

Mahmood Qannati Pioneers First Watchmaking Course in Bahrain, Creating Middle East's New Horological Hub

From Banking Executive to Watchmaking Visionary: How Qannati is Creating Bahrain's Timekeeping Legacy

AL MANAMA, BAHRAIN, April 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bahrain is establishing itself as an emerging centre for horological excellence in the Middle East through a groundbreaking educational initiative led by entrepreneur and watch designer Mahmood Qannati in partnership with Bahrain Polytechnic.



The first-ever undergraduate watchmaking course in Bahrain launched in February 2025, with Mr. Qannati delivering the inaugural lecture on the fundamentals of watchmaking. Through May, approximately two dozen students are receiving comprehensive training in various aspects of watchmaking, from history and assembly to marketing and design.

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Mahmood Qannati, Founder of Qannati Objet d'Art

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Mahmood Qannati is not only a marketing executive at a Bahraini bank but also the founder of Qannati Objet d'Art, established in 2019. The brand specializes in one-of-a-kind métiers d'art watches featuring intricate dials and sculpted

details crafted from precious materials. These high-end timepieces, powered by Swiss movements and crafted in France, have gained international recognition since their debut in 2022, with clients ranging from Palm Beach to Hong Kong.

In 2024, Mr. Qannati expanded his vision to develop local watchmaking expertise in Bahrain. "I thought about producing a collection here in Manama," he explained. "But the question was how can I do that and help Bahraini society at the same time. That is why I decided to invest in educating our first generation of watch professionals."

Bahrain Polytechnic has partnered with Mr. Qannati to create a fully functional watchmaking workshop that serves as both classroom and production facility. In exchange for teaching the course, Mr. Qannati is permitted to use the space outside class hours to produce his Lab Edition watches - the brand's first generation of métiers d'art timepieces assembled in Bahrain.

"The collaboration with Qannati has opened avenues for students to delve into innovative business concepts that might otherwise be unattainable," said Ciarán Ó. Catháin, chief executive of Bahrain Polytechnic.

The Lab Edition watches represent a more accessible entry point to the Qannati brand while maintaining its artistic identity. Priced at \$2,000 (compared to six-figure prices for the higher-end pieces), these watches feature stainless steel construction, Swiss automatic Sellita SW100 movements, two case options (41mm round or 44mm tonneau), rubber straps, and a unique space above the dial for bespoke 3D-printed sculptures designed using AI technology. Since the collection's launch in November, Mr. Qannati has sold 102 pieces through online channels and trade fairs.

The comprehensive watchmaking course covers the evolution of watch movements, comparative study of quartz and mechanical mechanisms, watch design and modelling, precision assembly and customization, luxury branding, AI-assisted design, and watch photography and digital presentation.

The student body is diverse, with half being women, and includes individuals from various educational backgrounds, particularly engineering. "Everyone here is interested in watches," said Muhannad Alqassab, a 22-year-old senior majoring in web media studies. "Some dream of owning a watch brand."

For hands-on training, Mr. Qannati has enlisted Pierre Christe, a veteran Swiss watchmaker and instructor with 30 years of teaching experience at Bulgari. Mr. Christe will guide students in assembling mechanical movements from the Swiss company ETA. "We will do things properly, the Swiss way," he emphasized. "It won't be tinkering."

Looking ahead, Mr. Qannati plans to expand this educational model beyond Bahrain to other countries in the region. "Being in the lab has become the most enjoyable part of my day," he said. "We are creating Bahrain's new generation of watch entrepreneurs."

This initiative comes at a time when the Middle East represents a significant market for luxury timepieces. Last year, exports of Swiss watches to the region were valued at 3.8 billion francs (\$4.3 billion), marking a 622 percent increase over 25 years, according to the Swiss watch

federation.

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