

FEATS OF THINNINGS

PIAGET'S ULTRA-THIN MOVEMENTS CONTINUE TO AMAZE



PIAGET BEGAN AS A SUPPLIER OF MOVEMENTS TO THE WATCH INDUSTRY. Ever since the company started making its own watches, however, Piaget has been determined to shave thickness from its movements, a fraction of a millimeter at a time, in amazing feats of horological engineering, and this determination has resulted in several world records for thinness.

Why go thin? One of the reasons is that not every maker has the capability to do so. It's difficult to produce thin movements that also perform well and are absolutely reliable. So Piaget makes thin watches partly because it can. There is no denying that the predominant trend in watches right now is toward bigness—42 mm is a popular case diameter, with some soaring to 50 mm or more, and case thickness of 15 mm is a common sight. These are visually impressive in their way, but a large watch is less of a challenge to design; there is more space available for every detail. Making everything thinner and smaller, on the other hand, now that's a watchmaking challenge.

Piaget Altiplano Anniversary Edition with 1200P automatic movement, flanked by rose gold and white gold versions of the Altiplano with 1208P automatic movement

But there's yet an even more compelling reason behind Piaget's pursuit of thinness. It is part of the DNA of Piaget, essential to its brand identity. "Whatever watch we make, the thinness has always been a key part of it. We are setting records, and we are very happy about this, but the key thing is that the technical developments are serving the design. Thin movements allow us to make extremely thin watches. The Altiplano, for example, is simple, elegant and very thin. Even the Piaget Polo FortyFive—compared to other watches in the same category, it is much thinner and much more elegant. Even when we are working in larger diameter movements, the watch remains extraordinarily thin," states Piaget CEO Philippe Léopold-Metzger.

"THIN IS OUR RELIGION."

—Philippe Léopold-Metzger

Piaget has a team of designers who work only on Piaget movements, and part of their mission is to make every piece and part as thin as possible without sacrificing the robust nature of the movement. "All of the parts in the movement are reduced to the smallest thickness possible," says Pierre Guerrier, product manager, Piaget. "Some wheels are only 0.12 mm, which is almost as fine as a single human hair. It's not easy to understand how difficult it is to make these parts." "It's relatively easy to develop thin bridges, for example, but we have to be sure of the reliability of every part,"



Philippe Léopold-Metzger, CEO of Piaget

Piaget Altiplano in white gold with 1208P automatic movement



Guerrier continues. "Sometimes we are obliged to make movement parts thicker, because, otherwise, they won't be strong enough to make the movement work. In the history of ultra-thin movements, many have been introduced and then disappear because they don't work."

power. When we were challenged with creating a small rotor for the new 1208P movement, we had to make it thicker, and the weight had to be towards the center. We did a special palladium gold composition to get the right density, and we increased the power reserve by two

ultra-thin watches; they enjoy the challenge. We had one watchmaker who left to go to work somewhere else, but he recently returned, because he prefers the difficulty."

Thin has always been "in" at Piaget, and the brand has no intention of changing course. "There is an ongoing debate about whether thin is coming back and whether elegance is coming back," says Léopold-Metzger, who seems to believe that

these trends are now less important than they once were. He says, "No one buys only one or two watches in a lifetime anymore, so I think it's great to have one watch that is thin, others that are thick, one watch that is elegant, another that is sporty. It's wonderful that we all have so many different choices when it comes to timepieces."

Whether Piaget watches can get any thinner than they already are is unclear, but there is no question that this maker will continue to explore the outer limits of thinness, and, most likely, continue to amaze us all. 877.8PIAGET, piaget.com

"EVEN WHEN WE ARE WORKING IN LARGER DIAMETER MOVEMENTS, THE WATCH REMAINS EXTRAORDINARILY THIN."

—Philippe Léopold-Metzger

Piaget has developed both remarkably thin manual-winding and incredibly thin automatic watches. "The automatic movement has all the additional parts of the winding system and the rotor, which makes it obviously thicker," Guerrier explains. "The challenge of ultra-thin automatic movements means keeping the rotor as thin as possible, but it still has to have enough weight for good winding

hours. This means that the 1208P is strong enough to support added complications; we can make it into a family of movements. We now have the possibility to break additional records."

Once a design is complete, production takes place in La Côte-aux-Fées, at a facility that is completely devoted to Piaget. Piaget human resources director Yves Bornand says, "The expert watchmakers here want the difficulty of working on

1957



Piaget caused a sensation in 1957 by introducing Caliber 9P, at 2 mm thick, the world's thinnest manual-winding movement.

1960

By 1960, Piaget was setting a new record with its 12P, at that time the thinnest self-winding movement at just 2.3 mm.



Building on the know-how acquired in the development of these two record-setting mechanisms, Piaget has explored ultra-thin complicated movements and succeeded in setting a new record with the 600P, the world's thinnest shaped-tourbillon movement at 3.5 mm.

In addition, Piaget engineers have managed to add complications such as a flyback chronograph, a dual time-zone function, a perpetual calendar and retrograde displays in the space of 5.6 or 5.65 mm (as in the 855P and the 880P).



2010

Honoring the 50th anniversary of 1960's Caliber 12P, Piaget this year presented the 1200P, the thinnest self-winding movement currently on the market.

