



RING IN THE GOOD TIMES

Eszter Faykiss reports exclusively for Signature from Baselworld 2012



The writer is a Certified Diamond Grader from HRD Antwerp and has a passion for all things that sparkle. She also has more than 8 years of marketing, communication and event experience in various industries, mainly energy and IT sector and jewellery business, in different regions; Europe, Australia and Middle East.

There are different stereotypes of Swiss people. Probably not all of them are valid, but what I can tell from experience is that time matters to them more than to the sons and daughters of any other nation. Have you seen a train being late in Switzerland? Or Swiss people not arriving to a meeting on time? They are rather five minutes early than one minute late and they also consider it a matter of honour that they pay bills on time. Blessed by the talent for precision and punctuality it is no wonder that Swiss watchmakers have supplied the majority of watches to the world for centuries. Manufacturers from the banks of Lake Genève and Lake Neuchâtel have become the synonyms of quality, inimitable design and perfect reliability, raising the entire Swiss watchmaking industry to the heights of today.

The history of watch and jewellery exhibitions in the region dates back to 1917, when the first Schweizer Mustermesse Basel was held. In 2012, the one week show of BASELWORLD attracted more than 100,000 visitors, 1815 exhibitors on 160,000 m² and over 3,300 journalists describing clearly the largest and most prestigious event of the kind world-wide. This is the week that all exhibitors have prepared for in the past year, the week that echoes the announcements of novelties in the world, the week that entices the lovers of watches and jewellery to Basel and that the whole industry has sharpened its nerves for. This is the week that defines the trends for the next twelve months.



PROMISING PERSPECTIVES

"Since last we met here almost 12 months ago, the world economic situation has continued to deteriorate." – started his opening speech Jacques J. Duchêne, Chairman of the Exhibitors' Committee. "In this severely battered world, which is going through radical reshaping, there is, however, one industry that has been able to stand up well and even to break numerous records."

Indeed. The exports of Swiss watchmaking sector reached a record 19.3 billion francs (RO. 8.1 billion) in 2011, soaring 19.2 per cent from a year earlier. Over 10 billion francs is accounted for the Middle East and the Far East alone.

The fair occupied six massive buildings embodying numerous halls, most of which were dedicated to watches, some to jewellery and others to gemstones and related tools. Companies

endeavoured to capture the attention by building more impressive, more extravagant and impeccable multi-level constructions, and opened dedicated floors to the public and restricted areas for people with appointment and for buyers.

BASELWORLD brought novelties. Some of them are really new concepts, others repolish a design from the past. The one week is just enough to see them.

VISIBLE TRENDS IN 2012

"Haute horlogerie goes on a diet: extra-slim timepieces have again a grand entrance in 2012" – as BASELWORLD news described. For the master watchmakers is always a challenge to reduce the thickness of the movement while preserve the accuracy. This year, watches thinner than 1cm, offering a light and comfortable fit started to emerge. Dedicated to the memory of Louis-Ulysse Chopard, the luxury house

has come out with two pieces with ultra-thin movements. The cases of Chopard L.U.C XP Skeletec and L.U.C XPS - Poinçon de Genève 125th Anniversary Edition are less than 8mm thick with incredible 3.5mm thin movements.

Among its many complications Blancpain also created an ultra slim movement achieving a remarkable balance: the Villeret collection is the perfect mixture of technical refinement and aesthetic purity. The classical design of the Slim Line collection by Frédérique Constant is elegant and timeless, embodied in a 9mm case.

China being the largest and growing market for the sector, the Year of Dragon has inspired many watch companies from different categories. Swatch made a blue-white version for the young generation, Swarovski glitters with The Piazza Grande Automatic Dragon Limited Edition and if one aims to have a more minimalistic version, the Danish Skagen Dragon Watches Collection delivers just that.

Jaquet Droz and Glashütte Original elevated the topic to an artistic level. The Petite Heure Minute Relief Dragon from Jaquet Droz with sumptuous materials, realistic decorative motifs and virtuoso technical features present the dragon, that legendary creature whose magic pearl symbolises the power and wisdom of the Emperor. Glashütte, German manufactory has created eight unique timepieces based on the classic Original Senator Meissen Tourbillon, each featuring a Meissen porcelain dial with a beautifully hand-painted Chinese dragon. The ornamental dragons rendered in a ceramic paint are made of pure gold dust.

Dragon as a motive is pretty popular not only on watches, but also on other lifestyle objects. Luxury mobile phone company, Vertu came out earlier with special Signature Dragon Edition, while Caran d'Ache introduced the "Year of the Dragon" Limited Edition pens. This latest addition to the Artist Collection is a genuine tribute to the refinement .of Asia, the richness of Chinese culture and the extraordinary graphics of the Zodiac. It is a magnificent demonstration of Swiss expertise by the masters of lacquering running symbolic colours of black, red and gold along the classic pen lines.

Last year the global demand for platinum jewellery increased by 2 per cent to 2.47 million ounces, according to the Johnson Matthey Platinum interim report. Platinum played a great role in Basel, too. BASELWORLD 2012 hosted the 3rd Platinum Design Awards competition organized by Platinum Guild International. Although this metal is extremely rare and requires special tools, and knowledge



to work with, more than 50 stunning platinum jewellery designs were displayed at the 26 participating manufacturer's booths. The jury of 50 international journalists rewarded the most significant pieces in four categories.

Tendencies can be observed amongst the precious stones, too. In the Hall of Elements many beautiful gemstones were displayed. Colombian emeralds, colourful sapphires, deep blue tanzanites, "Siamese colour" rubies were seen often. Diamonds, of course, continued to dominate, however it was interesting to see the strong presence of the pretty rare pink ones. Pearls continued to be one of the most demanded gemstones. Bernd Willy Ripp, managing director of Groh + Ripp, sums up this year's fair as follows: "After a highly successful show in 2011 we were able to boost the good result we obtained by a further 25 per cent this time round. The quality of the visitors was exceedingly good. The other precious-stone dealers are similarly highly satisfied."

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2013

The building work on the impressive new hall complex which is to be brought into operation for BASELWORLD 2013 is progressing on schedule. The central section of the new building is already standing; Baselworld team has a clear goal: serve the industry at the most professional level.

François Thiébaud, Chairman of the Swiss Exhibitors' Committee, described BASELWORLD as a complete success: "The 2012 edition has confirmed the success of this unique platform, which brings together the watch and jewellery industry from all over the world. The positive results of the past two years allow us to look into the future full of optimism: we are reckoning with an excellent start to the new BASELWORLD 2013."

SEE YOU THERE 

A subjective guide to Basel

Basel is probably not an evident traveling destination when you think of Switzerland, however Basel is a city which has a lot to offer: culture, culinary experiences, luxury shopping to the highest perfection with a charming location along the River Rhine. The city is very well organised, clean and easy to access. You can travel here for business, sightseeing or even for your honeymoon, you will certainly find what you are looking for – something extraordinary.

Let us offer you a taster to Basel:

What to see?

Old town: The first written sources of Basel (Basilea) date back to 374 AD. Basel's Old Town is one of the best-preserved and most beautiful in Europe, where buildings from the 15th century are living in contrast, but in clear harmony with modern works of internationally renowned architects.

The **Basel Münster** cathedral is one of the main landmarks of Basel. It defines the cityscape with its red sandstone architecture and coloured roof tiles, its two slim towers and the cross-shaped intersection of the main roof. Originally as a Catholic cathedral it was built between 1019 and 1500 in Romanesque and Gothic styles. Today is a reformed Protestant church.

Museums: Basel has very rich cultural and art life. As a veritable arts center, Basel is home to numerous museums and galleries. The Kunstmuseum Basel is the oldest museum in Switzerland. The Kunstmuseum also possesses a world-famous collection of the Classical Modern period, such as works of cubism (Picasso, Braque, Léger), German Expressionism, and the American art since 1950 (Newman, Warhol, Nauman).

It is well worth to visit the Kunstmuseum this summer. From 01.04.2012 to 05.08.2012 in a grand survey exhibition you can see „Auguste Renoir. Between Bohemia and Bourgeoisie: The Early Years.“ www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch

Insider tip: The world's premier international art show for Modern and contemporary works, Art Basel features nearly 300 leading galleries from North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Art 43 Basel takes place June 14 – 17, 2012.

Where to stay?

Located in the Old Town of Basel in a unique riverside position, Hotel Les Trois Rois is one of Europe's oldest city hotels, where already Napoleon, Elizabeth II, Pablo Picasso, Thomas Mann and many other famous people have stayed. The hotel still maintains its prestigious status among the grandest of Europe being in the cultural hub of Switzerland and due its easy proximity to the idyllic Alpine heart of the old continent.

Hotel Les Trois Rois hotel is Swiss hôtellerie at it's best. One can only find this exceptionally personalized recognition in these Swiss traditional places that makes all the difference. Everything is done to perfection making this hotel truly fitting for kings.

Where to eat?

The region of Basel has many excellent restaurants in every category and style. For a real creative cuisine try Stucki. This restaurant is located a little outside of Basel in a smart mansion with a stylish interior. "Aroma Kitchen" is what Tanja Grandits calls her culinary philosophy and the Gault Millau honoured Chef cooks with a vibrant array of colours to enhance the flavour of her dishes. www.stuckibasel.ch

Since you are in Switzerland you deserve the sweet treats of real chocolate offered by the small shops on every corner. If you are looking for a local cake speciality, try the Basler Läckerli (also Leckerli or Läggerli, lecker meaning "delicious" in German), which is a traditional hard spice biscuit originating from Basel. www.laeckerli-huus.ch/

Insider tip: If you are a real haute-cuisine addict, is it worth to travel around 45 minutes from Basel to Hägendorf to discover this old coach house with rustic atmosphere. Anni and Reto Lampart's restaurant offers classic French cuisine with Mediterranean influences and is awarded with two Michelin stars. www.lamparts.ch

Where to shop:

Of course you can buy the best range of the world's most precious brands in Basel, like Louis Vuitton, Hermès or Gucci, but why wouldn't try something else? Elia Gilli presents extravagant jewellery pieces as well as an interesting collection of bowls and vases that combines carved wood with silver. www.eliagilli.com

For fine gifts, stationary and luxury pens visit this chic Landolt-Arbenz store on Freie Strasse to re-discover the pleasures of old-world correspondence. www.landolt-arbenz.ch/

Insider tip: Do you own an oldtimer or pretty desiring to have one? Let's drive 12 minutes from Basel to Birsfelden and Kestenholz Classic will share your passion for oldtimers. The team has competence and experience paired with the latest technology to ensure that oldtimers are in the best hands.



Black Edition, Boucheron

Boucheron launched the Quatre collection in 2004 on the foundations of their iconic motifs, such as the "Clous de Paris," which evokes the cobblestones of Place Vendôme. Their new line, Black Edition, features the first Quatre ring made of white and black gold. It will enter stores from mid-April.



Braided choker, Mikimoto

Akoya oysters, from the waters of Japan have amazing ability and consistency in producing near-perfect round cultured pearls. These pearls have brilliant lustre and rich colours – the qualities the Akoya pearl has become renowned for. Akoya colours range from white, cream and pink to silver pink. This unique voluminous choker is made from the highest quality Akoya pearls and it has a 18K white gold clasp with diamonds and a beautiful White South Sea cultured pearl.



CEO Pilot, TW Steel

TW Steel enjoys a reputation being an innovative and bold lifestyle brand and their watches are more than recognisable. Make a statement with their Swiss Made collection. Let yourself be impressed by the CEO Pilot limited edition with sophisticated Swiss ETA 3-Hand movement, AA-grade PVD rose gold plated case and bezel, sunray blue dial and dark blue Italian leather strap.



Dressage, Hermès

Every luxury lover knows Hermès. But maybe not all of them are familiar with their watchmaking traditions. The Dressage watch, created in 2003 by Henri d'Origny, now appears in a modernised interpretation while remaining loyal to its original aesthetic. This in-house movement, named after the founding date of the Maison Hermès, is available in versions with either a large central seconds hand and a date display at 6 o'clock, or with small seconds at 6 o'clock." The pictured version is a rose gold model with matt havana alligator strap.



Firmamentum, Heritage Watch Manufactory

Heritage Watch Manufactory is a privately-owned company from Neuchâtel with the concept of manufacturing the highest quality chronometers without compromises. One of their watches, Tensus just won the Superwatch Award of the Geneva Time Exhibition. Another model, Firmamentum is definitely one of the most complex watches of Baselworld; it is more like a navigation instrument. This special piece is for collectors and astronomy enthusiasts and at the same time it is also a celebration of the exceptional knowledge of haute horology.



Grande Heure Onyx, Jaquet Droz

Grande Heure Onyx is one of the most generous watches I've ever seen. Surprising the eye with its artistic look and the mind with its technical excellence, the Grande Heure Onyx takes a revolutionary step in luxury watchmaking. The minutes and seconds have vanished from the face of the watch and the hour hand swings around alighting on intervals that are only as accurate as to the nearest 10 minutes. The concept and the visual image of this watch is dedicated to elegant, high minded and sophisticated connoisseurs.



Opus 12, Harry Winston

It's been already 12 years since Harry Winston started to cooperate with few extraordinary independent watchmakers. Emmanuel Bouchet and Augustin Nussbaum worked together to create the Opus 12. This exceptional timepiece deliberately overturns the perception of time by drawing its inspiration from the Copernican revolution." It displays the hours and the five minutes intervals via a rotating, double-hand system, which goes into an attractive animation every hour.



Pink Panther, Chopard

To celebrate Chopard's 150 years the company has launched the creation of a 150-pieces unique animal collection in 2010. The lazy laying Pink Panther is the new member of the collection, is crafted in rose gold, fully set with pink and white diamonds and onyx cabochons. Rare pink diamonds increase the uniqueness – and of course the value – of this one-of-a-kind piece. If kitties are not your style, check out the Precious Temptations or L'Heure du Diamant.



Sky-Dweller, Rolex

Rolex has long had the slogan "A crown for every achievement." Their latest achievement is Sky-Dweller in the Oyster Perpetual collection. With its dual time zone display, the watch is designed for global travellers. Months are indicated next to every hour marker around the dial. It is equipped a mechanical self-winding movement with a 72-hour power reserve. The Everose gold version is chocolate brown with sunray finish and pink gold hands. On the top of this it comes with an exclusive brown Alligator leather strap.



\$5 Million, Hublot

The Swiss luxury brand Hublot (owned by LVMH Group) has sold the most expensive watch of the fair to a shop in Singapore, called The Hour Glass. The name describes the price accurately, \$5m. It is set primarily in white gold and contains a total of 1,292 diamonds, six of which weighs more than three carats a piece. This is the most precious watch ever created by Hublot and its Geneveese partner, Atelier Bunter. The GIA certified stones selected by Hublot are all of the highest quality, graded VVS in clarity and Top Wesselton in colour.