



BY LESLIE WU

Global

Although it's been 40 years since Marshall McLuhan first wrote about the global village and the idea of a worldwide meeting of minds, the concept was still alive and well at Baselworld 2007. Despite the usual frantic buzz of activity surrounding the show, relaxation and connections seemed to be the themes of the day. The mellow mood of the new Baselworld village and the new meeting place for show patrons and exhibitors reflected the overall feeling of bonhomie at this year's show.

The event was proclaimed by organizers as "the best show ever", and with 2,109 watch and jewellery exhibitors from 45 nations, an eight percent increase in visitors from 2006 (101,700 in total) and a nine percent increase in press attendance numbering 2,758, there was much to be proud of. Such was the general feeling of goodwill that an *Associated Press* report of over \$800,000 US in theft at the show barely seemed to dampen the mood.

Much like the watches on display, the organizers' plans seemed larger than life. Ambitious expansion plans for upcoming shows were announced during the show's opening press conference. "We are now noticing an increasing convergence of watch and jewellery brands," said René Kamm,

CEO of MCH Swiss Exhibition (Holding) Ltd. at the show. "As show organizers, we shall from now on no longer be able to make a clear distinction between these two product categories by accommodating them in different buildings." Plans are underway for the demolition of Hall 6 (Hall of Universe) in 2011, and a new site plan designed by Basel architects Herzog & de Meuron will be put into place. The new site includes a three-storey hall complex with an extended Hall 1 and a linked roof between Hall 1 and 3 over Exhibition Square. The project will double the floor space for multi-storey stands, from 45,000 square metres to 90,000 square metres. The project is forecasted to cost 350 million Swiss francs, with 200 million coming from the Swiss Exhibition and 150 million from the Cantons of Basel-city and Basel-county.

SEE AND BE SCENE

Vincent Bérard and new partner Timex took Baselworld attendees to church with a luxe event held at Basel's Elizabethenkirche. Part interpretive dance routine, part beat-poetry performance, the event showcased the different seasons and their influence on the new Vincent Bérard collection.

Guess and its new Swiss-based licensee, Sequel AG, hit

One: Baselworld 2007's Hall of Dreams. Two: Meeting and greeting at the new Baselworld village.



Making connections at

BASELWORLD 2007

the runways with their “Faces to Watch” event, where models competed to be the next face of the company’s ad campaign. A Vancouver, BC-based model, Serinda, was one of the four winners announced by Paul Marciano, CEO and creative director for Guess.

During the Israeli Diamond Institute (IDI) press breakfast, IDI president Eli Avidor announced the opening of the IDI’s gemological laboratory in Ramat Gan at the end of 2007, although specific details about the nature of grading, etc. have not yet been released to the press.

Celebrity sightings included a pre-prison Paris Hilton for her new line of watches with Parlux (including, predictably, pink and faux-leopard details), and model Natalia Vodianova, there to celebrate CK’s 10-year anniversary.

TRENDS AND THEMES

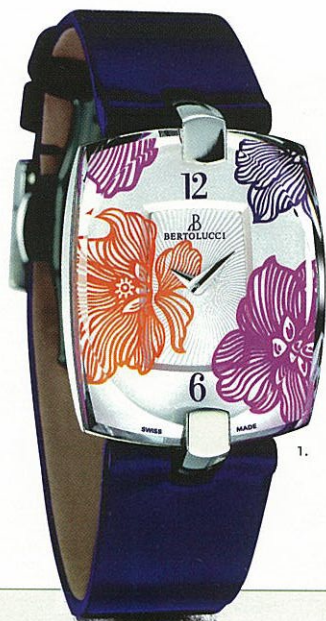
Although there were some complaints from visitors that the levels of technology on display were not as advanced as in previous years, Baselworld was still a hotbed of trend-forecasting activity for upcoming seasons. A notable trend amongst this year’s releases was diamonds, which sparkled on watch faces throughout the show. “Bling seems to be

stronger than ever, whether actual diamonds or crystals,” said Anita D’Amario, vice-president of product for Odyssey Time. The most extreme example was Hublot’s One Million Dollar Big Bang Watch, completely covered in almost 500 baguette diamonds.

In addition, many manufacturers reported an increased interest in mechanical watches for women, with more technological functions. The trend towards bigger watches for women, or women gravitating towards men’s watches, was also noted. In general, sizes were large. “Many 42mm+ cases were on display, making smaller traditional case sizes seem quaint or outdated,” noted Leo Fournier, president of Timex Canada.

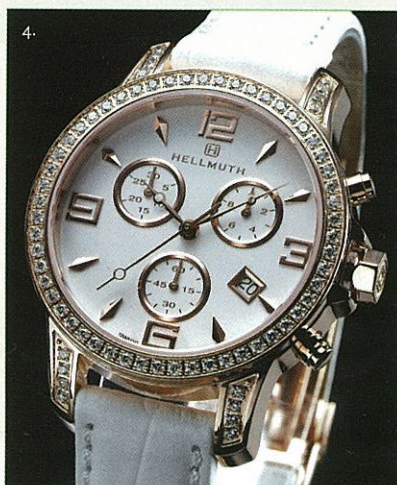
Internationally, French watch designers saw a return to steel (white or blackened), and precious metals; men’s watches in formal, extra-flat, sober and elegant styles; digital watches with mixed colours in straps and cases; and a continuation of the trend of mixing precious and common materials that has been prevalent in jewellery.

Hong Kong manufacturers reported seeing an increased demand for multifunctional watches incorporating electronic devices, stainless steel or leather straps for women’s watches, and an increased focus on design and styling.



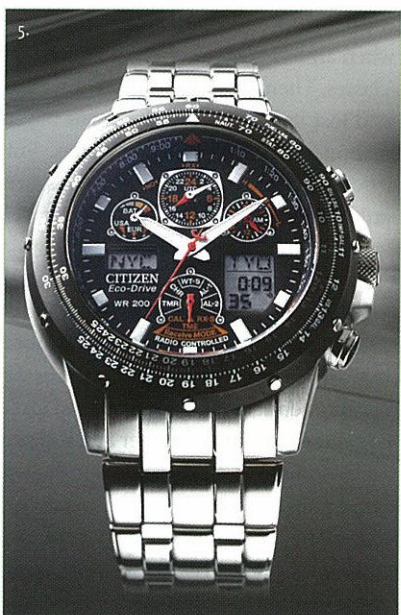
FLORA AND FAUNA

The overpowering urge to get back to nature through flowers and organics that has been prevalent on runways worldwide has manifested itself in watch design. The Wild Side watch from Guess combines a fashion-forward animal print face with a gold bracelet. Bertolucci's Doppia pairs an orange and purple floral patterned face with a satin strap. And Vincent Bérard's Four Seasons pocket watch symbolizes spring with an intricate tree pattern engraved in gold on its face.



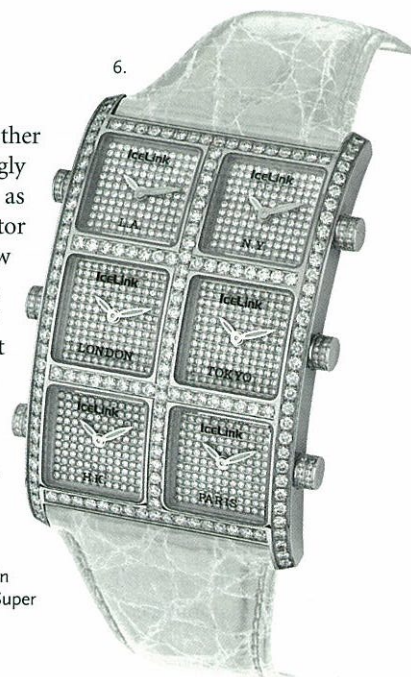
WHITEWASH

Spring runway trends of black and white made their appearance in stands across Baselworld. Although there are signs that men may be ready to take the plunge with white watches, they remain primarily the women's watch of choice. Breil's Milk series is sleek and demure, whether in a squared-off or globe-faced chrono and crystallized with Swarovski. A diamond-accented steel watch from Hellmuth and Blancpain's Women Ultra Plate Lotus pair a white face with rose gold and diamonds for a feminine touch, while Hermes' Heur H in steel with white face and white leather double wrap-around strap, and Skagen's 562 SWLW in steel with white face and white leather strap, bring sleek and slender design.



FORM AND FUNCTION

In a world where many people use cellphones and other options to tell time, some brands are getting increasingly creative with their time-telling methods. Marketed as "resolutely ostentatious", Icelink's 6 Time Zone Senator watch is targeted towards the celebrity who needs to know the time in LA, NY, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Paris, all in one chain link-inspired watch face. Quadtec's hefty creation in stainless steel tells time traditionally for the first half hour of every hour, then switches to count down time as minutes before the coming hour. And Citizen's Super Skyhawk is a global radio-controlled watch that receives standard time radio waves transmitted in Germany, the US and Japan. [CJ]

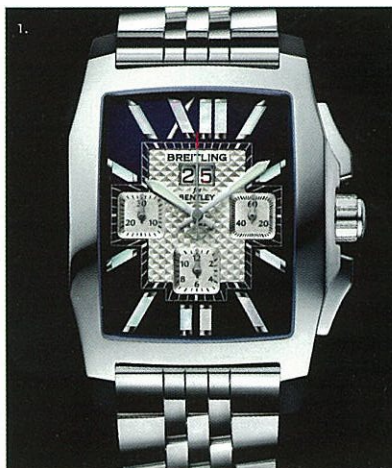


One: Bertolucci Doppia. Two: Vincent Bérard Four Seasons. Three: Blancpain Ultra Plate Lotus. Four: Hellmuth steel watch with diamonds. Five: Citizen Super Skyhawk. Six: Icelink Senator.

One: Breitling Flying B for Bentley. Two: Glycine Airman 7 Plaza Mayor. Three: Corum Admiral's Cup Tides. Four: Rolex Yacht Master II. Five: Seiko Velatura. Six: Romain-Jerome Titanic-DNA. Seven: Bertolucci Voglia.

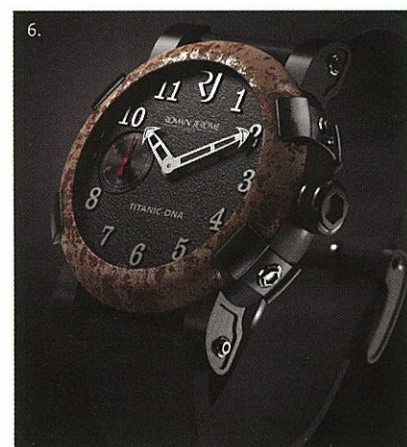
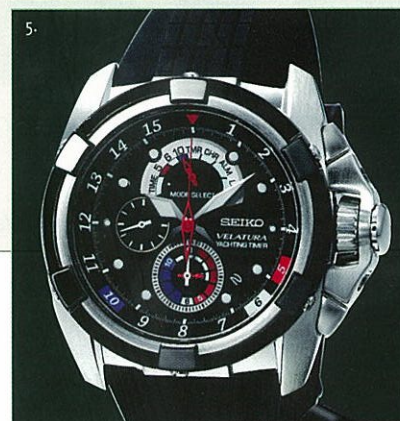
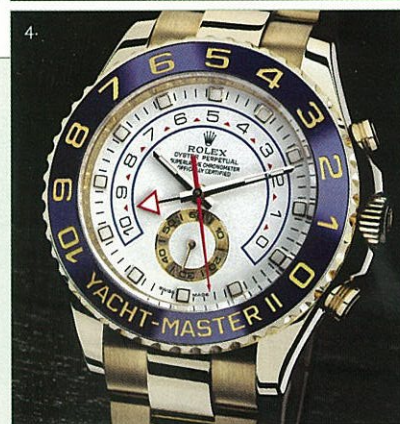
PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

Despite the current cost of fuel, transportation seemed to be on the minds of those behind several major watch brands. Breitling's Flying B Bentley Chronograph uses knurled motifs inspired by Bentley control buttons to adorn the dial centre, and distinct livery shades from the famous British auto manufacturer to interpret the outer part of the dials. The Glycine Airman 7 Plaza Mayor features three independent self-winding movements that show four time zones on three independent dials, for the multi-tasking road-warrior in all of us.



THE LIFE AQUATIC

Both diving and yachting watches continued to sail away from the competition. Seiko's new Velatura Yachting Timer, part of its new marine collection, uses yachting details such as marine-lock shaped bezel screws, and features a case back which echoes the shape of a wheel on a large racing yacht. The doyenne of yachting watch brands, Rolex, released its Yacht Master II in yellow gold with blue and red nautical detailing. And nautical pennant hour markers found their way onto the Corum Admiral's Cup Tides with titanium and vulcanized leather strap. For those who prefer life under the sea, the TX Diver Style measures depths to 150m and has a retrograde-style temperature indicator.



MAKING HISTORY

Those wearing Romain-Jerome's Titanic-DNA watch can claim to own a piece of the doomed luxury liner, as each of the 2,012 limited editions contain actual steel salvaged from the Titanic. For would-be swashbucklers and other pirates, there is the Corum Gold coin watch and the Guess Scribe watch in steel with leather strap and tattoo-inspired etching.

POTTERY CLASS

On the other side of the equation, black watches, especially in ceramics or blackened steel, were popular amongst Basel exhibitors. Breil's Black Series, featuring a black ceramic bracelet and face, and the Voglia from Bertolucci, featuring a black ceramic strap with steel case and diamonds, show a dark glamour.

