

A Close Relationship between Japanese Art and Science with Roots in the Edo Period (1603–1868)

Exploring the Man-nen Dokei, Western timekeeping and the Japanese flow of time

Exhibition

Venue

Lobby at the Embassy of Japan in the UK
101-104 Piccadilly, London W1J 7JT

Period

From 29th October to 1st December, 2014
9:30am–5:30pm, Monday–Friday

The value of time in the West rests on accuracy. In contrast, the Japanese perception of time was one of impermanence or an observation of how time itself passes. This Japanese concept of time, which reflected the changing of the four seasons, was built into the Wa-dokei, the Japanese clock. The Man-nen Dokei, which can be literally translated as the Ten Thousand-Year Clock but is often referred to as the Myriad Year Clock, is the only mechanical clock in the world based on a seasonal system of timekeeping; daytime and nighttime were divided into units which varied in length from day to day and from season to season.

Tanaka Hisashige (1799-1881) built the Wa-dokei masterpiece, the Man-nen Dokei, and in 1875 founded one of the companies which would later become Toshiba. This intricately crafted timepiece is a guide to the study of the aesthetic qualities in Japanese craftsmanship and the innovations which shaped modern Japanese technology.

Co-organised by

Toshiba International Foundation
The Embassy of Japan in the UK

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