



The Bergamo 40, housed in an attractive cabinet, shown right, provides no clue as to its function. A remote controlled motorized lift mechanism raises or lowers the watch winders module, shown left, for viewing and loading.

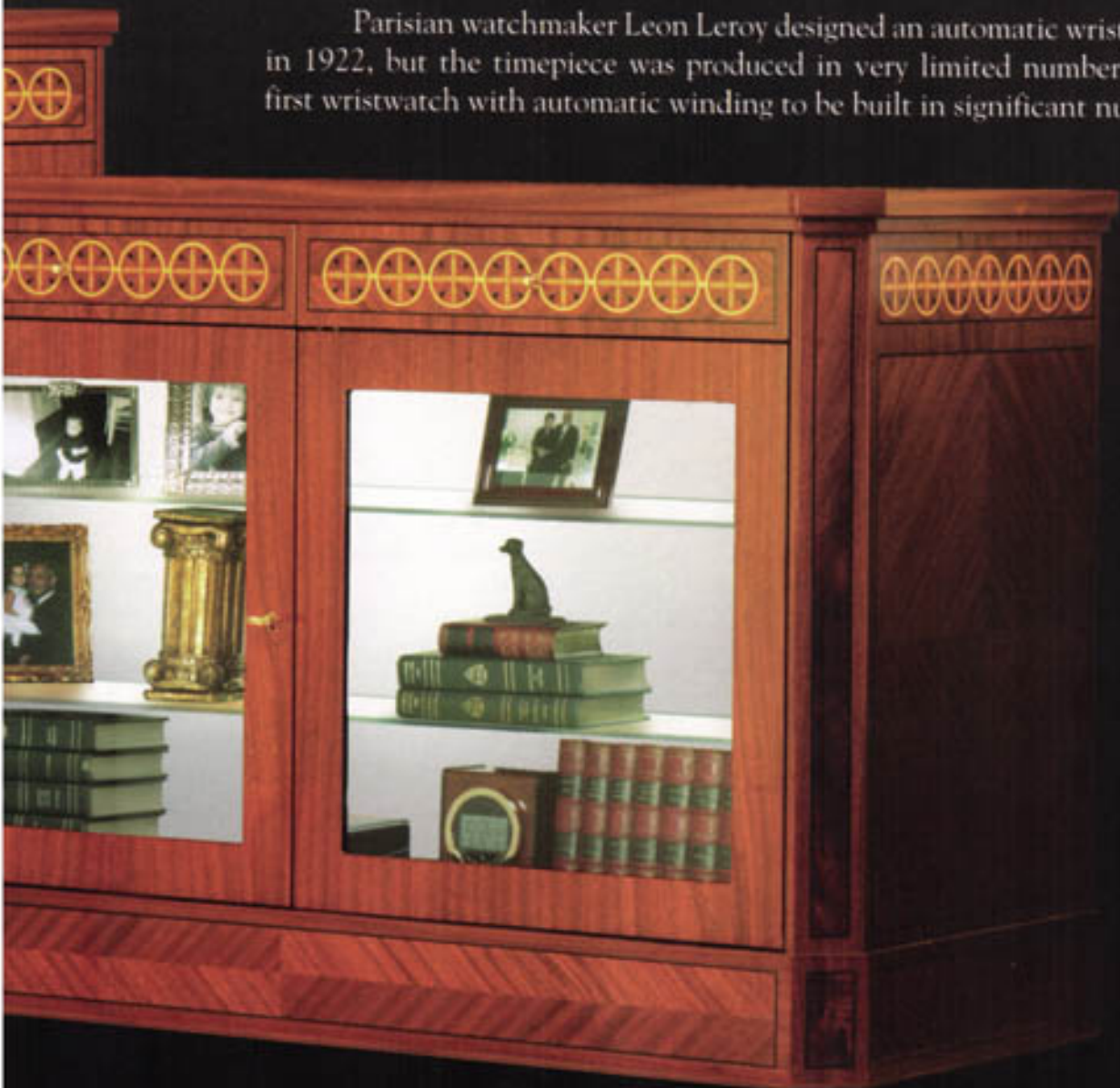
ORBITA

WATCHWINDERS

Abraham Louis Perrelet is credited with inventing the first automatic watch in 1770, powered by a winding mechanism that operated in both directions via a rotor. Perrelet's concept was improved upon by Abraham-Louis Breguet in 1780, a development Breguet called the "Perpetuelle" watch.

Since pocket watches were carried in one's vest, coat or pants, they were not subjected to enough motion to activate a self-winding system and therefore automatic watches were not in general use. When the wristwatch was developed, worn on one of most active parts of the body, watchmakers began to once again explore the possibilities of the automatic watch.

Parisian watchmaker Leon Leroy designed an automatic wristwatch in 1922, but the timepiece was produced in very limited numbers. The first wristwatch with automatic winding to be built in significant numbers





Produced in a Limited Edition of 100 pieces, each Artisan piece is serially numbered and individually signed by the artist, Stephen Schlansker. The end product is an impressive, highly viewable work of art which is also utilitarian.

was developed by the English watchmaker, John Harwood.

Today, most of the major manufacturers offer automatic watches. They are marvelous machines, but they also have one major drawback. If the watch's owner doesn't wear it for a period of time, the watch runs down and stops. The next time the watch is worn, it has to be reset. This is an inconvenience, especially if a timepiece is equipped with a perpetual calendar feature that requires elaborate resetting.

In 1995, Charles Agnoff retired from the Interroll Corporation, a company he founded in 1968 that manufactured conveyor rollers and associated components. To commemorate his retirement, Agnoff's wife gave him a watch.

"Evelyn," he said, "bought me a gold Rolex President. I hated it. If I didn't wear it for a few days, it stopped."

When Evelyn Agnoff suggested that perhaps she should have bought her husband a quartz watch, the jeweler that sold her the watch explained, "Nobody buys a quartz Rolex. It has to be an automatic."

At some point Agnoff became aware of a possible solution to his timekeeping problem. "I learned," he explained, "that there was a gadget around that would wind an automatic watch. I saw one, it was about bread box sized, and would wind three watches."

The "gadget" that Agnoff described was an Italian made watch winder, a device that holds a watch (or watches) and moves it in a circular pattern that activates the self-winding mechanism.

Intrigued, Agnoff expressed interest, only to find that they were extremely expensive. When told that the price for this watch winder was \$5,000, Agnoff was taken aback. "It seemed too much for a box that slowly

rotates watches." At that point, Agnoff decided he would build his own winder.

Drawing on his background — Agnoff graduated from college with a B.S. in mechanical engineering — Agnoff built a prototype. "It was a drive I'd already created at Interroll for use in a conveyor roller — only miniaturizing it."

His first attempt worked, but it had several problems. "It worked fine mechanically," he says, "but a conveyor environment is not exactly a low noise environment, and that gearbox wasn't designed for low noise. There was a lot of metal rattling around."

Agnoff put his winder on the table next to his bed because he wanted to see if his watch was still running in the morning, but his wife complained that the box was keeping her awake.

He went back to the drawing board and after working out the kinks, Agnoff had 100 winders produced. He then put an advertisement in *The Robb Report*. Since he and his wife were scheduled to leave on a cruise, Agnoff left his daughter, Karen, in charge. Several days into the cruise, Agnoff got a phone call. "Karen said, 'Come home, all of the winders have been sold,'" he said, laughing.

Satisfied there was a market, Agnoff opened Orbita in 1997. The firm's headquarters and manufacturing facility are located in Wilmington, North Carolina. Orbita builds winders in a wide range of styles and models that can accommodate from one to forty watches. Most of the winders are fully programmable and operate on AC or batteries.

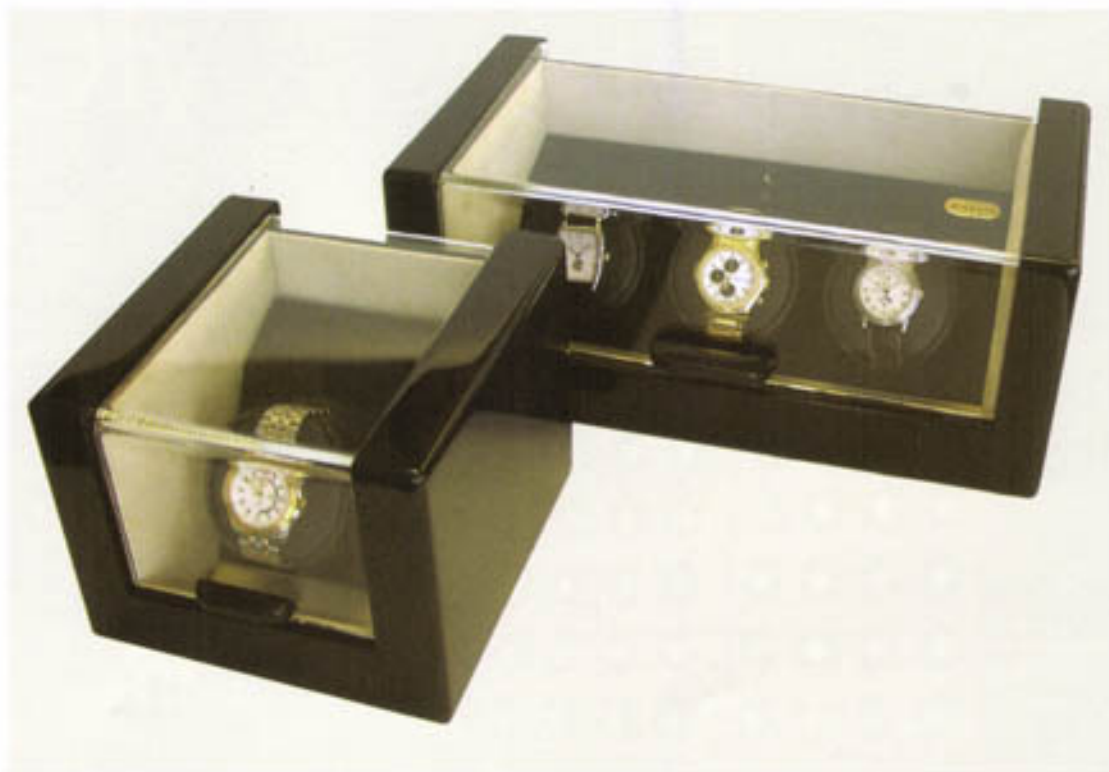
Agnoff is usually involved in designing new boxes, but he gets most of his ideas from consumer feedback. This usually occurs at either trade shows or through direct contact initiated by a customer.

Such is the case with Orbita Bergamo 24, a winder that houses and winds 24 watches. "We were in a show in Switzerland," Agnoff said, "and a Swiss guy came over and said, 'I have 700 Rolex watches' — he had one of every Rolex ever made. 'Can't you make a winder for a lot of watches?' he said, 'I can't buy winders in threes and fours.'"

Agnoff ended up contacting a company that makes grandfather clocks and curio cabinets which were about the right size for a multihead winder. They put him in touch with an Italian cabinet firm and the Bergamo 24 was a reality.

Today, Orbita's flagship model is the Bergamo 40, a winder for winding forty watches independently that made its debut at Basel 2004. Housed in an attractive cabinet, the piece of furniture provides no clue as to its function. A remote controlled motorized lift mechanism

Orbita's latest, the TICINO series, features a very contemporary case design with black piano finish and a lift-up acrylic viewing top and frosted cover. Padded cream suede lining.



raises or lowers the watch winder module for viewing and loading. The Bergamo 40 is available in Madrona Burl, Mahogany Parquet or Brazilian Rosewood.

Orbita has also commissioned several artists to create the Artisan Watch Winder series. Produced in limited editions of 100, each piece is serially numbered and signed by the artist. Stephen Schlanser's design utilizes his speciality, unusual art glass. Mark Rehmar's box is constructed from highly figured solid wood combined with rare burl veneers.

In the short time that the company has been producing watch winders, Orbita has established itself as one of the most recognized names in this specialized area. With a second factory opened in Europe in 2000, Orbita winders are now sold to watch collectors all over the world. If you would like more information, Orbita can be reached at 800-800-4436 or info@orbita.net.



Collectors will find the BERGAMO watchwinder to be the perfect solution for both displaying and "exercising" their watch collection. Designed to wind 12 or 24 automatic watches independently, this series combines old world Italian inlay craftsmanship with modern electronic design and engineering.