

EMBARGO UNTIL 4TH SEPTEMBER 13:00 GENEVA TIME

What lies behind the blue eyes of the “White Tiger”?

Promising technical innovations and an impressive design.

At first glance, Konstantin Chaykin’s new masterpiece “White Tiger” seems to fall into the “design first” category. That impression would hold true if one were to focus solely on the exterior and not turn the case over to examine the movement. The dial, decorated with two types of embossed guilloché, is dominated by striking blue eyes and – during daylight hours – a wide-open, fanged mouth. Inside the jaws appears a pictogram depicting one of the animals that these dangerous predators are known to hunt.

For anyone familiar with the Wristmons collection, it is easy to see that the “White Tiger” is essentially a reinterpretation of the 2022 “Smilodon” model, created to mark the Year of the Tiger in the traditional Chinese calendar. To a certain extent, that is true – yet this watch has a story of its own.

The “White Tiger” is a new addition to Konstantin Chaykin’s bestiary – a group of Wristmons featuring animal-inspired characters. As a rule, the master seeks to weave multiple layers of allusion into each design, and this unique creation is no exception.

On one level, it pays tribute to white tigers – exceptionally rare specimens of Bengal and Siberian tigers born with a genetic mutation. These animals lack the typical yellow-orange coat; instead, their fur remains white, patterned with black stripes. The irises of real white tigers are a piercing sky-blue, and it is precisely this shade that Chaykin chose for the eyes of the character’s indicators.

On another level, the White Tiger is a key figure in traditional Chinese astronomy and astrology. This mythological creature is regarded as the guardian of the West and the ruler of the Seven Mansions – a group of seven constellations along the ecliptic through which the Moon passes from the fifteenth to the twenty-first days of the lunar sidereal month. In Chinese philosophy, the White Tiger also symbolizes the color white, the element of metal, and the evening twilight as a time of day.

Konstantin Chaykin enriches the image of the White Tiger with meanings characteristic of the Wristmons universe. The fanged mouth closes around midnight, reopening at five in the morning to reveal a pictogram of prey. The animals correspond in number to the days of the week, changing one after another at midnight when the mouth is shut.

It is worth noting that the “White Tiger” (Báihǔ) is not a zodiac sign, whereas the “Zodiac Tiger” belongs to the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac (Shengxiao). These are two distinct symbolic systems that intersect only once within the 60-year cycle of the Chinese calendar. The most recent Years of the White Tiger were 1950 and 2010, with the next to come in 2070.

For the case of this new model, the creator chose titanium – a white metal. The design is further accentuated by the upper lugs shaped like the predator’s ears, while the lower lugs follow a more classical form. The crown is positioned at 6 o’clock – a component the owner will rarely need, as the new in-house caliber K.33-4 is equipped with a self-winding system.

A new in-house caliber with an integrated Joker-indication mechanism

In creating the “White Tiger” watch, Konstantin Chaykin set himself the task of modernizing the in-house caliber K.33-3 with its micro-rotor self-winding system. This movement had previously been used in the unique “Zebra” Wristmon, unveiled in February 2024.

The first step was to optimize the keyless works of the K.33-3 caliber in order to increase the efficiency of the self-winding system. In the industry-standard configuration, the winding transmission from the barrel wheel to the clutch of the setting lever yoke remains constantly engaged, disengaging only during hand-setting. This means that during automatic winding, all these wheels rotate, which in turn causes the winding pinion to spin idly. This idle motion generates additional energy loss, as it works against the tension of the setting lever spring.

In calibers with a central rotor, such losses are generally negligible, since the large rotor provides a high moment of inertia. In calibers with a micro-rotor, however, the inertia is lower and the energy losses become more noticeable. For this reason, Konstantin Chaykin decided to implement a more efficient keyless works system with a rocking bar in the new micro-rotor caliber. This solution not only reduces energy losses during automatic winding but also minimizes wear on the winding transmission wheels, as it disengages them from the barrel wheel during self-winding.

The second key feature of the K.33-4 caliber is its integrated Joker-indication construction. Since the release of the very first Wristmon (the “Joker” of 2017), with only rare exceptions, the movements of this collection have been designed according to a modular principle. In the case of the “White Tiger,” however, Chaykin employs an integrated construction within a self-winding movement. This means that no separate plate is used to accommodate the Joker-indication components; instead, recesses for them are built directly into the mainplate on the dial side.

In creating his own calibers, the master adheres to the principles of haute horlogerie. A world-renowned watchmaker and an active member of the Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants (AHCI), he has mastered the traditional techniques of fine movement finishing and has continued to refine them throughout his career. The decoration of the K.33-4 caliber involves an array of refined techniques, including graining, perlage, fine circular and straight brushing, hand-polished bevels, engraved inscriptions, polished countersinks for screws, pins and jewels, flat-polished screw heads, spherical polishing of pivots, circular graining and gilding of the gear train wheels, as well as rhodium galvanic plating of the mainplate and bridges. Together, these elements transform each mechanical caliber into a true work of haute horlogerie.

The design of the movement also bears the unmistakable signature of the master, whose stylistic foundations were established 17 years ago with the debut of his first base caliber, the hand-wound K.01. In particular, fine adjustment of the active length of the hairspring is performed by Chaykin’s signature “Pac-Man” index regulator, with its eccentric screw with clamp shaped like the Pac-Man video game character that gained worldwide popularity in the 1980s.

White Tiger Piece Unique Technical Specifications

Caliber: K.33-4 with micro-rotor self-winding system, fully conceived, designed, and manufactured in-house by the Konstantin Chaykin Manufacture

Micro-rotor: Heavy tungsten alloy WNZh 65

Movement dimensions: Diameter 33.2 mm, thickness 8.1 mm

Escapement: Swiss lever

Balance frequency: 21,600 vibrations per hour

Power reserve: 42 hours

Jewels: 40

Functions: Joker-indication with disc indicators for hours and minutes, day of the week, and “Tiger Time”

Case: Titanium

Case dimensions: Diameter 42 mm, thickness 13 mm

Crystal: Sapphire crystal with anti-reflective coating, diameter 34.5 mm

Number of case components: 36

Caseback: Titanium with sapphire window

Dial finish: Embossed guilloché decoration in two patterns, multi-layer lacquer coating

Number of dial components: 18

Strap: Exclusive, crafted from high-quality leather

Buckle: Konstantin Chaykin Manufacture, classic, titanium