

Delving into Dutch clock craftsmanship in 'Golden Age'

Hu Min

An exhibition is underway at the Shanghai Dalai Time Museum in Anting Town of Jiading District, delving into Dutch clock craftsmanship and Sino-Western cultural exchanges during the Dutch Golden Age, a period in the 17th century when the Netherlands emerged as a dominant European power in trade, art, science and politics.

The exhibition, titled "Time Convergence — Dutch Clocks and the Cultural Resonance of the Maritime Silk Road," showcases over 50 items from the museum's collection, including Dutch antique clocks, marine chronometers, trade artifacts and cultural fusion pieces.

It combines interactive experiences and immersive space design to recreate the mechanical beauty and cross-cultural dialogues of the Dutch Golden Age, presenting the audiences with a festive atmosphere and taking them on a profound journey through time.

The exhibition is divided into three thematic sections — Dutch impression, craftsmanship inheritance and artistic rebirth. An interactive installation area stimulates sensory experiences, encouraging reflection on time, technology and art.

Featured exhibits

• Windmill weather clock

The "weather forecast expert" in the shape of a Dutch windmill combines

aesthetics and functionality. It features a barometer, mechanical clock and thermometer. The windmill top senses air pressure changes for weather prediction, while the middle is a precise mechanical clock, and the sides are vertical thermometers. It embodies Dutch scientific innovation and cultural charm.

• Clog-shaped sailboat ornament

This ornament uses traditional clogs as the hull and features typical Dutch patterns like sailboats, canals and windmills. The sails display emblems and the mast flies the Dutch flag, symbolizing Dutch folklore and the Golden Age's maritime spirit.

• Delft blue pottery clock

This ceramic clock is a tribute to oriental pottery. In the Delft classic blue-and-white colors, it features floral and rural scene patterns, reflecting the Dutch adaptation of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain style since the 18th century and is an elegant symbol of cultural integration.

• JEMA porcelain clock

These JEMA clocks feature animal shapes, unique metallic luster glazes and German movements. Combining aesthetic charm with practicality, they appeal to vintage ceramic enthusiasts.



Clog-shaped sailboat ornament

Delft blue pottery clock

JEMA porcelain clock

• Dutch sports wall clock

This minimalist timepiece is inspired by the De Stijl art movement. It uses pure geometric shapes and primary colors (red, yellow, blue) to embody minimalism, reflecting early 20th-century artistic innovation and demonstrating a bold breakthrough in traditional artistic concepts.

• Hindeloopen painted wall clock

It showcases the rustic art style of Hindeloopen, a Dutch countryside tradition, with vivid hues and intricate floral motifs. Hand-painted, it reflects 17th-18th century rural folk art and regional cultural integration.

• WUBA water-drop pendulum wall clock

From Dutch clockmaker WUBA, this timepiece weaves mythological storytelling into its design: a water-drop-shaped pendulum topped with

a statue of Atlas, the Greek deity symbolizing the burden of time. The classic WUBA design blends traditional Dutch clockmaking elements with Greek mythology, creating a timeless symbol of time's enduring weight.

• Delft blue pottery ornaments

Since the 1950s, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines has created these "flying blue houses" as business class souvenirs. Embodying cultural elements and designed to hold liquor, they offer both commemorative and collectible value.

If you go

Date: Through June 30
Opening Hours: 9am-12pm, 1-4:30pm (Tuesday-Sunday)
Admission: Free
Venue: Shanghai Dalai Time Museum
Address: 981 Hejing Rd, Jiading District
 嘉定区和静路981号



More than 50 items from the Shanghai Dalai Time Museum's clock collection are being showcased at a special exhibition exploring Sino-Western cultural exchanges during the Dutch Golden Age. — Photos by Ti Gong