



MADE TO LAST



ETERNAL CALENDAR

Woodworking

Humans have been keeping track of time since, well, the beginning of time. Our current approach to the turning of the planets, seasons, and the advent of night and day is shaped by the Gregorian calendar, which was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in October 1582. Defining time is one thing; keeping track of it is quite another. This clever calendar was made by a Japanese-born, Berlin-dwelling designer and maker. It looks and works a bit like a wall clock, and will last for as long as our calendar system does. However, it's not battery powered – it's human powered ... The idea is that every day, you'll manually move the hands to their appropriate spot, adjusting the date and day of the week, and of course as the months roll over, you'll shift them along too. Talk about analogue.

MEASUREMENTS	Diameter: 31 cm (12 in); depth: 19 mm (¾ in)
MATERIALS	Beechwood, glue, ink, paint, paper, spruce, threaded rod, varnish, wooden screw nut
KEY TOOLS	Japanese scribe gauge
KEY MACHINES	Drill, milling machine, router, sander, spray gun, suction, table saw, thickness plane
TIME TO MAKE	6 hours
LIFESPAN	Until the end of time

SHIGEKI YAMAMOTO — Furniture maker [Berlin, Germany]

The most important tool in Shigeki Yamamoto's toolkit is a scribe gauge. It was gifted to him in 2001 by his then-boss, a Japanese iron sculptor by the name of Nobuyuki Tachibana. The scribe gauge enables Shigeki to accurately mark distances from and along wooden edges, and is invaluable in his furniture making and design.

Of course, Shigeki took the scribe gauge with him when he relocated from Osaka in Japan to Berlin in 2006.

'I was keen to be closer to European design culture. Since coming to Berlin I've trained as a carpenter, and now I focus all my work on wooden furniture and forms,' says Shigeki.

Shigeki developed the concept for the eternal calendar in 2011, after watching the hands of a wall clock ticking around and around and making the link that days and months also move cyclically, but that we don't generally mark them in the same circular way.

He set about working out how to mark all these measures of time on the same timepiece.

'I did a lot of prototyping. There were around six versions – it was particularly difficult to find the correct distances and positions for the numbers and names of the month.'

To start making the calendar, Shigeki mills the beechwood that forms the calendar's base into a round shape, using a router.

'Next I use a sander to mill the edges until they're smooth, then smooth all the surfaces with sandpaper. I brush the edges twice with the milling machine, to give the wood a softer appearance.'

Shigeki flips the base over and drills a hole for the hook in the back, then oils the beechwood. Next, he grinds the hands, and drills holes in them. Then he spray-paints all the components: blue for the days of the week; yellow for the name of the month and red for the days of the month.

The paper that forms the calendar's face has already been cut into a circular shape measuring exactly 31 cm (12 in) in diameter and printed with high-grade ink onto high-grade paper by an offsite printer. Shigeki carefully glues the paper onto the beechwood.

“This part is quite tricky,” says Shigeki. “I need to apply the glue as uniformly as possible, then apply as little pressure as possible when applying the paper to the wood, lest it mark.”

To finish the calendar, he drills a hole in the centre of the face and inserts the wooden screw nut, then the hands, which he also crafts from wood.

Shigeki makes around a dozen calendars at a time in a 32 sq m (344.4 sq ft) workshop in a former factory space just south of the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. The entire space has been converted to artists’ studios; Shigeki’s, on the third floor, is one of more than 30.

Shigeki was born and raised in the Osaka prefecture of Japan. His father was an engineer at a large industrial plant and a maker of things, and he had a big influence.

“When I was six years old my father built a bed for me in the top of a typical Japanese wardrobe. It was made from wood, and I needed a small ladder to climb up and get into it. I loved it.”

It’s easy to see the link between a bed like that and the playfulness that is a deliberate feature of his designs. Nobuyuki Tachibana was another big influence. Working with the renowned iron sculptor was the first job Shigeki had after graduating from his studies in interior design at the Osaka Sogo College of Design. One particular item Shigeki made, a metal chair, led him to consider making his career in furniture.

“When I launched my brand in 2010, the leading concept was “High Humour Design”. I like to bring a sense of fun into daily life, while maintaining a commitment to quality. I also strive to infuse my work with spiritual richness in the face of today’s mass production.”



“

I like to bring a sense of fun into daily life, while maintaining a commitment to quality. I also strive to infuse my work with spiritual richness in the face of today’s mass production.



CARING FOR YOUR ETERNAL CALENDAR

Hang the calendar out of direct sunlight, and dust it occasionally. Always make sure you have clean fingers when you shift the hands along.

