



In this file photo an employee of Swiss watchmaker H Moser & Cie assembles a wristwatch at the “Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie” (SIHH) professional fair in fine watchmaking in Geneva. — AFP photos



An employee of Swiss watchmaker Audemars Piguet checks a wristwatch during the opening day of the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH), a professional fair in fine watchmaking, in Geneva.

Decorating with antiques

By Engineer Yousef Al Samhan

Antiques are a beautiful and themed way to decorate for a particular style of home, it may be that they are placed within a modern home or the house itself is old and antique.

Many antiques are used as art only and displayed as such however, the real beauty of antique furniture is that it can still be used. Whether it is a Georgian mahogany sideboard or a 19th century chest of drawers, items of furniture that can be used especially for storage are obviously valuable in two ways.

Choosing a piece is quite a specialist task. I do believe that the most important aspect of an antique is that you really enjoy it either visually, practically or both. I have seen some homes filled with antiques that are so overwhelming that the items are lost within the clutter. Other homes I have seen have items that seem to have lost all sense of proportion. Of course, design is subjective so each to their own but as a designer I believe it is extremely important to have balance.

Be very careful when using anyone who claims that they are able to restore the furniture or artwork. Ensure that written testimonials are checked or that the company is well established and recommended by the dealers. There have been cases of items being devalued as a result of poor or incorrect work and others that have substituted artwork. Not that this is common when dealing with these companies but these are very valuable items and should be treated as such.

Note: Interior design consultant and CEO of MY12 Creations Interior Design and contracting Co.

Art of watchmaking gets UNESCO heritage status

The craftsmanship of Swiss and French mechanical watchmaking on Wednesday won UNESCO intangible heritage status, casting the spotlight on an art practiced for centuries in the Jura mountain region straddling the two countries. Inclusion on the prestigious global list highlights “a living and emblematic tradition in the French-Swiss Jura Arc,” the Swiss cultural ministry said in a statement. The craftsmanship getting the UNESCO nod sits at a “crossroads of science, art and technology,” the UN agency said.

UNESCO annually announces a list of cultural artefacts that encapsulate the spirit and heritage of their countries. Switzerland and France had last year presented a joint application for their centuries-old cross-border watchmaking craft to be included on the list. Their listing covers the skills related to the craftsmanship of mechanical watchmaking and art mechanics, which are used to create watches, clocks and other objects designed to measure and indicate time. But the manufacture of automatons, music boxes and mechanical songbirds are also included.

And techniques range from the manual and traditional to the cutting-edge and innovative. “Though generally hidden, the mechanisms can also be visible, which contributes to the aesthetics and poetic dimension of the objects,” the UNESCO listing said. The Swiss-French Jura Arc, stretching from Geneva to Basel, is considered the cradle of the European time keeping industry, with the craft practiced there for centuries.

French theologian Jean Calvin, the influential reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, actually played a role in embedding watchmaking in the region. By banning the wearing of ornamental objects in 1541, he “in effect forced goldsmiths and other jewelers to turn to a different art: that of watchmaking,” the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry explains on its site. The



File photo taken in Geneva at the “Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie” (SIHH) professional fair in fine watchmaking shows the MB&F Balthazar clock.

fact that numerous Protestants fleeing prosecution in France also fled into the city, bringing their watchmaking skills with them, also helped embed the craft in the city. Today, the Jura region remains bustling with watchmaking companies, big and small, with highly qualified craftspeople and a multitude of training options.

In Switzerland alone, 57,500 people are employed in the sector, which counts a broad range of professions that are needed to assemble the casings and internal mechanics of a precision timepiece. Watchmaking is the third largest export sector in the Alpine country, with exports ticking in at nearly 22 billion Swiss francs (\$25 billion, 20 billion euros) last year. — AFP



Rebuilt Prussian palace, scarred by history, opens in Berlin

A reconstructed Prussian palace opened in Berlin on Wednesday as a museum complex housing colonial artifacts, just as debate is gathering pace around the return of treasures plundered from abroad. The opening ceremony for the Humboldt Forum, which will house attractions including the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, will take place virtually due to restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Launched in 2013, the huge renovation project in central Berlin has been plagued by delays, controversy and spiralling costs—much like the capital’s ill-fated new international airport that opened in October.

Critics have seized on the new building being home to a museum housing nearly 20,000 artifacts from Africa, Asia and Oceania, mostly from the former colonies. In an oblique reference to the controversy at a media presentation Wednesday, Berlin Mayor Michael Mueller said the Humboldt Forum would be “a place to reflect on our history and our place in the world”. Until the fall of the German Empire at the end of World War I, the palace was the main residence of the Hohenzollerns, instigators of German colonialism. The construction has also cost some 677 million euros (\$823 million) — almost 100 million more than originally planned.

The original palace was a victim of Berlin’s history, including World War II and the division between East and West. Partly destroyed by bombing during the war, it was then completely razed to the ground by communist East Germany after the defeat of the Nazis. It was replaced by the Palace of the Republic, an austere modernist slab with reflective orange windows that housed the regime’s parliament and a cultural and leisure centre. In the new palace designed by Italian architect Franco Stella, three-quarters of the facades are replicas of the Baroque originals. — AFP