# Shona Taine becomes youngest and first female AHCI member, reshaping watchmaking tradition



# Shona Taine: A Trailblazer in the World of Watchmaking

In the traditional narrative of watchmaking, the image often conjured is that of a master craftsman, often older and male, working meticulously at a timeworn bench. This perception has been entrenched particularly in elite circles, such as the Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants (AHCI), an esteemed organisation established in 1985 and currently housing just 37 members—each male, with an average age of 59. However, this stereotype began to shatter on April 6, 2024, when Shona Taine, a 27-year-old French watchmaker, made history by becoming the youngest and first female member of the AHCI.

Taine's journey to this significant milestone began with her debut creation, the Khemea, which attracted the attention of leading figures in horology even when it remained a work-in-progress. The inspiration for her interest in timepieces ignited during a childhood visit to Prague, where the city's famous astronomical clock captivated her. Enrolment in the local watchmaking school at Morteau at age 15 marked the start of a rigorous six-year programme, which remarkably only saw 15 students graduate from an initial cohort of 45.

Reflecting on her early aspirations, she noted, “I had wanted to study philosophy and literature, but it wasn’t work with my hands… I wanted to have a true profession.” This longing for tangible, creative engagement ultimately led her to forge her unique path in the male-dominated world. After completing her studies, Taine found herself in the service segment of the industry, repairing Ebel chronograph watches, a role she quickly deemed monotonous. "The only way to do that was to create my own watch," she stated, prompting her to set up her own company, Khemea, just before her 22nd birthday.

With relentless determination, Taine took on any available watchmaking work to sustain herself while seeking mentorship from established craftsmen. Her pursuit of excellence found her in the atelier of Olivier Mory, where she honed her skills and completed the Khemea. This feature-rich watch boasts a modified tourbillon, moonphase display, calendar, and a generous 100-hour power reserve, compelling elements that garnered attention and acclaim.

David Candaux, a fellow AHCI member who nominated her for membership, praised Taine's innovative spirit, stating, “What impresses me most about Shona’s creations is her ability to merge tradition and innovation.” Her design philosophy seamlessly blends classic horological techniques with modern, organic forms inspired by nature, employing floral and fluid motifs across her creations.

Despite growing interest from investors, Taine has optively declined offers that might jeopardise her creative vision. Her commitment to independent growth aligns with her ethos of maintaining balance in her personal and professional life. Speaking candidly about her financial approach, she mentioned, "I self-financed through subcontracting work," highlighting the support of family and friends who believed in her craft.

In addition to running her burgeoning business, Taine now plays a vital role as an educator at her alma mater, inspiring a new generation of watchmakers. The gender dynamics within the industry are shifting as well; Taine noted, "When I was a student, there were only two girls in the class. Now it’s fifty-fifty." This change reflects a broader cultural transformation within the craft, where female representation is gradually increasing.

Taine's story resonates not just as a personal triumph but as an emblem of progress within the watch industry. Her influence extends beyond her innovative designs; she has become a beacon for aspiring female watchmakers. “I receive a lot of messages from girls studying watchmaking,” she shared, “saying it’s incredible what you’re doing, thank you, you’re the only example we have.”

As Taine continues to push the boundaries of watch design while cultivating inclusivity in the field, her ascent signifies a hopeful evolution in an industry long defined by tradition, reinforcing that the future of horology may be as bright as it is diverse.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.ft.com/content/9206333b-0c90-4010-a4d7-62a1cc37af12), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acad%C3%A9mie_Horlog%C3%A8re_des_Cr%C3%A9ateurs_Ind%C3%A9pendants)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.ft.com/content/9206333b-0c90-4010-a4d7-62a1cc37af12), [[5]](https://www.europastar.com/the-watch-files/independent-watchmakers/1004113270-shona-taine-that-s-what-i-want-to-do.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.watchonista.com/articles/opinions/future-classics-top-five-new-releases-watches-and-wonders-2024), [[6]](https://www.ganoksin.com/article/ahci-tinkerers-club/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ft.com/content/9206333b-0c90-4010-a4d7-62a1cc37af12> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/9206333b-0c90-4010-a4d7-62a1cc37af12> - Shona Taine, a 27-year-old French watchmaker, has made history as the youngest and first female member of the prestigious Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants (AHCI), an elite group traditionally dominated by older male craftsmen. Taine's debut creation, the Khemea, a feature-rich watch with a modified tourbillon, moonphase display, calendar, and 100-hour power reserve, captured the attention of top watchmakers even before its completion. Inspired by Prague’s astronomical clock and trained at Morteau’s watchmaking school, she carved her path by establishing her own company at 22. Working in renowned ateliers like Olivier Mory’s, she continuously sought to improve her craft. Her innovative merging of traditional techniques with organic, nature-inspired designs has earned her acclaim and growing investor interest, which she has declined to maintain creative control and steady growth. Now also a watchmaking teacher, Taine is a rising figure in horology and an inspiration to aspiring female watchmakers, reflecting a shifting gender balance in the industry. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/9206333b-0c90-4010-a4d7-62a1cc37af12?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.watchonista.com/articles/opinions/future-classics-top-five-new-releases-watches-and-wonders-2024> - At the Watches and Wonders 2024 event, 26-year-old independent watchmaker Shona Taine introduced her first creation, the Khemea. This timepiece features a tourbillon with a moonphase and date indication on the dial, along with a power reserve indicator on the movement. The novel date display consists of 31 holes, with one hole highlighted to indicate the current date. The prototype, crafted in a white gold case with an anthracite dial, was worn by Taine for a year during its development. The first limited edition of 12 pieces is set to be delivered this summer, followed by another 12-piece limited edition in a rose gold case with a white guilloché dial. ([watchonista.com](https://www.watchonista.com/articles/opinions/future-classics-top-five-new-releases-watches-and-wonders-2024?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acad%C3%A9mie_Horlog%C3%A8re_des_Cr%C3%A9ateurs_Ind%C3%A9pendants> - The Académie Horlogère des Créateurs Indépendants (AHCI) is a non-profit association founded in 1985 by Svend Andersen and Vincent Calabrese under Swiss civil law. Its mission is to perpetuate the art of independent watch- and clock-making. The AHCI is based in Zürich and is an international institution with 34 members, 7 honorary members, and 6 candidates from over 12 countries. Membership is subject to strict standards and excellent skills, with members being selected from among the independent watchmakers worldwide. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acad%C3%A9mie_Horlog%C3%A8re_des_Cr%C3%A9ateurs_Ind%C3%A9pendants?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.europastar.com/the-watch-files/independent-watchmakers/1004113270-shona-taine-that-s-what-i-want-to-do.html> - At just 25, Shona Taine has already accrued impressive technical skills and a well-rounded vision of watchmaking, fueled by daily practice and a sound general knowledge of history, philosophy, and literature. Inspired by a childhood visit to Prague, where she became fascinated by the city's famous astronomical clock, Taine enrolled in the nearby watchmaking school in Morteau at age 15, beginning a six-year course comprising three ... . After graduation, she worked in a service workshop, repairing ... , but found it monotonous and sought to create her own watch. At 22, she established her own company, Khemea, and created her debut watch, the Arkhea, which features a tourbillon, moon phases, date, and a 100-hour power ... . The Arkhea watch combines elements of traditional watch design ... , inspired by nature. ([europastar.com](https://www.europastar.com/the-watch-files/independent-watchmakers/1004113270-shona-taine-that-s-what-i-want-to-do.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.ganoksin.com/article/ahci-tinkerers-club/> - The Académie Horlogère des ... ) is a collective of the most creative and best watchmakers who have joined forces to perpetuate the art of independent watchmaking. Founded in 1985 by Svend Andersen and Vincent Calabrese, the AHCI is based in Zürich and is an international institution with 34 members, 7 honorary members, and 6 candidates from over 12 countries. The members of the AHCI are known for their innovative and unique timepieces, constantly reinventing the watch in their studios with unusual displays, indicators never seen before, and miniaturized watch movements. ([ganoksin.com](https://www.ganoksin.com/article/ahci-tinkerers-club/?utm_source=openai))