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# Approach to Personalized Horology

THM Desk

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In a dimly lit workshop nestled in the heart of France, Armand Billard hunches over a workbench, his steady hands guiding a laser cutter with surgical precision. The titanium dial before him slowly transforms, etching the initials of a soon-to-be

ecstatic customer halfway across the world. This isn't just another day at the office for Billard; it's a revolution in the making.



Armand Billard, Founder of Sartory Billard

In an industry dominated by centuries-old Swiss giants and their off-the-shelf offerings, this small French atelier is turning heads and changing minds about what a truly personal watch can be. But how did a milestone birthday project morph into a brand that's challenging the status quo of haute horlogerie? And more importantly, what does this mean for watch enthusiasts who've long dreamed of wearing a unique piece of art on their wrists without breaking the bank?

### **The Genesis of Sartory Billard**

Armand Billard's journey into the world of watchmaking wasn't a traditional one. Unlike many in the industry who inherit generations of horological knowledge, Billard's background was in engineering and design. His passion for watches, however, was lifelong, cultivated through years of collecting and admiring timepieces from around the world. The spark that would eventually ignite the Sartory Billard flame came on Billard's 40th birthday. Unsatisfied with the available options for a truly unique timepiece, he decided to create his own. This personal project, combining his engineering expertise with his love for watches, quickly caught the attention of friends and fellow enthusiasts.



Bespoke watches

What started as a one-off soon became a series of collaborations. Billard found himself designing and creating custom watches for a small circle of collectors, each piece a unique expression of its owner's personality and style. It was from these early experiments that the core philosophy of Sartory Billard emerged: watches should be as individual as the people who wear them.

The transition from hobby to brand was organic, driven by growing demand and Billard's own passion for pushing the boundaries of watch design. In 2015, Sartory Billard was officially born, named in honor of Billard's grandmother, Sartory, who had always encouraged his creative pursuits.

### **Evolution of the Sartory Billard Line**

The Sartory Billard line has evolved significantly since its inception, with each new model building on the successes and lessons of its predecessors. The SB01, the brand's inaugural model, set the tone for what was to come. It featured a clean, minimalist design with a focus on customization options for the dial and hands.

The movement was a reliable Swiss automatic, chosen for its durability and ease of servicing.

The SB02 expanded on this concept, introducing more complex dial designs and the option for custom engravings. It was with this model that Billard began experimenting with different materials for the dial, including heat-treated titanium that produced stunning, iridescent colors. The SB03 marked a significant leap forward in terms of technical innovation. This model introduced a modular case design, allowing for even greater customization. Customers could now choose between different case materials, including titanium, steel, and even gold for those seeking ultimate luxury. With the SB04, Sartory Billard ventured into the world of complications, offering a chronograph option for the first time. This model also saw the introduction of Billard's patented quick-change strap system, allowing wearers to easily switch between different strap options.



SB04 Custom piece

The latest model, the SB05, represents the culmination of all Sartory Billard has learned and achieved so far. It offers an unprecedented level of customization, from the case material and finish to the minutest details of the dial design. The SB05 also introduces the option for a fully custom movement, a service previously unheard of at this price point. Throughout this evolution, Sartory Billard's design philosophy has remained consistent: create watches that are not just timepieces, but personal statements. Each model has pushed the boundaries of what's possible in terms of customization, while maintaining a cohesive brand identity rooted in clean lines and functional elegance.

### **The Customization Process: A Deep Dive**

At the heart of Sartory Billard's appeal is its customization process, a collaborative journey between the customer and the atelier that results in a truly unique timepiece. The process begins with a consultation, where the customer discusses their preferences, lifestyle, and vision for their watch with Billard himself. This conversation forms the foundation of the design, ensuring that the final product isn't just aesthetically pleasing, but functionally suited to the wearer's needs. From there, customers are presented with a dizzying array of options. The case material can be chosen from a range of metals, each offering different properties in terms of weight, durability, and appearance. The case finish can be polished, brushed, or even given a custom patina.

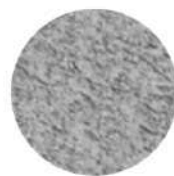
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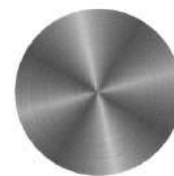
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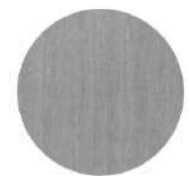
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#### **Choosing the finishes**

The dial is where Sartory Billard's expertise truly shines. Using advanced laser-cutting techniques, almost any design can be etched onto the dial surface. This could be anything from intricate patterns to personal artwork or even photographs. The base material for the dial can also be customized, with options including traditional metals, exotic woods, and even meteorite.

One of Sartory Billard's signature techniques is the use of heat-treated titanium for dials. This process creates stunning, iridescent colors that shift and change depending on the light, resulting in a dial that's as dynamic as it is beautiful.



#### Choosing the base

The hands, indices, and any additional complications are also fully customizable. Customers can choose from a variety of styles and colors, or even design their own unique shapes. Throughout this process, Billard works closely with the customer, providing 3D renderings and mockups to ensure that the final product matches their vision perfectly. It's this level of personal attention and collaboration that sets Sartory Billard apart from larger luxury brands.



Choosing the dial colors and designs

### **The Mechanics Behind the Magic**

While much of Sartory Billard's appeal lies in its aesthetic customization, the brand doesn't neglect the mechanical heart of its timepieces. For most models, Sartory Billard uses high-quality Swiss automatic movements from manufacturers like ETA and Sellita. These movements are chosen for their reliability, accuracy, and ease of servicing. However, they don't remain stock for long.



The movement

Each movement undergoes a thorough inspection and regulation process in Sartory Billard's workshop. Depending on the customer's preferences, the movement can be decorated with traditional techniques like Côtes de Genève or perlage. For those seeking even more exclusivity, Sartory Billard offers the option of a custom rotor, visible through a sapphire case back. With the introduction of the SB05, Sartory Billard has taken movement customization to a new level. Customers can now opt for a fully custom movement, developed in collaboration with a Swiss movement manufacturer. This allows for unique complications and layouts, truly making the watch one-of-a-kind from the inside out.

### **Democratizing Luxury: The Sartory Billard Pricing Model**

One of the most revolutionary aspects of Sartory Billard is its pricing model. In an industry where custom timepieces often command six-figure sums, Sartory Billard offers its bespoke creations at a fraction of that cost. This is achieved through a combination of factors. By operating as a small, independent atelier, Sartory Billard avoids the overhead costs associated with large luxury brands. The use of modern



manufacturing techniques like laser cutting and 3D printing allows for efficient production without sacrificing quality.



Dragon Limited edition

Moreover, Sartory Billard's direct-to-consumer model eliminates the markups associated with traditional retail channels. Customers are paying for the craftsmanship and materials, not for marketing campaigns or store overheads. The result is a truly custom luxury watch that typically ranges from \$3,000 to \$10,000, depending on the level of customization and materials used. This pricing strategy has opened up the world of bespoke watchmaking to a much wider audience, challenging the notion that personalized luxury must come with an exorbitant price tag.

### **The Wait: From Concept to Wrist**

Creating a Sartory Billard watch is not an overnight process. From the initial consultation to the moment the watch is strapped to the customer's wrist, the

journey typically takes between 3 to 6 months. This timeframe allows for the meticulous attention to detail that goes into each piece. After the design is finalized, each component is carefully crafted or modified to meet the specifications. The assembly process is equally painstaking, with each watch undergoing rigorous quality checks before it's deemed ready for delivery. Throughout this wait, Sartory Billard maintains open communication with the customer, providing updates and even photos of the watch in progress. This transparency not only keeps the customer engaged but also builds anticipation, making the final reveal all the more special.

### Industry Impact and Customer Stories

The impact of Sartory Billard extends beyond its immediate customer base. The brand's success has challenged larger luxury watch companies to reconsider their approach to customization and customer engagement. Numerous heartwarming stories have emerged from Sartory Billard's clientele. There's the deep-sea diver who had the coordinates of his favorite dive site etched onto his watch dial. Or the couple who commissioned matching watches with dials made from wood from the tree under which they were married. These stories underscore the emotional connection that Sartory Billard fosters between its watches and their owners.



The different stones in the bespoke watches

### Future Horizons: What's Next for Sartory Billard?

As Sartory Billard looks to the future, Armand Billard shows no signs of slowing down. Plans are in the works for even more advanced customization options, including the use of novel materials like lab-grown gemstones and recycled metals. Billard also hints at the possibility of limited edition collaborations with artists and designers, bringing fresh perspectives to the world of watch design. But perhaps most excitingly, Billard speaks of his vision to create a community around Sartory Billard. He imagines events where owners can meet, share their unique timepieces, and even collaborate on new designs. By combining traditional

craftsmanship with modern technology and a customer-centric approach, Armand Billard has not just created a watch brand; he's redefined what luxury watchmaking can be.

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