

NYC WATCH SUMMIT

**From Geneva to New York:
The Fondation Haute Horlogerie Celebrates the Resounding
Success of Its First Watch Summit in the U.S.**



FHH Watch Summit 2025 – New York

New York, October 21, 2025 In its 20th anniversary year, the Fondation Haute Horlogerie (FHH) took a historic step by hosting the first-ever FHH Watch Summit outside Switzerland, held in New York City on October 17, 2025. The event marked a defining milestone in the Foundation's mission to make watchmaking knowledge universal, accessible, and inspiring.

A resounding success, the Summit drew a full house at The Glasshouse Chelsea, welcoming close to 300 attendees throughout the day's panels — a vibrant mix of industry professionals and friends, members of the press, collectors, and passionate enthusiasts who gathered to explore the future of fine watchmaking.



A Global Forum for the Future of Watchmaking

The FHH Forum, traditionally held in Geneva, travelled to the United States for the first time, in collaboration with NYU Stern, Hodinkee, and WWD. Hosted at The Glasshouse Chelsea, the Forum opened with welcoming remarks from Ambassador Niculin Jaeger, Consul General of Switzerland in New York, who praised the initiative as “a testament to the partnership between Switzerland and the United States. Swiss watchmaking is more than an industry – it is a reflection of our culture and precision. Bringing the FHH Forum to the United States – Switzerland’s most important export market – reflects how deeply intertwined our countries are in advancing this tradition into the future.”

Throughout the day, the Forum tackled key topics shaping the future of fine watchmaking through four engaging panels that brought together leading industry experts and renowned U.S. personalities.

Moderated by influential voices from NYU Stern, WWD, Hodinkee, and Craft + Tailored, the discussions featured high-profile figures such as Patrick Pruniaux, Wei Koh, and Paul Boutros, reflecting the FHH’s growing ability to unite thought leaders from across and beyond the industry.

The atmosphere was one of true exchange and conviviality, with an attentive, reactive audience, moments of lightness, and a few unexpected twists that made the day feel both authentic and inspiring – a genuine celebration of ideas, people, and passion for watchmaking.



Ambassador Niculin Jaeger, Consul General of Switzerland in New York

Taste, Time and Value: Ushering the New Age of Luxury

The programme began with “Ushering the New Age of Luxury,” moderated by Professor Thomai Serdari, PhD, Professor of Marketing and Director of the Luxury & Retail MBA at NYU Stern. The panel brought together Jean-Emmanuel Biondi, Head of Fashion & Luxury at Deloitte Consulting US; Wei Koh, CEO and Founder of Revolution and The Rake magazines; and Patrick Pruniaux, Co-Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Sowind Group.

Professor Serdari set the stage by introducing the crowd to the “mille-feuille theory”, named after the French pastry which includes intricately constructed alternating layers of puff pastry and pastry cream. “The idea is that luxury is as delicate as this dessert,” Professor Serdari explained. “It has so many layers that one can keep uncovering the craftsmanship, the product excellence, the raw materials, and the individuality of the creator.” Using this theory as a lens, Serdari identified what she believes to be three key bottlenecks for consumers to familiarize and engage with luxury watch brands: brand building (being more brand-driven than product-driven), democratization (the industry remains too exclusive and traditional), and retail experiences (a potentially too intimidating and transactional process). With these three key elements in mind, the conversation turned to the behaviors of Millennial and Gen Z consumers.

In an increasingly digital age, Wei Koh raised the notion that the sizeable wave of new, younger watch enthusiasts stems from a desire to seek refuge or create a boundary from the disposable, digital world they find themselves too immersed in. “The younger generation is focused specifically on that which is missing from contemporary culture, which is craftsmanship, native art, right?,” Koh said, “It’s almost as if they fall in love with watchmakers who intentionally regressed through industrial times and try to fabricate everything by hand.”

Though the romance and craftsmanship of luxury watchmaking have intrigued young buyers, statistics reveal there are obstacles to overcome. Armed with the data of the latest Deloitte Swiss Watch Industry Study released earlier this month, Jean-Emmanuel Biondi revealed that, “58% of the customers are saying they can’t pay more than US\$1,500, US\$2,000 to buy a watch.” This key figure affirms Serdari’s belief that watch brands need to create new entry points for younger consumers without compromising quality. It also explains why the 2025 Swiss Watch Industry Study also highlights how 40% of young buyers enter through the secondary market, almost double the number compared to the boomer generation. Young buyers are finding the secondary market is a more viable entrance fiscally, which, in turn, has an effect on the primary, retail market.

To better entice or speak to a new generation of watch buyers, some brands have explored incorporating sustainable materials into their creations. However, Patrick Pruniaux, who oversees both Ulysse Nardin and Girard-Perregaux, is not convinced that sustainability-driven offerings are a strong purchase motivator.

“Using sustainable materials is not a main driver for buying a luxury watch,” Pruniaux explains. “But it doesn’t mean because it’s not that we shouldn’t be doing it.” He believes it is a very important effort to make in regard to bringing further awareness to the cause, but notes it is more expensive. Citing the first batch of Ulysse Nardin’s Diver Net watch, which utilises a significant amount of recycled and upcycled materials, Pruniaux pointed out that the cost of making the case was almost equivalent to the cost of forging one in gold. With the budgetary constraints of young watch buyers illustrated in the 2025 Swiss Watch Industry Study, the target market is perhaps priced out.

The watch industry has tremendous potential with an enthusiastic new generation, but it appears it must modernize its approach to brand building, retail, and customer relationships while maintaining its core strength in craftsmanship and heritage, based on these expert sentiments and data points.



Patrick Pruniaux, Co-founder, Chairman and CEO of Sowind Group, Jean-Emmanuel Biondi, Head of Fashion & Luxury, Deloitte Consulting US, Tracey Llewellyn, Global Editorial Director Revolution, Wei Koh, Founder of Revolution and The Rake Magazines

Today's Evolving Luxury Consumer

The second panel, "Today's Evolving Luxury Consumer," presented by Kathy Lee, Deputy Editor of WWD, featured Austen Chu, Founder & CEO of Wristcheck; Malaika Crawford, Editorial Director of Hodinkee Magazine; Johannes Huebl, personality and watch collector; and Todd Snyder, fashion designer. The conversation explored how transparency, authenticity, and emotional storytelling are redefining the relationship between brands and their audiences.

For the new, evolving luxury consumer, Todd Snyder believes the established titans of the industry can no longer simply rely on their name and brand power alone. "The younger generation doesn't really care about brand names anymore," Snyder explains. "I have 2 daughters who are in their 20s, and brands mean nothing."

With the rise of digital watch media and accessibility of information, consumers are more educated about luxury watches than ever before. By consuming the now-abundant number of articles, social media, and longer-form video content surrounding watches, the evolving luxury consumer now places more emphasis on the makeup of a novelty than the name of its maker.

The panellists called out how rising "delusional prices" and scarcity of in-demand big-name models have driven a new era of watch buyers to seek out more approachable offerings that meet the benchmarks of what such evolved consumers are now seeking. With the gap for more entry-luxury products becoming clearer in the wake of climbing prices across the industry, emerging brands from China, the UK, Italy, Korea, Japan, and more are capturing the attention of young buyers with offerings that showcase the desired level of craftsmanship and design at a more affordable price.

The makeup of what a luxury consumer looks like, and how they interact with luxury watches, has significantly evolved as well. "Luxury right now is more about comfort, and it's less about aesthetics," Austin Chu shared. "Whereas I would say 30 years ago, if you were driving a nice car and if you weren't wearing a suit, people would just say that you stole that car. But now, if you're driving a nice car and you're wearing a suit, people assume that you're the driver." This phenomenon runs in stark contrast to the traditional, established status quo luxury watch brands are more accustomed to. The consensus was clear: luxury watch brands will need to reshape their notions of the consumer to better keep up with them, or risk losing relevance.



Malaika Crawford, Editorial Director Hodinkee Magazine, Austen Chu, Founder and CEO of Wristcheck



Kathy Lee, Deputy editor of WWD, Johannes Huebl, Personality and Watch Collector, Malaika Crawford, Editorial Director, Hodinkee Magazine, Austen Chu, Founder and CEO of Wristcheck, Todd Snyder, Fashion Designer

The Rise of the Secondary Market

In “The Rise of the Secondary Market,” moderated by Cameron Barr, CEO of Craft + Tailored, panelists Paul Boutros, Deputy Chairman and Head of Watches, Americas – Phillips Auctioneers; Georgia Benjamin, collector and content creator; and James Lamdin, Founder of Analog:Shift and Vice President of Vintage & Pre-Owned Timepieces at the Watches of Switzerland Group, discussed how the pre-owned sector has become an incredible avenue to satiate the hunger learn about more historical watches and purchase pieces with rich heritage and designs. However, such exponential growth does not mean there is not room for further development.

Whether for educational reasons, the allure of more attractive market prices, or stronger, direct ties to watchmaking heritage and history, vintage and pre-owned watches have become a major driver of bringing a new generation of collectors and enthusiasts into the mix.

Though a booming segment of the luxury watch world today, James Lamdin made it clear that this did not happen overnight. “20 years ago, 25 years ago, when I started collecting, you would go to an auction, and there might be like 4 or 5 dealers in the world,” Lamdin recalled. As emerging digital content placed more of a spotlight on vintage and pre-owned watches with information formerly gatekept by obscure print catalogues, books, and early online forums, auction houses and their expansive catalogues of highly curated and fascinating lots became a ripe venue for those seeking more knowledge to get more hands-on. “The fastest, easiest and quickest way to learn about watches is to come to an auction house,” Paul Boutros explained. “In one venue, you can see 100 - 200 watches across brands, across eras, across aesthetics. You get to try them on, and you can speak to a specialist with zero pressure to buy.”

Education is certainly key within the segment of pre-owned and vintage, which notably does not have the same foolproof assurances of authenticity as modern pieces purchased in the primary market at retail. This has led to the emergence of Certified Pre-Owned programs by major players such as Rolex, which stands to have a significant impact on the market as brands with such programs attempt to wrangle more control of the secondary market of their products. That being said, according to the panellists, the sector stands to benefit from further educational growth and consistency. “I would love to see more transparency and education around the reasoning of high prices and the condition,” Georgia Benjamin expressed.

This prompted Lamdin to call out the need for a better-established, common language in which all pre-owned dealers are applying common listing descriptors, such as “unpolished”, in a consistent manner. Until such terminology is applied to listings consistently, the wild, wild west roots of the pre-owned segment will not be fully shed. Both Lamdin and Boutros illuminated the misguided emphasis on commonly sought out elements for pre-owned listings such as “box and papers” which offer a false sense of security. Instead, it was suggested that prospective buyers remember to always “buy the seller” and instead seek out vendors that stand behind the authenticity of their inventory with money-back guarantees.



Cameron Barr, CEO of Craft + Tailored (moderator), Georgia Benjamin, Collector & Content Creator, James Lamdin, Founder, Analog:Shift; Vice President of Vintage & Pre-Owned Timepieces of Watches of Switzerland Group, Paul Boutros, Deputy Chairman and Head of Watches, Americas for Phillips Auctioneers

Myths and Misconceptions in Watchmaking

The Forum concluded with “Myths and Misconceptions in Watchmaking,” moderated by Tim Jeffreys, Deputy Editor of Editorial at Hodinkee. The panel featured Ines Hatzmannsberger, International Communication, Nomos Glashütte; James Kong, Founder of Fleming and Waitlisted; and TanTan Wang, Editor at Hodinkee. Together, they examined the enduring role of storytelling in shaping modern watch culture and how it can both illuminate and mystify the world of luxury watchmaking.

Two key funnels for information about watches were called out in the discussion. The first is the brand’s own communications on its various platforms, and the second is “enthusiast press” platforms like Hodinkee, which are, admittedly, dependent at times on the brand’s communications. Depending on the transparency and clarity of the source information, it can cause a game of telephone in which, by the time the information reaches the target audience, elements of misinformation can arise.

“We want to educate and we want to entertain,” says TanTan Wang. “So how do you actually balance that without being unfaithful to representing what you’re actually talking about?” With each brand “speaking its own language”, TanTan points out the Rosseta Stone-like translation watch press must master, translating the information into “plain English.” The constant communication the digital age affords has led to certain cultural rhetorics, or unwritten rules that have since proven to be misconceptions. One such example is the idea that “in-house” always equates to better, when in reality, there are nuances to what in-house or “manufacture calibres” actually mean. If such terms are misunderstood or misinterpreted, then how can anyone be sure-footed in their praise or criticism of a watch? Despite the best efforts of all participants within the information ecosystem, an anecdote from Ines Hatzmannsberger suggests that some realities and inherent complexities and nuances lead to inevitable confusion.

Nomos is one of 10+ brands located in Glashütte, and the close proximity of the manufactures, and usage of the region in their names has resulted in surprisingly frequent mixups. “Many people think Glashütte is a brand. Glashütte is a town in Germany. A very small town, only about 2000 people live there, but it is a town,” Hatzmannsberger explained. The result of this point of confusion surprised attendees of the event. “Every other week”, according to Hatzmannsberger, Nomos receives watches that are mistakenly sent to the manufacture. In particular, many Glashütte Original owners have sent their timepieces for servicing, not realising they have sent their watch to the wrong location. Fortunately, as a small town, it is not a terrible inconvenience to walk it over to the right manufacture. Ultimately, the panellists all agreed that the industry needs balanced storytelling that is both engaging and accurate, with the complexity and nuance of watchmaking properly considered and relayed to worldwide audiences of watch media.



Tim Jeffreys, Deputy Editor of Editorial, Hodinkee (moderator), Ines Hatzmannsberger, International Communication, Nomos Glashütte, James Kong, Fleming, @waitlisted, TanTan Wang, Editor, Hodinkee

Throughout the day, speakers and participants shared a unifying message: the strength of watchmaking lies in its ability to evolve while preserving authenticity, a philosophy deeply aligned with the Fondation Haute Horlogerie’s mission to foster understanding, education, and cultural dialogue worldwide.

Education at the Heart of the Mission: The FHH Academy Launches its Consumer Certification

Earlier that day, the FHH Academy announced to the U.S. press the launch of the FHH Certification for Consumers, marking a new chapter in its educational mission.

Already recognised as the global reference for professional training among watch brands and retailers, the Academy now opens its doors to the public through an online platform offering interactive learning modules and an official certification designed to deepen understanding and appreciation of fine watchmaking.



Kilyan Danièle, FHH Academy International Program Manager

This first-level certification, “Watch Advisor,” is introduced through the Watch Essentials Video Series — a 10-chapter course featuring watchmakers, historians, and specialists exploring the foundations of fine watchmaking: history, craftsmanship, movements, complications, and iconic timepieces.

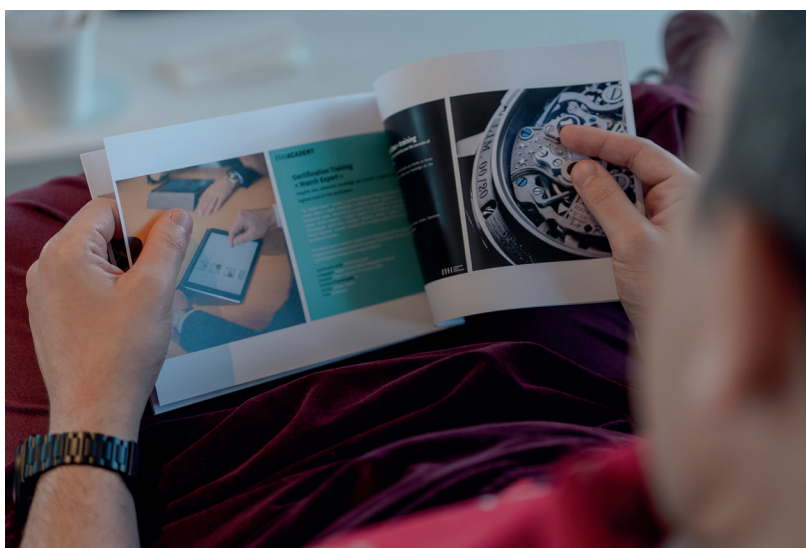
“The launch of this certification brings a new dimension of the Academy to the U.S. community of watch lovers,” said Aurélie Streit, Vice President of the Fondation Haute Horlogerie. “It’s the beginning of a journey we want to share globally — making watchmaking knowledge more inclusive, accessible, and engaging for everyone.”

The FHH Certification pathway comprises three progressive levels — Watch Advisor, Watch Specialist, and Watch Expert — all available on the FHH Boutique. To celebrate the launch, the Academy is offering a 20% discount until the end of 2025.

The press conference was followed by a hands-on watchmaking workshop, where leading U.S. media experienced the art of assembling a mechanical movement under the guidance of FHH trainers.

“As Aurélie Streit added, “Our mission is to share watchmaking knowledge everywhere, with everyone. By coming to New York, we are showing how culture, craftsmanship, and education can come together to inspire the next generation of watch lovers.”

This launch represents a key milestone in the FHH’s mission to bridge professional expertise with public curiosity, reinforcing its commitment to making horological culture inclusive, credible, and accessible to all.



Trang Trinh, «Girl's O'clock»

“Watches and Culture: A Talk with New York” – An Evening of Creative Dialogue

The Summit was preceded by “Watches and Culture: A Talk With New York”, held on October 16 at the Swiss Institute.

Moderated by journalist Scarlett Baker, the evening gathered Brynn Wallner, Mojdeh Cutter, Nolan Daniel White, and Adrian Douzmanian—creative voices whose journeys into watchmaking reflect how timepieces transcend craftsmanship to embody emotion, community, and shared meaning.

More than a hundred guests—including curators, students, and young collectors—attended the lively discussion, which echoed the spirit of previous Watches and Culture events in London.

As Maxime Couturier, from Watches and Culture by FHH, explained:

“Watches and Culture is about creating moments of authenticity and lightness, where passion for watchmaking can be shared openly and inclusively. From London to New York, these gatherings bring freshness and sincerity to the conversation, reminding us that watches are not just objects of craftsmanship, but bridges between people and cultures.”

The evening set the tone for the Summit, informal, inspiring, and deeply human, reaffirming the Fondation Haute Horlogerie’s belief that culture remains the most powerful driver of connection in the watchmaking world.



Credits: Evan Angelastro.
Mojdeh Cutter, Adrian Douzmanian, Nolan Daniel White, Brynn Wallner, and Scarlett Baker

With these initiatives, the Fondation Haute Horlogerie reaffirmed its role as the global reference for watchmaking culture—neutral, universal, and forward-looking. Its recent recognition by Swiss authorities as an institution of public utility underscores its commitment to promoting watchmaking as a living art form, rooted in excellence yet open to all.

About Fondation Haute Horlogerie

Founded in 2005 by Audemars Piguet, Girard-Perregaux and the Richemont Group, the Fondation Haute Horlogerie (FHH) has since focused its mission on the international influence of watchmaking culture and positions the watch as an object of art and culture. The FHH serves as a neutral reference in watchmaking, supported by three pillars. 'Watches and Culture' brings watchmaking culture to life through original content, events, and international meetings for both the public and professionals. The 'FHH Academy' offers training and certification for current professionals and future enthusiasts, with courses available in over 20 countries, both in-person and online. The 'FHH Forum' is an industry-driven platform for discussion and debate, connecting leaders to shape the future of watchmaking. Around 40 watch brands actively support the FHH's mission to preserve and promote watchmaking culture and heritage.

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