

Swiss Watches

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SWISS WATCHES

Switzerland, 11th April . . . Time was when watches were only looked at to tell the time. The situation is now ended — for ever — according to the watchmakers of Switzerland.

To prove it they could point to the almost bewildering array of stylings among the 20,000 glittering timepieces which ticked away at the world's watch exhibition, the Swiss Watch Fair in Basle which opened on 11th April. The Swiss are now concentrating more and more on styling watches whose looks are as up-to-the-minute as the precision machinery which lies beneath the dial.

Basle this year saw the confirmation of the "Swiss watch line". It is a line which was unveiled last Autumn at Geneva's avant-garde international styling exhibition. The Swiss Watch Fair in Basle confirmed which of the many styling ideas first seen at Geneva six months earlier have been selected by the Swiss manufacturers for consolidation as definite styling trends. These will make their impact in jewellers' windows all over the world during the coming months.

Last year saw the return of the square shape in men's and women's watches. This year the square idea has caught on with a vengeance. Some Swiss manufacturers estimate that forty per cent of their total production is now devoted to square-shaped watches. It is a staggering come-back by a shape which has languished in decline for decades. The Swiss do not predict that the square watch will surpass the round one but the square revival serves to underline how quickly the changes are being rung in timing high fashion.

Luxury goes hand in hand with styling variations. More watches than even before are gold watches and they come in all types of gold with rough or "native" finishes on view everywhere. This year sees the adoption of grey gold as a style leader for wristwear. There is a far greater choice in the types of dial faces with the welcome return of the enamel dial. General dial note is classic simplicity and elegance with ornamentation kept to a minimum.

Like the style leader it is, the pedigree-studded Swiss watch is now even prouder of its silhouette. Although most people have long been predicting that Swiss engineering could hardly fine down the already razor-slim profiles of its watches, Basle annually proves that it can. This year is no exception and more ultra-slim watches abound in all categories in a much wider price range than before. They now come fitted with standard extras like date calendars and sweep-second hands, fully-shock protected movements with rugged constitutions behind their incredibly delicate looking exteriors.

The watch has long been the most durable as well as the most useful fashion accessory possessed by any woman. Highlighting a variety of appealing fashion ideas are several new cufflink watches, which can also be worn by men. Women's bracelets are still wider, often linking as a perfect team with very small watch movements and dials, some of which are hidden and revealed only by the touch of a concealed spring.

Even special feature watches get the full modern styling treatment and are not so "technical" and functional in appearance. Inter-changeable dial watches, enabling the wearer to ring the fashion changes with a single movement, are very much in vogue. So too are

fob watches for men and women and vest pocket watches for men. A welcome revival here is the "hunter", the old time favourite with its protective lid.

Small table clocks scored a resounding success in Basle last year and the story continues in 1964. There is a whole new range of forward-looking models, many of them incorporating date calendars. Among the new types for example, are picture clocks and statuette clocks. One superb Picture Clock even shows the world-famous clock tower in Berne — the clock in the picture tells the time.

A new digital electronic clock will be one of the attractions of the Swiss Timing Centre at the New York World's Fair.

(Swiss Federation of Watch Manufacturers.)

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We have been asked to publish the following report sent by M. Paul Gruaz, member for France of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, himself a subscriber to the "Swiss Observer".

CONSTRUCTION D'UNE MAISON SUISSE A LYON

Il y a 20 ans, un comité composé de personnalités suisses de Lyon constituait une Société Immobilière ayant pour but de construire une "Maison Suisse" et d'offrir à l'importante colonie helvétique et aux sociétés suisses de la grande ville rhodanienne les locaux dont elles avaient besoin. A l'appel de ce Comité, les souscriptions de parts de la Société Immobilière furent nombreuses et un terrain put être acheté.

Mais des difficultés de tous ordres, notamment l'expropriation de ce terrain par la Ville de Lyon, qui fit ériger une école sur le bloc dont il faisait partie, ainsi que la perte de pouvoir d'achat de la monnaie empêchèrent depuis lors la réalisation du projet.

En 1961 cependant, en s'associant avec une Compagnie d'assurances suisse dont le siège lyonnais est devenu trop exigu, la Société Immobilière "La Maison Suisse" put acheter un nouveau terrain très bien situé et sur lequel la construction d'un immeuble de sept étages a débuté récemment. La "Maison Suisse" y sera propriétaire d'une belle salle de 250 m², divisible, ainsi que d'un carnotzet et des locaux annexes nécessaires. La Colonie suisse de Lyon disposera ainsi du cercle qui lui fait défaut et notre pays d'un centre de rayonnement, notamment sur le plan culturel.

Samedi 11 avril M. Manz, Consul général, M. Gruaz, Président de la Société Immobilière, accompagné de MM. Knobel, Bodmer, Ochsner, Chassot, membres de son Comité, M. Jacot, Directeur à Lyon de la Compagnie d'assurances "L'Union Suisse", et M. Cornaz, constructeur de l'immeuble constatèrent, à l'occasion d'une visite de chantier et de la réunion qui suivit, que les dispositions prises permettraient d'inaugurer le Maison Suisse de Lyon dans deux ans environ. C'est là une bonne nouvelle, non seulement pour les Suisses de Lyon, mais pour tous ceux qui portent de l'intérêt au rayonnement de notre pays à l'étranger.