

SWAROVSKI VARIATION IN PRODUCTION (VIP) PIECES

Continuing our series of Crystal Lodge VIP factsheets, we are taking a look at the Silver Crystal animals from K to Z, with the exception of Hedgehogs and Mice which will feature in their own factsheet, finishing off with an annual edition variation piece that is probably the most famous of all the VIP pieces.

KIWI

Part of the Endangered Species theme group, the Kiwi is a cute little Silver Crystal piece which was only available from 1991 in 1996. Here at The Crystal Lodge, we have noticed that there is a variation in the design of the beak. It is our opinion that the thicker beak was the original beak, and then it underwent a design enhancement to produce a more sculpted, sleeker beak.



Kiwi on left of photos has thicker beak, kiwi on right has more slender beak

KOALAS LARGE AND SMALL

The earliest koalas produced were called large and small. The large standing at around 1 3/4" (44mm) tall was introduced in 1987, retiring in 2004 with the small at 1 1/8" (29mm) tall, introduced in 1989 and retired in 2000. This is an unusual variation, in that the pieces were assembled differently for the USA market for a time, compared to the rest of the world.

The large koala globally (excluding USA) was assembled to face left, but up until 1993 large koalas in the USA were assembled facing right! Similarly, the small koala in the USA faced left, but the global edition faced right! The 2 different USA koalas continued in production until 1993, when they were replaced by the global koalas and remained in this format until the pieces retired.



L-R: Koalas mini (USA), large (USA), large (global), mini (global)

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MALLARD (LARGE DUCK)

In 1986, the Mallard duck was introduced to the Beauties of the Lake theme group and the base of the design was completely flat. However, 3 little hemi-spheres were added to the bottom of the design to raise it from the shelf to protect the body from damage. These variations are generally known as “with feet” or “without feet”, but they are definitely not feet as we know them! This Max Schreck design was retired in 1994.



OWLS

We have noticed that the colour of the eyes can vary sometimes on the older owls. Here's an example using the Giant Owl to show the difference.



PARTRIDGE

One of those “variations” that you can't actually see on display, the partridge has been found with a different body stone, one has a completely flat base, while the other is divided into 3 flat surfaces and this one has a more defined tail.

A third version of this piece has been documented as having a Crystal Cal base, however, we remain dubious about this one as it is usual for a Cal (or any applied colour coating to the base of items, such as paperweights) to be protected with a layer of felt as the coating is easily scratched. The partridge was designed by Adi Stocker in 1988 and retired in 1990, and we believe that the version with more defined tail was the later of the 2.



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PENGUIN MINI

A little known variation, where the mini penguins eyes can be found either faceted to a point, or just faceted around the edge leaving them flat.



PIG LARGE

Early information about the large pig, code 011846, suggested that it had a round disc tail. We've never seen one like that. The only examples we have seen are the ones with the curly tail (as shown below), the component for the tail being the same as the top of the hat of the 1990 Dumbo. We have seen slightly different cuts to the leg of the large pig though which most being fully faceted, but occasionally they have a flat part to them, as per the photo on the right.



L-R: Pig large, Dumbo 1990 (same component for hat as pig's tail), flat cut leg on some pigs

PIG MEDIUM

The medium pig, code 010031 has one notable variation, which is the tail. Early examples had a disc shaped tail (which was identical to the stone used for the nose, without the nostrils of course!) and then the tail was changed to a metal tail. We have also noted slightly different sized body stones on the metal tailed medium pigs.



Left: Medium pig with crystal disc tail, Right: Medium pig with wire tail.

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PIG MINI

There are 3 versions of the mini pig. The first introduced in the European market had a chaton (diamond shaped) tail, while over in the US/Canadian market it had a disc shaped tail. Both these designs were replaced by the wired tailed version. The chaton tailed pig is the most rare as this was only available for a short time.



L-R: Pig mini with chaton tail (Euro), disc tail (USA) and wire tail (global)



Different tail positions and ear placements on mini USA pig

POLAR BEAR

The polar bear can be found with different types of facet cuts on the body which can either be hexagonal or square in shape.



OODLES OF POODLES

On its introduction to the collection in 1992, some of the standing poodles, code 167571 had a frosted tail. This was very quickly replaced by one with a completely clear tail. The frosted tailed poodles are believed to be very rare. We do believe this is a genuine piece as they were shown in Swarovski literature at the time of their launch, notably the "Make a Wish" publication which was circulated to SCS members and gave an overview of all products currently available in store.

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L-R: Standing poodles with frosted and clear tails

RABBIT MINI

The mini rabbit, code 010012 can be found with different ear placements which are almost parallel or they are set in a V shape.



L-R: mini rabbit with parallel ears and V shaped set ears

SEAL OF APPROVAL

In 1985 the large seal, designed by Max Schreck was introduced as part of the “Kingdom of Ice and Snow” theme group. This continued in production until 1995, but was produced in 3 different styles. Originally, it is believed that the (now called variation 1) seal which has a black button style nose and no whiskers was available in the European market. In the USA, however, their large seal was different (now called variation 2). This one has silver whiskers and his tail fins are splayed. The date of introduction of the more familiar black whiskered large seal (mostly commonly in variation 4) is also given as 1985, and this is the one which appeared worldwide following the discontinuation of the other 2 styles of seals. However, due to differing head placements on this piece, we have variation 3 (looking straight forward, also having splayed tail fins as per variation 2), variation 4 (looking towards the left) and the more rare one, variation 5 (looking to the right)! Quite a family! All the large seals share the same code numbers (012 261 / 7646 085 000 or 7646NR85 in USA) and they are 3 1/2” (89mm) in length.

The variety of different noses/whiskers did not just apply to the large seal. Three variations of the very cute mini seal also exist. Variation 1 with a black button nose and no whiskers (believed to be exclusive to Europe), Variation 2 with silver whiskers which was a USA exclusive and Variation 3, the more widely known one which has black whiskers and was available globally. The mini seals were designed by Adi Stocker and are 1 1/2” (38mm) long and introduced in 1986. The button nose and silver whiskered mini seals were discontinued to be replaced globally by the black whiskered mini seal, which was retired in 2005.

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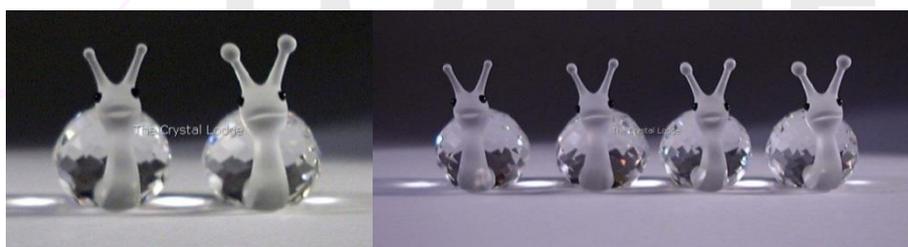
Back row: Large seal v1 (button nose), v2 (USA silver whiskers and splayed tail fins), v3 (black whiskers, splayed tail fins), v4 (black whiskers – common variety), v5 (black whiskers looking right)
Front row: Mini seal v1 (button nose), v2 (silver whiskers/USA), v3 (black whiskers)



Seals large and mini L-R: v2, v3, v1

SNAILS

Here's a variation that would appear to have been created due to variations in the moulding process for the crystal component which makes up the neck and head of the snail. When looking at this snail code 012725 there are 2 things to check which are the size of the antenna and the width of the smile of the snail.



Snails with different antenna (thin and thick) and different smiles - smaller and wider

SQUIRREL

The squirrel, code 011871 has a slightly different background story. Here in the UK, we have our indigenous red squirrel with its long fluffy red ears, but we have all heard the tales of how the "introduced" grey squirrel (native to USA) has taken over most of their habitat. So presumably because of global variations in "real" squirrels, when Swarovski introduced their mini squirrel in 1985, it produced 2 different varieties of squirrel which were available according to continent. The only difference being the size of the ears. The squirrel with larger ears was initially only available in the European market to represent the red squirrel, but from 1994 onwards it became available

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globally. Prior to that, a version with smaller ears to represent the grey squirrel was produced for the USA market only. Both are exceptionally cute! The squirrel with smaller ears was discontinued in 1994 when the one with larger ears went “global”. So, at least the red squirrel won that battle and achieved world domination as far as crystal squirrels go, before the design was retired in 2012. Just as an aside, rumours abounded for a while about the existence of a USA squirrel which carried a black nut in its paws, instead of a clear one. The explanation given was that it was a factory error and was very rare. However, we remain highly dubious about this piece as it has never been documented by Swarovski, and if you look at the photos of the Frog Princes earlier in this article, you can see how this variation might have been created!



L-R: European (later global) squirrel, USA squirrel, USA squirrel with black nut which was originally believed to be a factory error, but more commonly believed to be a fake!

SWAN SONG

The original swans from the Silver Crystal range in large (010005), medium (010006), small (015152) and mini (010021) sizes can all be found with slight differences. Tail placement can be short or long, best illustrated as shown in the photos below of the large swan, code 010005 and medium swans code 010006.



L-R: Large swan (long and short tails), Medium swan (long and short tails)

Additionally, there can be different thicknesses of the neck stones of the swans, the best example of which can be seen below in the photos of the mini swan:



L-R: Mini swan with thick neck stone, mini swan with thin more sculptured neck stone

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SMILEY WHALES

Often known as the “Smiley” whale – this whale, code 014483 can be found with different thicknesses of smiles!



Smiley whales with different thickness of smiles.

1988 WOODPECKERS

Probably the best known variation piece of all – The Woodpeckers “Sharing”. During 1988 (the year that the Woodpeckers were the Swarovski annual edition piece). Swarovski changed their logo for SCS pieces from the Edelweiss flower motif to the more well-known Swan logo. This means that the Woodpeckers can be found with either logo, and of course, the packaging and mirror can also be found in either format. To be an authentic set, everything should match.

However, that is not the end of the story because there was a design variation as well. The more common version of the Swarovski Woodpeckers has a frosted base to the tree trunk that the mother and baby Woodpeckers are sitting on. However, the first version of the piece had a clear base (as per the top of the tree trunk on the piece). Originally the Woodpecker trunk bases were polished after they had been treated to make them frosted. After a while, it is believed that the practice was questioned – after all, why bother to spend time polishing the bases if no-one would ever see them? So it is commonly believed that the practice stopped for that reason. Therefore if you should find a clear based set of Woodpeckers, you have found yourself a rare piece!



L-R: 1988 Woodpeckers with frosted base, clear base (rare)



Swan logo and Edelweiss logos on box