

Inertia

Angular Momentum is picking up the pace with an increasingly eclectic collection. QP browses the kaleidoscope of models from the Swiss youngster

Alex Doak

Angular Momentum's logo is simplicity itself: a squashed oval, with one side bisected by a seemingly spurious line. Believe it or not, this bare, abstract form illustrates the brand's 'essence' rather elegantly: a minute hand sweeping above a merry-go-round disk, otherwise known as the trademark 'Revolving-Disk-System' (RDS). Indeed, it is this unique horological concept that gave rise to the 'Angular Momentum'

name itself – an astrophysical concept characterising the rotary inertia of an object in motion about an axis. An arguably superfluous feature, the RDS nonetheless adds a level of intrigue that is maintained beyond the double take it elicits. Given the horological world's current gimmick overload, it is perhaps surprising to find such a genuine twist on traditional timekeeping that is so simple.

All Illum watches are available in the six Super-LumiNova colours of white, yellow, orange, red, blue and green. This orange Illum VI chronograph is a particularly popular model (£1,340).



(Left) New for 2004, the AXIS/VII Globe possesses a 24-hour revolving disk showing time zones around the world (£1,340). (Right) Based on the Axis model, the Tec&Art 'Red Nashiji' does away with the standard hour hand altogether, in favour of the revolving hour disk alone, plus minute and sweep seconds hands. The dial is hand-finished in red lacquer and gold spray (£1,465). (Bottom) The Illum II diver's watch from Angular Momentum, driven by the ETA 2824 movement, with a 42 mm case water resistant to 100m (£815).

Form and function

The crowds of Basel first witnessed the RDS in 1999 (the year of Angular Momentum's foundation in Bern), with the 'Pioneers' watch collection. While the minutes and seconds were indicated by conventional sweeping hands, a large disk revolving about the central axis replaced both the hour hand and dial itself. While you continue to read the minutes and seconds normally, the hour is read from the disk at the 12 o'clock position marked on the bezel.

Martin Pauli is head of the Angular Momentum Design Center and MD of the parent company, B&D Branding and Design Ltd. He formulated his vision of the watch brand whilst involved in product design, interior design and marketing Asian art. "As a designer, I believe that it is possible to create machine-made products no less beautiful than those from the age of handcrafted work... I believe that beauty is inseparable from what Japanese call 'yo' – meaning 'function' or 'use'." Which, I assume, roughly translates to that age-old adage of 'form following function'.

Illum

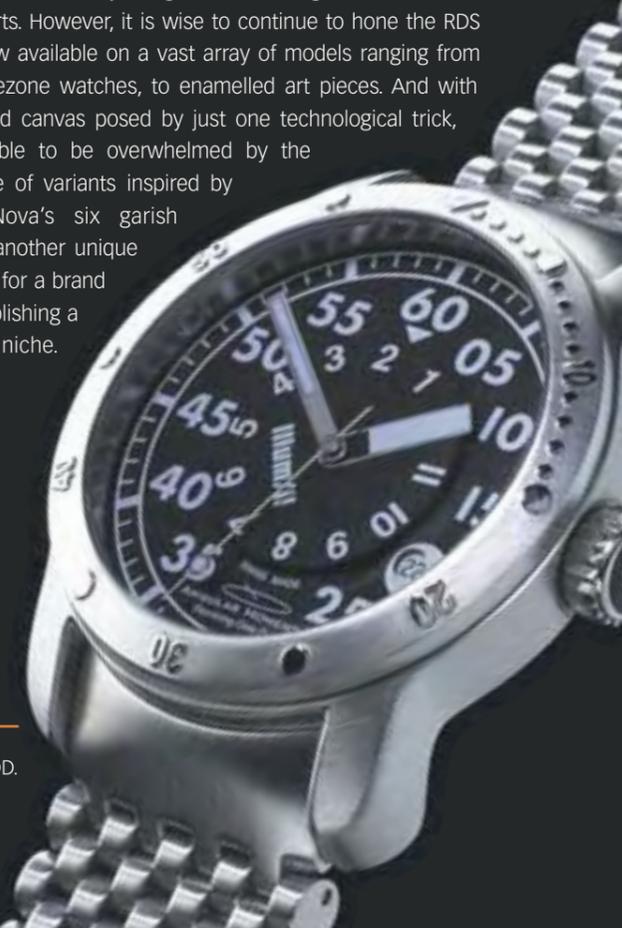
The RDS appeared in various guises over the next two years – principally those of the Illum collection, first launched at Basel 2000 as a more sporty adaptation of the Pioneers, with diving, chronograph and GMT variants. Theoretically at least, minutes and seconds are more important in water sports than hours, further justifying the RDS beyond mere gimmickry as a means of limiting the principal hands to minutes and seconds indication.

Illum was also based on another technological innovation – Super-LumiNova. Angular Momentum was the first watch

company to apply the luminescent material to a watch dial in Illum's novel manner, making the most of the immediate advantages it offers over standard Tritium luminescence (for a start, Super-LumiNova achieves up to 100 times higher luminosity and is free of any radioactive substances).

Angular Momentum has established itself so well over the past five years that it can now afford to launch models that do not feature the RDS – surely a sign that its design has reached a zenith of sorts. However, it is wise to continue to hone the RDS theme – now available on a vast array of models ranging from 24-hour timezone watches, to enamelled art pieces. And with such a broad canvas posed by just one technological trick, it is forgivable to be overwhelmed by the kaleidoscope of variants inspired by Super-LumiNova's six garish hues – yet another unique selling point for a brand rapidly establishing a distinctive niche.

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Further information: Quality Time, 70 Common View, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 1DD. Tel: 07981 124 477, Email: steve.jonesqt@ntlworld.com, www.angularmomentum.com