### The Tellurium

The Tellurium by François Ducommun is a rare piece from the early 19th century in which the astronomical mechanism represents the Earth and the Moon revolving around the Sun. The Tellurium has never been restored. It requires a good understanding of cosmology, astronomy, and, of course, horology.

The casing is made of gilt bronze and is cylindrical in shape, adorned with garlands of roses, leaves and ribbons. It sits on a square base with concave corners. An oval roundel, painted on enamel and representing an allegory of Astronomy, appears below the white enamel dial with Roman numerals and "Breguet" hands. The same roundel appears on the reverse. On top of the casing is the orrery, consisting of the Moon, Earth and Sun, and a silver band bearing the following astronomical indications: calendar days, months, leap years, age and moon phases. The signs of the zodiac are represented within roundels painted on enamel. The clock's movement has a recoil anchor escapement and a chime for hours and quarter hours.



### **A truly inspired creation**

The appearance of the MIH Gaïa watch is reminiscent of the museum's concrete architectural design by Zurich's Pierre Zoelly and La Chaux-de-Fonds' Georges-Jacques Haefeli. Produced in Le Corbusier's birthplace, the timepiece also shares a number of similarities with the Brutalist movement. The building's bold, raw, minimalist outlines are reflected in the lugs and dial of the watch, combining rectangular and rounded forms. The watch also takes inspiration from the architectural interplay of empty space and solid mass: the hour, displayed on a revolving disc, is shown through the window at the top of the dial, and the minutes are indicated through an opening in a domed disc – a reference to the Gaïa trophy – which also rotates. On the case back, the rotor uncovers a message, as a nod to both the magician and the underground building which reveals its many treasures as the visitor continues to explore. The name of the museum is engraved on the oscillating weight and is revealed each time the weight moves in line with the



opening on the back. The initials MIH are subtly engraved on the crown and the museum's geographical coordinates are featured on the pin buckle of the strap. Unusual yet understated, unisex and timeless, the MIH Gaïa watch illustrates a harmony between industry and craftsmanship. An initial limited series of 200 pieces will be produced with a blue finish – the official colour of the MIH – with the possibility of subsequent variations or individual editions developed with partners. The accompanying case consists of a cardboard container especially designed for long-term storage, as a reminder of the initiatives the watch has been designed to fund.

### A long-term project

Ten years after it created its first watch, the MIH was keen to repeat the experience and to prioritise working with the city's artisans. The watch had to be both classic and original, with not only a high-end finish but also an accessible price. This is why the MIH forged partnerships with the region's best watchmaking manufactures and artisans. The museum benefited from their support to develop a functional prototype led by the internal restoration workshop which assembled, tested, monitored and conducted checks on all of the components associated with the MIH Gaïa. This network of expertise reflects a traditional Swiss watchmaking production system, and the MIH is keen to raise public awareness of this.



# Technical specifications

## ITEM

MIH Gaïa, Series I, limited to 200 pieces

## CASING, Stila SA

Stainless steel 316 L

Diameter: 39 mm

Thickness: 9.74 mm

Water resistance: 3 ATM

Sapphire crystal

MIH, Gaïa, *Swiss made*, La Chaux-de-Fonds and individual serial number engraved on the case back  
MIH engraved on the crown

## DISPLAY, Jean Singer & Cie

PVD treated main dial

Rhodium-plated hour disc

PVD treated central minute disc

## MOVEMENT, Sellita Watch Co SA

SW400-1 calibre, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ "", Ø 31.00 mm

Self-winding mechanical movement

Oscillating weight engraved with "Musée international d'horlogerie"

Power reserve: 38 hours

Frequency: 28,800 Vib/h

Jewels: 26 rubies

## STRAP, Brasport S.A.

Calf leather

## CLASP, Cornu & Cie SA

Tongue buckle with tool-free removal system, engraved with "MIH" and featuring the museum's geographical coordinates (47°06'03" N / 06°49'48" E)

## PRICE

CHF 2400 during the subscription period, thereafter CHF 2900



## One museum, one city, eight partners

When the MIH issued invitations to work on a unique project aimed at safeguarding and showcasing watchmaking heritage, various regional experts from different fields came forward. These artisans, all based in La Chaux-de-Fonds, were eager and proud to contribute their technical expertise towards the different aspects of the watch, to develop a finished product of outstanding quality.

### Atelier XJC – the design

XJC is an artist-led and products design studio and a familiar name in luxury and craftsmanship. In its laboratory of ideas, one of the main activities is researching new materials and production processes. They came up with the design for the watch, which was developed ahead of the creation process and subsequently adjusted during the course of the project, and gave it its original shape.

*“It’s always interesting to see a project mature and evolve in line with proposals from its participants. The design brief for the watch was to work from an original, pared-back display while taking inspiration from the MIH. Our thinking was focused on that goal, but right up until the end we were making changes. There were also certain constraints that pushed us to be original.”* Xavier Perrenoud, designer

### Timeforge – the technical plans

Timeforge is a company specialising in watch design and the development of high-end watches. They took care of translating the design into production-ready terms and supplied the technical plans for the watch, which are wholly owned by the museum.

*« The interactions which take place between the different specialists allow us to acquire new knowledge and push our limits ever further. »* Jérémy Freléchox et Axel Leuenberger, co-founders

### Sellita – the movement

Sellita has a long history in both the assembly and design and manufacture of quality automatic movements. One of its Swiss-made mechanical movements is at the heart of the MIH Gaïa watch, and was adapted to meet its requirements.

*“The project is very exciting in its own right, as the watch is so elegant and beautiful. Through its originality, the MIH Gaïa watch presents a vision for watchmaking and a unique aesthetic that are perfectly in tune with the MIH’s values. The concept of a watch made entirely in La Chaux-de-Fonds is wonderful, and further reinforces the already very strong links between the city and the museum. This geographical connection really brings the project*

*together and showcases the unique expertise we have in this city.” Miguel Garcia, CEO*

## Stila – the case

The company Stila contributed their expertise to create the case for the watch. The result is a very finely crafted outer enclosure, demonstrating to collectors that the MIH Gaïa watch has a standard of workmanship on a par with the luxury watch brands.

## Jean Singer & Cie – the dial

The manufacturer Jean Singer & Cie SA produces dials for the best-known watch brands. This family-run company offered the museum the full breadth of their experience in producing high-quality dials, in particular taking up the challenge of manufacturing the distinctive domed central disc seen on the MIH Gaïa watch.

*“The project demonstrates something that is often forgotten: that here in La Chaux-de-Fonds we are in a position to create amazing things with the extraordinary watchmaking expertise of subcontractors that are still family-owned.” Joris Engisch, director*

## Brasport – the strap

The company Brasport specialises in leather watch straps, as well as other small leather goods (such as cases, card holders and cigar cases). Brasport was created in 1946 and is committed to innovating in its sector. This partnership therefore gave the MIH the opportunity to combine the MIH Gaïa watch with the highest quality leather.

## Cornu & Cie – the buckle

Cornu & Cie is a manufacturer specialising in metal straps, folding buckles, clasps and metal tongue buckles – and inventiveness is its watchword. This is a value it shares with the MIH as part of this venture.

## Laboratoire Dubois – the reliability tests

The museum approached Laboratoire Dubois to guarantee precision and compliance with standards the MIH Gaïa is not designed to be kept behind glass but to be worn on a daily basis. The laboratory has specialised in testing, analysis and checks for the watchmaking industry since the 1970s. Incidentally, its founder Henri Dubois won the 2014 Gaïa Prize in the Entrepreneurship category.

*“I appreciate the fact that the project involves different local participants from the watchmaking industry; we can each make an individual contribution in our own specialist area. Creating a watch represents the pooling of many different skills and crafts. Here, in the capital of watchmaking, we have all of these assets.” Patrick Dubois, CEO*

## The Gaïa Prize recognises the leading names in watchmaking

From creativity and innovation to inspiration and originality, every year, the Gaïa Prize celebrates the dynamism of the watchmaking world.

In 1993, the Musée international d'horlogerie created the Gaïa Prize to honour those individuals who have helped to build the reputation of horology in terms of its history, its techniques and the industry as a whole. The only one of its kind, this Prize uniquely handpicks the "crème de la crème". The museum's aim was to officially recognise the spiritual heirs of the watchmaking culture embodied in the museum's collections and in the city itself.

The Gaïa Prize was created in homage to one of the first patrons of the Musée d'horlogerie, Maurice Ditisheim, president of the Board of Directors of the Inspectorate of precious metal artefacts. It has made a name for itself on the international watchmaking scene as the "Nobel Prize" of watchmaking.

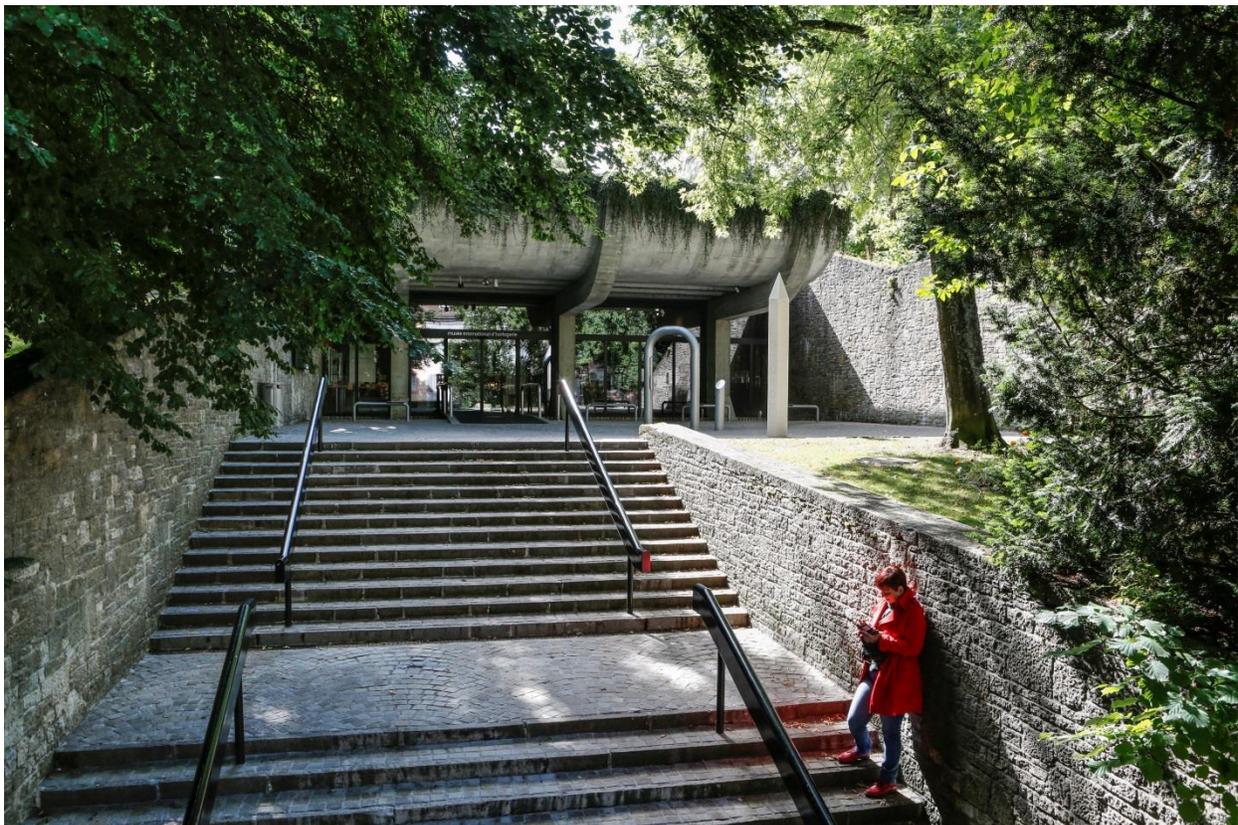
*Gaïa*, the ancient Greek word for "Earth", is also the name of the goddess who symbolises it. The Gaïa award features a translucent acrylic globe with a beam passing through it.



## MIH: uncovering treasures of horological heritage

The MIH uses a variety of media to reveal the different approaches to time. Artefacts are housed in this shrine on three levels, two underground and the third set in a park. There are three main sections: the museum, the restoration workshop and a research centre. The architects Georges-Jacques Haefeli and Pierre Zoelly won the Concrete Architecture Prize in 1977 and the Cembureau Prize 1978 for their work in developing this showcase.

The museum has large and medium-sized clocks, mechanical and electronic watches, marine and dashboard chronometers, non-mechanical measuring instruments, automata, paintings, and more. It is the world's largest horological collection. The restoration workshop is where artefacts are examined and preserved. Finally, the documentation centre comprises a library housing thousands of books, journals, sales catalogues and advertisements, in addition to private archive collections.



# Contact details, useful information and images

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**Images available at**  
<http://bit.ly/MIHGaia>

# Partner interviews

## Atelier XJC

Xavier Perrenoud, designer

The MIH Gaïa watch is a quite a unique project. What made you want to be a part of it?

"The fact that it is a collaborative project gives it a certain authenticity, transparency and logic in relation to the museum's values. Today, the public wants to know the provenance of the products they buy, and this project is a window into the modern design of a horological piece."

What positive impact do you think this project has as something "*made in La Chaux-de-Fonds*"?

"The MIH Gaïa is a way of highlighting one of the hubs of Swiss watchmaking – La Chaux-de-Fonds – and its expertise, as well as showcasing the local talent."

Just like the MIH Gaïa watch, the design of a timepiece is always the result of a collaborative process. What are the differences, difficulties and benefits of working in this way?

"It's always interesting to see a project mature and evolve in line with proposals from its participants. The design brief for the watch was to work from an original, pared-back display while taking inspiration from the MIH. Our thinking was focused on that goal, but right up until the end we were making changes. There were also certain constraints that pushed us to be original."

What are the areas of activity, successes and expertise that can be attributed to your company?

"We specialise in providing creative direction for luxury brands and businesses focused on craftsmanship; our main priority is to work on the vision and the aesthetic unity which comes from that. Product design comes next and is closely linked to that first step.

Following an approach based on perpetual innovation, XJC has developed an "ideas laboratory" which explores different skills to create a piece. This allows us to invert the design process by not working from a commission. We could work from a particular technique, material, or form, for example."

## Timeforge

Jérémy Freléchox et Axel Leuenberger, co-founders

The MIH Gaïa watch is a quite a unique project. What made you want to be a part of it?

"The MIH has always been an awe-inspiring place for us as watchmakers. To be involved with one of its projects and have the chance to help create the MIH Gaïa watch was my motivation and driving force."

What positive impact do you think this project has as something "*made in La Chaux-de-Fonds*"?

"The main impact is that it promotes the expertise of our region and its inhabitants, and the resulting unique artistic creation."

Just like the MIH Gaïa watch, the design of a timepiece is always the result of a collaborative process. What are the differences, difficulties and benefits of working in this way?

"Firstly, it provides an opportunity to expand the scope of your knowledge through exchanges with different industries. The interactions which take place between the different specialists allow us to acquire new knowledge and push our limits ever further."

What are the areas of activity, successes and expertise that can be attributed to your company?

"Timeforge is a design office specialising in watchmaking and micromechanical engineering and our main areas of expertise are:

- The design and production of watch mechanisms, from simple mechanisms to grande complications.
- The calculation and optimisation of micro-gears, on both existing products and new developments. Our customers are not necessarily watchmakers, and they come from practically all over the world, but they all share a need for reliable, effective solutions. We are supported by a very well-known expert in this sector, Mr Michel Belot. Now retired, he devotes some of his spare time to passing on his experience and expertise to us. We have also taken on the task of preserving his work.
- Private label and product design specifically for watchmaking. We use our expertise to help our customers create new products. We cover this domain in partnership with Thierry Fischer, an exceptional designer who shares our premises."

## Laboratoire Dubois

Patrick Dubois, president

The MIH Gaïa watch is a quite a unique project. What made you want to be a part of it?

"The people who dreamt up the project at MIH had an infectious enthusiasm that made me want to offer the Laboratoire's services for our area of competence – reliability."

What positive impact do you think this project has as something "*made in La Chaux-de-Fonds*"?

"I appreciate the fact that the project involves different local participants from the watchmaking industry; we can each make an individual contribution in our own specialist area. Creating a watch represents the pooling of many different skills and crafts. Here in the capital of watchmaking we have all of these assets."

Just like the MIH Gaïa watch, the design of a timepiece is always the result of a collaborative process. What are the differences, difficulties and benefits of working in this way?

"Joining forces is very inspiring and requires a great deal of communication; it's an enriching experience. Of course, this can sometimes bring certain complications into the process."

What are the areas of activity, successes and expertise that can be attributed to your company?

"We specialise in testing, analysis and checks, whether for movements, exterior or straps. In this context, we provide quality control and reliability testing for watches on behalf of our watchmaking clients. We also operate in a variety of fields aside from watches and clocks, particularly in our chemistry department."

## Jean Singer & Cie

Joris Engisch, director

The MIH Gaïa watch is a quite a unique project. What made you want to be a part of it?

"We wanted to support the MIH by offering our company's services. We are celebrating our 100th anniversary this year and this is a great way to mark this milestone together."

What positive impact do you think this project has as something "*made in La Chaux-de-Fonds*"?

"It demonstrates something that is often forgotten: that here in La Chaux-de-Fonds we are in a position to create amazing things with the extraordinary watchmaking expertise of subcontractors that are still family-owned."

Just like the MIH watch, the design of a timepiece is always the result of a collaborative process. What are the differences, difficulties and benefits of working in this way?

"The one and only difficulty per se is to ensure we understand what our clients want and know how to interpret this in technical and aesthetic terms. Once all this is clear, nowadays nothing is impossible. The toughest thing is making choices, since the possibilities are infinite."

What are the areas of activity, successes and expertise that can be attributed to your company?

"Over the years we have built up a real expertise in new technologies for vapour phase surface treatments, known as PVD. The colours developed by Singer are known far and wide, and have names such as Singer blue no. 5 and Singer blue no. 11. Our competitors also use these names for placing orders. Besides this, the traditional expertise Singer has acquired over the century we have been in business gives us a certain credibility with clients."

## Sellita

Miguel Garcia, director

The MIH Gaïa watch is a quite a unique project. What made you want to be a part of it?

"First of all, it's crucial to support our museum. "The MIH plays a central role in preserving and promoting the art of watchmaking. As a watchmaking business, the preservation of this heritage is obviously something particularly close to our hearts. And the project is very exciting in its own right, as the watch is so elegant and beautiful. Through its originality, the MIH Gaïa watch presents a unique vision for watchmaking and a unique aesthetic that are perfectly in tune with the MIH's values."

What positive impact do you think this project has as something "*made in La Chaux-de-Fonds*"?

"The concept of a watch made entirely in La Chaux-de-Fonds is wonderful, and further reinforces the already very strong links between the city and the museum. This geographical connection really brings the project together and showcases the unique expertise we have in this city. "

Just like the MIH Gaïa watch, the design of a timepiece is always the result of a collaborative process. What do you think are the differences, difficulties and benefits of working in this way?

"The MIH watch uses an original method of displaying time, based on discs. This may at first seem like a trivial decision, but it has major technical implications and requires great care in terms of developing the exterior and also assembling the watch."

**What are the areas of activity, successes and expertise that can be attributed to your company?**

"Sellita was created in La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1950, and we have a long history in assembly as well as design and manufacture of quality mechanical movements. Over the years we have become an essential mainstay of the Swiss watchmaking industry. It therefore seemed a natural step that a Sellita movement would drive the MIH Gaïa watch."