



PANORAMA

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Tick tock

The man behind
the Always Clock

The Canberra Times
October 20, 2012

Unique timepiece ticks all the right boxes

The Always Clock pendulum represents a healthy democracy in a modern society. **Julianne Strachan** speaks to its creator, Canberra jeweller Eytan Aharoni, about his work and how it found its way to Parliament House

Studded with pink diamonds and shimmering with more than a quarter of a kilogram of gold, the properties of the Always Clock are such that it would be sorely tempting to try to wear it as a necklace. This should hardly come as a surprise though, given that it was designed and created by Canberra's Eytan Aharoni, a jeweller of 23 years, who graduated from the Gabi Hameshabetz Jewellery Academy in Haifa.

At his shop in Bunda Street, Civic, Aharoni Jewellery, he and wife Nurit have designed many one-off pieces incorporating precious gems, stones and metals.

The pieces have been handmade using traditional methods that have become increasingly rare in an age of mass-produced jewellery lines.

Aharoni crafts the pieces himself in his workshop, going through painstaking processes to melt solid gold into stronger 18-carat gold. He has brought his skills as a jeweller to the task of creating a clock he intends will be able to last for hundreds, if not thousands of years.

The Always Clock now hangs proudly in Federal Parliament. However, surprisingly, it was not a commissioned work, but rather a labour of love that Aharoni decided to make with no guaranteed buyer.

Aharoni says he wanted to express his great fondness for Australia and felt compelled to make the clock using the prestigious Mokume Gane forging technique pioneered in 17th-century Japan.



The Always Clock contains more than a quarter of a kilogram of gold.

The complex technique fuses different metals to produce unique colour and shape combinations and has been the long-standing method for making samurai swords and knives.

Mokume Gane is created by applying heat and pressure only (without the use of a solder) to bond the metals into a solid billet. Forging and then folding the metal creates organic looking pattern in the metal, resembling wood grain.

"Every day I drive from Mawson to work and I always go out of my way to look at Parliament House – to see how amazing and special it is," Aharoni says. "And it struck me like lightning and I suddenly realised the connection between Mokume Gane, myself, Parliament and Australia – it was a focused thinking – I knew in one second what I would do."

"Nobody commissioned it, I just knew in my bones that I needed to do it. It cost tens of thousands of dollars to invest in the materials alone."

"When I was done I took it to a valuer in Sydney who has done valuations for 30 years for Cartier and Tiffany's and other companies and he had never seen anything like this."

"It's a new idea."

Aharoni believes it is the first Mokume Gane pendulum clock created in Australia and has scoured known information sources to find anything similar without uncovering anything else in its likeness.

The Always Clock found its way to Parliament after the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Peter Slipper, was shown a photograph of it.

"One of my customers is the Israeli Ambassador and he saw the clock and was fascinated by it," Aharoni says.

"And he actually approached the Speaker of the House Peter Slipper and he showed him the picture of the clock and he [Mr Slipper] said 'yes' immediately."

"When I actually installed the clock in the study of the Speaker of the House he said it 'looked far better in real life than the photo'."

The clock is on loan and will likely find a new home in a national art venue that is open to the general public.

A joint statement about the clock was released last month by Slipper and Michael Danby, the chairman of the joint committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

"What a privilege it is to have such an exquisite piece of art work within our Parliament" Slipper said.

"I commend Mr Aharoni for his craftsmanship and his ability to use Australia's natural resources to create such a masterpiece."

Danby said the clock was truly remarkable.

"This is a work of international excellence. Both the story and the craftsmanship is worthy of the Australian Parliament and should be shared with those who visit its halls."

The Ambassador of Israel to Australia Yuval Rotem also attended the official unveiling of the clock at Parliament.

The materials are, fittingly, all from Australia, from the pink diamonds, to the Tasmanian Myrtle timber case, to the sterling silver and golds which range from rose gold, to yellow gold, green gold and white gold.

The clock also has its own story and a message which has been translated into a short book in its honour.

"The face of the Always Clock is a map of Australia, surrounded by a solid Mokume Gane frame and pink diamonds which represent Australia's abundance of natural treasures," Aharoni explains.

"The pendulum features a representation of Parliament House swinging from left to right, and right to left."





"This is the desirable way for Parliament to move – it represents a healthy democracy in a modern society.

"The Always Clock tells the story of my personal experience and perspective of Australia as an immigrant: its beautiful landscapes, its diverse and welcoming society, its natural wealth and its democratic political process.

"In today's world we are surrounded by countries whose clocks are still or the movement of their pendulums is fake, countries whose maps are colourless or painted with dull, depressing colours.

"The relationship between the map and the Parliament is directly linked to the dimension of time, just as demonstrated by the Always Clock.

"This linkage can be measured; each time that Parliament moves to the left of right the colours on the map will change."

The clock face is not made with gold and silver alone, it



Jeweller Eytan Aharoni, known for his stunning rings, pictured, and one-off pieces, has painstakingly created a clock that will last for many centuries. Photos: Colleen Petch and courtesy Eytan Aharoni

also has palladium and shakudo. As the clock ages, the colours in it will change.

"That is the nature of Mokume Gane," Aharoni says.

"Half of the map of Australia is dark and the other half is light. It is very colourful and that is because

Australian society is very diverse. Its diversity is there in the metal elements and the clock shows the relationship between the land and society and the Parliament in the dimension of time in the clock.

"The Parliament moves from side to side with the will of

the people which is why the map is at the top and the Parliament is the pendulum.

"It is a story about the will of the people making the Parliament move.

"Over time the colours in the map will change, though I will not be alive to see it.

"In 200 years from now people will see this clock and it will have different colours. That is because the shakudo oxidises and that is part of the mystique of Mokume Gane.

"If people look after it and they clean it, it will last for hundreds of years or more because these are the old techniques I have used. It is gold – there is no aluminium in this clock. It will last."

Aharoni has dedicated the clock to something else that will last – to the loving memory of his mother and father, Sarah and Bechor Aharoni, and his mother- and father-in-law Lola and Ephraim Bental.