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MONOCHROME-watches In-Depth **Pellikaan Watches, An Indie brand Born Out of Pure Stubbornness**

**Patented logical thinking from Utrecht, The
Netherlands.**

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The Dutch watch scene has been growing for about a decade and has been producing quite a lot of interesting pieces. One of the most intriguing micro brands coming from the Lowlands is Pellikaan Watches. 13 years down the road, this watch company is still running steadily and producing fresh new watches. Next in our series of Dutch Creators: Hubert Pellikaan, a watchmaker by choice.

You probably know what it feels like. Scanning all watch websites, social media, peeking through all shopping windows, but somehow you still can't find what you're looking for. You know what you like, and your new watch just has to be perfect (at least to you). Like nothing you've ever seen before.



This was the frustrating feeling that Hubert Pellikaan (1964) was feeling thirteen years ago as he was driving back home from a weekend in the south of the country. *'I had a vintage Speedmaster at that time, and I thought it was about time I bought a new watch. I admired a Panerai and an Omega Seamaster Planet Ocean, but there was always something wrong with the designs, I felt.'*

A very serious hobby

We're seated at a large, wooden table in his beautiful home in the city centre of the Dutch city Utrecht. Scattered around us are all sorts of watch paraphernalia; books and tools, the kind that you see in every real workshop. But there's more. Some small plastic bottles, machinery I've never seen before and some more stuff that looks like medical equipment. *'What's that?'* I ask. *'Ah, this is my other job. Or, rather, actual job. I studied Pharmaceutical Sciences. I own a company called Nextstep Pharma. At this moment, for example, I am working on a device to dispense a certain new nose spray. I also worked for a long time in CO² technology. Chemistry and mechanics, those are the two things I'm actually any good at. And that's what I like doing here.'*







Patented logical thinking

Hubert Pellikaan does not make his own movements. And the explanation of why will give you some insight into how this man thinks. *'I don't really see the point. I don't feel like making everything all by myself. It wouldn't really add anything for me. I just can't guarantee the right quality. I've tried other movements than ETA, but that usually ends up in disappointment. So if you want to deliver a very steady quality, you'll have to stick to ETA. That is a bit of a problem, as I always want to balance new discoveries with good quality.'*

'At the moment I'm mainly using the Uritas/ETA 6497 movement. I get my movements from Switzerland, although it's not always easy to get them. Prizes fluctuate and supply is anything but steady. I always double-check all movements.'

For accuracy but also because some parts are not always mounted perfectly. I also always add a little bit of oil on some specific parts because that's not always done the right way in the factory.'



'When it comes to complications, I'd say I'm open to it. But thinking about it and being able to make it, are two different things. I want to make functional and reliable watches. A GMT, for example, would be an interesting addition, although I did that once as a limited edition.'

Still, Pellikaan couldn't stop himself from doing things *differently*. He actually did his own invention: the balanced pallet fork. He even got it patented. The reason is as logical as anything this man says. *'The balance wheel is perfectly balanced. The wheels are all perfectly balanced as well. But one part that has contact with the balance wheel, is not balanced at all. And that is the pallet fork. The centre of gravity for that part is not in the middle. And so I thought to myself: that must have some effect on the entire escapement. By balancing the pallet fork, I tried to solve this one problem for two advantages: get less friction and make the locking of the anchor insensitive to shocks.'*



This idea isn't completely new. Already in the early 1900s, so-called moustache movements were made, with a longer pallet fork. *'But this solution had the downside having longer 'legs', which meant a lot more energy was needed to make the*

movement work,' says Pellikaan. 'So I asked an intern to see if we could balance that pallet fork without changing the size of the pallet fork. The goal itself was quite easy to achieve we added a very small weight on the fork. And surprisingly the innovation worked directly. But there was one more thing that did change with it: the amplitude rose, but without any influence on timing. I do not need to readjust the movements!'



'This improvement is very functional, very reliable and it doesn't skyrocket the price of the watch, so I decided to add it to my watches. And get it patented. I had done that a couple of times before with pharmaceutical inventions, so I knew what it took to get one. It's nice to have the patent, although it's quite an expensive thing to get.'

From acquired taste to serious business

Fast forward to 2007. After having realized that the perfect watch was not available on the market, Pellikaan got one more epiphany. *'If I'm prepared to spend thousands of euros on a watch, I thought, why not make one myself? At that point, I already had followed some online courses on watchmaking – wrecking quite a few Russian pieces in the process.'*



'I also knew I could just buy a movement somewhere, and I downloaded a design program. And I started sketching every day as I travelled back home by train. At a certain point, I had made a design with a sector dial. Although I honestly didn't know that name at all yet. I was looking for a clean design with good legibility. I had been flipping through watch books for years, so I knew what I wanted. I saw one vintage Omega with a sector dial, with one of the lines straight through the logo. I loved that detail. Not perfect at all, but that's what made it perfect to me. It wasn't that these images were consciously inspiring me, but it helped me realize what I wanted, what I liked.'

In the spring of 2009, he ordered 100 more cases and soon after, he sold 25 rapidly after another. That really gave him the feeling that he could make this work. In the beginning, he made about fifty pieces per year. In 2019, he made 96 watches.

No things half done

Hubert Pelikaan doesn't talk like normal men do. His words are so precise, I imagine he orders his bread by the thickness of the cut. Yet there is something playful in his way of speaking, a Dutch sort of understated dryness that is absolutely impossible to translate properly into English. He could explain the theory of relativity and ending the sentence with *'so yeah, that's easy.'* When he talks about watches, all of his opinions (believe me – he has a lot) and knowledge come shining through. At some point, we are discussing the dress watch in his collection, the Hendrik Lorenz. I

mention to him I think the lugs are too long. He laughs. *'Yeah, true. That was actually on purpose. I tried to make a real dress watch, you know, very elitist. And from all my research I found two things that felt exactly as classy as I wanted it to be. The first thing was to have a broad strap with a relatively small watch. The other was to have a slight space between strap and case. Hence the longer lugs.'*



This watch actually stands out from the collection a bit, as the rest of his creations are all very tool(ish) watches. If one sees the development of the entire collection, one thing really becomes clear: this microbrand is growing up. The watches get more and more detailed every year, and the collection counts quite a few different models and special editions.

His first and most prominent model is the Flying Dutchman, which is his current collection has evolved into the Flying Dutchman II, III (with date window) and Perpetuum (automatic). This model has a nice minimalist design, a steel case, white Breguet hands with lume and a black dial with white sector indications.



Pellikaan has also created some very interesting Special Editions, although all watches from a brand this small could be considered special editions. If you're into very big divers, for example, the Diving Dutchman is definitely a watch to take a good look at. It's not very cheap (5,930 euros). But its very intelligent design and nicely finished titanium case make up for that downside. Take a look at that tucked away crown alone...



And that's definitely not the end of it. At the moment, Pellikaan is working on two new models, both in different categories. One of them will be a contemporary piece for an accessible price, targeted at younger buyers. The other watch will be on the higher end of his collection: a chronograph. A kind of Speedmaster-inspired very functional piece in steel with a black dial and (most probably) a Valjoux movement.

The rewards for doing things differently

The more I learn from seeing what's going on inside his head, I start to understand the mission Hubert Pellikaan is on. He has a very clear idea of what makes a good watch. And he is as accurate as he is persistent to make that idea work. He loves clean designs, but always with an unexpected touch of fun.

'I like watches to be useful. But I also like a certain degree of elegance. And some cheerfulness. If you're getting better at something, it is easier to start playing with it,' he says. These watches are the perfect outlet to push that philosophy ever further. *'Generally speaking, I really like the combination of mechanics and design. I never thought I would end up with these watches as I make them now. I just wanted a watch for myself. The sector dial kind-of design has become my signature, but it wasn't a conscious choice. It's just what I like, aesthetically.'*



'But that's the good thing when you're doing it all by yourself. You're allowed to do everything you like. And you can even put your name on it.'

More details on the brand and watches at www.pellikaantiming.com.