

Watch
GB 100

Swatch AG
1983



Armbanduhr, GB 100, Kollektion Frühling-Sommer
1983
Entwicklung: 1980–1982; Produktion: ab 1983
Herstellung: ETA AG, Grenchen, CH
Produktion: Swatch AG, Biel, CH / ASUAG (Allgemeine
Schweizer Uhren AG)
Material/Technik: Kunststoff
1 x 3.5 x 24 cm
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK

When Swatch debuted its watch in twelve colors in 1983, it changed the status and purpose of the Swiss watch. It was no longer a timepiece seen as a lifelong investment but rather a fashionable accessory that could adapt to new trends like a chameleon.

In the 1970s, the Swiss watch industry found itself at an unprecedented low point. From 1977 to 1983 the volume of exports declined by half. Although the world's first electronic wristwatch with quartz crystal display was developed in Neuchâtel in 1967, Japan was quicker to bring the new technology to the mass market, and Switzerland ending up losing its leading position. The radical reinvention of the Swiss watch by Swatch (Second Watch) has an economic, a technical, and an aesthetic aspect, with all three equally determining the development and design of the Swatch. Simplifying production was central to the undertaking: the watch's plastic housing (produced by injection molding) also serves as a mounting plate for the mere fifty-one components (instead of the ninety-one in typical watch movements), which are assembled in a fully automated process with ultrasonic welding technology. Despite

this pared-down construction, the Swatch, available for only fifty Swiss francs, runs on its mini-battery just as precisely as a chronometer. In 1983, the Swatch was presented in twelve colors—with plans to produce a million watches. But it was not until the plastic watch was reconceived as a fashion accessory that it experienced its true breakthrough. In the period from 1983 to 1989, the visual designers Jean Robert and Käti Robert-Durrer came up with five different product lines displaying great graphic diversity—something for every taste. Swatch thus became a pioneer of individualized surface design, a trend that would go on to shape the product culture—from sneakers to toothbrushes—in the 1990s. (Renate Menzi)

<https://www.eguide.ch/en/objekt/gb-100/>

Museum
für Gestaltung
Zürich

Zürcher
Hochschule der
Künste

museum-gestaltung.ch
eGuide.ch
eMuseum.ch