



Yves “FusionMan” Rossy: passion has wings

“When I grow up, I’m going to be pilots. With an S”. A profession of faith made as a child that was instilled in Yves Rossy the day he found himself on the branch of a tree unable to get down unaided. Today, he has become FusionMan, the first man in the world to attach jet engines to a single wing and fly like Icarus. His story.

Yves Rossy was born on the 27 of August 1959 in Neuchâtel (Switzerland). With his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground, Yves Rossy followed a technical apprenticeship and then graduated in engineering. An accomplished sportsman, his past and present pastimes include surfing, water-skiing, wakeboarding, skysurfing, parachuting, aerobatics, motorbike riding, rafting and hang-gliding, to name but a few. Flying under a jet wing is the culmination of a 30 year career interspersed with exploits and firsts.

Fighter pilot

Discovering the Mirage III supersonic fighter plane was certainly one of the high points of Yves Rossy’s career. He flew the aircraft for 15 years while at the same time piloting historic aircraft such as the Hunter and the Venom, one of England’s earliest jet fighters. In 1991 the idea arose to complete a multi-activity tour of Switzerland in a single day. On 3 July that year he began the day at the controls of a DC-9 and completed the challenge by riding a motorbike, snowboarding, skiing, mountaineering, paragliding, mountain biking, bungee-jumping, flying a helicopter, skydiving and white water rafting, followed by kayaking, driving a racing car, hang-gliding, horse riding, running barefoot, water-skiing, wakeboarding and piloting a speed boat. Not a bad day’s work!

Today retired from the Air Force, he continues to fly the Hunter two-seater owned by the Amici del Hunter association. Currently a Swiss airlines pilot, he devotes all his free time to his passion. Since February 2007, he has been supported by Jean-Claude Biver, the boss of Hublot watches.

A taste for the unusual

Treading the beaten track is something for others to do; for Yves Rossy, it's not an option. He decided to devote all of his spare time to flying in the purest sense.

Yves Rossy carried out more and more tests using equipment developed on a trial and error basis: an inflatable wing which carried him over the 12 kilometres separating the Swiss and French banks of Lake Geneva, a paraglider and a surf board that sent him skimming through Geneva's water fountain before spectacularly grabbing the handle of a water skier, and a skydiving adventure on a disc "above" the Matterhorn in an image that appears in the book "Cervin, Top model des Alpes". But Yves Rossy's dream goes far beyond these exploits. He wants to fly like a bird, with a minimum of instruments but with the power to steer himself in space. The idea came to him to power a wing using scaled down jet engines.

The jet wing

It was in March 2003 that the first jet engine was ignited at altitude, on the Allalin glacier in Saas Fee, then on board an aircraft. The German company Jet-Cat supplied the engines which were initially attached to an inflatable wing. This method failed because of insufficient rigidity. In 2004 Yves Rossy developed a rigid deployable carbon wing manufactured by ACT Composites. The early days were difficult. At the Al-Aïn air show – probably the world's largest event of its kind – he went into a spin, released the wing and tore his parachute. The craft was partially destroyed. The pilot worked on improving the wing deployment system and the aerodynamics of the wing tips to improve its stability. In 2005, he completed two successful flights under a wing fitted with two jet engines. A month later, he risked death again as uncontrollable oscillations forced him to release the wing which crashed to the ground. A long year of hard work and the addition of two additional jet engines were needed for the wing to attain the required level of performance and safety. This was the flight of November 2006, in Bex, a waking dream lasting 5 minutes and 40 seconds.

Since then, Yves Rossy has been training constantly in order to optimise his wing. In April 2007, during a test flight, Yves was again forced to jettison his prototype. Seriously damaged, the wing took several months to repair. Yves Rossy then decided to build a new, more reliable and efficient prototype. Since 2008, his wings have been perfected further to enhance his flying enjoyment.

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