

A German town *and the most perfect watches*



There are not many high-end watch brands that flourish outside Switzerland. However, a small garden near Dresden in the former East Germany is the refuge of nearly a dozen small and medium Manufactures which resurfaced after the long communist winter with the German reunification.

A small haven in the German town of Glashütte is where A. Lange & Söhne shines, the Manufacture of excellence that maintains a low profile and sober aesthetics of traditional and technical aspect.

Lange was reborn in the 90s when the family who owns the company could recover it. Slowly and with a low perspective of success in the context of the watchmaking universe of two decades ago, the brand was able to reposition itself as a distinguished landmark for lovers of mechanical watchmaking. Its pieces are impeccable and fascinating for the connoisseur.

RISE FROM THE ASHES

The evolution of A. Lange & Söhne in the last two decades is comparable to the evolution of the city of Dresden, the nearest

metropolis to Glashütte. At the end of World War II, Dresden endured one of the most intense Allied bombing ever recorded in history. Almost reduced to rubble, the beautiful Saxon town came under Soviet hegemony, from which it never recovered until the German reunification of the 90s. From that date and at the expense of the Federal Government, Dresden rose from its dark ages and now shines again as a city of special beauty. Its historic buildings-either demolished or seriously damaged- were erected again. Today, those who are not familiar with the history of the last century would not hesitate to believe that those buildings have been there for centuries, instead of the five or ten years that mark their true age.

To visit the Manufacture is a unique experience. The first meeting with our guide prepared us for what would be not just one more professional visit: "These pictures I brought-she says, opening a folder with rural images quite different from what we could see around us-were taken here, where we are now standing, in the historic center of Dresden, in the 40es".

The trip from Dresden to Glashütte took half an hour by bucolic rural roads, during which we familiarized with the history of the Manufacture and its stories, which are often not reflected in the books and pamphlets published about Lange. "After the Nazi defeat, Saxony was under Soviet control and the communists took precision machinery back to Russia as war compensation. Without that equipment and without a market for fine watches our large family of owners and operators were left in a desperate situation, barely able to survive" continues our companion, while paradoxically we circulate in a Mercedes Benz through one of the most vibrant and advanced countries in the world: "There is still a strong memory of the queues where each and every one of the members of my house lined up to buy rations of bananas when that luxury came to Dresden".

But the Lange family did not lose hope and in 1990 was able to regain the Manufacture which had been nationalized. Now the problem was the precipitous decline of the market for mechanical watches and the generational gap between the pre-war

To visit an enchanting village inside a Germany that rose from its ashes is a magical experience in itself. But those who may also enter the refuge of the A. Lange & Söhne Manufacture have guaranteed an epiphanic trip through the universe of excellence.

Ferdinand-Adolph-Lange-Platz



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expert watchmakers and the new workforce. It had to be regenerated to recover the legendary excellence they had imposed for nearly a century, since the beginning of the company by Ferdinand A. Lange.

GLASHÜTTE

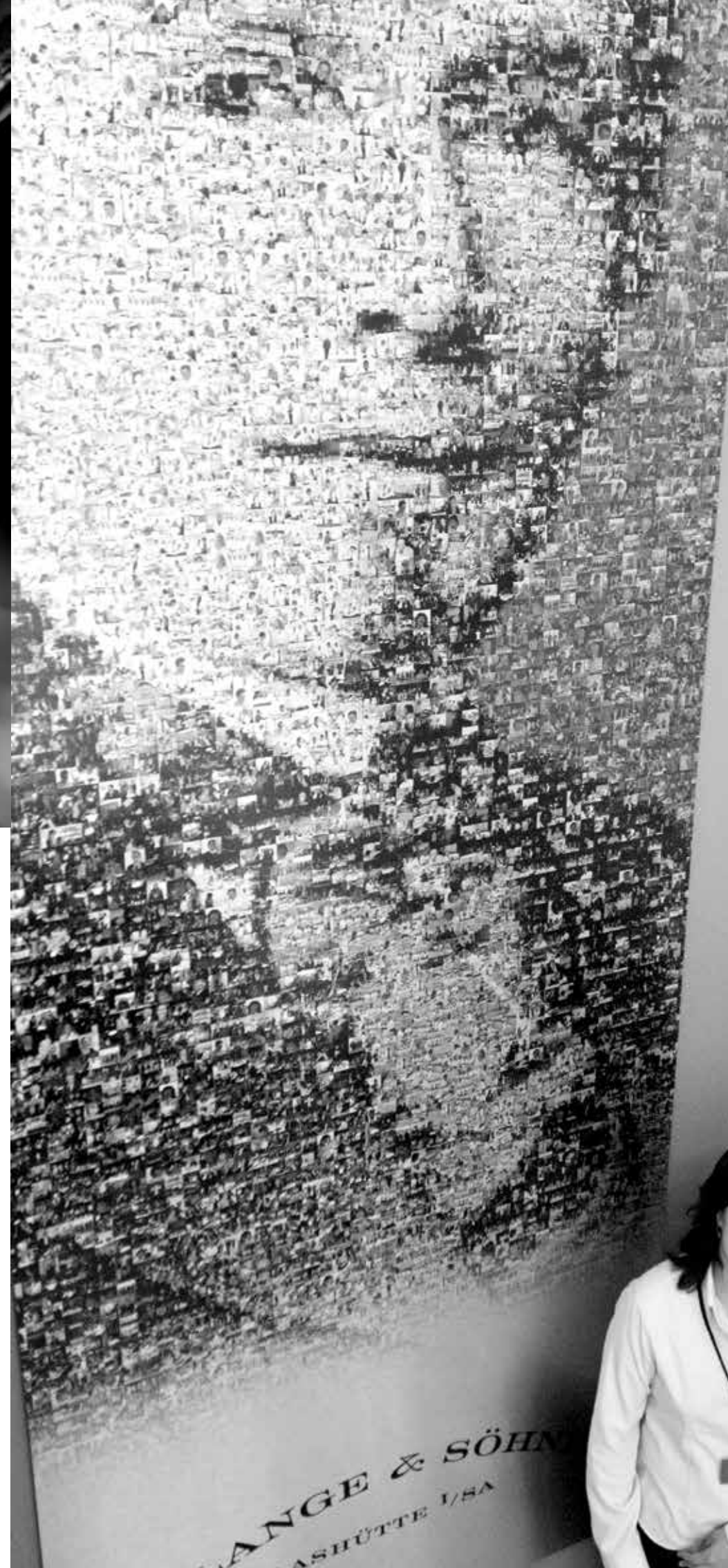
One more of the many conventional buildings in Glashütte, 30 kilometers from Dresden, houses the reborn watch factory founded by Ferdinand A. Lange in 1845. Although in two years the Manufacture will be moved to a new five-storey building that was built to absorb the expansion of operations.

Like most watchmaking celebrities from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Ferdinand went through all the stages: from being a young apprentice to a patriarch of precision watchmaking. In his hands, the family name was stamped onto exquisite pieces like pocket and marine chronometers, watches with multiple complications, pendulums for observatories and other variants, always with outstanding design and unsurpassed finishings, even of those the parts not in plain view. The purist style of his pieces recalls more the image of a nineteenth-century scientific instrument

than a gem, as is characteristic of other high-end brands.

During World War II, the Manufacture was involved in the compulsive production of war machinery for the Germans, especially in the manufacture of parts for marine and aviation navigation, like marine chronometers and wrist watches for aviators. Once the infernal conflagration was over, it was the turn of the Soviets, who seized Lange instrumentation and began producing their own versions of watches.

After the vicissitudes of German reunification, the Manufacture was recovered by Walter Lange, great-grandson of the founder. The company is now fully devoted to the design and production of sophisticated pieces following the aesthetics and excellence of over a century of experience. These are only a few thousand a year; in precious metals and with just under 40 calibers developed in 20 years, among which stand out its classic icons series 1 and Lange Zeitwerk, with jumping numerals of supreme readability. The watches every watchmaker would love to have on his wrist.



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