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INTERVIEW

"I think we need an economy where nature is not capitalized on"

Interview with Nicolas Freudiger, CEO and co-founder of ID Genève

Nicolas Freudiger and his co-founders, Cédric Mulhauser, and Singal Depéry, launched [ID Genève](#) in December 2020, aiming to redefine luxury watchmaking with a focus on sustainability. They use 100% recycled stainless steel, sourced from Swiss waste facilities, and employ eco-friendly materials like cork, agricultural waste, hemp, and wine residue. For this edition of our newsletter, we interviewed Mr. Freudiger at the ID Genève atelier.

Can you share the story behind the founding of ID Genève and what inspired you to create a brand focused on sustainable watchmaking?

Our story begins with a childhood dream shared between myself and Cédric. We've known each other since we were four years old, growing up together in Geneva. At around 14, we decided we would one day create our own watch brand. Cédric had done his apprenticeship at *Vacheron Constantin*, a traditional watchmaker, which is very well renowned worldwide, while I graduated from the Lausanne Hotel Management School. I had also completed a course on circular economy, which made it clear to me that this was the only way for sustainable entrepreneurship. We met Singal Depéry, our designer, at *Baselworld* through mutual friends. We discovered we shared a similar



Singal Depéry (left), Nicolas Freudiger (centre), and Cédric Mulhauser (right) founded ID Genève in 2020 © ID Genève

vision for the future of the watch industry and the same values. Together, we founded ID Genève in December 2020 with the aim of creating a different identity of luxury and watchmaking. We recognize the significant responsibility that comes with being part of the Swiss watch industry, which accounts for 95% of watches sold over \$1,000 USD worldwide. Our brand is built on three essential pillars: sustainability, transparency, and traceability. We wanted to show that creating a recycled watch brand based on the concept of waste could have a place in the luxury market.

What are some key innovations that ID Genève has introduced in its products that differentiate it from traditional watchmakers? Can you elaborate on your use of

recycled materials in your products?

We are redefining the luxury watchmaking landscape through innovative eco-conscious practices that set us apart from traditional watchmakers. Our commitment to sustainability is embodied in our use of 100% recycled materials, including stainless steel sourced from Swiss waste facilities, which significantly reduces our carbon footprint—by as much as ten times compared to industry standards. We have pioneered the use of solar steel, a groundbreaking material melted using solar energy, further minimizing environmental impact. This innovation exemplifies our dedication to the circular economy, ensuring that every component of our watches is designed for disassembly and repairability, extending their lifecycle. Moreover, we are proud to introduce materials like MIRUM, a sustainable alternative to leather made from agricultural waste, and straps crafted from grape pomace. These initiatives not only challenge conventional luxury narratives but also promote transparency and traceability in our supply chain. Through collaboration with climate-conscious partners and start-ups, we are leading a movement that inspires change. At ID Genève, we believe that luxury can be synonymous with responsibility, and we are committed to "wearing our conviction on our wrists".

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“I think we need an economy where nature is not capitalized on”

Interview with Nicolas Freudiger, CEO and co-founder of ID Genève

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INTERVIEW

(continued from page 1)

What challenges have you faced in implementing sustainable practices within your supply chain, and how have you addressed them?

I would say the biggest challenge is really consumer perception. Many still believe there is a trade-off between quality and sustainability, so we address this head-on by maintaining a zero compromise on quality. Our quality expert, Cedric, ensures that every product meets the high standards expected by our clients, helping to shift the narrative around recycled materials to show that they can be both beautiful and high-quality. Additionally, innovation requires significant investment in time and resources; for example, developing a single strap using biophilica involved creating 57 prototypes. This commitment to resilience and investment is part of our mission to lead the luxury industry in sustainability. As a relatively young company since our launch in December 2020, we are proud of our progress, including obtaining B Corp certification and focusing on a circular economy model that minimizes waste and environmental impact.

ID Genève is seen as a “disrupter” in the traditional luxury watch industry, particularly in achieving significant success with limited resources compared to larger competitors. Could you elaborate on that?

In an industry steeped in tradition for over 200 years, you need to be a disrupter to survive and thrive. Our unique value proposition lies in our commitment to sustainability and circular economy principles, making us the first B Corp certified luxury watchmaker. This reflects our dedication to creating watches that not only embody luxury but also prioritize social and environmental impact. We differentiate ourselves from established



The ‘Air’ model of ID Genève’s Elements collection © ID Genève

giants by adopting authentic marketing practices. For instance, we collaborate with individuals who share our vision, such as Leonardo DiCaprio, who invests in our brand due to our mission rather than merely endorsing it. This approach fosters a community of like-minded advocates for change. By utilizing recycled materials and innovative technologies, we aim to challenge the status quo and inspire a new standard in luxury watchmaking. We are not just entering the market; we are actively reshaping it.

How do you see the future of sustainable luxury goods evolving, particularly in the watch industry?

The future of sustainable luxury goods in the watch industry is evolving, and I believe it will take time to fully realize. New regulations are coming into force in Europe, and I think we need an economy where nature is not capitalized on. This shift will require both regulatory support and consumer pressure. I am optimistic that sustainability will increasingly influence purchase decisions. Transparency is key; while many major brands are making positive strides, we need to be clearer about our efforts.

As ID Genève looks to expand its market presence, do you have any plans to enter the Japanese market? If so, what strategies do you envision for engaging Japanese consumers?

The Japanese market is indeed on our radar. Our strategy has always focused on building strong retail partnerships, and we have successfully established connections in regions such as the UK, US, and the Middle East. Japan presents a unique opportunity due to its sophisticated consumer base and high standards for quality and design. We are currently exploring potential partnerships and have already seen positive feedback from Japanese journalists. In addition to traditional retail, we are leveraging e-commerce as a channel to reach Japanese consumers effectively. My trip to Tokyo in 2025 will serve to introduce our products and engage with local stakeholders.

Looking ahead, what are your long-term goals for ID Genève in terms of sustainability and market expansion?

We plan to publish an impact report next year during Watches & Wonders, showcasing our environmental and social performance as a leader in the circular economy within the luxury watch sector. Our ongoing fundraising efforts for Series A are crucial for scaling our operations and enhancing our product offerings. In 2025, we are excited to arrange a visit from Leonardo DiCaprio to Switzerland, which will elevate our visibility and commitment to sustainable practices. Additionally, I will travel to Asia, including Tokyo, to explore potential partnerships that can help us tap into new markets. I look forward to meeting potential partners of the brand that understand our vision and that want to drive the vision further in those Asian countries.

ID Genève recently won in the [Innovators & Independents category at the 2024 WatchPro Awards](#). Congratulations!

Results of the Federal Vote of 24 November 2024

A [popular vote](#) was held on 24 November 2024 in Switzerland. Votes were held on the expansion of the national highways, changes to the tenancy law (subletting on the one hand and termination for personal use on the other hand) and healthcare financing reform. While voters rejected the plans to expand the highway system and the changes to tenancy law, they voted in favor of reforming the healthcare financing system.

A proposed expansion of the national highway system was turned down by [52.7% of voters \(voter turnout: 45.05%\)](#). The plan aimed to alleviate traffic congestion by widening motorways in key areas, including near Bern and between Geneva and Lausanne. Opponents, led by the Green Party, argued that such expansions would worsen environmental issues and increase traffic, advocating instead for investments in public transport and existing road renovations.

Voters also rejected two proposals aimed at benefiting landlords. A plan to ease eviction rules for landlords to reclaim properties for personal use was turned down by [53.83% \(voter turnout: 44.9%\)](#), while a proposal to tighten controls on subletting was rejected by [51.58% \(voter turnout: 44.89%\)](#). These measures were criticized for potentially exacerbating the housing crisis.

In contrast, the healthcare financing reform was approved by [53.31% \(voter turnout: 44.9%\)](#). This reform aimed to standardize funding for outpatient and inpatient treatments, ensuring that cantons and health insurers share costs more equitably. Those in favor hailed it as a milestone for Swiss healthcare, although critics warned it might not sufficiently address rising insurance costs, a major concern for the Swiss.

Sources: [swissinfo](#); [admin.ch](#)

動向

SITUATION

JETRO Opens an Office in Kyiv, Ukraine

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) has officially opened a new office in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on 10 October 2024. This marks a significant step in strengthening economic ties between Japan and Ukraine. This move is part of JETRO's broader strategy to enhance trade and business relationships with various countries around the world.

The primary aim of the new JETRO Kyiv office is to support Japanese companies in exploring business opportunities in Ukraine. It seeks to facilitate bilateral trade and investment by providing vital information and services to Japanese businesses interested in entering or expanding their presence in the Ukrainian market. Opening an office in Ukraine underscores Japan's interest in increasing its economic footprint in Eastern Europe. The establishment of a JETRO office in Kyiv was part of a series of agreements made during a conference on Ukraine's reconstruction



Ribbon-cutting Ceremony © JETRO

hosted by Japan in February of this year. Despite the ongoing Russian aggression in the country, Ukraine, with its strategic location and growing market potential, offers numerous opportunities for Japanese firms, particularly in sectors such as technology, agriculture, and infrastructure development. By establishing a local presence, JETRO aims to better understand the Ukrainian market dynamics and build stronger part-

nerships with local businesses. As of October 2023, a total of 38 Japanese companies were involved in business operations in Ukraine across various sectors, including manufacturing, wholesale trade, information and communication technology, and agriculture, as reported by JETRO.

Sources: [Kyodo News](#); [JETRO](#)

活動

ACTIVITY

Increasing Number of Foreign M&A Bids Are Targeting Japanese Companies

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TREND

Japanese companies are experiencing a notable increase in foreign mergers and acquisitions (M&A) bids, driven by several key factors. This trend has been particularly pronounced in 2024, as international firms seek to capitalize on the current economic climate in Japan.

Last year, the total value of inbound M&A deals in Japan hit approximately \$36.2 billion, marking a 28% increase from the previous year. This surge reflects heightened interest from North American and European investors, who are eager to capitalize on favorable exchange rates and relatively low valuations of Japanese companies. Building on this momentum, the trend of increasing foreign M&A bids targeting Japanese firms not only persisted into 2024 but also intensified. One significant factor contributing to the surge in 2024 is the depreciation of the yen. As the currency weakens, Japanese companies become more attractive targets for foreign investors due to their lower market capitalization. This situation creates opportunities for overseas firms looking to acquire undervalued assets in Japan, enhancing their global

portfolios. Additionally, new guidelines for corporate takeovers introduced by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) last year have played a crucial role in this trend. These guidelines aim to encourage corporate acquisitions that can enhance corporate value and shareholder profits. A prominent example of this trend is the recent acquisition bid involving Seven & I Holdings, a major Japanese retail player. In August 2024, the company received a buyout proposal from Alimentation Couche-Tard, a Canadian convenience store operator. The initial offer of approximately ¥6 trillion was subsequently raised to ¥7 trillion, signaling strong interest from foreign investors in Japanese retail assets. As foreign companies increasingly target Japanese businesses, this trend may lead to significant changes in the landscape of corporate ownership in Japan, potentially reshaping various industries and impacting local economies. The combination of favorable currency conditions and supportive government policies suggests that this wave of foreign acquisitions could continue into the foreseeable future.

Sources: [The Japan Times](#); [Nikkei](#)

Agenda

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AGENDA

✓ EXPO 2025 in Osaka

Dates: 13 April – 13 October 2025

Theme: *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*

Find more information [here](#)

The official Swiss National Day at Expo 2025 is 22 April 2025. Find more information about the Swiss Pavilion [here](#)

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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