

WIRED

TIME



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SUPPLEMENT
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RESSENCE 5 EXPLODED

INNER WORKINGS

LIQUIDS AND MAGNETISM DON'T USUALLY MAKE FOR A SUCCESSFUL TIMEPIECE – BUT THE RESSENCE TYPE 5 TAKES FULL ADVANTAGE OF THEIR UNIQUE ABILITIES

If there is one complaint to level at the Swiss watch industry, it is its reticence to embrace radical new thinking, either mechanical or aesthetic. It can sometimes take new upstarts to rock the boat – and perhaps none more so than Ressence, a Belgian company founded by Benoît Mintiens. Crucially, he is no watchmaker, but an industrial designer who has created vacuum cleaners for LG, pushchairs for Maxi-Cosi, interiors for Air France first class and even elements of the new generation TGV. For Mintiens, a watch is all about functionality, legibility and the expression of time, which, he notes, need not be the usual hands swinging around a centre point. “In fact, the very way we’re taught to read the time, by a series of hands, isn’t – from a designer’s point of view – the best way. Yes, such a graphic device is better than digital, because it can be read much faster. But it has to be explained and it’s not intuitive – only when it’s learned does it become the best way,” says Mintiens. “Yet we have it because watchmakers found a mechanism for measuring time and then, precisely what an engineer would do, just stuck some hands on it to give a read-out. But, in some respects, industrial designers build from the outside to the inside.” With this in mind, the new Type 5 is the purest expression of Ressence’s radical design agenda to date.

BY JOSH SIMS

Because oil and the glass have a similar refractive index, the two substances seem to appear as one. This eliminates perception of depth, so the watch indicators look as though they are on the dome’s surface.



2. DIAL

The Orbital Convex System features hours, seconds and an oil gauge rotating within a larger disc that gives the minutes reading. This method uses the minutes mechanism as the base calculation of time; the sub-dials take their cue from this.

3. MAGNETS

Timekeeping is transmitted from the dry mechanical compartment in the base of the watch to the oil-filled top two-thirds via magnetism. Micro-magnets sit on a titanium plate, connecting the movement below to these oil-suspended wheels and the dial indicators.

CROWNLESS CONTROL

To enhance water-resistance, the watch is wound and set via a rotating bezel on the case back.



1. GLASS

Light refraction typically means a watch face can only be viewed clearly from certain angles – and in the water they can look like mirrors. Under this glass is an oil-filled compartment which eliminates light refraction entirely, making the time read-out supremely legible.

4. BELLWS

Seven nickel-and-gold bellows compensate for oil-volume changes due to temperature: they compress when the oil warms and its volume goes up, and expand when it’s colder and the oil volume decreases. This is regulated by a bi-metal thermometer (the grey spiral above the magnets).

5. CASE

What better for a diving watch than to take inspiration from an amphibious animal? The Type 5’s lightweight titanium case is curved like a turtle’s shell, giving not only an aqua-dynamic shape, but a piece that sits more comfortably on the wrist.