

CLASSIC DRIVER

A visit to Meertz World of Time in Munich

Lead

Watch collectors around the world rely on the knowledge of Ralf Meertz and his team. Many use their holiday or business trip for a visit to Prannerstrasse 13 in Munich, where Meertz World of Time can be found, since there are always some intriguing rarities in the skilled watchmaker's collection...

A journey through time via the history of the clock



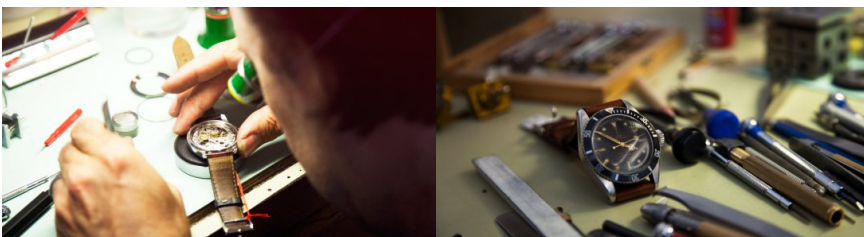
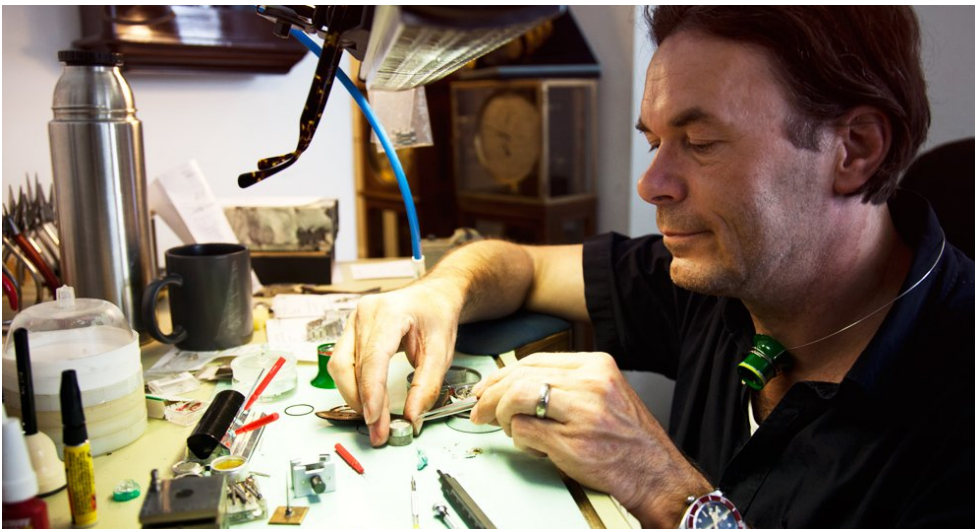
The world of classic watches, Rolex in particular, has evolved in recent years to become big business. Many are now seeking a slice of this profitable cake, with some entrepreneurs seeing classic watches as simply a means to make money. With some of them, you get the feeling they'd sell their grandmothers if they could make a quick buck. But not Ralf Meertz and his crew: the cozy showroom in the heart of Munich is exactly as you'd imagine a watchmaker's to be. Priceless clocks tick softly, and bookcases are packed with literature demonstrating a genuine interest in the history of time. Working in concentrated silence, a watchmaker focuses intently on the intimate workings under his magnifying glass and, as soon as the door clicks shut behind you, you find yourself on a horological journey through time.

Ticking rarities in the heart of Munich



On closer inspection, it becomes clear that Meertz World of Time is not an everyday watch shop. At the core of the business are a young team of experts and watches of such rarity that they'd normally be found only in private collections. "My love for antique timepieces was aroused during my time at 'Antike Uhren Schley', which specialises in ancient and complicated watches," explains the trained watchmaker Ralf Meertz. In his years there he acquired the knowledge necessary to establish his own business in 2003 – a time when collectors were increasingly focusing on rare and historic watches from [IWC](#), [Rolex](#), [Panerai](#) or [Heuer](#). Meertz shares this passion, and decided to specialise only in the rarest items. In time, Ralf Meertz and his team built a reputation as a reliable partner in buying and selling high-value antique timepieces – often over the 50,000-euro threshold. Meanwhile, customers from all over the world buy from the Munich business via the Internet. "Confidence is the key to a good relationship with a customer," says Meertz. This is not mere rhetoric, but a matter of attitude.

Originality is everything



Ralf Meertz measures the value of a watch by its originality and condition. Prices for vintage watches, straight from brands such as [Patek Philippe](#) and Rolex, are known to reach dizzying heights but, for Meertz, their condition plays a central role. "It's similar to the market for classic cars – it's originality that counts. Unfortunately, comparable barn finds are discovered only very, very rarely..." But the watch specialist does remember one very special piece: "I was once offered a historic Panerai Kampfschwimmer watch from the Second World War by an elderly gentlemen. The fact that he had owned this watch during his time in the military made it historically fascinating." It's stories like this that repeatedly send Ralf Meertz and his team in search of unique timepieces. In this small 'watch universe', you feel the passion emanating from the small mechanical marvels that fill the showroom. And as Ralf Meertz puts it, "You can look at a watch, and even inspect it under

the microscope but, at the end of the day, it still has to *feel* right.”

Photos: Jan Baedeker

Gallery

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