

Press Release

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Günter Blümlein's Legacy

A. Lange & Söhne remembers its visionary co-founder on the 25th anniversary of his death

Together with Walter Lange, Günter Blümlein brought A. Lange & Söhne back to the forefront of international precision watchmaking following the reunification of Germany. Even a quarter of a century after his sudden death on the 1st of October 2001, his legacy lives on in the company's culture and in every timepiece produced by the manufacture.



Günter Blümlein (1943–2001)

“Without Günter Blümlein, A. Lange & Söhne would no longer exist – and Glashütte would not once again be the centre of German precision watchmaking today,” Walter Lange once remarked in his characteristic forthright manner. The great-grandson of Ferdinand Adolph Lange, with the active support of his esteemed business partner Günter Blümlein, revived the legend of this time-honoured brand after a forced hiatus of over forty years, thereby re-establishing the Saxon precision watchmaking tradition in Glashütte for a second time.

To make this ambitious project a reality, it took support from a proven expert with a keen understanding of the industry, professional expertise, entrepreneurial vision and courage. In Günter Blümlein, they found a bridge-builder who brought people and ideas together without ever losing sight of the bigger picture. "Günter Blümlein knew how to make watches and how to lead people; he was an outstanding manager and strategist. He was an expert in marketing, and he understood the A. Lange & Söhne brand. I have never before met a man with so many talents," recalled Walter Lange.

A key figure in the mechanical renaissance

Born in Nuremberg in 1943, the Franconian began his career – after studying precision engineering – at the Diehl Group, which had taken over Uhrenfabrik Junghans in the 1950s. Günter Blümlein was soon entrusted with senior positions in marketing and sales until VDO – which later became a Mannesmann subsidiary – gave him responsibility for reorganising the IWC and Jaeger-LeCoultre brands, which were grouped under the holding company "Les Manufactures Horlogères" (LMH). Like much of the Swiss watch industry, these brands were suffering from the consequences of the quartz crisis. With his shrewd understanding of the times, strategic foresight and consistent brand management, Günter Blümlein played a key role in the renaissance of the Swiss mechanical watch. The revival of A. Lange & Söhne in 1990, meant that he also paved the way for Saxon precision watchmaking's return to the international haute horlogerie stage.



This TOURBILLON "Pour le Mérite", with the limited edition number 1/50, was often seen on Blümlein's wrist.

When Time Came Home

Firmly convinced that a comeback for the once world-famous, long-established brand was possible, Günter Blümlin and Walter Lange made A. Lange & Söhne's history their mission: the exceptional quality of the brand's historic pocket watches would form the basis of a strong brand and product philosophy centred on craftsmanship. Günter Blümlin described the concept: "A Lange watch is a complete work of art. It combines the watchmakers' passion for mechanics and craftsmanship with the house's unmistakable style and its rich history." When the first four Lange wristwatches of the new era were unveiled on the 24th of October 1994 at the Dresden Royal Palace, connoisseurs and enthusiasts of masterful watchmaking were immediately captivated. The model that contributed most to this resurgence was the LANGE 1, with its off-centre dial and outsize date, which remains as distinctive today as it was then. With the TOURBILLON "Pour le Mérite", boasting a fusée-and-chain transmission, and the ARKADE and SAXONIA models, A. Lange & Söhne immediately secured a firm place in the world of precision watchmaking.



Günter Blümlin and Walter Lange present the DATOGRAPH at Baselworld 1999.

Key contributions to precision watchmaking

Further innovations followed, confirming Walter Lange and Günter Blümlin's commitment to consistently forging their own path. One of the most significant of these was the DATOGRAPH, launched in 1999. At a time when chronograph movements designed and manufactured in-house were the exception, the manufacture calibre set new standards.

With the DOUBLE SPLIT in 2004 – the launch of which Günter Blümlein did not live to see – the manufacture created the first chronograph with a double rattrapante in the history of precision watchmaking. The inclusion of a second minute counter made it possible to extend the range for intermediate time measurements from 60 seconds to 30 minutes. It was also the first model to feature the balance spring, which the manufacture developed and produced in-house. This expertise laid the foundation for maximum independence in developing new movements. It was one of Günter Blümlein's many forward-thinking decisions, from which the manufacture continues to benefit today. His ideals, his courage and his vision continue to shape A. Lange & Söhne to this day.



The commemorative relief in the workshop in honour of Günter Blümlein.

A lasting memento

In the Lange II manufacture building, a bronze relief commemorates Günter Blümlein. The piece by Schaffhausen-based artist Beat Künzler was commissioned after his death and unveiled on the first anniversary in 2002 during a memorial service attended by management, partners and staff. It shows Günter Blümlein with that determined look that some Lange employees still fondly remember today. In the background, the unmistakable dial of the LANGE 1 can be seen – symbolic of A. Lange & Söhne's successful revival.

“Walter Lange was the heart, Günter Blümlein the brain behind A. Lange & Söhne. It was only by working together that the two of them managed to create something great and unique,” says Lange CEO Wilhelm Schmid, paying tribute to the dynamic duo's joint efforts. “Without the other, each of them would probably have been left shipwrecked. That is why I believe it is important that we always mention Günter Blümlein in the same breath as Walter Lange and consistently recognise his outstanding entrepreneurial achievements.”

About A. Lange & Söhne

Dresden watchmaker Ferdinand Adolph Lange laid the foundations for Saxony's precision watchmaking industry when he established his manufactory in 1845. His precious pocket watches remain highly coveted among collectors all over the world. The company was expropriated after the Second World War, and the name A. Lange & Söhne nearly vanished. But in 1990, Walter Lange, Ferdinand Adolph Lange's great-grandson, had the courage to revitalise the brand. Today, Lange crafts only a few thousand wristwatches per year, mainly in gold or platinum. They are equipped exclusively with movements made in-house that are elaborately finished and assembled by hand. With 77 calibres manufactured in-house since 1990, A. Lange & Söhne holds a leading position in the watchmaking world. Some of the major successes include the LANGE 1 with the first outsize date in a regularly produced wristwatch and the ZEITWERK with its precisely jumping numerals. Extraordinary complications such as the MINUTE REPEATER PERPETUAL, the LANGE 1 TOURBILLON PERPETUAL CALENDAR “Lumen”, and the TRIPLE SPLIT represent the manufacture's quest to take its time-honoured craft to ever new heights. Launched in 2019, the sporty and elegant ODYSSEUS in stainless steel marks the beginning of a new chapter for the manufacture.

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