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ON DISPLAY A SWISS MUSEUM TELLS THE STORY OF ITS VALLEY SITE

LE SENTIER, SWITZERLAND For hundreds of years, some of the world's most beautiful, complicated and expensive watches have been made by hand in the Joux Valley. Vacheron Constantin, Audemars Piguet, Bulgari, Breguet, Blancpain and Patek Philippe's Grand Complication watches are all made here, in one-road villages cradled in the hills and watched over by grazing cows.

So it seemed only fitting to Vincent Javot, a project designer who grew up nearby, that there be a museum to celebrate the area's artistry and skills.

"There had been a museum here since 1996," he said, "but it was the work of a madman." Why feature old clocks from France, he fumed, rather than focus on the

richness of the region right outside the door? "I came to visit with a friend, and I thought, 'I want to do something for them.'"

Thanks to his passion, the Espace Horloger opened three years ago.

Mr. Javot designed interactive installations that allow visitors to scroll over screens in English, French and German, disassembling a watch, learning about its parts, and then putting it back together again. Associated facts and figures also appear, from descriptions of the skills used in each step of watchmaking to the job outlook for those artisans.

And the entire presentation can be saved on the visitor's smartphone to take home.

The permanent display includes about 300 timepieces made in the Joux Valley, from a 1720 copper and iron clock to Simplicité, a contemporary round-face wristwatch made by Philippe Dufour, whom Mr. Javot calls "the pope of watch-

makers."

The museum is independent, Mr. Javot said, and he works with the major watch groups, as well as independent watchmakers to create the temporary exhibitions.

Are the corporate and independent watchmakers competitive? "Their competition is not with each other," Mr. Javot responded. "It's with the smart watch."

On display until April 16 is a temporary exhibition saluting the 1932 Henry Graves pocket watch by Patek Philippe, which Mr. Javot calls the most complicated watch made entirely by hand — the hands being those of three generations of Piguets, in the valley.

The watch was sold at a Sotheby's auction last year for a record-breaking 26 million Swiss francs, or \$26.7 million.

Sotheby's allowed Mr. Javot to make a 3-D film for the museum — "What the Mona Lisa is to painting," he concluded, "the Henry Graves is to watches."

KATHLEEN BECKETT

