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Timecraft

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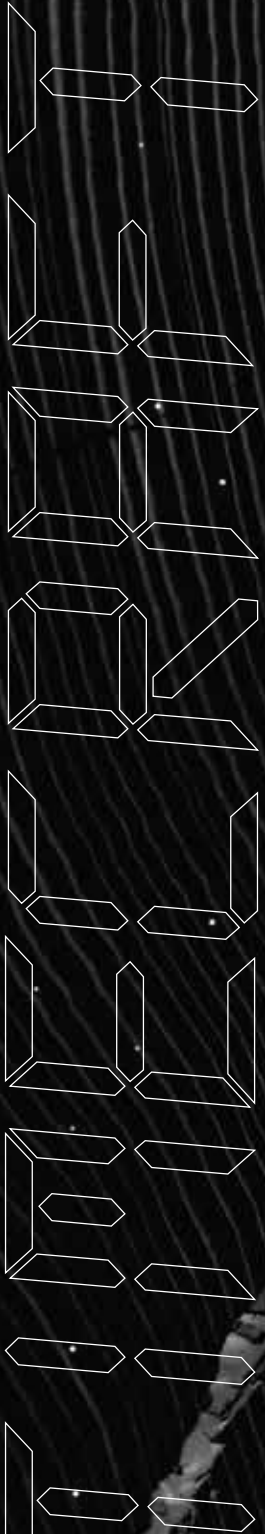
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Carpenter Library
November 10, 2023 through May 2024

TIMECRAFT

This catalogue serves as a permanent record for the exhibition *Timecraft* curated by Alexis White and Mallory Fitzpatrick in conjunction with the 14th Biennial Graduate Group Symposium on the same theme. The exhibition, which ran from November 2023 to May 2024 in Carpenter Library, challenges viewers to rethink their understanding of the way time is shaped, categorized, and created in the past, present, and future.

In this catalogue, you will find a listing of each art object in the show, including a link to **TriArte** or **Tripod** where applicable. The objects are organized by the cases they were displayed in at the show, and each section is accompanied by brief text explaining how we, the curators, saw the objects in conversation. However, there are many ways to understand the relationships between these objects, and we encourage everyone to consider the myriad connections between them.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the Graduate Group in Archaeology, Classics, and History of Art. We also offer our sincere thanks to special collaborators whose input and aid has been invaluable to this project. These contributors include Astrid Lindenlauf, Carrie Robbins, Alex Dooley, Alice McGrath, Monique Scott, Camilla MacKay, Laura Surtees, Bronwen Densmore, Selby Hearth, Katherine Marenco, and Pedro Marenco.

How Do Humans Craft Time?

"I love watches. I own many. Not for the time, but for the way they look. Why do I need to know the right time?"

Issey Miyake (1938-2022)

Sundials, clocks, and calendars are some of the most common and conventional ways of timekeeping from a historical perspective. Other, slightly more creative ways of keeping time include music, which measures time through beats, rests, and rhythms. All the instruments seen here are familiar objects which many of us have been taught to use from childhood to pass the time and schedule our lives.

Constance Irving

1. A Child's Book of Hours, 1921

Ellery Yale Wood Collection of Children's Books
and Young Adult Literature

Yoruba

2. Agba Ogboni (Drum), late 19th-mid 20th c.

Carved and incised wood and animal skin

Gift of Bruce and Adele King, in memory of Nicole M. King. **2003.27.1**

3. Academic Calendar from the Halycon, 1903

Swarthmore College

4. Metal Compass and Sundial, 20th c.

Asia

Metal, paper

Gift of Helen Burwell Chapin. **2022.11.8**

5. Hunting Horn with Wreaths, Flowers, and

Cherubs, 1857, after a 16th century original

Europe, Italy

Plaster cast of original ivory carving

Gift of Haverford College. **1857.16**

How Does Nature Craft Time?

The natural world plays a huge role in human conceptions of time. On the one hand, shifting seasons regulate important agricultural processes, helping us understand when crops should be planted, pruned, or harvested, and seasonal cycles of birth, growth, and death in plants and animals alike mirror changes and transformations in the human body.

On the other, now-static pieces of rock and stone can help us comprehend the passage of time on an immense geological scale. Minerals formed through natural processes provide evidence for the history of the areas from which they are recovered, while the fossil record helps scientists understand the planet's history of life from its very conception.

6. Ammonoid

Period unknown
Location unknown
Bryn Mawr College Geology Department

7. Basalt

Volcanic mafic rock
Location unknown
Bryn Mawr College Teaching Collection

8. Ammonoids(2)

Probably Mesozoic
Location Unknown
Bryn Mawr College Geology Department

9. Skolithos linearis

Cambrian
Hallam Quartzite
Chickies Formation, Pennsylvania
Bryn Mawr College Geology Collection

10. Fulgurite

Melted beach sand (quartz)
Santa Rosa Island, Florida
Bryn Mawr Albrecht Collection, Sample #65

Utagawa Yoshitora (Japanese, active 1850-1870)

11. Development of a Fetus in the Changing Seasons, 1880 (Meiji)

Color woodblock
Gift of S. Kathleen Doster. **2022.13.392.a-c**

Elliot Grant Watson, illustrated by Charles Tunnicliffe

12. What to Look for in..., 1959-1961

Ellery Yale Wood Collection of Children's Books and Young Adult Literature

How Does Time Craft History?

Our relationship with the past is complicated. Timekeeping is not only about measuring our own lives, but also understanding and (mis)representing the cultures and lives of those who came before us. Classical antiquity has often been idealized as glorious ruins of our venerable ancestors in art, literature, and science, while many non-Western cultures, held to these “classical” standards and found wanting, are denigrated as “primitive”.

These presumptions about the past are deeply entangled in many of our own academic fields, including anthropology, archaeology, classical studies, and many others. Timekeeping can thus also be weaponized, used to relegate certain cultures to the “Stone Age” while elevating others as the height of “civilization”.

- Europe, Denmark
13. Axe, 3900-1700 BC (Neolithic)
Stone
Gift of the Academy of Natural Sciences. **70.61.350**
- Europe, Denmark
14. Axe, 3900-1700 BC (Neolithic)
Stone
Gift of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. **70.61.325**
- Europe, Denmark
15. Axe, 3900-1700 BC (Neolithic)
Stone
Gift of the Academy of Natural Sciences. **70.61.316**
- Peru
16. Blade, unknown date
Stone
Gift of the Academy of Natural Sciences. **2004.20.52**
- Peru
17. Blade, unknown date
Stone
Gift of the Academy of Natural Sciences. **2004.20.33**
- Mexico
18. Axe Head, unknown date
Polished and incised stone
Gift of the Academy of Natural Sciences. **70.54.11**
- 19. Babylonian Gudea Clay Nail**, 2350 BCE
Asia, Iraq, Tello (Girsu)
Bequest of Howard Lehman Goodhart. **2009.18.19**
- Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Italian, 1720-1778)
21. Dieta, o sia Luogo, che da ingresso a due diversi grandiosi Cubiolo, e ad altre, 1771
Etching on wove paper
1999.15.5
- Joseph Lindon Smith (American, 1863-1950)
22. Copy of an Egyptian Relief Depicting Two Boys with Two Bulls, Late 19th-Early 20th c.
Oil on Canvas
Bequest of Frances Arnold, Class of 1897. **1975.3**

How Can We Deconstruct Time?

When it comes to timekeeping, the future has just as important a role as the past or present. Though daily planners and calendars chart out the days, weeks, and months ahead, it's also human nature to wonder more broadly about what the future may hold. From seeking answers about upcoming decisions to dreaming about what the future might hold, the realms of the spiritual and cosmic remind us that sometimes it's better not to keep time too closely.

Maren Hassinger

23. Twilight, 1990

Woodcut

Seymour Adelman Fund. **2021.6.87**

Shona

24. Headrest, early 20th c.

Carved wood

Gift of Mace Neufeld and Helen Katz Neufeld. **99.5.51**

Yoruba

25. Opon Ifa (Divination Tray), 20th c.

Carved and incised wood

Gift of Bruce and Adele King, in memory of Nicole M. King. **2003.27.3**

The cycle of the moon has been important for human timekeeping for thousands of years across many cultures. And yet, in its roles as celestial divinity, inspiration for art, setting for speculative and science fiction, and many more, it also serves as an escape from the strict regimentation of time. Gazing at the moon is an action shared by the scientist, the farmer, and the artist alike, whether to measure time or break free from it.

Mark Klett

26. Byron Checking the position of the moon with his laptop, Flaming George, Wyo., 1997.

Gelatin silver print

Haverford College **HC08-0468**

Yoshiiku Ochiai

27. A Moon-Viewing Party with the Suma Koto in the Bedroom (Tsuki no en neya no sumagoto), 1861

Color woodblock

Gift of Margery Hoffman Smith. **S.80.FA.a-c**

Timekeeping can also be a matter of perspective. The stars are lightyears away, and yet we reach for them every day. How is time measured from space, where the sun never sets and there are no seasons? The exponential advancement of space technology has changed our understanding of Earth's place in the galaxy, and yet astronauts still rely on its familiar rhythms to structure their days.

NASA

28. Earth as Seen from the Moon. Kennedy Space Center, 1980

Color laser print

Gift of James Tanis. **2003.5.1**

Judith Masur

29. Figure from Behind Holding a Star, 1978

Ink on paper

Gift of Judith Masur. **2018.8.28**

1. The way that we learn to tell time as children—with numbers, dials, and instruments—is only one among many. The book's reference to a medieval religious tradition, the Book of Hours, which tied moments of the day and year to prayers, indicates that a devotional attitude lingers in our unquestioning deference to this time system.

2. Percussive instruments keep time in music and dance. Anyone who has heard a drum beat and instinctively started grooving knows how powerful these timekeepers can be. Drummers create and enforce a coherent rhythm that unifies a troupe of dancers, musicians, or worshippers in a tightly controlled time system, making a temporary but totally immersive universe of sound and music which undercuts the normal unfolding of time for a brief period.

3. Most calendars start on New Year's Day, in winter. A calendar that begins on the cusp of autumn demarcates a life immersed in school and university systems. Swarthmore's identity is further expressed by the exchange of the pagan names January, February, etc, with plain numbered months, a uniquely Quaker commitment to Christianizing time.

4. By the time this portable compass-sundial was produced in the twentieth century, its technology had been made obsolete by the mechanical wristwatch. However, pocket sundials had a centuries-long association with exploration and trading in faraway lands that added value as evidence of the owner's worldliness and sense of adventure.

5. While the sharp blasts of a horn can measure time in a musical context, horns have also traditionally been used to signal that it's time for certain activities like the hunt. Large hunting parties spread across a wide area can't always see the action. Luckily, horns like this help keep time for participants with aural signals. For instance, a single note can announce the party's departure, while two staccato notes serve as a rallying "Tally-ho" cry, indicating that the quarry's been spotted.

6. This spectacular ammonoid fossil displays the curved shape which gave these creatures their names from their resemblance to rams' horns, an animal associated with the Egyptian god Ammon. In this specimen, the chambers of the ammonoid themselves serve as markers of the passage of time, as the processes of crystallization and petrification mark stages of development in the fossil's afterlife. Soon after the animal died and its soft parts decayed, sand and mud were able to fill the largest chambers through a small opening in each one. However, the sand and mud never reached the inner chambers, leaving them empty, allowing them to be filled with mineral-rich fluids long after the shell had become buried and fossilized. As these fluids dried up, the minerals precipitated large crystals in a process analogous to the formation of geodes.

7. The smooth ripples and rolls of this basalt were formed through the rapid cooling of magnesium- and iron-rich lava. In addition to marking an explosive moment in time—namely the eruption of volcanoes—basalt can also serve as an important timekeeping device by creating layers of volcanic rock that can help date fossils and minerals that occur above or below its surface. Using the basalt's chemical composition, scientists can estimate its approximate date, helping establish a chronology for the fossil record.

8. The first ammonoid, a long-extinct type of mollusk, with its repeating pattern of frilled suture lines looks like an odd bit of jigsaw puzzle, with each piece slotted perfectly into the next. The other has a complex web of white lines that bloom across the fossilized shell like frost on a window. Both these line patterns mark the ammonoids' septa—the places where the dividing walls of their inner chambers met the outer shell. Trained paleontologists can tell that the white-pattern ammonoid is much younger than the other because its suture lines are much more complex, a feature that evolved later.

9. This Skolithos specimen is a trace fossil, meaning that it is not the fossilized remains of the creature itself but rather of the traces it left behind—in this case, a fossilized burrow of a species of worm. Skolithos is one of the earliest records of animals digging vertical burrows into the seafloor. But the Skolithos, like the ammonoids, is also an index fossil. Index fossils are often used to identify and date the rocks in which they are found because they are organisms which existed during a limited time range, and can thus help define and establish geologic periods. In this case, when geologists find a rock with a high abundance of Skolithos, they refer to it "pipe rock," which is common in rocks from the Cambrian Period.

10. Fulgurite is formed almost instantaneously when lightning strikes the ground, fusing minerals together and converting them to a single glassy piece of petrified lightning. Like basalt, fulgurite is an igneous rock—but it defies our attempts at dating. It measures a moment of time infinitesimal to the human mind, a natural occurrence that has been happening for billions of years and will continue for billions more.

11-12. Learning to associate moods and activities with seasons is one of the ways we tell time without numbers and measurements. However, the way we experience seasonal change has to do as much with culture as with climate. Japan's four seasons now match ours, but in the 17th century, Japanese officials identified 72 microseasons, each corresponding with both solar events and local climatic changes. An intense awareness of nature's subtle changes is expressed by Utagawa Yoshitō's print, in which the appearance of seasonal blooms is intimately correlated with the interior stages of a woman's pregnancy.

13-18. In the second half of the 19th century, a new type of science—archaeology—used newly invented categories of time—the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages—to classify and interpret human material history. These familiar categories were coined with a particular time-based hierarchy in mind. Combining geology and biology with European historical philosophy, the new archaeologists presupposed that cultures, like animals, evolve over time, starting from a barbaric "state of nature" represented by the Stone Age and gradually progressing to the pinnacle of human endeavor, represented by modern Europe in the Age of Commerce. Archaeologists asserted that the use of stone tools by contemporary or historically recent culture groups, like many in the Americas, was evidence that these "Stone Age" peoples existed outside of the historical realm to which Europeans belonged.

19-20. This oversized clay nail would have been deposited in the walls at the time of a building's foundation to mark the occasion. More ornamental than practical, many are inscribed with the names of kings or gods to whom the buildings are dedicated. Compare the nail to the Tiwi axe. Which would you guess is older? The answer is the foundation nail—by nearly 4500 years. But at first glance, it may appear to be the more recent object, its cuneiform carvings making it seem more "advanced" according to traditional archaeological approaches.

21. The works of Piranesi are among the first instances of archaeological illustration. These popular publications spread widely, becoming part of the construction of knowledge about historical time by 18th-century Europeans. While Piranesi's prints were not accurate to the actual ruins they described, they evoked a desired response to the past, helping promote the notion of a pan-(Western) European heritage in ancient Roman history. The eager interpretation of Europe's past by historians and philosophers is reflected in the dramatic and imaginative effects of Piranesi's prints: the architectural remains of a celebrated and legendary empire appear in dynamic presentation and exaggerated scale.

22. Archaeological thought and the glorification of ruins had a huge impact on fine arts. American artist Joseph Smith not only reproduces the imagery of this ancient Egyptian relief sculpture, but carefully copies cracks, ruptures, and discoloration which show the precious accumulation of time. Historical imagination and the Western reverence for antiquities make these imperfections into evidence of great value, signs of civilizational achievement and the glory of remembrance.

23. Artist Maren Hassinger used wooden blocks with small holes to reproduce a glimpse of the calm night sky in black ink. Thousands of years ago, ancient Egyptians used the same material to create sundials like the one replicated below, making the communication between people and stars a part of everyday life and social ritual. Very simple tools paired with a very robust imagination can connect us with the sacred and mysterious movement of the stars and planets, sharing the secrets of time.

24. This headrest has two simultaneous and entangled functions: it comfortably supports the user's head during sleep, and by doing so, facilitates the ancestral communication that occurs during dreaming in Shona tradition. If used frequently, oil from the user's hair and head is imparted to the headrest over many years of nightly dreaming, making the dark, colorful wood glow and shine. The resulting beauty of the patina is a testament to the strength of the user's relationship with time in both physical and astral dimensions.

25. The eyes of Èsù peer out at the viewer from the top of this divination board. Èsù is an òrisà, or divine being from Yoruba and West African diasporic religious traditions. With his help, participants hope to communicate with divine forces through a babalawo, or diviner, who interprets the shapes of pine nuts scattered in wood dust on the tray's surface. Like spiritualist seances, ancient astrological guides, or still-popular tarot readings, divination ceremonies are one more way in which humans look to higher powers to escape the constraints of time.

26-27. Moon-viewing parties are a Japanese tradition stretching back hundreds of years to celebrate the autumnal full and waxing moons. The Japanese calendar has undergone many changes, from Chinese-influenced lunisolar patterns to the system of era names (gengō) and Gregorian calendars, both of which still remain in use. Still, however the year was measured and broken up, the tradition of Tsukimi, or moon-viewing parties disregarded the changing names and divisions of the official calendars, instead relying on lunar cycles to gather and celebrate the harvest moon with poetry, rice dumplings (dango), and decorations of pampas grass.

28-29. Stars are incomprehensibly massive—our own relatively small Sun is 846,000 miles in diameter. They live for billions of years and are many millions of miles away. Yet, they have been our constant companions throughout human history. The tiny handheld star in Judith Masur's drawing underlines our intimate relationship with celestial bodies. Our ability to observe and predict their movements within our limited perspective gives order and control to our lives, while inspiring the belief in a realm beyond human expectation or possibility.