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## “GÉRALD GENTA DEFINED THE DNA OF THE INGENIEUR’S DESIGN.”

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Celebrated watch designer Gérald Genta created the Ingenieur SL for IWC Schaffhausen in the 1970s. The Swiss luxury watch manufacturer has now enhanced his iconic design to produce a modern interpretation, perfected down to the smallest detail. But the Ingenieur Automatic 40 does not only reflect the bold aesthetic cues and unique character of the original. The new automatic model also meets the highest standards regarding ergonomics, finishing and technology. Christian Knoop, IWC’s Chief Design Officer, reviews a development process that has taken several years.

IWC Schaffhausen launched the Ingenieur in 1955. What is the significance of this collection?

More than any other watch, the Ingenieur embodies IWC’s engineering spirit and the brand’s strictly technical and design-oriented approach. It was initially developed for professionals such as engineers, physicists and doctors, whose work exposed them to strong magnetic fields. The first Ingenieur, Reference 666, was a technical milestone. It was powered by the 8531 calibre, the first automatic movement developed in-house by IWC with the highly efficient Pellaton winding system. A soft-iron inner cage effectively shielded the movement from magnetic fields. This technology had originally been developed for the Pilot’s Watch Mark 11, a professional navigation watch engineered in 1948 for the British Royal Air Force.

How would you describe the age that saw the launch of the Ingenieur?

In the 1950s, people were fascinated by technology, and engineering was the embodiment of innovation, progress and prosperity. Back then, engineering achievements laid the foundations for new forms of architecture and design that occurred repeatedly in many of the products and everyday objects of that period. This sense of optimism and the widespread belief in technical progress was also expressed in the name chosen for the new watch family: Ingenieur, the French word for “engineer”, which is also used in German.

In 1976, IWC unveiled the Ingenieur SL – a new, completely revised version of the Ingenieur, designed by the well-known Geneva watch designer Gérald Genta. What was so outstanding about his achievement?

The first Ingenieur, launched in the 1950s, had a round and rather understated case. Thanks to Gérald Genta’s inspired contribution, the watch finally had a face. For the Ingenieur SL, Reference 1832, he relied on bold aesthetic cues such as a screw-on bezel with five recesses, a checkerboard-pattern dial and an integrated bracelet with H-links. These gave the watch its distinctive character and made it instantly recognisable. Genta thus achieved something we might refer to today as strategic development of the product’s DNA. Using these pronounced, recognisable design cues, IWC has been able to vary the Ingenieur slightly again and again over many decades without sacrificing Gérald Genta’s artistic signature.

How should Genta’s work be assessed in terms of historical perspective?

In the 1970s, Gérald Genta succeeded in creating an entirely new category of luxury watches. Rugged, water-resistant, yet elegant steel sports watches with integrated metal link bracelets replaced classic gold watches. With creations like the Ingenieur SL, Gérald Genta is the undisputed master of this category. But these steel sports watches were also in keeping with the spirit of the times. The boundaries between work, leisure and sport became increasingly fluid – a development that helped shape watch aesthetics.

**Why didn't IWC simply reissue the original?**

Initially, we discussed that idea but quickly discarded it because merely reissuing a historical design does not fit in with our aspirations for the Ingenieur collection. As engineers and designers, continuously improving and perfecting something that already exists is our DNA. Evelyne Genta, Gérald Genta's long-time spouse, business partner and founder of the Gérald Genta Heritage Association, told us her husband was constantly developing his ideas and refused to cling to old designs. Ultimately, that encouraged us to take the Ingenieur SL as the starting point for a new and contemporary interpretation.

**And where did this journey lead?**

The result is the Ingenieur Automatic 40. The new automatic model reflects the unique character of the iconic design from the 1970s while meeting the highest possible ergonomic and aesthetic demands. We've spent years fine-tuning the proportions of the case and perfecting it down to the tiniest detail. And we must remember that manufacturing techniques have made huge strides forward since the 1970s. The new Ingenieur has an astonishingly high level of detail and outstanding quality in processing and finishing – evidenced, among other things, by the combination of polished and satin-finished surfaces.

**How did you set about improving the ergonomics?**

Our aim was to make a perfectly proportioned 40-millimetre case that would ensure the watch fitted snugly even on a slim wrist. So, over the years, we have produced countless prototypes in steel, continually checking how they feel on the wrist and further improving the case proportions. The Ingenieur SL had a relatively wide bracelet and nose-shaped horns that increased the length of the case. That is why we developed a new middle-link attachment, which is aesthetically comparable but more ergonomic, providing a better fit on the wrist. Another factor is the slight curve in the case ring, which further improves the ergonomics.

**The distinctive bezel is one of the central features of Genta's design. How did IWC adapt it for the new Ingenieur?**

We spent a lot of time tweaking the bezel's proportions and finishing. The most obvious difference, however, is that we have used genuine polygonal screws. For the Ingenieur SL, the bezel with the five recesses was simply screwed onto the case ring. The position of the recesses was purely random, and they were never in the same place. I'm a perfectionist, so that always bothered me. With the Ingenieur Automatic 40, five screws now secure the bezel to the case ring. The screws have a technical function and, as a result, are always in the same position.

**One of the striking features of the Ingenieur is the dial with its relief-like structure. How did you enhance this part?**

Similar to Reference 1832, the Ingenieur Automatic 40 features a dial with a structure that we now call "grid". The pattern consists of lines offset by 90 degrees to each other and stamped into the soft-iron blank before it is galvanised. It covers the entire inner area of the dial, while the outer area around the chapter ring remains smooth. We also painstakingly balanced the proportions of the IWC logo and its position on the dial and alignment with the Grid down to thousandths of a millimetre. Finally, appliques with luminescence ensure great legibility, even at night.

**What else have you perfected?**

We have optimised countless details you would hardly notice at first glance. For instance, the upper parts of the bracelet now contain closed links without visible pins. This feature not only enhances its overall quality but also underscores the superb finish. The integration of a clean, simple butterfly folding clasp gives full rein to the beauty of the bracelet. Another example is the slightly curved front glass. It is even more finely tuned to the overall proportions of the watch, underscoring its value and sophistication.

What are the individual parts of the new collection?

The Ingenieur Automatic 40 comes in stainless steel with the choice of a black, silver-plated, or aqua dials. Aqua is a new dial colour, a fascinating shade between green and blue. We are also making another version in titanium. IWC pioneered the use of titanium in the 1980s. This light, hard-wearing metal epitomises IWC's engineering and material expertise and is, therefore, a perfect match for the Ingenieur.

What about the mechanics inside the case?

All the models in the collection are powered by the IWC-manufactured 32111 calibre with an automatic pawl-winding system and a power reserve of 120 hours. In keeping with the Ingenieur tradition, the watches all feature a soft-iron inner case that shields the movement from the adverse effects of magnetic fields on its accuracy. And, as you would expect of a modern sports watch, the cases are water-resistant to 10 bar, making the Ingenieur Automatic 40 an enormously versatile companion, suitable for both work and leisure.

Could you describe what the creative process was like for you and your team?

It's not every day that a designer gets the chance to work on reinterpreting an icon like the Ingenieur SL. Gérald Genta's achievement deserves the utmost respect. We were aware of the enormous responsibility it entailed and proceeded very cautiously. We discussed every visible change intensively and asked ourselves whether we could justify certain specific interventions. But when Evelyne Genta told us her husband would certainly have approved of the new Ingenieur Automatic 40, it felt like a well-deserved reward for all the passion and hard work that had gone into the project.

## IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN

IWC Schaffhausen is a leading Swiss luxury watch manufacturer based in Schaffhausen in the north-eastern part of Switzerland. With collections like the Portugieser and the Pilot's Watches, the brand covers the whole spectrum from elegant to sports watches. Founded in 1868 by the American watchmaker and engineer Florentine Ariosto Jones, IWC is known for its unique engineering approach to watchmaking, combining the best of human craftsmanship and creativity with cutting-edge technology and processes.

Over its more than 150-year history, IWC has earned a reputation for creating professional instrument watches and functional complications, especially chronographs and calendars, which are ingenious, robust, and easy for customers to use. A pioneer in the use of titanium and ceramics, IWC today specialises in highly engineered watch cases manufactured from advanced materials, such as coloured ceramics, Ceratanium®, and titanium aluminide.

A leader in sustainable luxury watchmaking, IWC sources materials responsibly and takes action to minimise its impact on the environment. Along the pillars of transparency, circularity, and responsibility, the brand crafts timepieces built to last for generations and continuously improves every element of how it manufactures, distributes, and services its products in the most responsible way. IWC also partners with organisations that work globally to support children and young people.

## DOWNLOADS

Images can be downloaded free of charge from [press.iwc.com](https://press.iwc.com)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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