

Swarovski Crystal - Information about Swarovski Crystals

33 Administrator Wed, Nov 4, 2009 [General Knowledge](#) 0 5778

Swarovski Crystal is a type of mass-produced, cut and polished glass produced by the privately-owned Swarovski company of Wattens, Austria. The term "Swarovski" is a brand name, named after the founder of the company, Daniel Swarovski. Daniel Swarovski was born in 1862 in Georgenthal, Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) at a time when the industrial age was coming into its own. He experimented with electricity and glass-cutting and soon developed and patented a machine for mass-producing mechanically cut and polished glass. This gave him a major advantage over the previous handicraft industry.

The glass pieces were used in the booming fashion industry and for jewelry. They were called crystals, stones, or brilliants, in reference to their similarity with diamonds. The term "crystal" is actually a misnomer, since glass is technically an amorphous solid. In 1895, Daniel Swarovski opened the company in his name in Wattens, Austria. The location was chosen for its seclusion (to prevent copycats) and for its ample hydroelectric power.

The company grew steadily throughout the century, with temporary gaps due to the World Wars. Daniel Swarovski's three sons, Wilhelm, Friedrich, and Alfred all worked under their father, and continued after his death in 1956 at age ninety-four. The company has since diversified into several other industries, including optical instruments (Swarovski Optik), stone-cutting machinery (Tyrolit), and gemstones (Signity). As of 2003, the company's annual revenue was about \$2.1 billion. Swarovski is now a global company with over 14,000 employees, manufacturing sites in 15 countries, and a worldwide distribution network.

The Swarovski name is probably most commonly associated with the collectible animal figurines produced from glass, known as "The Swarovski Silver Crystal" range. These figurines have a silvery brilliance, but no actual silver is in the glass. Many of the figurines in this line were designed by Max Schreck, who worked directly with Daniel Swarovski. As of 1995, the principal designers of the figurines are Adi Stocker, Gabriele Stamey, Michael Stamey, Martin Zendron, Anton Hirzinger, Claudia Schneiderbauer, and Edith Maier. The designers are highly regarded amongst the Swarovski Collectors Society (SCS).

Production

The production techniques of the glass are closely held secrets. In general, the process of designing and manufacturing the crystal pieces happens as follows. The first figurine subjects, like the mouse and tortoise, were chosen somewhat haphazardly, and were produced from off-the-shelf chandelier parts the company was producing. However, today's crystal objects go through a far more complex process. First, the designers study the history of a particular subject, by looking through a large collection of photos, books, and other media. Once a representative design comes to mind, it is either sketched on paper, modeled in Plasticine, or directly cut from glass at a large scale.

Next, the model is converted to technical blueprints by a team of engineers trained in manufacturing. The goal is to produce "blanks", which are the rough pieces of the final design. The technicians create the tools and procedure to create the blanks and glue them together. Depending on the complexity of the figure, there may be five to fifty parts to put together. The design process can take up to two years.

Once in production, the blanks are produced by pouring molten glass into metal molds. The glass is not allowed to cool immediately, but instead, it is heated and cooled numerous times in a "lehr". A lehr is a special oven for "annealing" glass, a process that strengthens the glass and prevents it from shattering. The blanks are tested for their level of clarity and assigned a score. Those with a perfect score are cut with optical precision grinding wheels and then polished. Finally, the pieces are glued together with a special, transparent glue.

When giving Swarovski, Swarovski-embedded items are fascinating, but collectible crystal figurines can also be a suitable gift offering.

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