

Auctioneers Dr. Crott in Shanghai

LANGE COMES TO CHINA



On Thursday, May 22nd, the Wempe Boutique in Beijing launched the Chinese edition of „A. Lange & Söhne – Fine Watches Made in Saxony“. The nearly 1,000 pages of watch expert Reinhard Meis' two-volume book describe the history of watchmaking in Glashütte with encyclopedic precision – the book is regarded as a standard work amongst collectors.

The launch of a Chinese edition was encouraged by tour operator CAISSA Touristic, who brings thousands of Chinese tourists and business people per year to Europe and looks after them during their travels in Switzerland and Germany.

CAISSA chairman Mang Chen is a passionate collector of watches himself and introducing fine German watchmaking to his fellow countrymen is a matter close to his heart. The same is true for Kim-Eva Wempe, CEO of the Hamburg-based jeweller and founder of the Wempe Boutique in the elegant Chaoyang District of Beijing, who has a similarly great interest in promoting the A. Lange & Söhne brand.

Nana Lee, marketing manager of the Glashütte company, presented the visitors with the history of the brand from its beginning in 1845 to the rebirth in 1990; she explained about its recent international success and entertained

the audience with many facts on the historical background of monarchies and republics in far away Europe.

An even bigger draw for collectors, experts and media were the press conference and question time with Stefan and Steffi Muser organised by the Lange flagship store in Shanghai on May 24th. The Mansion Hotel, a colonial style villa in Shanghai's cultural centre, proved to be the perfect backdrop for Stefan Muser's speech. Before an audience of members of the Chinese trade press, the head of German auctioneers Dr. Crott in Mannheim spoke about fine histo-

rical timekeepers; he explained the delight of searching for a particularly exquisite piece and the collectors' pride in finally being able to add such pieces to their own collection.

In the afternoon an invited group of high-profile collectors and Lange patrons had the opportunity to fire their pointed and detailed questions at Stefan Muser; thanks to his profound knowledge and expertise in all technical and historical details and with the help of his translator, the expert left none of their questions unanswered.

Following are some highlights of the discussions, which went on until the early evening.



Mr. Muser, how do you see the future of the auction trade?

Collectors in China have only recently begun collecting vintage watches and clocks. Unlike other houses, Auctioneers Dr. Crott have always concentrated on the sale of historical pieces; this is one of the reasons for our increasing popularity in China. I have great faith in the future of live auctions. Only a live auction will achieve true market prices that are determined by demand and supply.

What is the demand for A. Lange & Söhne watches among German watch collectors?

How do you personally feel about the brand?

The watches produced by Lange & Söhne have a legendary reputation amongst German watch collectors. These pieces keep their value extremely well, which makes them a kind of currency of their own. I collect watches myself and quite a significant number of pieces in my collection bear the Lange & Sons signature.



What do you think of Mr. Meis and his book?

I have known Reinhard Meis for over 30 years; his publications are always well researched and many collectors regard his books as excellent sources of information on all aspects of horology.

Do you remember your first „meeting“ with A. Lange & Söhne?

I have been handling Lange & Söhne watches long before the re-launch in 1990. Günther Blümlein acquainted me with the production after 1993; he is a truly remarkable man without whom Lange & Söhne could not have achieved such a magnificent rebirth. My favourite Lange & Söhne is still the „Pour le Merite“ tourbillon.

When we spoke with Mr. Mang Chen earlier, we learned that he had to spend a lot of money and effort in order to purchase an A. Lange & Söhne watch. Is it really that difficult?

Lange & Söhne watches are never easy to acquire. Once you own such a piece, you do not really want to part with it. We have, however, been working with watch collectors all over the world for years and that makes it possible for me to bring in exceptional pieces for our auctions time and again.

You must have met Walter Lange, great-grandson of company founder Ferdinand Adolph Lange?

Walter Lange is someone who commands respect wherever he goes, he is the „Grand Seigneur“ of the watch world in Glashütte. Without him the comeback of the town of Glashütte and the company Lange & Söhne would not have happened the way it did.

You have auctioned over 3,500 A. Lange & Söhne watches, so you understand the buyers' market like no one else. How do you see the trends on the Chinese market?

The buyer's market for Lange & Söhne watches in China is continually growing. Contrary to the situation 10 years ago, Chinese collectors today are very well informed and know how to appreciate quality and complications.

The Chinese collectors of artworks – and vintage watches are pieces of art – always go for quality, which is something they have in common with the Germans.

At the book launch you said that the value of new A. Lange & Söhne watches could be even higher than that of their vintage counterparts. How did you come to this conclusion?

Vintage watches are like vintage cars – they are not used every day but kept in safe storage where they can be looked after and admired.

The new Lange & Söhne watches on the other hand are being worn, which adds a practical value to the collector's value.



