

EVENTS/CAUSES

In Shanghai, Watches and Wonders strengthens connection with next-gen collectors

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Of all ticket purchases for Watches and Wonders Shanghai's public event days, 70 percent were sold to visitors under the age of 35. Image credit: Watches and Wonders

By AMIRAH KEATON

Held from Aug. 28 to Sept. 1, 2024, one high-profile watchmaking event is blending programs geared toward luxury industry professionals and VIPs with presentations that cater to a broader audience.

Guided tours, workshops and interactive experiences from the likes of Germany's A. Lange & Shne, Switzerland's Vacheron Constantin, France's Cartier and Italy's Panerai attracted more than 10,000 visitors to Watches and Wonders Shanghai this year, half of whom were members of the public drawn in by demonstrations of high-end horology. Inclusivity is charting the conference's next steps, as organizers continue to focus on appealing to emerging demographics.

Watches and Wonders Shanghai 2024

A fusion of heritage and innovation remains core to the five-day affair, the spirit of the event's theme underlining a number of brand launches.

Marking the latest edition of a product released earlier this year, Swiss watchmaker Roger Dubuis' new Orbis in Machina Central Monotourbillon was one of four timepieces debuted at Watches and Wonders Shanghai.



Retailing for \$348,000, the new Orbis in Machina Central Monotourbillon from Roger Dubuis was one of four timepieces debuted at Watches and Wonders Shanghai. Image courtesy of Roger Dubuis

Excluding taxes, the chronograph, decorated in rubies and diamonds, retails for \$348,000. Just eight pieces will be produced.

Priced at \$225,000, \$180,000 and \$296,500, respectively, Excalibur Monotourbillons in Blue Hour and White Gold and an Excalibur Double Tourbillon in Cobalt Chrome from Roger Dubuis were also on display.

Appearances from ambassadors and friends of the participating brands helped to further bridge the gap between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design.



The Roger Dubuis Booth at Watches and Wonders 2024. Image credit: Watches and Wonders

Preempting its kickoff, U.S.-born freestyle skier Eileen Gu and English physicist joined Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen on Aug. 27, ahead of Watches and Wonders Shanghai's start, for an exclusive event at multifunctional art center TANK Shanghai.

The two touched on their passion for science and a shared fascination for concepts involving time and eternity before unpacking IWC Schaffhausen's new Portugieser collection, highlighting the Portugieser Eternal Calendar.

New colorways include Horizon Blue, Dune, Obsidian and Silver Moon. The model also features a 400-year gear and moon phase display the company says is crafted to run accurately for over 45 million years.



Olympic ski champion and university student Eileen Gu joined renowned physicist and professor Brian Cox for a conversation hosted by the Swiss watchmaker on Aug. 27, 2024. Image credit: IWC Schaffhausen

Inspired by the new Portugieser collection and the Portugieser Eternal Calendar, the evening ended with "A Tribute to Eternity," performed by a string quartet from Shanghai and created by Mr. Cox in collaboration with Academy Award-winning music composer Hans Zimmer.

"We were excited to unite Eileen Gu with Professor Brian Cox, bringing together two personalities who have achieved extraordinary feats and have a special connection to our brand," said Franziska Gsell, CMO of IWC Schaffhausen, in a statement.

“With their meaningful conversation about the concepts of time and eternity, they captured and inspired the audience,” Ms. Gsell said. “I could not have imagined a better start to Watches and Wonders Shanghai.”

Attracting new audiences

The incorporation of digital elements further highlights the event’s adaptability to modern consumer habits.

Swiss watchmaker Baume & Mercier, for instance, livestreamed its latest releases, granting access to online viewers.



Baume & Mercier livestreams its latest releases from the showroom floor. Image credit: Watches and Wonders

Meanwhile, Watches and Wonders Shanghai hosted a drone show, casting branded projections against the city’s skyline. Panel discussions additionally framed programming.

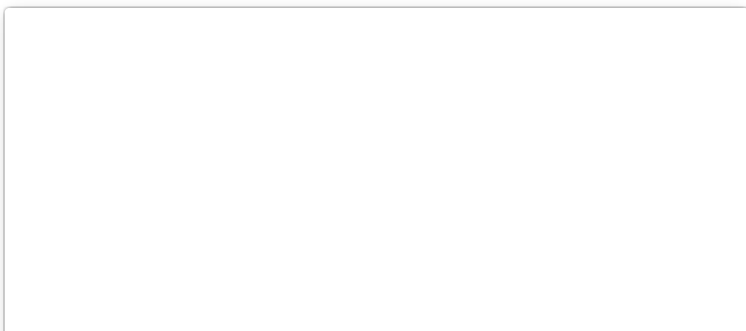
“How to win over Gen Z with watches” and “Insights and foresights: watchmaking of today and tomorrow” titled sessions that dispersed valuable insights and allowed luxury experts to impress information and teachable moments upon listeners. The move was one of many that could very well catalyze the process of building brand affinity with new and wider audiences.



A drone show at Watches and Wonders Shanghai 2024. Image credit: Watches and Wonders

Placing emphasis on the degree to which digital innovation is becoming an integral part of the luxury watch industry’s future, these tech-enabled exhibits worked to draw younger visitors.

Signaling the sector’s growing resonance with this group, 70 percent of tickets to the satellite event’s public days were sold to visitors under the age of 35 this year.



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A post shared by Watches and Wonders (@watchesandwond..

The success of Watches and Wonders Shanghai, founded in 2020 ([see story](#)) as a means of expanding the Richemont-backed operative's global footprint, is making clear attempts to comprehend and nurture the interests of the next generation of collectors.

By offering accessible, educational and engaging experiences, the event honors tradition as it secures horology's pending place amid the luxury landscape.

Up next, Watches and Wonders Geneva ([see story](#)) takes place from April 1-7, 2025. The last three days will remain open to the public.

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