

# Local Traits

## Lang & Heyne remains faithful to Saxony's rich horological heritage

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The choice of unique watches made by individual watchmakers continues to grow. Collectors have never had a better opportunity to go beyond the well-known high street brands to make that special, very personal choice. Watches have become an art form and, in the same way as others have followed the work of Damian Hirst or Tracey Emin, one can choose to seek out and support the work of gifted young watchmakers.

The artistry of the watchmaker must however find its expression in the production of a functional object within a traditional form. Unlike other artists, many watchmakers come to their art following in the footsteps of earlier generations – for them, watchmaking is a family tradition. One such traditionalist is Marco Lang.

### In the family

Marco Lang was born in the DDR and was primarily employed as a precision machinist at the GUB – the forerunner of Glashütte Original and the modern incarnation of A Lange & Söhne. Before joining Lange & Söhne, Lang's father made special pocket watches for collectors and worked as a watch and instrument restorer at the famous Mathematical and Physical Museum in the Zwinger Palace in Dresden. His grandfather and grandmother were also watchmakers in Glashütte – his grandmother being, in 1920, the first woman in Germany to qualify as a watch-

maker. Such familial heritage held great significance for Lang and the photographs and certificates of these antecedents fill the walls of the living room in the flat above his workshop.

Wishing to move away from industrial watchmaking, Marco established himself in Dresden dealing in antique watches, making special pieces for collectors and carrying out restoration work. The latter has had particular importance since Dresden's 2002 flooding inundated bank vaults containing many valuable watches. In 2001, Merko Heyne – the first graduate of the new Lange & Söhne Watchmaking School in Glashütte – approached him and they formed 'Lang & Heyne, Dresden', to produce hand finished watches with a strong regional flavour. All no doubt inspired by the huge success of the two major Glashütte brands, these independent young watchmakers have entered the collector's market with something more individual and exclusive than Glashütte Original and Lange & Söhne, yet still retaining the characteristic techniques honed locally over the centuries. Lang & Heyne have now exhibited on the AHCI stand at BASELWORLD since 2002.

### The two kings

Fashionably large, though not extreme (43.5 mm), Lang & Heyne watches come in two styles named after two local rulers: the Emperor Friedrich August I and King Johann of



Lang & Heyne's Friedrich August I model – distinguished from the Johann model by Arabic numerals, framed by red minute indicators. This variant has a yellow-gold case and chased hands shaped in the Louis XV style (€16,900).



(Left) Lang & Heyne's white-gold Johann (€17,600), distinguished by Roman numerals instead of the Friedrich August I's Arabic. Currently, Louis XV hands are not available on the Johann model. (Centre) Rose-gold Friedrich August I with spade hands (€16,400). (Right) Yellow-gold Johann model (€16,400).

The  $\frac{3}{4}$  plate has been synonymous with Saxon horology since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lang & Heyne's 'Caliber I' - found in both models - emphasises typical elements of not only function, but also beauty: rubies set in gleaming gold chatons create a balanced contrast to the hand finished plate.



It would be difficult to cram more indeces of the Glashütte tradition into a single movement.

Saxony. Both lines have white enamel dials but the former has Arabic numerals and the latter Roman. All cases are gold, with a choice of yellow, rose or white.

The 46-hour manually wound movements are based on a Unitas calibre but are completely rebuilt. The Unitas cocks and bridges are replaced with a beautifully frosted  $\frac{3}{4}$  plate. This finish is perhaps the most difficult to produce in all watchmaking. It was the pride of English watchmaking in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later favoured by

George Daniels. The jewels are set in gold chatons with flawless blued screws - a Glashütte tradition. The screwed 18,000-vph balance has a diamond end-stone, Breguet overcoil, whiplash regulator and engraved cock (Glashütte again). The winding wheels are even snailed. It would be difficult to put more traditional indeces into a single movement. All this is achieved by two men working quietly and patiently, mostly by hand, in a small workshop. In keeping with their understated approach, they are even occasionally joined by Marco's wife, who is an engraver. ◯