



BEAUTIFULLY MEASURED MOMENTS: Present Time Clocks

IN HIS LINE OF WORK, Jim Dailey is used to hearing corny jokes about time. In his newly built studio in rural Acme, Washington, surrounded by clocks, his thoughts are consumed with it. Like the rest of us, he's conscious of the fact that there's never enough time (that is, as the comedians say, "unless you're serving it"). But somehow, time seems less demanding when measured by one of Jim's handsome handcrafted timepieces. Is it the burnished wood? The inviting clockfaces? The classic Arts and Crafts designs with the Jim Dailey twist? Whatever it is, it's working, and it keeps customers coming back.

Bucolic Acme is a far cry from Los Angeles, where he was living 20 years ago. He was restoring his beautiful Highland Park bungalow, tinkering in his 10' x 12' workshop, making Arts and Crafts furniture and clocks and volunteering as a docent at the Gamble House in



Pasadena. With a degree in sculpture and an MFA in painting, Jim's clocks showed an artistic sensibility and unique design that went beyond mere hobby. But a hobby it stayed until on one evening in 1992, when he invited his friend and Gamble House bookstore director, Lee Sander to his home for dinner.

"We were in my workshop. He looked at my clocks and said, 'You know, I could sell these in the bookstore.'

So we did. That's how it started."

In 1993, Jim and his partner were looking to get out of the city. They moved to an 1880s farmhouse on Fir Island, Washington. Jim got his business license and began making his clocks in earnest, selling them on his website.

Jim's motto is, "Draw from the past, live in the present." It's a perfect metaphor for the way he honors the past and creates new designs, often blending the two for custom orders.

"A client will say, 'I want your design, based on this framework.' Right now I'm doing an incredible clock. It's a Stickley wedding clock, but with very different construction. I like a challenge. It's taken longer than I expected, but it'll be worth it."

A few years ago, Jim found himself in transition, ready for another challenge. He set out on a Honda Shadow motorcycle in search of the right space to build his dream studio. He found it in the rolling hills of Acme, 200 miles north of Seattle.

Jim began blogging about the new space, Acme Studios, after it was finished in 2010. It's gaining followers, with topics like "Burning Frank Lloyd Wright's Desk." His work at the





Gamble House, with its integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, was an inspiration for the new space.

The first thing you notice about the new abode, with the studio on the first floor and living quarters on the second, is the galvanized metal siding. He calls it “more industrial farm style than Craftsman.” But he also believes it has “an Arts and Crafts aesthetic in the space, and its relation to the natural setting around it. I wanted it to feel like it had always been there.

“The new shop is wonderful, because it’s very open, with covered areas that allow me to work outside. It’s been a lifelong dream to do something like this, to build a home/shop/studio, to design it from the ground up.”

Jim says he’s a woodworker who makes clocks, not a clockmaker. Most of Jim’s clocks use quartz movements—“the most accurate, reliable and cost effective time keeping mechanism available today.” For clients who insist on a mechanical movement, he turns to clock specialist Ron Zentner, or as Jim calls him, “the clock genius.”

“You have to wonder, why would someone want a mechanical movement when a quartz is so much more reliable? But some people are just willing to spend the extra money for that audible sensation, the ticking. A lot of people tell me it reminds them of being in their grandmother’s house.”

With Jim’s newest designs, inspiration sometimes comes from unexpected places. “My nephew was watching *Lord of the Rings*. I was taken with the Bilbo Baggins house. That inspired the Buffalo Square clock, with the door that looks like a hobbit house.”

Another design was inspired by a railroad trestle. “I love the long tines coming down like corbels on an old house.”

When asked to count up the number of clocks he’s made, Jim was surprised to learn he’d made



over 4,000 clocks in the past 20 years. It’s hard to imagine a more beautiful setting or a more enjoyable pastime for a man who so clearly loves what he does. But then, as the saying goes, time flies when you’re having fun.

Present Time Clocks
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LEFT, JIM DAILEY SURROUNDED BY TICKING CLOCKS IN HIS ACME STUDIO. ABOVE, THE PRAIRIE TULIP CLOCK. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP, THE NEWLY NAMED TRESTLE ARCH WALL CLOCK. BELOW, THE ALHAMBRA, THE SAN JOSE, AND THE MISSION ARCH.