



Giselle Rufer founded and runs Delance Watches

Watch Magic

Her enthusiasm is infectious, her entrepreneurship effective and the philosophy is one of true conviction. Giselle Rufer believes in the magic of women and is bewitched by the women of magic. Her creations are the physical embodiment of that statement. We conversed during a pleasant walk along an autumnal lane.

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Interview: Marton Radkai

Photos: Susanne Dubs (portrait), Monique Bernaz (watches)

bg: What is the creative impulse that produces your watches?

Giselle Rufer: I believe I can fly, I believe I can touch the sky ... I believe I can offer women a “Taliswoman,” a powerful, magical and beautiful symbol of the power of the “now,” connected with eternity. After having worked for years as a product manager and creator in the watch industry, that object could only be a watch. A very unique watch that would also symbolize the creative power of womanhood. It was a commitment I had to myself for a long time.

So when did you actually decide to take the plunge and become a watch-maker?

In fact I did not decide to create a watch manufacture. It just happened because I could not convince any manufacturer to make the watches I wanted to make for women. I asked most of the big bosses, I explained that we needed a special watch, just made for us. Not a men’s watch with diamonds, a pastel strap and a small heart somewhere, nor a reduction of a men’s watch. We needed something that expresses our relationship with time, our strength and our commitment as well as our dreams.

It sounds like the industry is fairly dominated by males. Is that still so?

Slowly it is changing, but it is a men’s “bastion” and too many of them are still convinced that a woman cannot create something like a watch, a bridge, or a car (*big smile*). It’s surprising because 50 percent of the workers in the watch industry are women. The contribution of women to the economy is now obvious and is a necessity. Women are natural communicators, it is our gift, because we are educated to understand what others want in all circumstances. I don’t know, but I am convinced that having women at all levels can only be profitable for companies and nations.

Entering that world must have been quite a challenge personally and socially...

I have to confess that I never thought about the challenges. I was driven by my dream and the conviction that the idea of the watch and

the concept I had developed were both unique and that I could only be successful. I was doing what I was born for. As an entrepreneur, I wanted to create a social and responsible enterprise and I work towards that goal as much as I can, every day. It is a lasting and constant commitment. As a woman, thanks to my mother and the women with whom I grew up with, the sky, for me, was the limit. I could feel that some people and even some friends could not understand me. I was crazy, utopian, pretentious, too old, etc. I lost a few of them, but gained many others. Nowadays, I am in the avant-garde as a woman entrepreneur. Women entrepreneurs are the heroes now ... and some people are jealous ... (*big laugh*)



“Judith”: A Delance that “recalls the loves of her life”



Your watches have a very special form, they are indeed very feminine. Could you comment?

Yes, it is more than a watch, it is a sculpture, a piece of art, a representation of femininity. It is a "Taliswoman" with strong symbolic meaning.

What is the meaning?

Delance tells you: be all what you can be, dare to be yourself, a woman with talent, courage, energy, love. You are the life... The men who offer such a watch are telling her: I believe in your talent and I will be on your side as you are on my side. She can be his mother, his daughter, his lover or his partner. A Delance watch is a symbol of the complementarities, masculine-feminine, north-south, moon-sun, water-fire, and we have to unite our strength and talent in order to create a new world, where each one can find peace and harmony.

I would be curious to know a little more about the shapes and symbols. You chose, for example, a lozenge shape.

The lozenge, the diamond shape, symbolizes the creative strength of womanhood. It is a universal symbol for life and femininity and it has the same significance in all civilizations. It is also the sign of fertility and abundance in China. The spiral at the zenith represents the moon, water, femininity and the stone at the nadir is the sun, fire, masculinity. And the infinity loop links the north with the south,

in harmony, to create life for eternity. It is a symbol of life, harmony and spirituality.

Time is in fact itself a symbol of life in its total abundance, and woman as well. Is there a special relationship between time and femininity?

You are a philosopher? And we could spend hours speaking about that! I love this subject and I would like to say that life is now. And I have chosen the shape of the Delance to give this message. The hands of the Delance show the time that is right now and the shape tells us the eternity of now. It is always now. Women have a special relation with time, a special perception, which is not the same as men... every one knows that! Please don't tell me that women are always late... we are at our own time, which is not always the same as for men. Who is on the right time? I don't know! Women have the tendency to multitask, while men do one thing after the other. Just see the results at the end of the day.

Watches are all about numbers. Is there any numerical symbolism?

Yes, the basis for women's time is 28. René Allendy (1889–1942, French doctor and psychoanalyst, the ed.) pointed out that the number 28 combines the so-called cyclic times represented in the number 4, and evolutionary times: 7. He put it this way: "It is the spiral of evolution unfolding among the endless cycles of nature. It is the being advancing in the midst of the eternal oscillations of the Cosmos." That makes all the difference.

How do you name your watches? My Mother's Watch, for example? What are the stories told by these watches?

The unique selling proposition of Delance is to allow women to create their own watch by combining existing elements or introducing other new ones. This personalization makes the watch the mirror of her soul. For example, My Mother's Watch has stones at the hours the children and grandchildren were born. The Secret or the Aïda and others symbolize a dream, a passion by the color and the position of the stones. The Diane and Isis are engraved to root them in mythology. The Pink Ribbon, with its 28 pink sapphires, celebrates female strength and connectedness. The Delance Cascade symbolizes the water in all its aspects. The lozenge is the seawater, the infinity loops are fluvial waters and the bracelet is the cascade or the rain. Water, one of the two feminine elements, is becoming the

"I am convinced that having women at all levels can only be profitable for companies and nations."



"Pink Ribbon": Solidarity among the world's women



"My Mother's Watch": Five rubies for her five children

big issue of the century. Each Delance is a unique watch for a magic woman as well as a magic watch for a unique woman. I create the watch with the person herself or with the person making the present of the watch. It is teamwork based on trust and communication.

There are many watches on the market. What kind of woman – or man for that matter – is going to be attracted to a Delance?

The Delance woman is creative, confident in her tastes, she dares to be different, carries her own story on her wrist and not the story of a famous brand. The man loves her for herself and not for himself. She can be all what she can be and he will be at her side like she is at his side.

What is required to attract a female clientele?

You have to be very creative and unique with an authentic story. If the creator is a real person it is a true story. Delance has been making personalized watches since 1996 and that is now the trend. Also, being 100-percent Swiss-made is a powerful argument in addition to ensuring the high quality that is expected of such an appl-

lication. Women love stories, on one hand, and they are very conscious on the other.

Where is Delance going? Where does it want to go? What is the next chapter in the book?

My vision for Delance is to be recognized worldwide as the watch for women. In order to do it I have to expand my distribution and find the appropriate partners for this expansion, partners that understand the philosophy of the brand and who are ready to participate financially and effectively. I have a design in mind for another watch with an identical meaning and also an extraordinary collection of jewelry I cannot wait to produce.

What about the brand?

I also have big dreams for the brand. Delance is a marvelous name in all languages, easy to remember, noble, elegant, refined and can be used for luxury items like leather goods and many other products.

Giselle Rufer, thank you very much for your time! ■