



Through community support and momentous acquisitions – such as the 1774 Marine Chronometer – professors of the school created a library and built a collection before founding the museum in 1902.

Having survived two World Wars and The Great Depression, it celebrated a 50th anniversary with reparations and the addition of a new room in 1952. It was there that Syndicat patronal des producteurs de la montre (SPPM) and Bureau de contrôle des ouvrages en métaux précieux both promised 5,000CHF for a period of five years, in addition to 3,000CHF from the community.

The museum went from strength to strength and made some notable acquisitions – including a pair-cased watch, made for King George III which was dated *circa* 1768. It boasted a gold and enamel outer case and a temperature compensation system – light years ahead of its time.

In 1974 a new avant-garde Musée international d'horlogerie

was inaugurated next to the city's Historical Museum and Fine Arts Museum. It featured a restoration centre for antique pieces and a centre for interdisciplinary studies, with a library containing periodicals, original works, auction catalogues, advertisements, iconographic and many other documents. Frescoes by Hans Erni, painted for the 1958 Universal Exhibition in Brussels, were donated by the Swiss Chamber of Horology.

In 1980, as the final stages of construction were taking place, the monumental carillon that completes the museum's exterior architecture was installed. Both a kinetic clock and a musical instrument, the impressive piece sounds seasonal tunes throughout the year.

Other specialised libraries around the world include the Royal Greenwich Observatory and the Clockmakers' Museum in London, and the Deutsches Uhrenmuseum in Furtwangen im Schwarzwald in Germany's Black Forest. There is a National Watch and Clock Museum in Columbia, Pennsylvania, and the American Clock and Watch Museum in Bristol, Connecticut.

In March every year, the whole industry descends upon Basel in Switzerland for Baselworld Watch and Jewellery Show, 'where passion, precision and perfection preside'. The show, that dates back to 1917, comprises of more than 1,500 exhibitors from over 45 countries, including the leading watch and jewellery brands, as well as companies specialising in precious gems. It attracts more than 145,000 visitors.

Baselworld exclusively exhibits new creations and innovations in the global watch and jewellery industry – an unmissable show for this multifaceted industry. ➤

Pictured: Various timepieces on display at the Musée international d'horlogerie at La Chaux-de-Fonds, including Montre à complication (below)



Time immemorial

In order to mark 100 years since the inaugural Baselworld watch and jewellery show, **Upward Curve** delves deep into Switzerland's love affair with the time piece, starting with the prestigious Musée international d'horlogerie at La Chaux-de-Fonds

From tally-sticks and sundials to candle clocks, water clocks and the hourglass; humankind has always found the need to measure time.

The first mechanical clocks are believed to have been created in Europe, (*circa* 1300), using oscillating timekeepers such as balance wheels. Spring-driven clocks and watches started to appear in the 1500s, and the pendulum was first used in 1657.

Since 1865, the Swiss city of La Chaux-de-Fonds, a renowned centre for Art Nouveau, has been the centre-piece of this marvellous evolution. A few kilometres south of the French border, the city is home to less than 40,000 people and sits at 1,000m altitude in the Jura Mountains.

Birthplace of modernist architect, Le Corbusier, writer, Blaise Cendrars, and racing car driver-turned-manufacturer,

Louis Chevrolet, La Chaux-de-Fonds was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 2009 for its exceptional universal value.

Popular for walking, cycling and skiing, the city is characterised by its chessboard design, which was created at the beginning of the 19th century after a catastrophic fire. One of Le Corbusier's early works, 'Maison Blanche', is located here – a house he built for his parents

in 1912. Today, of course, the city is inundated with luxury horological dealers and fine fashion emporiums.

While many consider Blancpain (est. 1735) the oldest watchmaker in the world, Vacheron Constantin (est. 1755) claims to be 'the oldest watchmaker in the world – that has been in production without interruption'.

Regardless, it is largely thanks to the opening of a horological school in La Chaux-de-Fonds (Ecole d'horlogerie) in 1865, that these watchmakers are still able to tell their historic tale. Today, the Musée international d'horlogerie is entirely dedicated to the history of time measurement and houses more than 4,500 exhibits, including 2,700 watches and 700 wall clocks.



Pictured: Baselworld in Switzerland celebrated 100 years of shows in March 2017, featuring the most ornate of timepieces with brands including Tissot, Movado and Balmain present **Bottom:** Luxury brand Rolex unveiled new models in its home town of Baselworld in 2017

With key players, prestigious buyers and international press present, Baselworld brings together emerging design talent, the finest retailers and the biggest brands on the planet – to set trends and determine what will be

worn and most talked about in the coming year.

Indeed, in 2012, the \$5m Hublot watch was unveiled at Baselworld. This remarkable piece is set in white gold with 1,282 diamonds weighing 140 carats

(including six diamonds that weigh more than three carats each).

The show prides itself on its market focus and an ability to adapt to the needs thereof with world-renowned dealers, suppliers of diamonds, gemstones, pearls and machinery, and the most successful independent watchmakers. Building on its success and keen to meet the increased demand for – and by – independent watchmaking brands, Baselworld has developed a new space concept for the most successful independent watchmakers appropriately named 'Les Ateliers' (workshops).

It is serendipity that Basel, the city in which 'passion, precision and perfection preside', also raised Roger Federer, an ideal fit for Rolex.

The luxury brand (est.1905 in La Chaux-de-Fonds) first bought the 35-year-old's allegiance in 2006 for a substantial £10 million in what is thought to be the most lucrative watch deal ever signed by an athlete.

Federer, who won the 2017 Australian Open, seems not to be phased by the passing of time. He has committed to play the Swiss Indoor Championships in Basel until 2019. ■

