

WATCHES AND JEWELRY

WatchTime goes West with consumer-centric show

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WatchTime will be making its Los Angeles debut this May. Image courtesy of WatchTime

By SARAH RAMIREZ

As many industry trade fairs lose steam, WatchTime is bucking the trend and is adding a new show to meet consumer demand.

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On May 3 and 4, WatchTime Los Angeles will become the West Coast's first major event dedicated to timepieces. While the annual Swiss watch show Baselworld continues to lose brands, WatchTime LA will include more than 30 watchmakers as it connects brands and consumers in a new market.

"WatchTime New York has become a destination event for collectors and for the industry, and over the years, many West Coast collectors have requested their own event in LA," said Sara Orlando, publisher at *WatchTime*, New York. "We tested the waters with several one-day events on Rodeo Drive, which were very well received, and it became clear that LA's vibrant watch scene needed and deserved its own two-day collectors' event.

"LA attendees will get the opportunity to see the newest luxury timepieces first, flown in to LA fresh from their debuts at SIHH and Baselworld, while participating watch brands will get the chance to interact directly with LA's most enthusiastic watch lovers," she said.

Ticking forward

Montblanc, Parmigiani Fleurier and Jaeger-LeCoultre are among the brands exhibiting at WatchTime Los Angeles' inaugural event.

WatchTime Events' fifth annual New York show will still take place this fall. WatchTime New York is one of few watch shows in the United States, where both the luxury business and the timepiece market are growing ([see story](#)).



WatchTime is complementing its fall show with a springtime event in L.A. Image courtesy of WatchTime

Both events focus on direct-to-consumer connections.

The May show will be hosted at Hudson Loft in downtown Los Angeles. Bhindi Jewelers is the retail partner, and admission will cost \$150 for access to both days of the show.

Attendees will also have a chance to start the weekend by attending a VIP cocktail party, where they can meet with executives and *WatchTime* editors and view new timepieces.

Panels and presentations are geared towards both new enthusiasts and longtime watch collectors. Consultant Jeff Kingston will also be offering by-appointment small group tours of the show floor, during which he will share insights on each participating watchmaker.

Watchmakers watching

Although *WatchTime* New York has seen enough growth to expand to Los Angeles, its attendee numbers pale compared to the tens of thousands who attend Baselworld every year.

However, the largest watch industry show is facing its own set of struggles.

Swiss watchmaking group Swatch, which includes brands such as Breguet, Blancpain, Harry Winston, Jaquet Droz, Longines, Omega and Tissot, has officially pulled out of Baselworld after attending for several decades.

The company cites the soaring expenses of exhibiting at Baselworld as well as the event's growing irrelevance to the way customers buy watches today for its decision. Swatch Group followed a few other high-end watch brands who have all stopped exhibiting at the event ([see story](#)).

Swatch has made the move permanent for the foreseeable future, according to [Bloomberg](#).

Even as some industry events are on the decline, the watchmaking industry itself has been rebounding.

Swiss watch exports were up around the world last November, but the sharpest uptick was in the United States.

The value of watches sent to the U.S. was up 17.6 percent last month, far surpassing the average global growth of 3.9 percent, according to statistics from the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry. After facing a tough climate in the U.S. the second largest watch market Swiss timepieces have seen a resurgence throughout 2018 ([see story](#)).