

A Legacy for the Future:

ARISTO ME 262

The pioneers of motorized flight, the Wright Brothers and Charles Lindbergh, lived in the United States of America. But the world's first usable jet aircraft, the ME 262, was a development of German aircraft builder Professor Dr. Willi Messerschmitt (1898-1978). Bavarian Motor Works, better known as BMW, had made a jet power unit for serial production and gave Messerschmitt the task of building an airplane to accompany the engine. One thousand thirty-three pieces of this revolutionary flying apparatus left Messerschmitt's workshops starting in 1942.

It's not only its revolutionary engine that makes the ME 262 a classic yet today in aviation technology. Messerschmitt's engineers created a design of lightness, harmony, and individuality – a design that today is still greatly admired and remains difficult to top. “Beautiful” may not be the appropriate word to describe a mechanism of war, but it is one that certainly applies to the ME 262. Used as a reconnaissance plane, a fighter, and a bomber, the ME 262 was always utilized in new variations toward the end of World War II; in the face of the allied dominance of the skies, however, these jets no longer played an important military role.

At the end of the war the Allies' interest in the ME 262 was great, for at a top speed of more than 870 km/h, it was the fastest airplane of its time. The Americans, the English, and the Russians each secured several flyable pieces for themselves, integrating the ME 262 into their own air forces or using them as schooling aircraft. In Czechoslovakia a production workshop was even founded where ten ME 262s were made just after the war ended (their Czech reference was S-92 and DS-92). If one adds these airplanes to the genre, today there are still ten original ME 262s in existence – four of which are in the U.S.A., two in the Czech Republic, and one each in Germany, Great Britain, Australia, and South Africa.

Today, the ME 262 can be attributed to our global technical legacy, continuing to give wings to the imaginations of aviation enthusiasts all over the world. One of these enthusiasts is watch designer Hansjörg Vollmer from Pforzheim, whose traditional company Aristo is one of the world's leading manufacturers of pilot's watches. Authorized by the Messerschmitt Foundation, which manages the aviation professor's legacy, the Pforzheim firm developed a wristwatch that justifiably bears the model description ME 262.

The Aristo ME 262 premiered at Baselworld 2003. The striking stainless steel watch case of 44 mm diameter is water-resistant to 50 m. It is additionally outfitted with a 10 mm *oignon*-style crown and a riveted leather strap. The screwed-down case back is transparent. Each and every piece is serially numbered. This watch is powered by a finely adjusted Aristo signature movement (based on the ETA 2824-2) with a decorated automatic rotor.

The four models of the Aristo 262 series available until now were dubbed according to the epochal jets that can still be admired by aviation enthusiasts. The Aristo 3H-262-X outfitted with a black vintage-style pilot's dial, the yellow Aristo 3H-262-7, and the white Aristo 3H-262-3 are named for the code markings of the planes still in existence.

Surrounded by legend is the two-seater ME 262 jet that Willi Messerschmitt himself had sketched in 1972. In the meantime, this plane has actually been built in the U.S. and bears the markings TT, which is how the words Tango Tango are abbreviated in pilot radio language. As an homage to this historical aviation specialty, Hansjörg Vollmer conceived the Aristo ME 262 Tango Tango.

The flagship model in Aristo's 262 line retains all of the technical features that the other watches of this series are also outfitted with. The Aristo ME Tango Tango's upgraded element is certainly to be found in the milanais bracelet made of fine stainless steel mesh that is produced according to a classic Milanese manufacturing process of the highest quality.

All four Aristo 262 models have the same price: € 690 (suggested retail price as of December 2005). The ME 262's replica costs quite a bit more: \$2,000,000 is the asking price determined by the manufacturer of the replica of the mother of all private jets, with engines and instruments incurring a surcharge. The Aristo ME 262 edition is however all-inclusive, and the Tango Tango model even comes with the precious Milanais stainless steel bracelet.