



GAÏA PRIZE 2025

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**GAÏA
PRIZE
2025**

M musée
I international
H d'horlogerie

The Gaïa Prize award ceremony will be presided over by Claudia Kübler, visual artist, on

**THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2025
AT 18:00
MUSÉE INTERNATIONAL D'HORLOGERIE
RUE DES MUSÉES 29
LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS**

THE JURY HAS NOMINATED

Roger W. Smith

winner in the
Craftsmanship, Creation category

for his unwavering commitment to craftsmanship in watchmaking and for his role as an ambassador for the independent British watchmaking tradition.

Helmut Crott

winner in the
History, Research category

for his meticulous research combining archive sources and oral testimony with his encyclopaedic knowledge of watchmaking history to benefit the watch collectors' market.

Jean-Jacques

Paolini

winner in the
Entrepreneurship category

for his exemplary career from a small family company to a major watch group, and as a visionary who adapted Lean manufacturing for the watchmaking world, enabling it to maintain competitiveness whilst upholding Swiss industrial excellence.



A PRIZE SIMILAR TO NONE... THE GAÏA PRIZE

The Gaïa Prize was created in 1993 by the Musée international d'horlogerie with an aim to honour prominent figures who have contributed and who contribute to the reputation of watchmaking – through its history, its technology and its industry. The only one of its kind, this Prize has the particularity of honouring the best of the best. By awarding this Prize, the Musée international d'horlogerie, a worldwide recognised institution and leading museum of La Chaux-de-Fonds, a town whose economic and social history is closely linked to watchmaking, wished to express its appreciation to the spiritual heirs of the watchmaking culture which impregnates the collections of the museum, as well as the town.

A distinction rather than a Prize, therefore a spontaneous application is not possible; applications presented by third parties allow the members of the Jury, prominent figures from Switzerland and abroad from various fields - cultural, journalistic, scientific or economic - to assess each contribution on a neutral basis and to choose a winner, or several whenever certain applications are thought to be complementary to each other. The independence of the Jury is guaranteed by its President, the Curator of the Musée international d'horlogerie.

JURY 2025

Régis Huguenin, conservateur du Musée international d'horlogerie, président du jury

Sébastien Chaulmontet, collectionneur, responsable innovation et marketing Sellita SA

Patrick Dubois, président du Conseil d'administration du Laboratoire Dubois SA

Patrick Duvanel, directeur Pôle Technologies et Industrie, Centre de formation professionnelle neuchâtelois

Estelle Fallet, conservatrice, Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève

Joël Grandjean, journaliste, éditeur et rédacteur en chef JSH Magazine

Serge Maillard, journaliste, éditeur Europa Star

Nathalie Marielloni, conservatrice adjointe, Musée international d'horlogerie

Luc Monnet, horloger indépendant

Morghan Mootoosamy, conservateur, Musée d'horlogerie du Locle, Château des Monts

Fanny Queloz, Co-fondatrice et Responsable Métiers d'Art, Arts & Design Manufacture SA

Kari Voutilainen, CEO Voutilainen Horlogerie d'Art

Silas Walton, fondateur et CEO A Collected Man

Roger W. Smith

Craftsmanship, Creation

The Prix Gaïa jury has recognised Roger W. Smith for his unwavering commitment to craftsmanship in watchmaking and for his role as an ambassador for the independent British watchmaking tradition.

Career

Born in Bolton, just outside Manchester, in 1970, Roger W. Smith discovered his passion for watchmaking at an early age and, following the advice of his father, left school at 16 to study at the Manchester School of Horology. Upon graduating in 1989, he was awarded the British Horological Institute's Bronze Medal for top academic performance.

After a brief period as a watch technician, he set his sights on making a watch entirely by hand, inspired by a visit from legendary watchmaker George Daniels. His first effort, Pocket Watch No. 1, was completed in 1990. Despite being rejected by Daniels as "too handmade," it was an extraordinary achievement for a 22-year-old. Determined to improve, Roger Smith spent five and a half years creating Pocket Watch No. 2, a masterpiece that earned Daniels' approval.



In 1998, Daniels invited Smith to join him in producing the Millennium series of wristwatches to celebrate Omega's adoption of the co-axial escapement. Following the project's completion in 2001, Roger Smith founded Roger W. Smith Ltd. Operating from a converted bedroom in his Isle of Man home, he designed the "Series 1", a rectangular watch featuring a retrograde calendar complication, of which he manufactured nine pieces over a period of three years.

The "Series 2" model was launched in 2005. By his own estimation, it was the most important model in the history of his workshop. The "Series 2" was the first watch

made entirely in-house, but it was also the first series watch to be created by a British watchmaker in the modern era. Its production assured the future of the workshop.

In 2009, Roger W. Smith started what was to be his last collaboration with George Daniels, a commission to produce a series of 48 watches to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Daniels' invention of the coaxial escapement, an invention which saw Daniels awarded a CBE for services to the British Empire.

In 2011, two defining events took place in the life of Roger W. Smith: George Daniels passed away and left his entire workshop to his protégé, and, secondly, Roger W. Smith received the Barrett Silver Medal, awarded by the BHI in recognition of an outstanding development or achievement in the field of horology, for his "dedication to and successfully continuing the finest traditions of English watchmaking".

In 2013, Roger W. Smith was named an ambassador for the UK Government's GREAT campaign, for which he created "The GREAT Britain" watch. In 2014, he conceived the Series 1, 3 and 4 which were unveiled at the SalonQP watch show in 2015.

In 2018, Roger Smith moved his workshop. Prior to this, he had still been working in an old house which had been gradually transformed, room by room, into a watchmaker's workshop. Now, the company was based in a purpose-built building. These new premises allowed the small firm to grow.

This same year, Roger W. Smith received an OBE for services to the British Empire. In 2019, he was awarded an honorary degree by the chancellor of Birmingham City

University. In 2020, he co-founded and became chairman of The Alliance of British Watch and Clock Makers. In 2023, Roger W. Smith was appointed a trustee of the "George Daniels' Educational Trust".

In 2025, the last Daniels Anniversary wristwatch was completed, marking sixteen years since George and Roger began the project. This was a significant moment for Roger, as the Daniels Anniversary was the final watch to have been designed and created during George's lifetime. Having been entrusted by George with the project, and later bequeathed the Daniels workshop collection, this moment marked the end of an era.

In 2026, Roger will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Roger W. Smith Ltd.

Accomplishments



The original Series 1 (2001)



Series 2 (2006)



Daniels' Co-axial Anniversary (2012)



Series 3

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The new Series 1 (2018)

Series 5 Open Dial (2019)

Helmut Crott

History, Research

The Prix Gaïa jury is paying tribute to Helmut Crott for his meticulous research combining archive sources and oral testimony with his encyclopaedic knowledge of watchmaking history to benefit the watch collectors' market.

Career

Helmut Crott actually started his career as a doctor, rather than in watchmaking. Graduating in medicine from the RWTH Aachen University in 1971, he went on to specialise as an orthopaedic surgeon in 1979. Alongside his studies, from the early 1970s, Dr Helmut Crott developed a passion for the world of antiquities; a dynamic sector, but one which was not very compatible with the professional rigours of medicine. Working at the hospital during the day, he spent his free time scouring the nearby villages for antiques. In 1972, he opened a boutique in Aachen, where he started to become seriously interested in watches.

In 1975, he founded his own auction house, Aachener Auktionshaus, once again in Aachen. Within what proved to be a highly competitive antiques market, he decided to focus on an as-yet lesser explored segment: the auctioning of watches. Two years later, he organised his first public sale of silver, jewellery and watches.



At odds with the market trends of that time, his company concentrated from the outset on wristwatches, which was quite a left-field decision at a time when the pocket watch dominated. As sales grew, his firm gradually started to specialise in clocks and watches. Helmut Crott honed his knowledge of the market, analysing the preferences of collectors and developing a recognised expertise in the evaluation of antique timepieces.

In 1986, Aachener Auktionshaus became Dr Crott Auktionshaus. The following year, Helmut Crott moved his headquarters to Frankfurt. By 1993, he had organised 50 specialist auctions, becoming a reference in the field.

Through the catalogues that he compiled and the many oral statements he gave, he actively helped to educate collectors and pass on his in-depth knowledge of collectors' timepieces.

In 1993, Helmut Crott sold his company to Stephan Musser, in Mannheim, to focus on historical research, mainly into the history of Patek Philippe. He developed data-

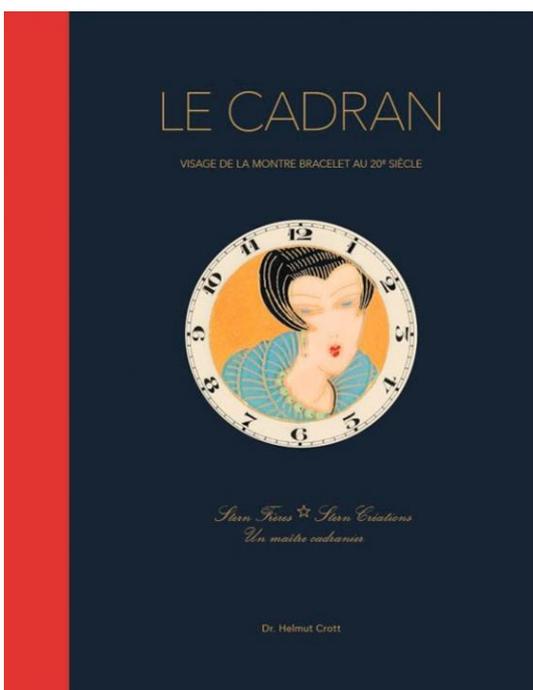
bases which enabled him to advise and write historical précis for the watches sold at auction by various houses. His objective at this time was to provide proof of transparency to help in the fight against counterfeiting which was affecting the watch auction market.

In 2010, Helmut Crott founded his own watch consultancy, Dr. Crott Consulting, in Luxembourg. The same year, he was contacted by the board of the watch brand Urban Jürgensen, following the death of its owner, Peter Baumberger, to whom he was close. He took over the company and ran it until 2014. During this period, the brand designed several calibres, included the one which won the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève in November 2014, in the men's wristwatch category.

In 2019, Helmut Crott published his masterpiece "Le Cadran", in French. A second edition and an English translation were published in 2023.

In February 2023, he became a member of the board for the Horopedia Foundation, an organisation based in Geneva. This structure governs the horopedia.org platform, a multilingual video encyclopaedia dedicated to watch-making. Helmut Crott brought his expertise as a dial specialist and an expert in watch history.

Still active, Helmut Crott continues to work with international auction houses, provide guidance to private collectors, and advise historic brands. In 2024, he sat on the jury for the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève (GPHG), alongside other important figures from the industry.



Jean-Jacques Paolini

Entrepreneurship

The Prix Gaïa jury is recognising Jean-Jacques Paolini for his exemplary career from a small family company to a major watch group, and as a visionary who adapted Lean manufacturing for the watchmaking world, enabling it to maintain competitiveness whilst upholding Swiss industrial excellence.

Career

Born in La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1947, Jean-Jacques Paolini grew up surrounded by entrepreneurs. His father founded a factory developing and manufacturing jewellery components, in Rue des Crêtets. The young Paolini spent many hours here learning and contributing to the small firm's output during his holidays. In 1967, he graduated with a degree in jewellery making from the School of Art in La Chaux-de-Fonds. Alongside his training, he pursued a high-level career in sport and managed the family business with his father. From 1968, this expanded its production to include watch cases, bracelets and clasps.

In 1980, he became the company's director. At that time, the company had 120 employees and showed great resilience as it continued operations throughout the huge upheavals in the watchmaking sector which forced many other factories to close. The customer base expanded under his management, notably with Cartier, which was still in its early days.



In 1989, the future of the Paolini Manufacture went in an entirely new direction when it was bought by its customer, Cartier. Satisfied with the expertise demonstrated by its supplier, Cartier chose it as the base for its industrial development. At the same time, Cartier also acquired the case-maker Cristalor and then Leuenberger, the polishing specialist.

In 1992, the confidence Cartier had in Jean-Jacques Paolini led them to entrust him with managing this entire sector of the business, totalling 600 employees. This responsibility was quite a major one as it actually made it the largest employer in the city of La Chaux-de-Fonds. To successfully fulfil his role, Mr Paolini took steps to further

his education, obtaining a degree from the Geneva Business School.

Between 1993 and 1996, the first production projects with short turnarounds were rolled out, tested on two pilot lines. Jean-Jacques Paolini was appointed managing director of Cristalor SA. The new production process that he proposed was an evolution that amounted to a virtual revolution at the time. The majority of watch companies were working with a “push flow”, adapting their offer to unstable demand, based on erratic forecasts. This resulted in large amounts of unwanted production, which did not ensure a good level of service, risks of stock obsolescence, and dissatisfied customer brands.

Jean-Jacques Paolini studied the alternatives and sought solutions. Reading works on Lean and visiting high-performance automotive factories, he became convinced that an alternative was possible. He then encouraged his team to train in line-based production concepts and to put into practice all the principles that Toyota had come up with for its own company. The entrepreneur's prime motivation was the retention of jobs; to ensure this, performance must be optimised if firms are to remain competitive. The changes made to the production process must not compromise quality in any way.

For the Swiss business environment, the key to performance is short turnarounds. The first projects produced impressive results as the throughput times – the time taken for an element to move through the entire production chain – were reduced eightfold.

In 1998, thanks to his initial success with the process, Jean-Jacques Paolini was promoted to industrial general manager of Richemont and its 2350 employees. Its pro-

duction sites were located in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Neuchâtel, Villeret, Buttes, la Côte-aux-Fées, Fribourg and Geneva, and worked to supply Cartier, Panerai, Baume & Mercier, Piaget and Montblanc.

The last turning point in Jean-Jacques Paolini's career took place at the turn of the 21st century. The principles of short turnarounds were deployed throughout the manufactures in the Richemont Group, thereby proving that it is possible to keep production in Switzerland and remain competitive. It was now the buildings and production equipment that were limiting growth. Backed by his team, Jean-Jacques Paolini implemented an ambitious industrial plan which mobilised all the resources needed. He proposed the creation of three new manufactures: a manufacture for Cartier in La Chaux-de-Fonds, a manufacture for Piaget in Plan-des-Ouates and a second for Cartier in Villars-sur-Glâne where he planned to retrain around a hundred staff from the luxury lighter sector to work in watchmaking.

These three new manufactures opened within the space of three years, spanning a working area of over 60,000 square metres, enabling the activity to be further developed, and creating job opportunities for hundreds of workers in the watchmaking sector and for the companies working on the sites. The construction of these industrial buildings cemented Cartier's presence in the landscape of the Jura Arc.

In 2001, Jean-Jacques Paolini was appointed industrial general manager for Cartier, and the Richemont Group consolidated the production tools for each of its brands. Between 2003 and 2004, the Cartier manufacture opened in Fribourg, and Cregon was integrated into the brand's value chain.

In 2008, Jean-Jacques Paolini came out of retirement to manage two production sites in Les Brenets and Les Breuleux, to familiarise them with the Lean concept and notion of short turnarounds.

Industrial performance, although rarely discussed, is clearly crucial to Switzerland's competitiveness. In the 1990s and 2000s, many brands opted to relocate their procurement to Asia, which threatened the ecosystem and would eventually erode the expertise and knowledge built up over centuries between Geneva and the Jura Arc. Jean-Jacques Paolini has therefore contributed to the creation of thousands of jobs (from 100 in 1989 to over 3000 today). His commitment to the watchmaking cause, his creative vision for employment, and his work in the field of the movement is remarkable and, as a whole, forms an exemplary professional career which played a vital role in supporting the Swiss watchmaking industry.

HORIZON GAÏA

Wandrille Bonnin Hector Burel

Grant holders

Alongside the three categories used to honour leading figures in the watchmaking world, Horizon Gaïa, an incentive grant made possible thanks to the generosity of the Watch Academy Foundation, is being awarded to encourage new talent in the fields recognised by the Prix Gaïa: Craftsmanship - Creation, History - Research, and Entrepreneurship. The grant will finance all or part of an individual project.



Two scholarship recipients collaborating on a joint project are being recognised this year: Wandrille Bonnin and Hector Burel, students at Lycée Edgar Faure in Morteau. Through their project 'Réhabilitation et augmentation d'une machine de contrôle' they aim to promote a mutualistic and sustainable model of work by adapting an old SIP Mu-214b machine, combining productivity gains with respect for watchmaking heritage.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Craftsmanship, Creation

It is without any doubt the desire to honour the bold, creative watchmakers, craftsmen and women that in some cases work in relative anonymity, with their names unobtrusively associated with big businesses, which urged the prize's founders to see them honoured in the first instance.

Ten years ago, the work of these profound, inventive and determined individuals was not as well recognised by the general public, not specialising or passionate about watchmaking, as it is today. We like to think that the Gaïa Prize has made a modest contribution to revealing the work of some of its ingenious craftsmen.

History, Research

The individuals honoured for their contribution to watchmaking history, techniques or more generally time measurement, by way of their writings or museum activities, come from a very wide variety of training backgrounds. Watchmakers, sales personnel or university students, their passion, learning and culture have led them to carry out research, historical studies or other work that has enabled them to contribute to the dissemination of watchmaking culture. This prize is also related to a wish to recognise historians and researchers who have at times worked unseen on the development of knowledge.

Entrepreneurship

What would watchmaking be without the entrepreneurship that has enabled this art to take root and grow over the centuries. It evolved from craftsmanship to industry, with all the implications from produc-

tion to product distribution. Over the past centuries, ingenious watchmakers have been able to instil this will to promote their works, and it is now only right to recognise and honour the men and women who have now pursued the same goals, ensuring that the quality of their products is recognised here and worldwide, and above all that new research is still constantly undertaken to improve timekeepers.

HORIZON GAÏA

Alongside the three categories used to honour leading figures in the watchmaking world, Horizon Gaïa, an incentive grant is being awarded to encourage new talent in the fields recognised by the Prix Gaïa: Craftsmanship - Creation, History - Research, and Entrepreneurship. The grant will finance all or part of an individual project.

PRIZE WINNERS SINCE 1993

1993

† Jean-Claude Nicolet Craftsmanship, Creation
† Henry Louis Belmont History, Research
† André Margot Entrepreneurship

1994

François-Paul Journe Craftsmanship, Creation
† François Mercier History, Research
† Anton Bally Entrepreneurship

1995

Michel Parmigiani Craftsmanship, Creation
Ludwig Oechslin History, Research
† Antoine Simonin Entrepreneurship

1996

Vincent Calabrese Craftsmanship, Creation
Jean-Luc Mayaud History, Research
† Günter Blümlein Entrepreneurship

1997

† Richard Daners Craftsmanship, Creation
† Jean-Claude Sabrier History, Research
Jean-Pierre Musy Entrepreneurship

1998

Philippe Dufour Craftsmanship, Creation
Yves Droz and
Joseph Flores History, Research
† Luigi Macaluso Entrepreneurship

1999

† Derek Pratt Craftsmanship, Creation
Estelle Fallet History, Research
Gabriel Feuvrier Entrepreneurship

2000

† René Bannwart Craftsmanship, Creation
† Kathleen Pritschard History, Research
† Simone Bédat Entrepreneurship

2001

† George Daniels Craftsmanship, Creation
Catherine Cardinal History, Research
† Rolf Schnyder Entrepreneurship

2003

Anthony G. Randall Craftsmanship, Creation

2004

† André Beyner Entrepreneurship

2006

† Luigi Pippa Craftsmanship, Creation
† John H. Leopold History, Research

2007

Paul Gerber Craftsmanship, Creation

2008

† Nicolas G. Hayek Entrepreneurship

2009

Beat Haldimann Craftsmanship, Creation
Robert Greubel
and Stephen Forsey Entrepreneurship

2010

Jacques Mueller
and Elmar Mock Craftsmanship, Creation
Jean-Claude Biver Entrepreneurship

2011

François Junod Craftsmanship, Creation
Pierre-Yves Donzé History, Research
Philippe Stern Entrepreneurship

2012

Eric Coudray Craftsmanship, Creation
Francesco Garufo History, Research
Franco Cologni Entrepreneurship

2013

Andreas Strehler Craftsmanship, Creation
Günther Oestmann History, Research
Ernst Thomke Entrepreneurship

2014

Kari Voutilainen Craftsmanship, Creation
Pierre Thomann History, Research
† Henri Dubois Entrepreneurship

2015

Anita Porchet Craftsmanship, Creation
Jonathan Betts History, Research
Giulio Papi Entrepreneurship

2016

Vianney Halter Craftsmanship, Creation
Roger Smith History, Research
Giovanni Busca
and Pascal Rochat Entrepreneurship

2017

Jean-Marc Wiederrecht Craftsmanship, Creation
Laurence Marti History, Research
Richard Mille Entrepreneurship

2018

Paul Clementi Craftsmanship, Creation
† Reinhard Meis History, Research
Maximilian Büsser Entrepreneurship

2019

Suzanne Rohr Craftsmanship, Creation
Laurent Tissot History, Research
Karl-Friedrich Scheufele Entrepreneurship

2020

Antoine Prezioso Craftsmanship, Creation
Denis Savoie History, Research
Felix Baumgartner
and Martin Frei Entrepreneurship

2021

Carole Kasapi Craftsmanship, Creation
Anthony Turner History, Research
Eric Klein Entrepreneurship

2022

Laurent Barotte Craftsmanship, Creation
Nico de Rooij History, Research
Edouard Meylan Entrepreneurship

2023

Georges Brodbeck Craftsmanship, Creation
Hans Boeckh History, Research
Miguel Garcia Entrepreneurship

2024

† Jean-Pierre Hagmann Craftsmanship, Creation
Caroline Rothauge History, Research
Jasmine Audemars Entrepreneurship

2025

Roger W. Smith Craftsmanship, Creation
Helmut Crott History, Research
Jean-Jacques Paolini Entrepreneurship

RULES

1. The Gaïa Prize is an honorary distinction bestowed annually, each autumn, by the International Watchmaking Museum (MIH), and consequently, by the Swiss town of La Chaux-de-Fonds.

2. The Gaïa Prize is awarded to individuals who have participated in developing and reinforcing knowledge of watchmaking through their work and achievements in 3 categories:

- Craftsmanship and Creation in watchmaking
- History and Research in watchmaking and timekeeping
- Entrepreneurship in watchmaking

The Awards Committee awards one prize in each of the three categories but reserves the right not to award a prize in one or more of the categories.

3. The Committee's decision on the prizewinner(s) is final.

4. The award nominees are chosen irrespective of their nationality.

5. All nominations, excluding personal ones, are taken into consideration.

Only nominations submitted before 21st March will be included in the current year's selection process.

6. After validating the nominations, the Management of MIH submits the list of nominees to the Awards Committee.

7. Members of the Awards Committee are appointed by the Management of MIH.

8. The Awards Committee is chaired by the Curator and is composed of three members of the Management of MIH and figures from various fields relating to watchmaking. There are between 10 and 15 members on the Committee. Every year, three members are replaced, in principle.

9. The Committee can legitimately deliberate if at least five members are present.

10. A member of the jury can participate in the vote only if he has followed the entire deliberations concerning the candidates of a category. No vote before the deliberations will be taken into account. The Chair, the Curator of MIH, takes part in the voting. In the event of a tie in the voting, the Chair has the deciding vote.

11. In the event of dispute or doubt concerning the interpretation or application of these rules, the Chair of the Awards Committee shall decide.