
EVERYTHING UNDER ONE ROOF

Being able to house all the production operations in one place, optimise processes and combine skilled workmanship with sophisticated technology – for Andreas Voll, COO of IWC Schaffhausen, the new Manufakturzentrum sees a long-held hope of his finally come to fruition.

WHY IS THE NEW MANUFAKTURZENTRUM AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE FOR IWC?

Andreas Voll: For the first time in our history, we are bringing together the production of movement components, manufacture movements and cases in one place. This important step has enabled us in particular to configure our production processes precisely as is best for ensuring that they run optimally and produce perfect quality. So, for example, the entire process of creating value, from the raw material to the individual movement component and on to the finished manufacture movement, progresses in a logical order on a single storey. The close proximity of the offices and the production facilities also facilitates communication and allows the different departments to coordinate more quickly. I have been dreaming of this ever since I started at IWC back in 2007.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTORS?

The new Manufakturzentrum also offers excellent working conditions for our employees, with plenty of natural daylight and ergonomically designed workstations. It goes without saying that we also incorporated elements of sustainability into the design; for instance, we have installed solar panels on the roof, and draw water for cooling and heating from two groundwater sources. We are reducing our energy consumption using automatic lighting control coupled with LED lights. A sensor-controlled sunshade

system also prevents the building from being heated up unnecessarily. On the other hand, we reuse the waste heat from our equipment and, just as we were already doing at our headquarters in Schaffhausen Old Town, we only use Swiss hydroelectric power that is generated with zero CO₂ emissions.

WHAT WERE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED DURING THIS PROJECT?

With a building project of this magnitude, there are many challenges, both at the design stage and at the construction stage. Before construction began, we invested a great deal of time into designing the optimal production layout and carefully defining the individual processes, for example. The objective was always to combine perfect production conditions with pleasing aesthetics. We also worked closely with our employees in this phase so that we could capitalise on their extensive expertise. That is why, today, not only are we able to enjoy the fantastic results of these efforts, but also, our employees feel a strong connection to the new building. Other challenges that we encountered along the way were the relatively limited construction period of just 21 months as well as trying to coordinate around 80 construction companies that were involved in the project. Finally, moving the machinery and workstations was a massive logistical feat that had to be meticulously planned and executed exactly on schedule.

ARE THERE ANY INNOVATIONS OF WHICH YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD?

In order to achieve perfect product quality and meet strict customer requirements, at IWC we have always married traditional watchmaking with state-of-the-art manufacturing methods and technologies. For instance, we use special, high-precision turning and milling centres that incorporate the most advanced technology to produce our movement and case components. This allows us to reliably produce minimal tolerances in the region of a few thousandths of a millimetre. In contrast to this, our manufacture calibres are very carefully assembled by hand. I am particularly proud of how our assembly processes for the different calibre families are organised into dedicated lines. This way, not only are we systematically realising the business vision of our founder Florentine Ariosto Jones, whose thinking was way ahead of its time, but we are also maximising the quality standards we are able to attain in our assembly processes.

WHAT CAN VISITORS EXPECT WHEN THEY COME HERE?

The new Manufakturzentrum is just as much of a milestone for visitors as it is for our production processes themselves. In production areas that are bathed in natural light, guests can follow the production of our manufacture movements and cases step by step, and benefit from being able to witness these processes up close. The various steps are clearly illustrated on information boards, and on tables that have been specially set up for the purpose, watch enthusiasts can even try their hand at adding circular graining to movement components or setting stones. This gives them a good insight into how much concentration, patience and dexterity is required of our specialists in their day-to-day work.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE, WHAT ELSE IS IN STORE?

Currently, there are around 230 employees working in the Manufakturzentrum. With a maximum capacity of 400 highly qualified specialists and an incredibly flexible building layout, however, our new building puts IWC in an excellent position to accommodate further growth. I don't know whether we planned every detail as meticulously as Kurt Klaus did when he designed his iconic perpetual calendar, but I am certain that it will be quite some time before we need to think about expanding the building.

IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN

With a clear focus on technology and development, the Swiss watch manufacturer IWC Schaffhausen has been producing timepieces of lasting value since 1868. The company has gained an international reputation based on a passion for innovative solutions and technical ingenuity. One of the world's leading brands in the luxury watch segment, IWC crafts masterpieces of Haute Horlogerie at their finest, combining supreme precision with exclusive design. As an ecologically and socially responsible company, IWC is committed to sustainable production, supports institutions around the globe in their work with children and young people, and maintains partnerships with organisations dedicated to environmental protection.

DOWNLOADS

Photos of the official opening of the new Manufakturzentrum can be obtained free of charge at press.iwc.com

MORE INFORMATION

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