



Daniel Stucki

SCEPTICISM CONFOUNDED?

Disgruntled pessimists are already openly wondering whether the economic upturn will last; whether we are right to be pleased about the good news being announced; whether the radiant joy expressed by various peoples in regaining what they truly regard as freedom is not merely a prelude to fresh atrocities; and whether the only true certainty is that the worst is yet to come. Wisdom commands us to keep a certain emotional distance, not to plunge headfirst into an ocean of illusions, not to take everything at face value. But conversely, it is definitely reasonable not to be paralysed by fear of the future and by an obsession with absolute guarantees.

Meanwhile, within the confines of our own modest field which lies at the crossroads between watchmaking and information, it is interesting to observe that this microcosm contains all the world's many faults – including excessive reactions, over-the-top enthusiasm and gut fears. Caught between the gloating self-satisfaction trumpeted by some and the distraught concerns expressed by others, those who attended the January watch shows in Geneva had to put up with stereophonic information.

So what and whom are we to believe? In concrete terms, this first round of 2011, including the full range of fringe events, was less well attended than usual,

despite the official statements to the contrary. However, it was in our opinion distinguished by a truly impressive demonstration of horological force.

For its 21st Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie, Cartier silenced any who might have doubted that it was a true watchmaker in the most technical and mechanical sense of the term. The fruits of substantial investments made over these past 10 years in R&D, in a programme of innovative concepts, and in its manufacturing facility in La Chaux-de-Fonds, have now ripened to fill a basket of models based on new proprietary movements. Without renouncing its unquestioned jewellery-making assets, it made the point through an historical exhibition of 270 pieces representing all the facets of horology on the table, the pocket or the wrist – along with 16 mystery clocks never before seen together. And it was all done with a seemingly detached air as if it were “just in case anyone had forgotten who we are...”

Its former suppliers, who are now competitors, along with talented and ambitious newcomers all dutifully paid their respects – at least those who saw the exhibition, because, contrary to Baselworld, this stage is not open to the public. And there are no signs yet that Cartier is ready to do its own one-brand show.

Jean-Philippe Arm