

Maxwell Hazan: creator of one-off, custom motorbikes

Working on his own, American artist Maxwell Hazan crafts magnificent, one-of-a-kind motorbikes – each creation the uncompromising result of 6 to 8 months of intense manual craftsmanship. The MB&F M.A.D.Gallery is proud to showcase the latest two to come out of the Hazan Motorworks atelier in Brooklyn: the Royal Enfield and Harley Davidson Ironhead.

Retro styling, subtle frosted effects and a hint of patina endow these wonders with a vintage look, while unconventional components – a tractor headlight and even kitchen utensils – play precise roles within the overall architecture. The mechanical complexity of the visible engines contrasts with the clean design lines, further enhancing the creative tension.

The starting point for each of the New Yorker's unique motorbikes is the engine. Hazan begins by finding a motor that he considers aesthetically pleasing and then builds around that.

"I love to build from scratch, although it entails a lot of menial work and time," he says. "It allows me to build without compromising the design: Every piece goes exactly where and how you want it. You can create something really unique and clean."

And the exceptional machines Hazan creates can – and often do – contain whatever catches his eye. *"I don't rule anything out," he says. "Everything is handmade from whatever I can find, or from bare steel. I've even used shot glasses for lens covers and made a tail light out of an ice cream scoop."*

Hazan's career creating motorbikes began by accident, quite literally. After a motocross misadventure, he was forced to recuperate on his couch for three months, in which time the Psychology graduate spent hours each day staring at the beach cruiser bicycle he kept in his living room. He contemplated adding an engine to it, which he eventually did, but soon decided that motorbikes would be his preferred medium.

"A motorcycle says just enough," believes Hazan, who modified a few bikes as a passionate amateur before going pro in 2012. *"Cars are beautiful but it's probably more than I need to actually express what I want to express."*

Hazan's Royal Enfield

Hazan fell in love with the Royal Enfield motor when he saw a photo of an Enfield that his sister had rented in India. Two years ago, he decided to buy a 1996 Royal Enfield motor and began six months of solid work on it. *"This was the first time that I built everything from scratch,"* he says. *"Every lever, linkage, cable... each part was made to be seen."*

Hazan's tribute to the Enfield puts the spotlight most definitely on this engine, the beating heart, accompanied by a double cam system with bronze chains. The front wheel of the bike boasts an impressive drum-braking system; the handlebars above bear metallic grips.

The silvered components of the frame and engine gently contrast with the ruddy patina of the fuel tank and rich brown tones of the über graceful, hand-carved wooden seat floating over the plump back tyre. The seat is inspired by the design of vintage Italian speedboats, and Hazan completely refinished it three times to compensate for the expansion and contraction of the wood.

Hazan's Harley Davidson Ironhead

Hazan's Ironhead is just as spectacular, featuring an innovative front suspension with horizontal shock absorber. *"With every bike, I try to make a suspension set-up that I have never seen before,"* says Hazan.

Ironhead motors had long held a special place in his heart before he finally began work on his own last year. *"I always loved the heads on the Harley 1000s,"* he acknowledges. *"So I bought an '81 with the idea of running two front heads and dual carbs."*

Hazan's Ironhead boasts a rare elegance for a motorcycle. While the engine is a joy to behold, the fuel tank also steals some of its thunder. *"There are infinite ways to make a functional part but they also have to be*

For more information, please contact:

Juliette Duru, MB&F SA, Rue Verdaine 11, CH-1204 Genève, Switzerland

Email: jd@mbandf.com Tel: +41 22 508 10 36

aesthetically pleasing,” says Hazan. “I had to make the Harley’s fuel tank four times until I felt it looked right; each time I made it slightly smaller than the previous attempt.”

It was worth the effort. With the tank’s silvered finish and curvaceous, tapered form, it resembles a leaping salmon and fits seamlessly into the general frame. The frame’s visible weld-joints only add to the bike’s charms.

The trick, apparently, for creating these mechanico-artistic gems, is for Hazan to constantly force himself to step out of his comfort zone.

“If you identify with something you’re good at, you tend to keep doing the same thing,” he says. “So I really take ego out of it, I try and push myself to do something different each time, which forces me to look at everything around me and to come up with something that is aesthetically pleasing but new at the same time. I find that I develop the skills as I need them for each project, though it can be frustrating doing everything for the first time, every time!”

In the short period that Hazan has been dedicating himself full-time to custom motorbike creation, his work has garnered a keen following. In fact, his first customer was none other than Austrian daredevil Felix Baumgartner – the man who fell to earth from space – and as it turns out, the man who couldn’t help falling for one of Max Hazan’s hand-built motorbikes. And who can blame him?

Maxwell Hazan background

Maxwell Hazan was born in New York in 1981. In his youth, he spent a lot of time in his father’s Long Island workshop *“taking things apart and putting them back together”* as well as riding motorbikes.

Hazan says: *“I honestly can’t remember a time in my life where I have not been designing or building something. I was fortunate to have parents who appreciated beautiful things and encouraged my love to experiment with them. As I matured, my design challenges became increasingly complex, from airplanes and composite sailboats to vintage cars... and of course custom motorcycles.”*

After graduating with a Psychology degree, Hazan first carved out a successful, yet personally unrewarding, career as a designer, before deciding to quit and make a living from his passion: Building exquisitely beautiful motorbikes. *“My heart wasn’t in my day job and it was a lot of work,”* he says. *“So I took a pay cut to do something I actually like.”*

Hazan set up Hazan Motors in 2012 and began crafting his hand-made motorised art out of his Brooklyn workshop; he has now built four bikes as a pro. The latest two – on show at the M.A.D. Gallery – are the first ones he has built entirely from scratch, fabricating everything himself except the engines.

The 33-year-old actually enjoys building motorcycles more than either owning or riding them and says that he is never short of inspiration: *“It could be from a kid’s toy or from a plant or animal. Anything can spark an idea, I just try to keep my eyes and mind open.”*