

Press release

Beijing November 8th, 2024

‘Swiss Design Classics’ opens: largest and most complete exhibition of original Swiss designs in China

As a warm-up activity for the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Switzerland in 2025, the ‘Swiss Design Classics’ exhibition, jointly hosted by the Embassy of Switzerland in China and the Today Art Museum and curated by Christian Herren, was unveiled on November 8th, 2024, Building No.2, Today Art Museum, Beijing. It is the largest and most complete ever undertaking of original pieces of Swiss design in China.

The opening, inaugurated by Swiss Ambassador to China Jürg Burri and Director of Today Art Museum Jessica Zhang, was attended by more than 200 design experts and enthusiasts.

The ‘Swiss Design Classics’ exhibition is presented by the Embassy of Switzerland in China, in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics, USM, Switzerland Tourism, and local and international partners. Featuring more than 200 Swiss iconic design works, the exhibition includes six major chapters – Original Furniture, Ground-breaking Innovations, Tourism Posters, Swiss Stools, Max Bill’s Legacy, and Most Beautiful Swiss Books. It encapsulates the rich 400-year history of Swiss design, covering from everyday objects to design inventions that have influenced the world, allowing visitors an up close and personal experience of the unique charm of Swiss design.

The 75 iconic furniture pieces of the exhibition feature the evolution of Swiss craftsmanship from humble beginnings to global recognition. At the same time, over 50 carefully selected travel and tourism posters that exemplify Switzerland’s unique approach to visual communication showcase the profound foundation of graphic design in Swiss culture. 20 stools from different years reflect the evolution of Swiss design, celebrated for their simplicity and functionality.

A key focus of the exhibition is Switzerland’s ongoing commitment to innovation – not only in design but also in fields such as engineering, healthcare, and sustainability. From ground-breaking inventions such as sparkling water and aluminium foil to pioneering approaches in research and development, Switzerland continues to drive progress across a range of industries. The exhibition features a special section honouring the influential Swiss artist, designer, and teacher Max Bill, including furniture, posters,

and limited edition prints designed by Bill. It also pays tribute to the 80th anniversary of the Most Beautiful Swiss Books competition, offering a glimpse of book designs that have won international acclaim in recent years.

For 14 consecutive years, Switzerland has consistently retained its leading position in the Global Innovation Index by the World Intellectual Property Organization, with design innovation being one of its important areas. 'Although Switzerland is not a giant, our influence in global innovation and design is extremely profound. We have set examples in fields like economy, education, and national and social governance,' Ambassador Burri said in his opening remarks. 'And so', he added, 'we did in design!'

'Today Art Museum is dedicated to fostering global cultural dialogue. Every exhibit in this showcase is a prime example of the quintessence of Swiss design. Our aim is to bring the true spirit of Swiss design to all art and design enthusiasts through this exhibition,' the director of Today Art Museum Jessica Zhang said at the opening.

'It's fascinating to see how many Swiss designs and innovations – from iconic items like Swiss Railways Clock, to more unexpected ones like the curved-neck toilet cleaner bottle – are familiar in China, yet the stories behind them are little known,' said curator Christian Herren.

The 'Swiss Design Classics' exhibition is part of the Swiss Embassy's public diplomacy campaign 2024-2025. It will be open to the public from November 9th, 2024 to January 12th, 2025, followed by touring exhibitions in Nanjing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai. Potential further locations will be announced later.

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