

HISTORY AND ORGANISATION

HISTORY

The first Swiss Motor Show was held in Geneva's Electoral Building from 29 April to 7 May 1905. The brains behind this fair for automobiles and two-wheeled vehicles were Paul Buchet, Michelin's general agent in Switzerland; Geneva businessman Albert Vassali; and young engineer Jules Mégevet, who was both the owner of a car-accessories company and the President of the resurrected Swiss Trade Union Chamber for the Automobile Industry (*Chambre Syndicale Suisse de l'Automobile*), while the Organising Committee was chaired by Charles-Louis Empeyta, President of the Swiss Automobile Club (*Automobile Club Suisse*, or ACS). The first motor show was a roaring success, welcoming 59 exhibitors and over 17,000 visitors, and its inauguration was attended by Ludwig Forrer, a member of the Swiss federal government, the Federal Council. Geneva also hosted the second edition of the show from 28 April to 6 May 1906, but the third national motor show was held in Zurich in 1907.

Following several failed attempts during what proved a difficult period, the fourth Swiss Motor Show was not staged until 1923, with the venue again being Geneva's Electoral Building and Robert Marchand – who, for many years afterwards, was a leading promoter of the Swiss automotive industry – taking over as President. In light of the show's successful fourth edition, the Permanent Committee of the Geneva Motor Show (*Comité permanent du Salon international de l'automobile à Genève*) was established on 3 November 1923; the Committee immediately began planning the first International Motor, Moto and Cycle Show to be held from 14 to 23 March 1924. Exhibitor applications rolled in at such a rate that 8,000 m² of temporary exhibition space had to be constructed on the *Plaine de Plainpalais* to house the car exhibitors, whilst two-wheeled vehicles were displayed in the Electoral Building. The two buildings were linked by a walkway with escalators, which had been rented from a local stallholder, thus making it possible for visitors and exhibitors alike to cross the street safely.

This time the show was opened by Switzerland's President, Ernest Chuard. The show's 68,000 visitors generated so much trade that the number of automobiles in Switzerland rose from 33,000 to 39,000. The show's doors had barely closed before the Committee started looking for more suitable premises. The second International Show again took place in 1925 divided between in the Electoral Building and in the 12,500-m² temporary exhibition halls erected on the *Plaine de Plainpalais*. With the support of the cantonal and municipal authorities and Geneva industry and commerce, construction on the new *Palais des Expositions* began in late autumn 1925. The 1926 show was deliberately pushed back to June and was the first to take place in this building. In all, 83 automobile manufacturers from eight different countries as well as representatives from 25 motorcycle brands took part in this show.

The Geneva International Motor Show began to achieve global renown in 1934 and by 1939, the number of exhibitors had reached approximately 200 and the *Palais des Expositions* was no longer large enough to accommodate them, requiring temporary exhibition halls to be used again. The first motor show after World War Two opened its doors in 1947 and was an immediate success, with 305 exhibitors displaying their products over 9,608 m² of exhibition space. Since then, the Swiss motor show has gone from strength to strength (see the statistics below). The number of visitors surpassed 200,000 in 1948, 300,000 in 1960, and went over the 500,000 mark in 1967.

As a result of major developments in the transport and construction industry, an additional international show dedicated to commercial vehicles has been held a few weeks before the show for private cars every two years from 1970 onwards. This provided at least a temporary solution for the space problems, but the initial studies on the construction of a new exhibition centre outside the city centre began as early as 1972. A referendum opposing the project was launched, but the Geneva public ultimately supported this generous solution and the Palexpo exhibition and conference centre opened near the airport on 18 December 1981. Its first event was the International Commercial Vehicles Show in January 1982, followed by the International Motor Show in March that year.

The new infrastructure, considered one of the most modern in Europe, attracted 745,919 visitors at the two shows combined, which was a new record. However, not all the initiatives were successes, such as the 1984 independent show for motorcycles and cycles, which was quickly replaced by a similar event in Zurich. The show committee began looking for new ways to exhibit commercial vehicles in light of the major developments in this sector. Transpublic, an international show of public transport and community services, was held for the first time in 1987. This new exhibition also included displays of rail and cable transportation as well as airport infrastructure, mainly attracting top experts in both 1987 and 1989. However, due to the unfavourable economic climate, Transpublic subsequently vanished from the Geneva trade-show calendar.

Palexpo was gradually expanded; the new Hall 5 opened in January 1987 and increased the exhibition space by around 30%. As even this did not provide enough space to satisfy the needs of Geneva's largest fairs, the 16,000-m² Hall 7 was built on the opposite side of the motorway in 1995, just in time for the 65th Motor Show. Hall 7 is connected to the main building by a covered walkway that is approximately 100 metres long and completely integrated into the existing airport infrastructure as well as that of the SBB's Cointrin railway station built in 1987. This improved access by rail to Palexpo, and at the same time another 1,000 parking spaces were added. The International Automobile Museum (one of the finest and most original in Europe) opened its doors in March 1995, only to close 12 years later because of financial difficulties.

Visitor numbers to a single event passed the 700,000 mark for the first time in 2000. The current record (747,700 visitors) is held by the 75th edition in 2005, which also marked the show's centenary. The world was hit by crisis in late 2008, and the automotive industry was no exception. Despite difficult times, all major manufacturers continued to take part in Switzerland's International Motor Show. Visitor numbers fell below 700,000 in 2009 and 2010, but rose to 735,000 in 2011, the second best figure in the show's history.

Following the construction of Hall 6 in 2003, which already provided an additional 21,000 m², on the other side of the motorway, further renovation and expansion of the floor space was carried out most recently in 2013. Hall 6 was extended by 6,000 m², taking over space previously used as the esplanade. A nail-biting event also took place in 2013 – a car-racing competition was held in Palexpo's grounds for the first time, for which parts of a hall were used for the slalom.

The Geneva International Motor Show owes its outstanding importance to the fact that it continues to take place every year, while similar exhibitions such as the Frankfurt International Motor Show, the Paris Motor Show or Tokyo's Motor Show have long taken place every two years. Organisers did consider this option for Geneva in the past, but luckily decided against it. The show's privileged position is due to both the exhibition's excellent organisation and Geneva's international reputation, as

well as Switzerland's unique situation. There are very few other countries in which competition in the private automobile trade sector can develop freely and without quotas.

The Geneva show has more of an international character than the four large shows held in cities in various manufacturing countries (Detroit, Frankfurt, Paris and Tokyo), which predominantly aim to promote their own national products. This is why journalists, experts, buyers and automotive-industry representatives from around the world hold this show, which is always held in March, in particularly high esteem. No other motor show provides such a comprehensive view of current offers, new trends, available technologies and future developments as the one in Geneva.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Although the motor show is very much an initiative associated with Geneva, for many decades now it has had a Swiss federal legal structure.

Established as a private-law foundation, the *Comité Permanent du Salon International de l'Automobile à Genève* consists of two bodies, namely the Board of Foundation and the *Comité du Salon et des exposants*, or Organising Committee.

The Board of Foundation is made up of 12 members – the chairman of the Committee, the President of Auto-Suisse, the President of the SAA (Swiss automotive aftermarket), and eight committee members, at least three of which must represent economics and politics in the Canton of Geneva.

The Organising Committee, which acts as the General Meeting, comprises at most 50 members.

Since the Foundation is a strictly non-profit organisation, any surplus revenue after allocations made to automobile trade associations and organisations is paid back to the exhibitors. The Geneva Motor Show is thus a unique instrument which is made available to all those involved in the automotive industry and trade in Switzerland, be they manufacturers, distributors or customers.

INTERNAL STRUCTURE

Board of Foundation 'Permanent Committee of the Geneva International Motor Show':

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| President | M. Maurice Turrettini, Geneva |
| Vice-Président | M. François Launaz, Berne |
| Vice-Président | M. Philipp Rhomberg, Safenwil |

Organising Committee:

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| President | M. Maurice Turrettini, Geneva |
| Vice-Président | M. Alfred F. Gubser, Chavannes de Bogis |

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Press, Radio and TV Officer | M. Martin Schatzmann, Bern |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|

Management:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Mr André Hefti | <i>Managing Director</i> |
|----------------|--------------------------|

Commissioned organisation Palexpo SA:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Messrs Claude Membrez | <i>Managing Director</i> |
| Manuel Garcia | <i>Administration and Finance Manager</i> |
| Philippe Echivard | <i>Security and Environment Director</i> |
| Ms Claudine Fischer | <i>Technical Coordinator</i> |
| Ms Tanja Walther | <i>Show Director</i> |
| Ms Marianne Gyger | <i>Head of Communication</i> |

Visitor statistics for the Geneva International Motor Show since 1905

The Geneva International Motor Show was the first to open its doors after World War Two. The figures below give an idea of the evolution of this event.

| Year | Net floor space | Brands | Total number of visitors | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1905 | | 59 | 13,000 | First show |
| 1924 | 6,153 m ² | 200 | 68,000 | First international show |
| 1947 | 9,608 m ² | 305 | 185,000 | First show after the war |
| 1948 | 13,760 m ² | 374 | 210,000 | Surpasses 200,000 visitor mark |
| 1949 | 15,530 m ² | 411 | 210,000 | |
| 1950 | 14,530 m ² | 385 | 215,000 | |
| 1951 | 15,853 m ² | 400 | 210,000 | |
| 1952 | 16,333 m ² | 439 | 225,000 | |
| 1953 | 16,500 m ² | 425 | 230,000 | |
| 1954 | 19,035 m ² | 517 | 250,000 | |
| 1955 | 20,258 m ² | 638 | 260,000 | |
| 1956 | 22,290 m ² | 792 | 280,000 | |
| 1957 | 24,031 m ² | 815 | 280,000 | |
| 1958 | 29,627 m ² | 992 | 297,000 | |
| 1959 | 31,900 m ² | 885 | 299,000 | |
| 1960 | 32,238 m ² | 996 | 307,000 | Surpasses 300,000 visitor mark |
| 1961 | 36,305 m ² | 1,015 | 334,349 | |
| 1962 | 37,942 m ² | 1,070 | 356,319 | |
| 1963 | 28,230 m ² | 1,112 | 379,103 | |
| 1964 | 39,381 m ² | 1,164 | 411,677 | Surpasses 400,000 visitor mark |
| 1965 | 28,396 m ² | 1,136 | 426,792 | |
| 1966 | 41,092 m ² | 1,178 | 474,854 | |
| 1967 | 29,061 m ² | 1,159 | 502,176 | Surpasses 500,000 visitor mark |
| 1968 | 43,921 m ² | 1,303 | 526,775 | |
| 1969 | 33,330 m ² | 1,222 | 539,176 | |
| 1970 | 29,840 m ² | 946 | 469,587 | |
| 1971 | 33,200 m ² | 1,060 | 517,540 | |
| 1972 | 32,300 m ² | 974 | 465,896 | |
| 1973 | 32,600 m ² | 1,091 | 462,393 | |
| 1974 | 32,700 m ² | 1,036 | 406,044 | |
| 1975 | 33,500 m ² | 1,025 | 437,716 | |
| 1976 | 33,500 m ² | 1,045 | 462,610 | |
| 1977 | 34,000 m ² | 1,109 | 491,620 | |
| 1978 | 34,700 m ² | 1,111 | 478,325 | |
| 1979 | 34,700 m ² | 1,158 | 505,219 | |
| 1980 | 34,500 m ² | 1,121 | 534,349 | |
| 1981 | 34,200 m² | 1,116 | 524,264 | Last show in the old building in the city centre |

| Year | Net floor space | Brands | Total number of visitors | |
|------|-----------------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1982 | 38,240 m ² | 1,124 | 585,332 | First show at Palexpo |
| 1983 | 37,927 m ² | 1,161 | 550,271 | |
| 1984 | 36,880 m ² | 1,156 | 540,750 | |
| 1985 | 37,836 m ² | 1,573 | 552,121 | |
| 1986 | 37,844 m ² | 1,105 | 537,432 | |
| 1987 | 49,200 m² | 1,238 | 568,850 | Hall 5 opens |
| 1988 | 50,166 m ² | 1,202 | 609,709 | Surpasses 600,000 visitor mark |
| 1989 | 50,170 m ² | 1,214 | 649,968 | |
| 1990 | 50,450 m ² | 1,236 | 639,534 | |
| 1991 | 50,422 m ² | 1,044 | 681,140 | |
| 1992 | 51,703 m ² | 1,143 | 683,107 | |
| 1993 | 51,452 m ² | 1,185 | 685,220 | |
| 1994 | 51,459 m ² | 1,171 | 654,439 | |
| 1995 | 58,262 m² | 1,146 | 675,761 | Hall 7 opens |
| 1996 | 62,704 m ² | 1,041 | 657,781 | |
| 1997 | 63,192 m ² | 1,035 | 646,596 | |
| 1998 | 64,095 m ² | 1,020 | 680,356 | |
| 1999 | 63,710 m ² | 1,021 | 691,667 | |
| 2000 | 63,527 m ² | 1,053 | 714,179 | Surpasses 700,000 visitor mark |
| 2001 | 63,877 m ² | 1,044 | 718,473 | |
| 2002 | 63,500 m ² | 1,080 | 723,143 | |
| 2003 | 76,650 m² | 1,094 | 703,900 | Hall 6 opens |
| 2004 | 76,650 m ² | 1,102 | 729,629 | |
| 2005 | 75,912 m ² | 1,120 | 747,700 | All-time visitor record |
| 2006 | 77,000 m ² | 900 | 674,334 | Terrible weather conditions |
| 2007 | 76,617 m ² | 1,070 | 730,736 | |
| 2008 | 78,456 m ² | 1,030 | 714,559 | |
| 2009 | 77,894 m ² | 850 | 648,000 | |
| 2010 | 78,000 m ² | 700 | 692,000 | |
| 2011 | 80,774 m ² | 700 | 735,000 | |
| 2012 | 77,702 m ² | 890 | 702,014 | |
| 2013 | 81,031 m ² | 840 | 690,000 | |
| 2014 | 80,125 m ² | 850 | 670,000 | |
| 2015 | 79,139 m ² | 830 | 684,000 | |
| 2016 | 77,323 m ² | | 691,000 | |
| 2017 | 77,365 m ² | | 691,365 | |
| 2018 | 73,389 m ² | | 662,076 | |

Palexpo, June 2018