**THE M.A.D.HOUSE**

**Opens Its Doors**

*MB&F establishes its new headquarters in a century-old house in Geneva*

“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.

“You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Lewis Carroll

**THE SEARCH FOR A NEW HOME**

The universe of MB&F is growing! In the autumn of 2022, while opening the world’s first MB&F LAB in Singapore and preparing for a second LAB in Paris, the MB&F team was also busying itself with a matter slightly closer to home — the new M.A.D.House in Geneva.

For years, the MB&F offices had been split over two locations. There was the M.A.D.Gallery on Rue Verdaine in the heart of Geneva’s old town. Then, there was the main workshop address on Boulevard Helvétique,a few minutes away from the M.A.D.Gallery on foot. But both the M.A.D.Gallery and the Boulevard Helvétique offices were getting fuller and fuller. And it was time to bring everyone together under one roof.

At the end of 2019, the search began for a bigger office, one that could accommodate all the different departments of the company and allow them to interact seamlessly, fluidly, as one creative organisation. That was the logistical side of things. On a more philosophical note, this new location would also have to reflect what MB&F stood for, and what its people were working towards. The quest was on to find the MB&F team its new home.

The search went on hiatus for much of 2020 and picked up again towards the end of the year, but even after months of property visits, nothing felt exactly right. Some places were big and new, but overwhelmingly cold and corporate. And, because this is Geneva, some beautiful spaces were searingly expensive and therefore out of reach. Whilst visiting yet another office block, this one in Carouge village just beyond the southern limits of the city of Geneva, a large old house on an adjoining piece of land caught Maximilian Büsser’s eye.

**A JEWEL FROM GENEVA’S HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE**

Built between 1907 and 1908, the house’s exterior exuded history and character, though at the time it was in dire need of repairs and was occupied by a local business that had divided its three-storey interior into strictly functional workspaces, crammed with filing cabinets, twisted telephone extension cords and paper-piled desks. But there was potential in those three storeys (four, if you included the basement), enough to justify a second visit. Together with MB&F’s directors of production (Serge Kriknoff), marketing (Charris Yadigaroglou) and sales (Thibault Verdonckt), Max started to imagine how the space could be transformed.

And the M.A.D.House began to take shape, moving out of dreams and into this world.

One and a half years of repairs and renovation followed, including a full restoration of the roof and extensive interior refurbishment. The property that became the M.A.D.House was originally a joint project by the well-known architect Edmond Fatio (1871–1959) of Geneva and Charles Meysson (1869–1947) of Lyon; it was conceived as the private home of a wealthy family of industrial entrepreneurs and won an architectural prize in the year of its completion. Its construction, in the style known as Heimatstil, is characterised by a romanticised interpretation of historical architecture, a prescient nod towards its future occupants, who rework and re-dream traditional horology for the modern age. Its half-timbered exterior with rusticated stone walls recalls the castles and buildings seen in illustrated books of folklore — a fitting abode for a company whose creations were first inspired by the mythologies of science fiction and fantasy. Currently gazetted as a protected building by the Swiss Heritage Society (Patrimoine Suisse), the house came under the full stewardship of MB&F in 2022 when they entered the premises and inaugurated the M.A.D.House as their new home.

**A HIVE BUZZING WITH CREATIVITY**

It takes a certain kind of vision — some might say madness — to straddle past, present and future all at once. Like the watches of MB&F, the M.A.D.House contains elements of all three. Framed by historical architecture, filled with objects that tell the story of contemporary horological art, and inhabited by a team resolutely oriented towards the things yet to come.

Most days, the house can barely contain the flurry of activity generated within its walls. It’s the kind of activity you’d expect from having over 40 people together focused on the singular task of building and growing a company like MB&F. Multiple exterior doors lead towards a central staircase and atrium, creating a convergence of motion, an arterial confluence that hums and buzzes with comings and goings. There’s even a concealed passageway behind the stairs, a quaint artefact of the house’s original design, built for those in a hurry with too much to do and not quite enough time to do it all in. (Plunging down this hidden path, you almost expect to encounter a white rabbit, gravely consulting his pocket watch.)

On the ground floor, watchmakers assemble movements at custom-built workbenches in rooms flooded by natural light, surrounded by wood panelling and hand-painted ceramic tiles from the time the house was first built. Also on the ground floor, a reception area echoes the aesthetic concept of the M.A.D.Gallery and leads onto the central stairwell, with wood newels that retain their original engravings from 1908. The upper floors are home to departmental offices, with the product creation team on the top floor, creating an organic flow of movement throughout the multi-storey space.

**NOT A DULL WALL IN SIGHT**

Light and space are precious commodities in any office environment, and the M.A.D.House is replete with both, thanks to its unobstructed location in three hectares of parkland. Objects and artefacts from the MB&F universe are scattered around the house, from the Jean Kazès clock on the central stairway to the photography prints by Marc Ninghetto, Ulysse Fréchelin and other artists on the walls and shelves.

The central stairwell has become an installation of sorts, featuring a rotation of artists who will take it in turns to apply their vision to the white walls. The first artist to put his mark on the M.A.D.House in this way is Maxime Schertenleib, a Swiss illustrator and comic strip artist known for his highly detailed urban landscapes filled with human activity. Stepping out of the house, you’re greeted by an outdoor wind sculpture, the work of American kinetic sculptor Anthony Howe. His creations play with geometry and fluid dynamics, moving and swirling in the wind to produce hypnotic metallic waves, providing visitors to the M.A.D. House with a little foretaste of the mesmerising creations coming to life indoors.

MB&F moved into the M.A.D.House in late 2022, filling the century-old house with activity, creativity and just the right dose of insanity. Six months later in 2023, the brand officially opens its doors to welcome visitors, friends of MB&F and other mad pilgrims.

**To visit the MB&F M.A.D.House, please go to** [**https://www.mbandf.com/en/mbandf/visit**](https://www.mbandf.com/en/mbandf/visit) **or contact us at** **visit@mbandf.com****.**

**MB&F – GENESIS OF A CONCEPT LABORATORY**

Founded in 2005, MB&F is the world’s first-ever horological concept laboratory. With almost 20 remarkable calibres forming the base of the critically acclaimed Horological and Legacy Machines, MB&F is continuing to follow Founder and Creative Director Maximilian Büsser’s vision of creating 3-D kinetic art by deconstructing traditional watchmaking.

After 15 years managing prestigious watch brands, Maximilian Büsser resigned from his Managing Director position at Harry Winston in 2005 to create MB&F – Maximilian Büsser & Friends. MB&F is an artistic and micro-engineering laboratory dedicated to designing and crafting small series of radical concept watches by bringing together talented horological professionals that Büsser both respects and enjoys working with.

In 2007, MB&F unveiled its first Horological Machine, HM1. HM1’s sculptured, three-dimensional case and beautifully finished engine (movement) set the standard for the idiosyncratic Horological Machines that have followed – all Machines that tell the time, rather than Machines to tell the time. The Horological Machines have explored space (HM2, HM3, HM6), the sky (HM4, HM9), the road (HM5, HMX, HM8) and the animal kingdom (HM7, HM10).

In 2011, MB&F launched its round-cased Legacy Machine collection. These more classical pieces – classical for MB&F, that is – pay tribute to nineteenth-century watchmaking excellence by reinterpreting complications from the great horological innovators of yesteryear to create contemporary objets d'art. LM1 and LM2 were followed by LM101, the first MB&F Machine to feature a movement developed entirely in-house. LM Perpetual, LM Split Escapement and LM Thunderdome broadened the collection further. 2019 marked a turning point with the creation of the first MB&F Machine dedicated to women: LM FlyingT; and MB&F celebrated 10 years of Legacy Machines in 2021 with the LMX. MB&F generally alternates between launching contemporary, resolutely unconventional Horological Machines and historically inspired Legacy Machines.

As the F stands for Friends, it was only natural for MB&F to develop collaborations with artists, watchmakers, designers and manufacturers they admire.

This brought about two new categories: Performance Art and Co-creations. While Performance Art pieces are MB&F machines revisited by external creative talent, Co-creations are not wristwatches but other types of machines, engineered and crafted by unique Swiss Manufactures from MB&F ideas and designs. Many of these Co-creations, such as the clocks created with L’Epée 1839, tell the time while collaborations with Reuge and Caran d’Ache generated other forms of mechanical art.

To give all these machines an appropriate platform, Büsser had the idea of placing them in an art gallery alongside various forms of mechanical art created by other artists, rather than in a traditional storefront. This brought about the creation of the first MB&F M.A.D.Gallery (M.A.D. stands for Mechanical Art Devices) in Geneva, which would later be followed by M.A.D.Galleries in Taipei, Dubai and Hong Kong.

There have been distinguished accolades reminding us of the innovative nature of MB&F’s journey so far. To name a few, there have been no less than 9 awards from the famous Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève, including the ultimate prize: the “Aiguille d’Or”, which rewards the best watch of the year. In 2022, the LM Sequential EVO was awarded the Aiguille d’Or, while the M.A.D.1 RED won the ‘Challenge’ category. In 2021, LMX won the Best Men’s Complication and the LM SE Eddy Jaquet ‘Around The World in Eighty Days’ was awarded in the ‘Artistic Crafts’ category. In 2019, the prize for Best Ladies Complication went to the LM FlyingT; in 2016, LM Perpetual won the Best Calendar Watch award; in 2012, Legacy Machine No.1 was awarded both the Public Prize (voted for by horology fans) and the Best Men’s Watch Prize (voted for by the professional jury). In 2010, MB&F won Best Concept and Design Watch for the HM4 Thunderbolt. In 2015 MB&F received a Red Dot: Best of the Best award – the top prize at the international Red Dot Awards – for the HM6 Space Pirate.