



COMBINING STYLE WITH TECHNOLOGICAL EXCELLENCE

The Omega stand at Baselworld 2015 drew visitors in with the promise of an alluring visual experience and the opportunity to explore the technology of the brand's renowned ceramic Speedmaster models. Guests had the choice of two entrances - the dark side and white side both of which drew them in to reveal a large model of the Moon surrounded by the various ceramic Speedmaster timepieces, including the Speedmaster Dark Side of the Moon collection, the Speedmaster Grey Side of the Moon and the Speedmaster White Side of the Moon. The visual feast saw flashing lights highlighting the moon model and the timepieces themselves, while snippets of recordings from NASA missions were played on the speakers surrounding the display. Visitors were able to watch a video showing the advanced processes used to craft the popular ceramic wristwatches. The brand launched a number of exciting models, which are sure to find their way into exclusive watch collections across the world.



OMEGA'S MASTER CO-AXIAL WATCHES

Omega introduced anti-magnetic movements on a large scale in their Master Co-Axial watches in early 2014 and by the end of the year, sitting alongside the Swiss Institute of Metrology (METAS), announced their collaboration on a new watch certification process which the brand will begin using in 2015 to test each of its Master Co-Axial watches. At the press announcement, President of Omega, Stephen Urquhart recalled some of the technological milestones in the brand's long history, including its launch in 2013 of a mechanical movement resistant to magnetic fields greater than 15,000 gauss. He explained that the increasing number of magnets in our daily lives can affect the performance of watches, and showed a short film explaining how Omega had overcome one of watchmaking's greatest challenges. Swatch Group CEO Nick Hayek explained that in recent years it has become obvious that the COSC chronometer certification, long the industry norm, needs to be strengthened. It is for this reason that in the middle of 2015, the first Omega watches will be produced with the Master Co-Axial Officially Certified designation. Perhaps the most significant difference between the new certification and its predecessors is that it will test the finished watch instead of its movement. The new certification enables watchmakers the opportunity to demonstrate the quality and timekeeping performance of their watches to a far greater extent than had been previously possible. The collaboration on the certification between Omega and METAS revealed no favourable bias towards the brand, and clients other than Omega would also have access to the same certification.

Andreas Hobmeier, Omega Vice President of Production and Procurement, spoke in detail about the tests each Master Co-Axial watch will have to pass in order to earn the "Officially Certified" distinction. The watches will be tested for their precision during and after exposure to magnetic fields greater than 15,000 gauss – they will have to perform within a tolerance of 0 and +5 seconds per day, for autonomy (functioning without winding, measured in hours) and water resistance.

Photos: © Omega

THE GLOBEMASTER

The Globemaster houses Omega's most advanced mechanical movement and features a design inspired by early Constellation models that represent horological expertise and the brand's legacy of precision and outstanding performance. Two design features that define the Globemaster, are its pie-pan dial, and the "fluted" bezel, an element that has decorated several famous Constellation watches. Omega's history also influenced the Globemaster's caseback. Representing the precision awards that the watchmaker received for the outstanding performance of its movements during the famous chronometer observatory trials in the 1940s and 1950s is a medallion stamped with an image of a cupola of an observatory where the precision competitions took place. Eight stars in the sky above the observatory symbolise the most important precision records that Omega set and, reflecting how the brand's commitment to quality has endured, the stars also signify the eight METAS-certified criteria that a timepiece and its movement must pass in order to receive Master Chronometer status.



A BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

Just a few months later, at a highly attended event at Basel's von Bartha art gallery, Omega unveiled the highlight of its new collection – The Globemaster – and the certification that makes it such a revolutionary timepiece. The Globemaster, with its iconic pie-pan dial and fluted bezel, is the world's first Master Chronometer – it is the first mechanical timepiece to not only exceed the standards established by the Contrôle Officiel Suisse des Chronomètres (COSC) but also pass the stringent tests that are part of the certification process approved by the Swiss Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS). At the event, Omega Vice President of Product and Customer Service, Jean-Claude Monachon presented the METAS certification process and described the Globemaster in more detail. He explained that the eight stars on the caseback of the watch not only signify eight of the most important precision records that Omega's movements set in the 1940s and 1950s, but that they also represent the eight tests a watch must pass to become a Master Chronometer. He went on to say that the symbolic use of these eight stars and the eight certification criteria show that Omega aims to offer its customers only the best when it comes to precision. Following the presentations, guests were able to view showcases displaying the vintage models that inspired the Globemaster and the full Globemaster collection. Writing on the walls surrounding the displays described the Globemaster timepieces and outlined the criteria a watch and its movement must pass in order to become certified as a Master Chronometer. The exhibition also included an interactive station where guests could learn about the strength of the magnetic fields of objects they use on a daily basis and they could even measure the magnetic fields of their personal items, like cell phones, tablets, cameras or handbag clasps.





THE CERAMIC SPEEDMASTER COLLECTION

The Globmaster was not the only highly prized timepiece in Omega's Baselworld collection. When the Speedmaster Dark Side of the Moon was launched in 2013, it captured the attention of watch fans and collectors around the world. Inspired by the incredible discoveries NASA astronauts made while exploring space, the watch held true to the pioneering spirit of the brand, and paid homage to its impressive space legacy. Today, Omega's collection of ceramic watches includes nine striking models, which also undergo a stringent eight-stage process before finding their way to the wrists of discerning customers worldwide. In the forming of the casebody, raw ceramic material (ZrO₂) is pressed into the desired shape – an oversized version of the case. From there, the case undergoes sintering, when it is heated in a furnace at a smouldering 1,400°C so that it shrinks to the right size. Once cooled the ceramic casebody has to be machined with diamond tools because stainless steel tools are too soft. In the case of the Speedmaster Grey Side of the Moon the case is subjected to an unimaginable 20,000°C for three hours in a plasma heating chamber, transforming it to metallic grey-coloured ceramic. In the fifth stage - Tachymeter scale enhancement – the scale is laser engraved and either metallised with chromium nitride or filled with hand-applied Super-LumiNova. Then it is time to add the diamonds to the bezel. An angled recess is laser engraved directly on the ceramic bezel and a ring of Pt850 Liquidmetal® is cut from a disc and used to fill the recess. The excess Pt850 Liquidmetal® material is then removed. Next the holes are prepared and the diamonds are set. For this production step, heated tools are used to fold over the Pt850 Liquidmetal® in order to hold the diamonds in place. Quality control occurs at each stage of the production process.

Photos: © Omega





THE EVOCATIVE CONSTELLATION PLUMA

Long-admired for its elegant, understated design which combines innovation with style, the Constellation family, revealed its newest member at Baselworld 2015. Taking their name from the Latin word for feather, these stunning timepieces are characterised by the unique design engraved on their mother-of-pearl dials. The 18K red gold bezel of this ladies' wristwatch is paved with 32 full-cut diamonds, adding to the overall style of this piece. This Constellation Pluma is presented on a bracelet with brushed stainless steel links and polished 18 carat red-gold bars. The Omega Co-Axial calibre 8520, at its heart, is visible through a domed scratch-resistant caseback and the precision and reliability of this mechanical movement is such that the timepiece is offered with a full four-year warranty. This year, Omega has unveiled an evocative interpretation of the Constellation Pluma, whose light coral-coloured dial is reminiscent of the warm sunshine on a summer day. Similar to its sisters, this 27-mm timepiece is decorated with 11 diamond indexes in 18 carat gold holders and a soft-wavy pattern that flows between the iconic claws on the bezel. Its polished and faceted central hour, minute and seconds hands, are crafted from 18 carat gold and coated with white Super-LumiNova, so the time can be read in a variety of lighting conditions. ■ Lindsay Grubb



Photos: © Omega



Timepieces