



OUTSIDE FORCES

Furniture designers bring form to Nomos Glashütte watches

Watchmaker Nomos Glashütte established its headquarters in the skills-rich town of Glashütte, near Dresden, in 1990. But by basing its design offices in Berlin, it marked out its urban approach to design from the start. Nomos timepieces are steeped in German horological history, yet they tick along nicely in the capital's contemporary design landscape.

By 2008, the marque's chief branding officer, Judith Borowski, was looking beyond the watch industry for fresh design influences and began forging links with German product and furniture designers. 'Watch designers can quite often be conservative and traditional,' she says. 'At Nomos, we were always looking for something more vivid, more contemporary.'

To date, she has enlisted designers including Werner Aisslinger, Mark Braun and Thomas Höhnel to work with the brand. Borowski piqued Braun's interest with a simple question: 'If you designed a watch, what would it look like?' Eighteen months later, in 2014, his 'Metro' timepiece was winning awards for its cosmopolitan good looks and careful construction. Braun's design credits include glassware for Lobmeyr, and the 'moi'

Left to right, designers Werner Aisslinger, Thomas Höhnel and Mark Braun with Höhnel's 'Boxoffice' table (left), €1,870, designed with Christoph Männchen, for Chris+Ruby, chris-ruby.de; and Braun's 'moi' trestle table, €398, for Thonet, from Minimum, minimum.de

Centre, 'Club 38 Campus' watch in stainless steel and bipartite, with galvanised, white silver-plated dial, anthracite velour leather strap and 'a (Alpha)' in-house-built Nomos calibre, with manual winding movement, £1,100, by Nomos Glashütte

table for Thonet, as well as two Wallpaper* Handmade collaborations, but the Nomos Glashütte project was his first foray into the horological realm. 'Watch design, and especially mechanical watches, is a very special field, so it has its own rules – dos and don'ts that you have to learn and keep in mind,' he says. 'It's harder to implement a functional innovation than it is to create a strong aesthetic identity, for instance.'

Aisslinger confesses that although his design practice Studio Aisslinger tends to 'jump into new projects, whatever they are', moving beyond products, exhibitions and architecture into horological design took considerable thought. 'It takes a long time to create a new mechanical watch with a completely new engine inside,' adds Aisslinger, who has now worked on a number of models for Nomos Glashütte.

Höhnel, who grew up near Glashütte, was familiar with the brand's watches. After training as an industrial designer, working on everything from bus stops to exhibition architecture, he designed the 'Ahoi' timepiece for Nomos Glashütte in 2013, enhancing the marque's reputation for fine engineering. Höhnel's latest design for the company is yet to be revealed, but it will be a key 2017 launch. The designer says it was the brand's smart balance between tradition and progression that inspired him to get involved. ★ nomos-glashuette.com

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