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Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2014
Q2

The World of Bonsai Aloha; a 360-Degree Landscape

Judging Bonsai; Who Decides What is Good?

Professional Stone Collector; Ken McLeod

The 88th Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition

Nippon Suiseki Association

Noelanders Trophy XV 2014

Spirit Stones;

*The Ancient Art of the
Scholar's Rock*

Lightning's Dance;

The path to informality

Inspired by Masterpieces



*Satsuki Azalea in springtime, The
Kanuma Satsuki Festival, photo
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President's Message

March for many of us is the time to repot and root prune our bonsai. Last summer, I placed several olive stumps in sand and decomposed gravel and covered them with plastic. All but one successfully rooted and now I can begin the process of repotting and the first steps in styling. There are many fabulous olive bonsai here in southern California, and I hope someday, to have one worthy of displaying. Regardless if that happens or not, I always enjoy being out of doors working on a tree or in my stone room enjoying a newly acquired excellent stone.

This will be another year of extensive travel for my wife and I as we attend several major bonsai and stone events. We started the year in Tokyo in February where we attended the 88th Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition in the newly renovated Tokyo Metropolitan Museum in Ueno Park. It was another grand event with the best of the Japanese bonsai on display. The Nippon Suiseki Association (NSA) held a major week-long exhibit of 168 stones and 15 accessory items, also at this museum, during the second week of the Kokufu exhibition. The new leadership of the NSA is to be congratulated on staging an outstanding exhibition that included the addition of special stones seldom seen before and the addition of several fine tokonoma displays. After Tokyo, we travelled to Taiwan to visit Mr. Chen Tsang Shing's beautiful Wan-Jin Art Center near Taichung. Mr. Cheng has one of the largest and finest collections of bonsai in Taiwan.

In May, we will travel to Manila in the Philippines to participate in the National Bonsai Exhibition. I will join fellow BCI board member, Budi Sulisty, as he conducts a demonstration and I will give a lecture on stone appreciation. We are hoping to inform many bonsai enthusiasts in the Philippines about the benefits of BCI. Immediately after this, we will fly to Beijing, China to participate in the opening of a 100-tree exhibition of Lingnan style of penjing in the capital of China. Then, August 21–24, 2014, we have our grand BCI convention in the Gold Coast, Australia. I hope to see many of our members at this event. It promises to be another great convention. If all goes well, we will return to Japan in November for Taikan-ten exhibition in Kyoto. We do this because of our love of outstanding trees and stones and to help spread the news about the strongest and most active global organization promoting bonsai and viewing stones—Bonsai Clubs International.

I am pleased to report to you that in the month of February, two new contracts were signed for our 2015 and our 2017 BCI conventions. BCI board member Helen Su travelled to Guangzhou China to join me for a signing ceremony with Guangzhou government officials and officers of the local penjing association.



We now have contracts in place for the next four BCI conventions—2014 through 2017. These are one of the more important services that BCI provides for our members. Please join us at our next one in Australia. A great team of international bonsai artists will be conducting demonstrations.

During this trip, I had the opportunity to visit the venue for the 2015 convention. It is a beautiful site for the outdoor exhibit of trees. The demonstrations, lectures and stone exhibition will be directly across the street at the Science center. This is in the heart of Guangzhou (formerly Canton), an international trade center in southern China. A few days later, Helen Su and I met with Taiwan officials at the Wan-Jin Art Center near Taichung to sign another agreement to hold our 2017 convention in Taiwan.

We now have contracts in place for the next four BCI conventions—2014 through 2017. These are one of the more important services that BCI provides for our members. Please join us at our next one in Australia. A great team of international bonsai artists will be conducting demonstrations including Zhao Qingquan from China, Shinichi Nakajima from Japan, Budi Sulisty from Indonesia, and Nikunj and Jyoti Parekh from India. In addition, a team of Australian bonsai artists will perform. Participants will have the opportunity to learn how to make a bonsai pendant using the lost wax carving and casting techniques from the skilled jewelry artist Frank Mihalic. Immediately after the convention, a fabulous post-convention tour provides the opportunity to see some of the best known natural features of Australia. See and learn about bonsai and viewing stones while enjoying the company of hundreds of like-minded people from various regions of the world. Visit our website at www.goldcoasdt2014.bonsai-bci.com to learn more about this exciting event and to register for the convention. 🌳

Tom Elias, President
Bonsai Clubs International

You are invited to be a part of the BCI Vision.

**We are raising funds for the future of BCI!
Any donation you can make will help.**

You can make a difference with the following projects:

- Naming Rights for our Annual World Bonsai Styling Competition
- Multi-lingual magazine—Chinese and Spanish edition

Remember BCI in your will, your trust, your future!

For more information contact:



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or Paul Gilbert; pauillynpaul@msn.com

FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this column, we near the end of the second coldest winter on record in southern Manitoba. Only the most committed bonsai enthusiasts braved the minus-40-degree weather to attend our club meetings the last four months. My bonsai trees are still under a meter or more of snow and I won't know how they fared until early May. I know that many of you who are in northerly climes have also experienced a very cold winter. I certainly hope your trees have pulled through. Soon, winter will be a distant memory as we engage in springtime activities to refine and improve our bonsai, preparing them for club shows and competitions.

Speaking of competitions, BCI director Kath Hughes and accredited bonsai judge Malcolm Hughes have written the first of a three part presentation on judging bonsai. Look for part two in an upcoming issue. The third part will be a judging form that will help clubs evaluate bonsai trees in competition in a practical and time-efficient manner.

BCI president Tom Elias recently attended Japan's premier bonsai show, the Kokufu Bonsai Ten and reports on this prestigious exhibition and the suiseki show that coincided with this event. Kath Hughes reports on the Noelanders Trophy in Belgium, a bonsai event that continues to grow in stature with each occurrence. Whether its Japan, Belgium, or Australia's Gold Coast—the setting for BCI 2014—bonsai tourists have never had it so good.

David Fukumoto has stated in previous articles that in Hawaii, they consider all sides of a bonsai composition so that its display is not limited only to the formal front. He demonstrates this masterfully by creating a 360 degree planting with three beautiful and unique views that evoke Hawaii's exotic landscapes. Massimo Bandera shows us how nature and the aesthetic Shibusa inspired him and his team to turn a vigorous formal upright into an informal composition possessing distinction and character.

Danilo Scursatone ponders the role of masterpiece trees in bonsai art and helps us understand that if an art form is to evolve and progress, masterpieces should be considered a source of inspiration, not imitation.

Mike McIntyre's review of a new book on Kemin Hu's stone collection, lovingly photographed by acclaimed photographer Jonathan Singer, surveys the happy coincidences and the talented people that resulted in this exceptional production. To inspire us to look for our own stones to collect, Tom Elias profiles Ken McLeod, the adventurous stone purveyor of American stones and takes us on a collecting trip where we learn a few collecting tips.

Finally, many thanks to the BCI members who took time to reply to our website survey. The information you provided has given us a clearer picture of your bonsai and stone related activities and will be a big help as we continue to improve the website. Your comments and suggestions were especially helpful and I hope we can fulfill most of them. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada (bcieditor@grandesign.net)

MISSION STATEMENT

BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

Bonsai Clubs International, a not-for-profit educational organization, advances the ancient and living art of bonsai and related arts through the global sharing of knowledge. We educate while promoting international friendship and solidify world relationships through cooperation with individuals and organizations whose purpose is consistent with ours.

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The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of BCI. Neither BCI nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Digital images must be provided at 300 dpi resolution for an 8 x 5 inch size minimum.

Authors are requested not to submit articles simultaneously to another publication.

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Q3	J/A/S	May 1
Q4	O/N/D	August 1



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ON OUR COVER: *Satsuki Azalea in springtime*, photo courtesy Kaboku Center. The Kanuma Satsuki Festival held in late May in Kanuma, is the second largest flowering satsuki azalea exhibit held in Japan. The festival lasts ten days and begins the last week of May. The Kanuma Satsuki Festival is held at the Kaboku (Flowering Tree) Center. The display of outstanding flowering satsuki azaleas is held in an attractive exhibition hall overlooking a spacious sales area.

There are 1106 registered and officially recognized varieties of satsuki azaleas in Japan. Many of these will be in full flower at this festival. This is an unusual opportunity to see and appreciate the great diversity and range of flower colors and flower types. This is a very popular festival and as such it attracts a large audience. If possible, visit this exhibition during the week as the weekends are especially crowded.

THE WORLD OF BONSAI ALOHA

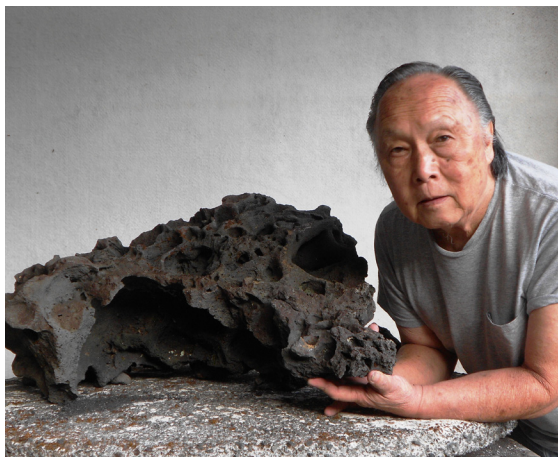
Creating a 360-Degree Complex Tropical Landscape

By David W. Fukumoto, Hawaii

The first 360-degree complex tropical landscape on a concrete turntable disc was titled "Creating a Bonsai World" and dedicated to Haruo "Papa" Kaneshiro, the father of tropical Hawaiian bonsai. Created in 1992, it features dwarf azaleas that are now about 25 years old in this current photo. This impressive arrangement attracts the most attention from visitors.



David Fukumoto is shown with a smaller selected rock that will be positioned to extend the sea-cave into the ocean. Smooth rounded stones will compliment the ocean scene.



Bottom left; This photo shows the left side of the sea cave with the space between the main rock filled with colored concrete so roots will not be able to invade the ocean scene.



Bottom right; The sea cave with the selected extension rock in place. The deeply eroded surface texture makes the landscape very attractive during the rainy season with the addition of pools of water.

Our bonsai evolves due to our American-Hawaiian values and our tropical climate and trees. Training has shifted from traditional temperate climate single apex, tier-branched pine-tree-style to tropical, multiple-apex, arched-branched trees with rounded heavy canopies and an emphasis on roots and banyan forms. There is less concern about creating a single formal front so we try to create bonsai that are attractive from all viewing positions.

This is the story of "The World of Bonsai Aloha" dedicated to and honoring Ted T. Tsukiyama, Hawaii's administrator and diplomat who played a major role in Hawaiian, national, and international bonsai.

The landscape has three major views: "The Giant Sea-cave," "The Transition to Land," and "The Kingdom of the Banyan." It features ocean-eroded lava rocks and two Dwarf Schefflera, *Schefflera arboricola*, 15 and 25 years in training. The concrete disc is 48 inches in diameter.

The landscape is almost equally divided into three sections with the high point of the major ocean rock almost in the center, standing 15 inches above the concrete disc. The sea cave will be on the right and trees on the left.

A second rock was positioned to form a small inlet. Smooth rounded stones were used to fill the voids and smaller stones created texture to complete the ocean landscape.



Very little was done on the other side except installing wire anchor points and building a small berm to contain the gravelly potting media. The concrete was allowed to cure for a week before the planting session.

The complex landscape was planted on December 14, 2013. Unlike the very young trees in the first “Creating a Bonsai World,” we used larger trees that are 15 and 25 years in training. The smaller tree has thick, dense aerial roots to suggest the stout growth of trees exposed to the elements.

The larger, looser tree will dominate the protected environment where long aerial roots will drop from high branches in the highly desirable “rainforest banyan” styling.

Ryan was assigned to bare root the smaller tree while I attached the multiple tie-down wires. Some of its roots are in a cave-like section of the major rock and the tree is featured in the section titled: “The Transition to Land.”

Once tied down securely, we built a netting with thin paper-covered wire. Sphagnum moss was placed inside the wire netting and Ryan used an open top funnel to aid dibbling potting media between the roots. As he filled openings, it pushed out against the wire netting which held the media in place.

There is a generous amount of potting media 6 inches deep below the exposed root tree. A flat rock hides that media and creates the illusion of a tree growing out of a rocky formation.

The top of the large rock forms a rocky amphitheater and we planted the larger rainforest banyan low so there would be a 4- to 6-inch high rocky cave-wall as the background for this tree to dominate the third section titled: “The Kingdom of the Banyan.”

Edison took a bit longer to bare root the largest tree. It, too, has a generous amount of potting media—over five gallons! We pulled the tree tight against the lava wall and quickly secured it into position.

Several anchor points in the base allow tying down the tree from several angles with aluminum bonsai wire. Selected rocks were placed within the landscape to break up the large amount of visible potting media and to create an attractive sloping landscape.

We used a fine nozzle spray to water it down and expose the rocks. Edison and Ryan did a thorough inspection trying to point out areas to improve. When everyone was satisfied, we took the final photo to end the planting session.

In anticipation of an April publishing deadline, I decided to prune back the two Dwarf Schefflera trees, gambling that new growth would appear in time to present a more compact appearance.

In contrast, to “Creating a Bonsai World,” in “The World of Bonsai Aloha,” we used older pre-shaped trees and we had less than three months to take “finished” photos. As the trees settled into position, the tie wires were removed, additional rocks added, and moss planted in time to meet the submittal deadline.



Edison Yadao (left) is Fuku-Bonsai’s customer service/workshop manager and vice president of our sister non-profit Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation. Ryan Chang of Oahu leads the Fast-Track Study Group and is a contributing editor of our monthly email Journal of Tropical & True Indoor Bonsai.



Work continued in the afternoon to check every inch, probing with dibbles to find air pockets that needed to be filled with potting media. After the areas behind the netting were firm, a thin layer of sphagnum moss was spread between the exposed roots and this helped to hold the media down firmly. A thin layer of fine, rich, organic material became the finished surface.



“The Giant Sea Cave”
The impressive rock formation dominates the complex landscape.



In anticipation of an April publishing deadline, I decided to prune back the two Dwarf Schefflera trees, gambling that new growth would appear in time to present a more compact appearance.

“The World of Bonsai Aloha,” View One: The Giant Sea-cave

This theme view dominates as the rock is so spectacular. The combination of the ocean eroded rock and contrasting smooth water-worn rock is very pleasing.

The view is especially attractive in the early morning after a rain. The highly texture rock holds pools of rainwater that glistens and presents a cool refreshing scene.

In creating this complex landscape with three primary views, I tried to make each view compliment but also contrast with the other views.

Looking from the left side, the rock seems to step down to the ocean. The design came together after I found a “land extension” rock that was collected at the same place and time. The broken section on the new rock seemed to match the broken section on the main rock.

I tried to create the illusion that the section broke off and fell into the sea. It’s supported by water-worn rocks and another matching rock was placed behind it to form another small cove. It’s easy to imagine that during storms, white water would be violently crashing into the sea-cave!

From the right side, the bottom of the rock is hidden by water worn boulders with smaller rocks in the foreground.

When assembling this type of rock, I try to fit and add rocks so the shapes seem to flow from one to the next to create the illusion that it’s all part of the same scene. This is my first attempt creating such sea-caves and I was guided by mental images of such scenes in the South Point area of the Big Island of Hawaii.



“The World of Bonsai Aloha,” View Two: The Transition to Land

A stout exposed root banyan stands tall and straight against the forces of the sea and survives amongst the rocky inland boulders. I tried to position the two trees so when they lined up, the other tree would be the background, and the two trees appear to be one.

The main large rock had a section that suggested a large cave and the back portion of the rock was elevated to allow the shadow of the cave to be the background for the heavy aerial roots. The area where the tree is planted had portions that held water so the ledge was removed and this created a larger area for much more potting media.

The entire area was cemented to prevent roots from migrating into the giant sea-cave. If you look at the third photo in this article, you can see that the top of the main rock is 15 inches high. About 4 to 6 inches

was allowed to be exposed as the background for the trees. But this left 6 to 10 inches for potting media! A 3-inch thick layer of coarse media on the bottom assures good drainage.

Note that in the two sections where the trees are planted, there's a half-inch concrete berm to aid in retaining the potting media. Short straws were embedded to serve as drain holes.

The view of the giant sea-cave was almost all rocks. This section also has many rocks too, but of a different character. Note that the two trees also have different character to try to suggest a harsher situation near the ocean but in the area shielded by the wall a rain-forest type banyan with free-falling aerial roots developed.



“The World of Bonsai Aloha,” View Three: The Kingdom of the Banyan

Banyans are trees with aerial roots and Dwarf Schefflera creates the most impressive banyan bonsai. In the coming years, the crowns of the two trees will merge into one and slowly enlarged to 48 inches wide.

Currently the top of the banyan is 22 inches above the concrete disc and it may eventually be another 10 inches taller. There is a deceptively large amount of potting material to easily support that amount of future growth. When needed, sections of the potting media can be replaced from time to time to assure that the trees will continue to flourish.

To visually reduce that depth, a lava ledge was created to allow the potting material to step down. The tree was first secured with several bonsai aluminum wires attached to anchor loops cemented into the concrete base slab. These wires ran up and down and initially firmly pulled down the tree every two inches.

Thin paper-coated wire was tied horizontally, one inch apart and media was dibbled behind the network. As all was firmed up, sphagnum moss was slipped behind the wire network from the bottom up. As more media was dibbled in, it pressed against the layer of sphagnum moss and it was possible to create a very steep hill. As the potting media settled down and the moss held the surface intact, the wire network was carefully removed.

The new Dwarf Schefflera growth came on strong and it was possible to take photographs to meet our deadlines for simultaneous publication in *BCI Bonsai and Stone Appreciation Magazine* and the *Journal of Tropical and True Indoor Bonsai* posted at www.fukubonsai.com.

BCI members are invited to review the current and past issues, and become members of the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation and study groups. 🌿



Honoring Ted T. Tsukiyama

The complex landscape: “The World of Bonsai Aloha” is dedicated to and honors Ted T. Tsukiyama of Honolulu, Hawaii.

No one has done more to create Hawaii’s “Aloha Bonsai World” than Ted Tsukiyama. He was an ROTC cadet at the University of Hawaii when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The unit became the Territorial Guard, were issued a rifle with six bullets and sent to guard the hills above Honolulu against enemy paratroopers. Soon after, he and other Japanese were unfairly and summarily discharged and branded enemy aliens.

Ted was part of the legendary Varsity Victory Volunteers who did manual labor to support the war effort and this made possible the all-Japanese units that included the 442nd Infantry Combat Team that became the most decorated unit of its size as they suffered awesome casualties to prove their loyalty. Ted did more than his share in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) in Burma where interpretation and interrogation combined with clandestine missions helped to turn the tide and shortened World War II.

After discharge, college, and establishing his legal practice, he befriended the nation of his former enemies beginning with Kaichi Ito and Saburo Kato of Omiya, Japan. On his trips throughout Hawaii, Japan, and the United States, he contacted the leaders of the bonsai world. He effectively cofounded the non-profit Hawaii Bonsai Association and handled the administrative and diplomatic role of secretary-treasurer for the first ten years; then as president for many more years.

Saburo Kato led the rebuilding of bonsai in Japan beginning with the restoration of the historic Imperial Bonsai Collection, the lengthy national exhibit at Osaka Expo 70, the 1976 Bicentennial Bonsai Gift to the United States, and the 1979 World Bonsai Convention. Ted and Hawaii played quiet, advisory and supportive roles internationally but burst on the American bonsai scene when Hawaii hosted the landmark IBC 80 Hawaii, cosponsored by Bonsai Clubs International (BCI), American Bonsai Society (ABS) and included the first international participation by Nippon (Japan) Bonsai Association. It featured a Hawaii 3-ring presentation, the first major penjing presentation by Deborah Koreshoff of Australia, John Naka trained aged, collected tropical material as bonsai, and Saburo Kato created his “Peace Forest,” the first major tropical forest arrangement that now resides at the Fuku-Bonsai Cultural Center.

As we became the catalyst to create the Kona Fuku-Bonsai Center, Ted assisted incorporating Fuku-Bonsai in 1985 as the corporate treasurer and director. He provided steadfast guidance through successful years, during our battle for survival, and retired from our board in 2007. Ted has accumulated impressive honors for his accomplishments in bonsai, his legal career, and also for his vast community service. This photo was taken in May, 2012, when he was named the University of Hawaii at Manoa Distinguished Alumnus of the year.

On behalf of all associated with Fuku-Bonsai and the Mid-Pacific Bonsai Foundation, in friendship and respect, “The World of Bonsai Aloha” is dedicated to and honors Ted T. Tsukiyama of Honolulu, Hawaii.



—David W. Fukumoto, Kurtistown, Hawaii (December 14, 2013)

Advancing Stone Appreciation through Professional Stone Collectors:

A Look at Ken McLeod, one of North America's Premier Stone Collectors.

By Tom Elias, USA

Photos by Tom Elias, Ken McLeod and Jason Villamil



Top; Ken using his long crow bar to pry loose a stone in a shallow area in a northern California river. The crow bar is painted a bright yellow so he can find it again in case it is dropped into the stream.

Bottom; Ken places a possible candidate stone on a large boulder above water to take a closer look at the stone. Moss and debris covering the stone may have to be removed to determine the surface texture and color.



Collecting and appreciating stones as natural objects of art in western countries is relatively new, a phenomenon that has been developing slowly, especially since the 1950s. Stone appreciation, like the art of bonsai and penjing, has been strongly influenced by Chinese and Japanese traditions in North America, Europe and other Western countries.

The development of stone appreciation hobby outside of China and Japan requires several essential components: basic information and expertise to guide development; the availability of suitable material; and opportunities to share through exhibits, publications, and web sites. While a few Chinese stones were introduced first in North America in the early 1900s and, perhaps, Europe; Western countries have been more strongly influenced by Japanese guidelines for collecting, evaluating, and displaying stones.

Japanese Americans were among the first to begin to explore some of the river systems in California in the early 1960s. They were soon followed by a number of Caucasian Americans who were interested in rocks, minerals, and in Asian stone appreciation. Small clubs went in search of Japanese-like stones for the fledgling stone appreciation culture in North America. Most of the stone collecting was individuals searching for interesting pieces for their personal collections. Much of the initial collecting occurred along the western coast and western mountains of North America. Many wonderful, dark, landscape type stones were found in the Eel River in northern California. Some of these serpentine or basaltic stones resembled in shape, the beautiful stones found in some Japanese rivers. People located in less suitable areas for finding quality stones or who were unable to search areas, were largely left out of opportunities to acquire stones as a hobby. This limited the supply of North American stones and also limited the growth of the hobby of stone appreciation.

This article focuses on one of the essential elements needed for the development of a stone appreciation culture; that is, the availability of suitable raw materials—stones and how professional stone hunters have contributed to a North American stone appreciation culture. It was the emergence of professional collectors and sellers of quality viewing stones that a much wider range of people could participate in this hobby. This article is about North America's most prolific collector and purveyor of native stones—Kenneth McLeod.

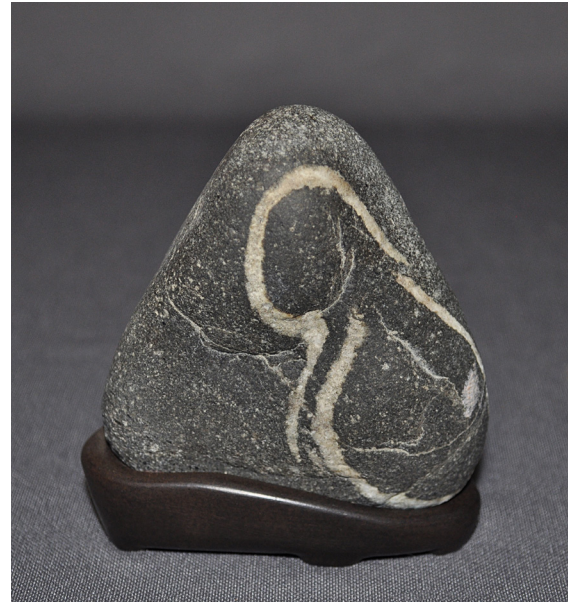


Top; This stone will be taken to Ken's home for further cleaning and to determine its suitability as an acceptable stone for collectors. On a good day of collecting, Ken will find several suitable stones.

Bottom; Makenna, a large 115-pound Bernese Mountain dog cooling herself in the river while Ken searches for stones. Makenna accompanies Ken on his forays into remote areas in search of stones.



Ken, a talkative and gregarious outdoors man, lives in a rustic home in the lower western foothills of the Sierra Mountains in Sonora in northern California. The home and entire front yard are filled with stones, piles of them. Along with his wife, Cindy, they share their home with several large Bernese Mountain dogs and many parrots. Before becoming a professional stone hunter and vendor, Ken owned and operated a series of pet stores. He and his wife are still active in dog and parrot breeding. His love for hiking and fishing in the Sierra Mountains goes back to his early



Top Left; Another large, multi-colored Trinity River watershed stone stands 18 inches high. These are very desirable stones and highly sought after by collections of North American stones.

Top Right; A small granite stone with a fascinating calcite pattern that resembles the late actor and director Alfred Hitchcock.

Bottom; This Eel River watershed mountain stone with a plateau make an attractive viewing stones. Some of the quartz veins may represent a waterfall. This stone is 9 inches high, 17 inches wide and 10 inches deep.

Facing page; This large, multi-color stone consisting of jasper, serpentine, and jade was presented by Ken to the U.S. National Arboretum to complement their collection of North American stones in the arboretum's National Bonsai and Penjing Museum.

childhood when his father used to take him searching for fossils and minerals in different regions of the state. As a result, he developed an intimate knowledge of the geology and natural history of northern Sierra Mountains, an important factor in his ability to locate excellent stones for others.

McLeod saw some Japanese style *suiseki* when he attended an Arts in Asia show in San Francisco in 1998 and noticed that they were similar in appearance to stones he had seen in the rivers and mountains in northern California. Ken, being an insatiable collector of things, decided to take some of the stones he had picked up in previous years to a 1999 bonsai

and stone exhibition and sales at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. To his surprise, he sold all of them. This inspired him to begin collecting stones seriously and to target the growing number of people in North America, and eventually in Europe, Australia, and other countries, interested in the hobby of stone appreciation. He joined the California Suiseki Society in the San Francisco area in 1999 to become more involved with a group of people interested in the natural stone appreciation. McLeod gathered geological maps of California and adjacent states and began to study them as a means to locate prime collecting places.

His familiarity with the varied natural areas of Northern California is a major asset. Another important feature is Ken's adventuresome and even fearless habits. He explores some of the remotest regions of the state, hikes many miles on foot to reach a river and





Top left; The shape, color and texture of this piece of grossular garnet was collected by Ken in a southern Oregon River. It is now in the collection of Paul Schmidt, Jr. It measures 5 inches high, 12 inches wide and 6 inches deep.

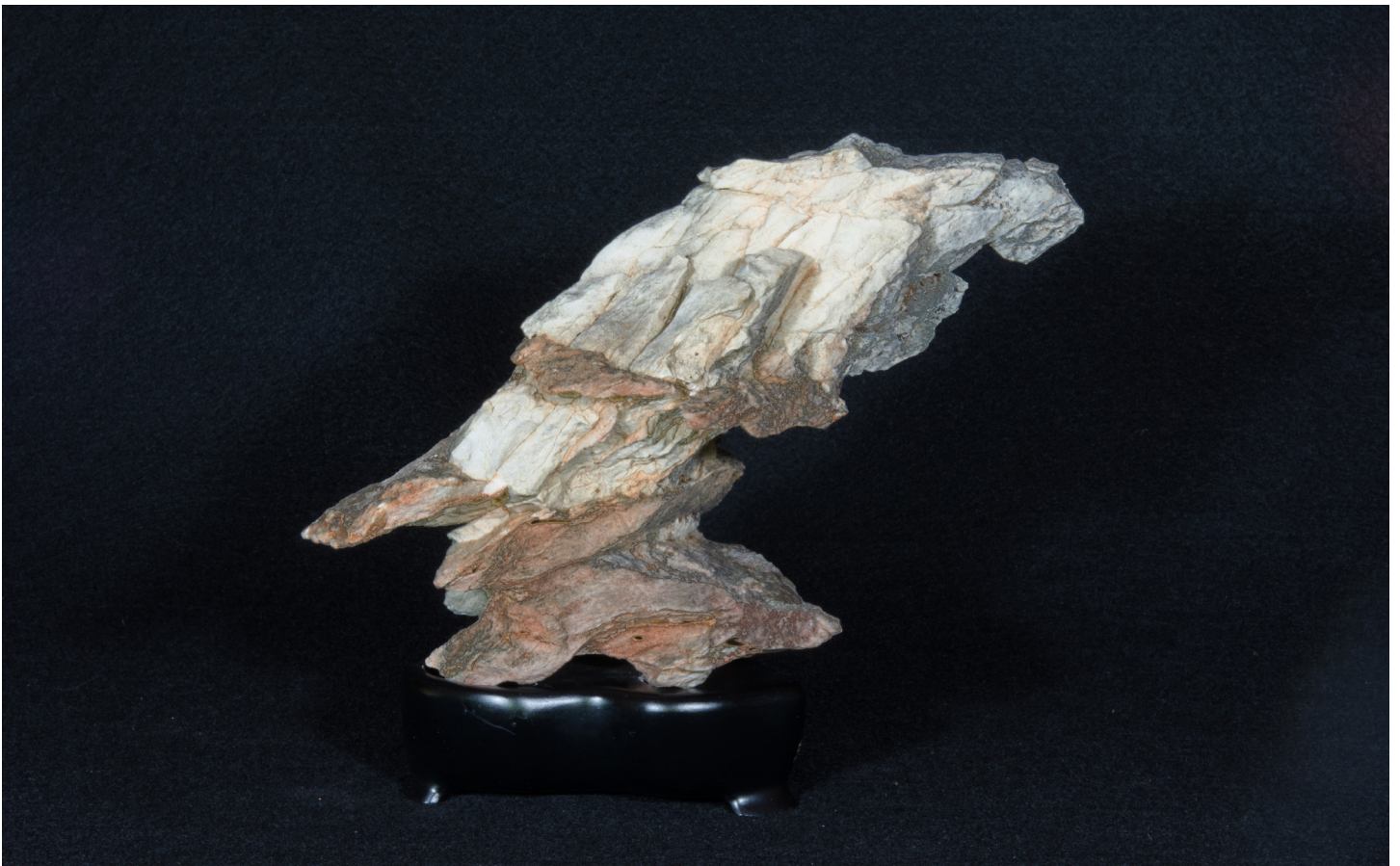
Bottom; This limestone and schist bird-shaped figure stone was collected near Murphy in Northern California. It measures 9 inches high, 11 inches wide, and 5 inches deep. Ken named this stone "Eagle."

valley, and frequently camps by his covered pickup truck in remote areas. Ken is in contact with property owners to gain permission to cross or collect on privately owned land and on public property. This takes him into areas where there are few facilities and occasional encounters with mountain lions, bears, and even people illegally growing marijuana. Ken always travels to these locations with his most trusted companion—Makenna. Makenna is an imposing 115 pound (55 kilograms) Bernese Mountain dog with a large head, square jaws, and a deep bark that will send any lion, bear, and person quickly running in the opposite direction. Little do they know that Makenna is

also one of the friendliest animals one will ever encounter.

Ken wades into the middle and deepest parts of a stream or river with a backpack and crow bar because he knows that this is where many of the larger, excellent stones are found. He has a keen eye for spotting great stones while they are submerged and partially buried in silt and gravel. Fortunately, Ken is strong and can carry sixty to eighty pounds of stones in his backpack while wading in rivers. On two occasions he has rented a helicopter to reach remote high mountain streams in search of new stone locations. He has gained considerable fame among collectors for his new discoveries and for locating new remote locations for collecting stones. His most popular new discovery is the multicolored Trinity-River-system stones composed of red jasper, serpentine, and jade that are highly sought after by collectors. One of his best Trinity River stone was presented as a gift to the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Ken has been very generous in donating valuable stones and other collectible stones to institutions, clubs, and to individual collectors. When he presents a lecture to a club, he often brings several smaller stones as gifts to attendees.

McLeod has introduced other types of North American stones to stone collectors and helped to introduce other high quality stones that were first found by earlier collectors. He was the first to find and introduce





two new combinations of serpentine and jade with a wavy pattern. Ken calls one of these types as “swirly stone” and the other as his “two-tone” stone. These have also become popular among collectors because of their texture and their beautiful colors. While Ken was not the first to introduce an interesting flower pattern stone from northern California, he did make many fine examples available to stone hobbyists. It is a river-washed stone that has numerous circular deposits, possibly fossils, on a darker background or matrix stone. He has collected and sold many Eel River stones and many authentic pieces of California jade to collectors. True North American chrysanthemum flower stones are scarce. Ken has collected four of the approximately twelve known examples of this type. Making numerous quality stones available to collectors is one of the most important contributions that Ken, and other earlier collectors and sellers of stones, have made to the hobby of stone appreciation.

His fifteen years of professional stone hunting has taken him throughout the western United States, but especially in California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and Wyoming. Ken regularly attends and has a sales booth at major exhibitions. He participated in four International Stone Symposia in Hershey, Pennsylvania, attends most major California bonsai and stone exhibitions, and maintains an active online sales of stones. He sells between 250 and 300 stones per years and has placed over 4,000 stones in hobbyist’s hands during his career as a stone merchant. Most of the major stone collections in North America have one or more of Ken’s stones. Many serious collectors have several to many stones that Ken McLeod collected over the last decade and a half. As



Top left; This colorful stone was found in the Trinity River watershed. Ken was the first to introduce this type to the stone appreciation community. He refers to this stone as “My Heart.” It stands 12 inches tall, 9 inches wide, and 5 inches deep.

Top right; This northern California mountain shaped stone with a waterfall is a combination of jasper with some quartz inclusions.

Bottom; This rare piece of grossular garnet stands 9 inches high, 7 inches wide, and 3 inches deep. Ken calls this stone “Scary Face.”

a result, Ken McLeod has become an important element in helping to drive the growth of North American stone appreciation culture. Evidence of this can readily be seen in James L. Greaves excellent book *American Viewing Stones: Beyond the Black Mountain: Color, Pattern, and Form*. According to Ken, approximately 30 of the stones featured in this book were collected by him.

My wife and I had the privilege of going on a stone hunting trip with Ken to a remote California river. We piled into his truck, a seven-passenger SUV, with his equipment early one morning and headed north from his home. Ken was regaling us with one stone collecting story after another along the way.



Makenna was placed in the very back of the truck, while I occupied the backseat. In a few minutes, the 115-pound Makenna began to claim the backseat as her property. She sat close to me and began leaning her full weight on me before resting her head on my lap. She was now in full control of the backseat.

Ken's enthusiasm reached a peak as we approached our river destination. We all went wading into the rocky river bottom searching for stones. Most of the stones were covered with moss and other organic material making it hard to see the texture and color of the stones. Ken's many years of experience gave him a definite advantage in finding nice ones. I learned from Ken that it is important to go to these rivers early in the year before the moss grows over them. It is tips like this that make stone hunting more productive. It was fascinating to watch Ken and Makenna in the river. Makenna was largely cooling herself, although I was almost convinced that she was pointing out good stones for Ken to collect. We left this collecting site with several nice stones—including a nice flower-pattern stone I found—and a deep appreciation for the amount of hard work required to locate quality stones in prime spots and the amount of energy needed to dislodge a stone, lift it and carry it back to the shore.

Each year, McLeod makes numerous multi-day collecting trips in California and adjacent western states. He typically returns home with hundreds of pounds of stones in his truck. Many of these stones are carefully cleaned to remove mud and organic matter on the surface. Ken does occasionally use a thin application of oil or a combination of wax and oil on certain stones to enhance a stone's color. He does supply stones without this surface treatment for those who prefer the natural "as found" surface patina. Early in his career, Ken would cut stones once to help make a

Top left; Ken collected this attractive mountain stone with clouds lingering below the peak in the Eel River in Northern California. It was sold to Eastern U.S. collector Paul Schmidt, Jr.

Bottom; "Majestic Mountain," a large beautiful mountain stone composed of serpentine and jade and collected in the Eel River in northern California. This stone is part of Ken's personal collection. A single baseline cut was made to obtain this stone.





Top; The color, texture and shape of this jasper and quartz stone was collected by Ken in Northern California. It measures 10 inches high, 10 inches wide, and 5 inches deep.

Bottom left; The low arch stone collected by Ken is from the Trinity River watershed.

Bottom right; This beautiful stone with its wavy surface texture came from one of Ken's favorite collecting sites, the Trinity River watershed. It is composed of serpentine and jade and stands 12.5 inches high, 8 inches wide, and 4 inches deep.



stable bottom for placement in a base. Now, he prefers to collect and supply natural stones; however, he still cuts certain stones when that is the only way to obtain a suitable specimen, especially a nice landscape stone. This follows the long standing tradition in Japan of occasionally cutting a stone once to form a base. This is documented in the Japanese language literature.

The stone appreciation community, especially in North America, is grateful to people like Ken and others collectors who share their stones sales through gifts or for sale with others. This supply of quality stones and the growing demand for them helps to drive a growing community of people interested in stone appreciation. We are fortunate to have individuals like Ken who have the ability to locate great stones and the willingness to share them with so many people. 🌿

The 88th Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition

By Tom Elias, USA

Photos by Tom Elias and Dato K. H. Chua

Each exhibited tree is subject to a panel of judges who decide if it is acceptable and if it might qualify for one of the awards that are given out to the outstanding trees of the year.



Left; Mr. Jiro Fukuda, Chairman of the Nippon Bonsai Association.

Right; The main exhibition hall for the Kokufu Bonsai exhibition held in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.



The prestigious Kokufu bonsai-ten, sponsored by the Nippon Bonsai Association (NBA), is held every February in Tokyo. At this event, the best bonsai in Japan are brought together and displayed at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in Ueno Park. This has been done every year except when the museum was recently closed for two years for extensive renovations. It is now re-opened and once again hosting the Kokufu bonsai-ten. Kokufu-ten literally means “national style exhibition” or “Japanese style exhibition.” It is the culmination of a series of smaller exhibition that are held each year in Japan.

The space in the renovated museum is limited; therefore, the NBA changed the format of the Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition to have half of the trees exhibited for a week, then they change and exhibit another suite

of trees the second week of this grand exhibition. This allows the association to display a greater number of outstanding trees. It is not surprising then to see people line up to get into the exhibit halls, particularly on the weekend and the holiday that occurs in the second half of the exhibit. Over 12,000 people came to this year’s Kokufu bonsai-ten.

Each exhibited tree is subject to a panel of judges who decide if it is acceptable and if it might qualify for one of the awards that are given out to the outstanding trees of the year. This is an exhibit for the hobbyists. However, since the competition is very keen, many owners will place their best trees in the nurseries of the leading professional bonsai artists in Japan. Then, prior to the exhibition, owners and their stylists examine their trees to see which ones are in the best condition for submission to the Kokufu bonsai exhibition.



Top left; An informal upright specimen of *Pseudocydonia sinensis*.
 Top right and middle left; The deciduous *Stewartia monadelpha* with its spreading trunk at the base make an exceptional bonsai.
 Lower right; Goyomatsu or Japanese White pine, *Pinus parviflora*, is a favorite among Japanese bonsai artists.

This year, we attended the Part 2 of the exhibition so we could also see the fine exhibition of stones that the Nippon Suiseki Association was sponsoring, also in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. These two exhibits coincides with each other in the same building. One hundred and seventy trees were displayed in the second part of the exhibition. The larger trees were located on the lower floor while the mid-size and smaller shohin trees were displayed on the corridor and floor above the main exhibit. There is an admission fee to enter the exhibition.

If you can only afford, financially or time-wise, to visit one exhibition of bonsai in Japan, this is the one. It has the finest examples of classical bonsai in Japan. If possible, avoid the weekend and holidays. Go early in the morning when it first opens and you will have more room to view the trees. The major exhibit areas

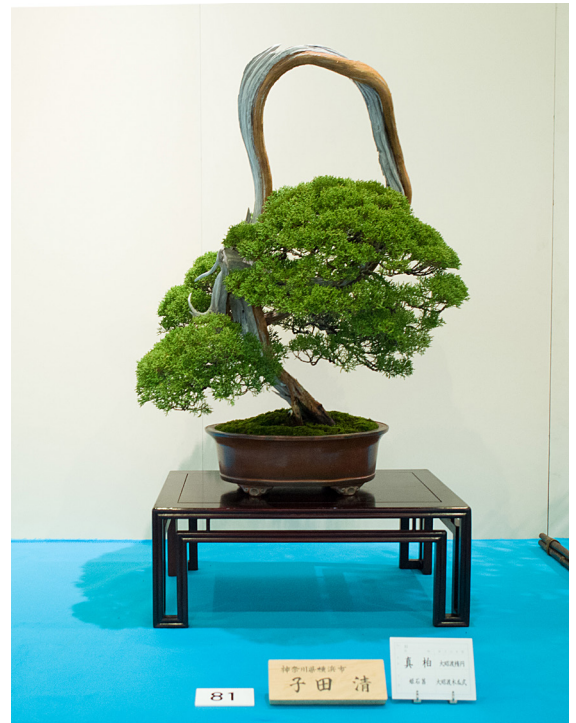


Top left; This large shimpaku juniper, *Juniperus chinensis* var. *sargentii*, with strong movement in the trunk makes an elegant bonsai.

Top right; The flowering plum, *Prunus mume*, is in bud and beginning to flower, a signal that Spring is arriving.

Bottom left; A beautiful forest planting of Japanese White pine, *Pinus parviflora*.

Bottom right; Shimpaku junipers, *Juniperus chinensis* var. *sargentii*, can be trained into any of the recognized styles of bonsai.



and all the accessories one may need for the practice of bonsai and suiseki. All you need to bring is money, a strong shopping bag, and a list of the items you need. A small bus supplied by the NBA takes people free of charge to the Green Club and back. It operates about every 15 to 20 minutes and is located on the street adjacent to the museum.

Attending the Kokufu bonsai-ten is always exciting. Seeing these trees is surely inspiring. Meeting Japanese bonsai masters and numerous foreign visitors is an added benefit to attending this event. If you have an extra day, take a forty-five minute train ride to Saitama to visit the new Omiya Bonsai Art Museum located in the heart of bonsai village. Several of the finest bonsai nurseries in Japan are located here including the Kato's Mansei-en and Takeyama's Fuyo-en. 🌲

fill up in late morning and early afternoon. On holidays, expect to cue up and wait to get in to see the trees.

The NBA has several tables at the exhibit where you can become a member of the association. Members receive their monthly magazine, *Bonsai Shunju*, and their beautiful, glossy photo album of the annual Kokufu bonsai exhibition. It is always a quality book that also serves as a valuable reference. Every visitor to the Kokufu bonsai exhibition should take time to visit the Green Club, a building and grounds a few kilometers away which serves as the sale venue. Vendors bring trees, pots, tools, suiseki, display tables, books,



BCI Tour Australia 2014

August 25 – September 2



Join us for the BCI 2014 Post Convention Tour of Australia.

Spend 9 days touring Cairns & the fabulous Barrier Reef, Ayres Rock at the Red Centre and exciting Sydney.



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You do not pay any money now.

CAIRNS HIGHLIGHTS:

Catamaran cruise to the Great Barrier Reef including morning & afternoon teas and lunch.

Kuranda Scenic Railway and return via Skyrail Rainforest Cableway

AYRES ROCK HIGHLIGHTS:

Uluru Sunrise Tour

Kata Tjuta Valley of The Winds Tour

SYDNEY AREA HIGHLIGHTS:

Blue Mountains and Australian Wildlife Tour



© passamanerie



ITINERARY

Day 1. Mon 25 Aug. Gold Coast > Cairns

Depart BCI Convention, Gold Coast. Early morning transfer to Brisbane Airport for flight to Cairns in Far North Queensland. Transfer to Pacific International Hotel, or similar, for 3 nights. Rest of day at leisure.

Day 2. Tue 26 Aug. Cairns

All-day fast catamaran cruise to the Great Barrier Reef. Snorkelling equipment available. Semi-submersible coral reef viewing tour and Underwater Observatory. Includes lunch and morning & afternoon teas.

Day 3. Wed 27 Aug. Cairns

Take the Kuranda Scenic Railway to Kuranda on the Atherton Tableland. Spend free time in Kuranda visiting Heritage Markets. Return via Skyrail Rainforest Cableway.

Day 4. Thu 28 Aug. Cairns > Ayres Rock (Uluru)

Transfer to Cairns Airport and catch flight to Uluru. Transfer to Voyages Desert Gardens Hotel, or similar, for 2 nights. Rest of day at leisure.

Day 5. Fri 29 Aug. Uluru

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon your Guide will escort you on a 2 to 3 hour walk through the Kata Tjuta Domes to The Valley of The Winds lookout. After the walk, take in a magnificent Outback sunset over Kata Tjuta and refresh yourself with a glass of sparkling wine & nibbles.



Photo by David Hiff. License: CC-BY-SA 3.0

Day 6. Sat 30 Aug. Uluru > Sydney

Before breakfast, experience an Uluru Sunrise Tour. After lunch transfer to the airport for your flight to Sydney. Transfer to the Rendezvous Studio Hotel, or similar, for 3 nights. Rest of day at leisure. This hotel is adjacent to Darling Harbour entertainment and dining precinct and includes the Chinese Garden, Maritime Museum and Sydney Aquarium.

Day 7. Sun 31 Aug. Sydney

Today is an all day tour to the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. Visit Featherdale Wildlife Park, The Three Sisters, Katoomba and Leura Village. At Featherdale Park you will have the opportunity to get up close and personal with a variety of Australian animals. Hand-feed a Kangaroo, wallaby or Emu and cuddle a Koala. A great Aussie experience!



Day 8. Mon 1 Sep. Sydney

Today at leisure in Sydney for optional activities. You could catch a water taxi from Darling Harbour to the Opera House or go shopping in the Central Business District, a short walk from your hotel or take a Harbour Cruise.



Day 9. Tue 2 Sep. Depart Sydney

Check out of hotel and spend the rest of day at leisure until your transfer to Sydney Airport for your flight home.



FULL TOUR COSTS:

Share Twin AUD \$3,229

Single AUD \$4,249

Price includes air fares as per the Itinerary, accommodation, breakfasts, tours in Cairns, Uluru and Sydney as per the Itinerary, transfers.

Costs not included are National Park Entry fees at Uluru and expenses of a personal nature.

Please read the Itinerary for details.

Convention web site:

www.goldcoast2014.bonsai-bci.com

Tour Enquiries:

mark.knight@flightcentre.com.au

REGISTER NOW! Nothing to Pay until 31 March, 2014!

Tour Registration
by February 28, 2014.

Tour Deposit payable
by March 31, 2014.

Full payment before June 25, 2014.

Cost includes:

1. Internal airfares, breakfasts each day and other meals as specified in the Itinerary, accommodation, tours and transfers as specified in the Itinerary.

Cost does not include:

1. International airfares
2. Spending of a personal nature
3. Optional activities.
4. Travel insurance
5. National Park Entry fees.

Remarks:

To register for the tour now, please fill out the online Registration Form or the one on the right.

You do not pay any money now. We will email you the payment instructions.



RESERVATION FORM *(online form at www.goldcoast2014.bonsai-bci.com)*

Surname, exactly as written in Passport:

Given Name(s) exactly as
written in Passport:

Nationality:

Passport / ID No.:

Passport Issue Date: y/m/d

Passport Expiry Date: y/m/d

Sex: Male Female Date of Birth: y/m/d

Email Address:

Contact Number / Mobile Number:

- I require a single room
 I require Twin Share, sharing with:

Nippon Suiseki Association: New Leadership, New Direction, New Exhibition

Text and photos by Tom Elias, USA



Top; This Abe River stone has a striking resemblance to Mount Fuji. It measures 10 cm high, 21 cm wide and 20 cm depth.

Bottom left; An exquisite eight-sided display table from the artist Shozan Adachi. It measures 41.5 x 41.5 wide and deep and stands only 12 cm high.

Bottom right; One of the exhibition rooms featuring stones displayed in tokonome and on pedestals.



Stone appreciation advocates world-wide received a clear message in early 2014 from the newly re-structured Nippon Suiseki Association (NSA). This came in the form of an exciting new major exhibition of stones that was held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum from February 9–13, 2014. Approximately 168 suiseki and 15 accessory items (display tables, suiban, doban) were beautifully displayed in this popular museum located in Ueno Park. The exhibit coincided with the second half of the Nippon Bonsai Association's popular Kokufu bonsai exhibit, also held in this museum. As a result, the new



Japan Suiseki Exhibition in this new venue resulted in a record breaking attendance at a major annual stone exhibition in Japan.

Charting a new path for the NSA is the result of new leadership and re-structuring of their board of directors. In mid-2013, Kunio Kobayashi was elected at the new Chair of the association and Mr. Seiji Morimae was appointed as the Executive Director. Their dynamic leadership led to this first ever Japan Suiseki Exhibition at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum and the publication of an outstanding 232-page exhibition catalog in Japanese and English. They were strongly supported in this effort by a board of directors. The NSA also broke with long-standing tradition by appointing their first ever non-Japanese to the board. Now only was Wil Lautenschlager, an American living and working in Tokyo, appointed as a full voting board member, he also became the youngest board member ever elected. The new exhibition and board makeup is a public announcement of how the leadership plans to re-vitalize this key organization in the global stone appreciation community.

The first ever Japan Suiseki Exhibition was organized into four major sections—special entries, tokonoma displays, general exhibits, and suiseki accessories. The gem of the four special entries was the beautiful and impressive Bonseki “Kurokamiyama,” a masterpiece stone and storage box that came with the Illustrated Handscrolls of the Origin of Kurokamiyama. They belong to the Ken’ei temple in Ueno. Interestingly, the base of the storage box also serves as the diaza for the stone. Three other outstanding stones comprised the special entries. In another break with tradition, the leadership decided to feature 28 tokonoma displays. This is a uniquely Japanese way of formally displaying a stone within a defined indoor space. This is a welcomed change as it helps visitors, especially foreign guests, to better understand aspects of Japanese culture and how defined spaces can be used in stone aesthetics. Among my favorite tokonoma displays were Mr. Masaru Hasaka’s white saba chrysanthemum flower stone, the finest example of this type of stone in Japan, and Mr. Kaoru Koizumi’s dramatic Seta river tiger stone.

The majority of the Japan Suiseki Exhibition was devoted to the general exhibits. These are the stones of individual members of the NSA, mainly Japanese,



Top left; Mr. Kunio Kobayashi, the new Chairman of the NSA.

Top middle; Mr. Kobayashi present Letter of Appreciation to Mr. Suzuki, Japan’s leading daiza maker.

Top right; Tom Elias and Hiromi Nakaoji receiving Letter of Appreciation from NSA Chairman Kobayashi.

Middle and bottom right; Hagoromo, a river washed chrysanthemum stone from Neo Valley, is one of Japan’s most famous suiseki. This figure stone resembles a person in the Noh play also named Hagoromo.

Top left; The clearly defined stripes on the Seta River stone contributes to its common name "black tiger stone." It measures 7 cm high, 48 cm wide and 27 cm deep.

Middle left; A gently sloping Saji River stone measuring 10.5 cm high, 44.5 cm wide and 24 cm deep.

Bottom left; Furuya stones such as this one often make beautiful landscape scenes. Bases on Furuya stones are typically more elaborate than those on other suiseki. This stone measures 6 cm high, 24 cm wide, and 12 cm deep.

Bottom right; Figure stones are often placed on pedestals. This stone, one of the finest in Japan, from the Seta River is 23 cm high, 5 cm wide, and 3 cm deep.



but also with ten foreign members participating. The individually owned stones on display were excellent. A display table was used for each stone. Normally in an exhibit like this, I can pick a few favorites that I would like to have in my home. At this venue, I would have liked to take a majority of these stones home. The quality of the stones selected for the exhibit was outstanding. I was happy to see the wide array of different types of Japanese stones used this Japanese suiseki exhibit. Western proponents of Japanese suiseki should study the exhibit catalog and see the diversity of stones considered fitting for this special exhibition.

Each of the fifteen accessory items—display stands, suiban, doban, and small cast bronze figures (tenpai)—was of museum quality. The exquisite detail, colors and workmanship of the items was superb. I wish I could have sat and viewed each undisturbed for several minutes. That was also true for most of the stones on display. Learning about the subtle aspects of Japanese aesthetic is not easy for many western visitors. But, this exhibition and its accompanying catalog helps with this process.

Fortunately, Seiji Morimae worked with Wil Lautenschlager and others to produce Japan Suiseki Exhibition, an extraordinary exhibit catalog, the best book published by the NSA in a decade. Readers should pay special attention to the commentary by Morimae and Lautenschlager, if they wish to develop a better understanding of Japanese stone aesthetics. We are grateful to Lautenschlager for his skillful translation



of Morimae's commentary into English. This efforts allows people throughout the world to study and learn about Japanese suiseki. Placing one stone or object per page permits viewers to see and appreciate nearly every detail of each object. Soft bound copies of the catalog are available from the NSA for 30,000 Yen or about \$30.

The NSA held a banquet for its members the night before the formal opening of the exhibition. During the banquet the NSA awarded four formal Letters of Appreciation to people they felt deserved recognition for their long-tern contributions to promoting the development of suiseki culture. The first award, a certificate from NSA President Shimamura Yoshinobu and a plaque was presented to BCI President Tom Elias. The second award was presented to Hideko Metexas of the United States, and the third presentation was made to Larry and Nina Ragle, also of the United States. The fourth and final award went to Japan's premier diaza maker, Koju Suzuki. The new board of NSA directors was introduced to the audience following the awards.

In a brief interview with Mr. Kobayashi, I learned that the Japan Suiseki Exhibition will become an annual event replacing their autumn show. They will still hold their annual Meihen-ten exhibit at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo in June. Their new February exhibit will greatly raise the visibility of suiseki within Japan and their exhibition catalog will further promote suiseki to the world's stone appreciation community. Congratulations to NAS and their new leaders for their progressive leadership and new vision. This will, undoubtedly lead to a growth in membership and a greater interest in suiseki from stone enthusiasts in many countries. 🌸

Top right; This deep red akadama stone is found on Sado Island off the west coast of Japan. It is 16 cm high, 44 cm wide and 23 cm deep.

Middle; This light colored Seta River stone make a grand mountain scene. This stone is 18 cm high, 50 wide and 27 cm deep.

Bottom; This Seigaku stone is mined from the earth on Mount Seigaku and is similar in many respects to Furuya stones. This one measures 17 cm high, 45 cm wide and 21 cm deep.



Judging Bonsai Who Decides What is Good?

By Kath Hughes, UK

Photos courtesy Malcolm Hughes except photos on this page and facing page, top right, which are by Willy Evenepoel.

Part One. Look for Part Two and Part Three in an upcoming issue.

Judged First-Class Trees at Various Shows.

All were judged by professional judges and placed first or second in major international shows. Are these *good* trees in your eyes? If so ask yourself why? Do not be too easily satisfied; be analytical in your evaluation.

Good? Yes, we know they are, but why? What criteria do they fulfill? Do not give up, write down your comments and by the end of this series of articles we hope you be able to look back and say “*Yes, I understand.*”



Judging bonsai is always controversial and a highly subjective subject. Just how do we actually do it?

We all agree that some bonsai are better, or much better, than others. In this three-part series, we will explore the various aspects of judging a bonsai, and try to design a judging system that can be used objectively to determine the quality of one bonsai, compared with another.

We will never, for as long as people remain different in their opinions on every factor from religion to what clothes they wear and what food they eat, succeed in devising a system that pleases all parties. However if we manage to satisfy the majority we will have made progress and hopefully silence those who still say, “*I gave it first prize because I liked it.*” At least they could say they like it based upon some measurable criteria that we all recognize.

The challenge of such a system is not the problem of selecting the right criteria: We all know what to appreciate in a good bonsai. Design, harmony, visual balance within the tree, visual balance between pot and tree, good health, ramification and branch development, quality craftsmanship with wiring and carving. We all know that a bonsai needs good taper to both trunk and major branches, proper branch development and refinement, good-looking nebari, and a pot that enhances the overall image.

So what then, is the greatest challenge?

It is, to decide the relative importance of all these criteria, and form them into a system that is both simple and practical for all to use, and also containing enough depth to cover all the important aspects of what makes one bonsai better than the next one.

Trunk taper is very important—a major factor in creating the impression of age and the impression of grandeur in many species and styles.

The root-base (nebari), also species and style dependent, adds to the above qualities, and also provides the feeling of balance. It is important to remember that bigger is not necessarily better. A stronger taper or a larger nebari is not necessarily better than a smaller one. It has to be appropriate to the subject. When grading taper or nebari, we should not give a higher grade to a nebari just because it is larger. The key word is harmony: it has to be in harmony with the rest of the tree.

Branch development is a large category, and includes several aspects; The proper placement of branches is one.

The development of a fine network of secondary and tertiary branches is another.

Finally, the branches need to be thick enough and tapered, in other words, in good proportion with the trunk, in order to appear as mature as the trunk itself.



All these branch-related aspects can be graded under the one category, branch development.

Pot selection & placement. Selecting a proper pot, and placing the tree correctly in it.

All this complicated as it may be, it is not nearly as difficult as creating an innovative design and recognizing character in a specimen.

Recognizing patterns and shapes

We are born with the ability to recognize patterns and shapes. Our brains are exceptionally good at this type of task. We are amazing pattern recognition machines. Our brain has evolved to do exactly this with great accuracy, but does the brain have the ability to apply the same recognition pattern to differentiate between a good and a poor bonsai.

This we have to learn: exactly the same way we learn to appreciate bonsai. We learn that a tree that follows the bonsai rules is good. When it breaks one of these rules it is bad. We learn that trees designed by Kobayashi, Kimura, or any great master are good.

But we are not content with just being told. We learn to search images of trees for patterns. We learn to see 'good' application of rules and 'bad' application. We learn to see the similarities in trees which are 'good' and we somehow create our own internal rules of how to decide. We can then judge a tree which we have never seen before. We can tell right away whether we have a piece of raw material or a masterpiece in front of us. We are not all equally good at this. Some become very expert at it and become instinctive experts in judging bonsai.

Some bonsai have the ability to move us emotionally, to convey a message, to make us feel they are something special. Thus we say, "*That tree is good.*" But why, because we like it? Is that good judgement, can we be sure that this response isn't simply a learned reaction? Appreciating a bonsai takes training. It is generally not the case that someone who has no training can appreciate and distinguish *good* from *bad* bonsai easily. It is possible that what we call artistic training is essentially training for pattern classification? Since most of us were trained by looking at the same books and by similar examples of good and bad bonsai, our opinions will often be similar to other bonsai enthusiasts, and we will judge the new artist by the rules we have learned overtime.

In appreciating bonsai we must, of course, realize that there is more to it than just pattern recognition; we can never know to what extent our preferences are biased by the pattern-recognition training we have received in the past. Are we prepared to even listen to someone who comes from another bonsai culture? If we listen, do we understand what he or she is saying? Probably not, probably we want to stay in



our comfortable well established and defined bonsai world rather than constantly having to question what we are thinking. We do not realize that what we think are *natural* rules just evolved accidentally and became a generally accepted code. How will we ever know the true difference between elitism perpetuated through pattern recognition and the intrinsic value of a bonsai?

Truth, Beauty and the Eye of the Beholder

Bonsai competitions are a means of knowing where our trees stand in the league. How can they be improved and what can we work on harder to excel our skills? Bonsai exhibitions range from international events to local society shows. They provide a window

on bonsai from the public perspective; however the knowledgeable enthusiast and the judges are likely to cast a more critical and maybe clinical eye on the trees.

Many people don't want their trees to be judged, their over sensitive egos could get hurt. Well, fine, keep on thinking your trees are great, that is your privilege. On the other hand, your tree, your pride and joy could be more than a little amateurish to the more knowledgeable eye. Fine, so you love your trees and in your eye they are great, but in your heart you know they do not compare with the best. So why be so misguided as to enter them in a competition? Just for the sake of exhibition? Well, if you say so, but do not think they are not being judged.

People's Choice.

These were judged top trees by the general public at major shows; in some cases they were also award-winning trees. But why did the public make this judgment? I do not think you will have trouble answering this one. We have all seen it at our local shows. If it is in flower, has berries, or brightly colored leaves or even something strangely exotic/artistic, the public go for it. This is human nature not good judgement; it looks pretty like a beauty queen or an extraordinarily pretty actress who can't act but gets rave reviews.



Judging comes in many forms. It may surprise you when I say that just about every bonsai exhibit is judged. How is that? In the end, the trees that are to be exhibited are selected from many—what is that but judging? How does this happen? Someone will have to tell someone else which trees to take to the show and which ones to leave at home and they will have to give reasons. The owners are often the poorest judges of their own trees—human nature is like that. It is accepted that a mother will always defend her child and she would always feel that he is better in every respect than how others may see him through more objective eyes. That is human nature and we forgive her. It is to be expected that in general bonsai folks think somewhat

higher of their own trees than they really should, and that they believe that the bonsai of their nation is in generally better than they are, when looked at objectively. This is human nature and we forgive it. Some feelings may get hurt along the way, but it happens. Hurting of feelings is not often considered; in fact it is generally not even talked about but accepted as necessary collateral damage.

What I really ask is, why are otherwise reasonable, intelligent, cultivated and learned people often utterly unreasonable about judging their own tree? I suppose once again it is human nature to be unable to judge yourself with impartiality, but would you expect the gap between objectivity and personal perception to be so wide?

Judges Are People Too!

These were all chosen by one or more judges to be the best tree, but did not reach that award because they were marked down by other judges. Why the disparity? More difficult to explain, but compare them to works of art. Which would be judged as best, a Picasso, a Constable or a Rembrandt? This is personal choice, not judgement. All may be equally good as works of art but not in the opinion of all judges. The same applies to bonsai: all the judges will know they are very good, well designed, healthy specimens, but they are not classic bonsai as they have been taught to expect to come out of Japan. In the same way a Picasso is not a classic scene as taken by the photographer and painted on canvas, so to many it is seen as not as good. It might however fetch even more when sold at auction. Some judges are extraordinarily passionate about something that is *different*.



If this same person had not been so biased in his or her views, that tree would never have reached selection for a show, let alone be on the Show Bench. I have come to the conclusion that this phenomenon most frequently occurs when the people concerned have had very little or no exposure to quality bonsai. They have not seen major bonsai exhibitions and only judge bonsai from photos or the standard of their local club. Bonsai trees, regardless of quality, look best in real life. It is very difficult to take a good picture of a bonsai because a photo is two dimensional and flat; the impact of three-dimensionality and depth perception is lost. How often have you seen photos of your trees and been disappointed; you really thought your tree was better than that! Often when people think they *know* certain trees from pictures and then see them in reality in an exhibit, they are amazed at how much more impact they have in reality.

Now they have certainly seen their own trees and those of their friends in reality and as we have established, it is human nature to see your own trees in

a rosy light and rate them higher than perhaps they deserve. But a bonsai designer/creator needs to have a vision of the future of the tree he or she is creating. Sometimes that vision is so strong in the mind that the reality is not seen. The result is that often, trees are compared that should never be compared, and consequently, otherwise reasonable people come to strange judgments.

Improving the quality of bonsai

If we are all so subjective and biased in our views and if we are going to go on with competitive bonsai shows who is going to judge our tree? The majority of enthusiasts want their trees to be judged and judged impartially. We need to encourage those who are hesitant to exhibit their trees. How are we to do this if so many see judging at present to be biased and unfair? The initial responsibility for motivating and guiding these individuals will most often rest within the bonsai clubs who are in regular contact with their members and have the greatest knowledge of the trees owned



Recognizing Show Quality!

Now these are from private collections. Why have they reached this stage of development but are not deemed to be in the show-class? Look more closely—wonderful trees—better than many of us will ever achieve, but are they prepared for showing? Are they weed-free? Are they fully trimmed and immaculate? Are the jins and sharis perfectly clean and algae free? I know you cannot see this but do they have wires cutting in that should have been removed before exhibiting? I assure you they do. Do the layers of the branches reveal themselves clearly? All these are significant points to having a tree ready to put on a show table and hope to receive acclaim. And at this point I will not even mention how to display the tree; the correct pot, the accompanying accent or companion stone as well as the right stand on which to present the tree.

by their members. The major benefit of putting bonsai into a competitive exhibition is to encourage people to work on developing their trees to a higher standard and thereby enhance their collections. Thus we must produce some system that will give people confidence to exhibit competitively.

The answer would seem to me, to lie in producing criteria or guidelines for judging bonsai. I hesitate to say rules because rules are incredibly restrictive, rules are inflexible, thoughts cannot blossom, creativity cannot flourish. However judging without some form of rules equals chaos. Balancing rules against innovation is a pervasive problem in all of life. As ageism is pervasive and entrenched in our society so elitism is pervasive in bonsai culture. Bonsai must teach us balance, and as experience accumulates, the many exceptions and variations gradually invalidate the rules and by the same experience, the rules become less needed.

So our challenge is to try and produce guidelines that will be accepted and used by most. I would not dare to suggest all. If we can provide a universal set

of criteria or guidelines and the means of using them at ground level, i.e., in local shows, and if it is seen to *work* and is treated with respect, then hopefully we can move on to getting the method accepted at national or international level. 🌲

About the Author. Kath Hughes is a bonsai enthusiast from the UK and serves on the BCI Board of Directors. Kath started her bonsai journey in 1977, chaired Midland bonsai society for 8 years, then founded South Staffs Bonsai Society. She is an organiser of events in the UK, including BCI Convention in Birmingham, 1991; EBA events in 1987 and 1999; Best of British Bonsai events in 2009, 2011 and 2013, producing 2 books from this event; and administrator for Federation of British Bonsai Societies (FoBBS) for 10 years. She has also organized bonsai tours in Europe and Japan, and lectures on bonsai topics to clubs. Kath is married to Malcolm Hughes, president of FoBBS, past president of EBA, and Royal Horticultural Society accredited judge for bonsai.

Book Review

Serendipitous Synergy

Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rock

By Michael Collins-McIntyre, Canada



Cover: *Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rock*, Jonathan Singer, Kemin Hu, and Thomas Elias, Abbeville Press, 2014.

Scientists studying human perception concluded, many years ago, that we organize perception in a way that could not be predicted by the study of each of the component elements in isolation. These scientists formed what was called the “Gestalt school” and emphasized that a complex perception often involves synergies that produce indivisible wholes. The slogan that emerged from their many analyses was: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” *Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rock* is an example of the kind of coherence and excellence that derives from an absolutely prepossessing interaction. The synergies here are unrivaled as is the final product.

Spirit Stones has an interesting prehistory that was discussed in detail in the first issue of *BCI Bonsai and Stone Appreciation Magazine* of 2013. Briefly, it began when Jonathan Singer's casual photography of several orchids at a local florist caught the eye of Marc Hachadourian, a curator at the New York Botanical Garden. Hachadourian was captivated and believed that Singer's botanical photographs were so extraordinarily rich in detail that they captured aspects of exotic plants and orchids that otherwise would have eluded notice. Marc gave Jonathan access to rare plants under his care and arranged an introduction to John Kress at the Smithsonian. Jonathan was welcomed and allowed to photograph the rare and exotic plant collection at the Smithsonian. The publication of the widely-heralded *Botanica Magnifica* ensued. The master prints of this work are on permanent display at the Smithsonian. In addition, a visit was arranged, quite serendipitously, for Jonathan to see the bonsai at The National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the National Arboretum. Here he met the Director, Dr. Tom Elias, and plans for *Fine Bonsai* materialized. At the same time, Jonathan saw the National Viewing Stone Collection. This astonishing collection is displayed in *Awakening the Soul: The National Viewing Stone Collection* that was published, with Tom Elias' guidance, by the National Bonsai Foundation in 2000. At the time, Jonathan was preoccupied with the photography of living forms, of the living art to be found in extraordinary plants and bonsai and thought that photographing viewing stones was unlikely. Times change. A wager was made with Jonathan betting against Tom's belief that Jonathan would ultimately decide to photograph stones. Jonathan confesses that a debt of one dollar is owed. The title of the book presenting the National Viewing Stone Collection—*Awakening the Soul*—is telling. Jonathan's soul was indeed awakened to the beauty and the art that nature has wrought in the stones he encountered. He attended the International Viewing Stone Symposium in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Kemin Hu also attended. Kemin is both a leading scholarly authority on viewing stones and has also assembled one of the world's truly great collections. Kemin and Jonathan were introduced. In very short order, Jonathan asked to photograph her collection. Kemin quickly agreed and *Spirit Stones* was born. Dr. Tom Elias provided scholarly guidance and authored large portions of the book's text. Abbeville Press made the project possible with its commitment to the printer's art and the adroit editing that allows the synergistic contributions from very different authors to be integrated seamlessly. One of the stones as displayed on its base is strikingly symbolic of the beautifully integrated synergies in the book. Figure 1 is a Taihu stone on a natural tree-root base. The coherence of the curves is such that the stone and base fuse as one. The integration could not be more complete or captivating.

Images from *Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rock*. Photographs copyright 2014 © Jonathan M. Singer. Published by Abbeville Press, New York, NY. Used by permission of the publisher.

Spirit Stones: The Ancient Art of the Scholar's Rock is an example of the kind of coherence and excellence that derives from an absolutely prepossessing interaction. The synergies here are unrivaled as is the final product.

We are introduced to the book by an essay of Kemin's on the aesthetics and appreciation of stones. For Kemin, stone appreciation is in the blood. She was born in China and her father was a distinguished stone collector; however, while in China, she was indifferent to viewing stones and their artistic and cultural significance. Only after she left China and moved to North America did the stones take on a deep and thoroughly heartfelt significance. They evoked memories of home and were intimately connected to her love of family. Kemin has a very discerning eye and has developed an exquisite collection that is consummately artful and evocative. She sees stones as the work of a great artist—nature. Tellingly, she quotes Thoreau: "The finest workers in stone are not copper or steel tools, but the gentle touches of air and water working at their leisure with a liberal allowance of time." In this moving passage, Kemin asserts that Thoreau has captured perfectly the Chinese view of nature's artistry. She also considers the qualities that elevate some stones above others. The Chinese regarded some rare and ancient stones as *gongshi*—which has been translated alternatively as "respected stone," "tribute stone," or "spirit stones."

The topic of *gongshi* also arises in the three compelling essays written by Dr. Tom Elias. He discusses the attributes that contribute to this status in a way that brings to mind the Japanese concept of *gei*—or the special qualities a bonsai must possess to be art. Both concepts are ineffable but, when present in a stone or in a bonsai, are immediately recognizable. Tom provides a history of Chinese stone appreciation and a guide to the appreciation of Kemin's collection. He notes the astonishing artistry and quality of Jonathan Singer's photography. He observes that the quality and size of the printed images invite contemplation. The viewer has the opportunity to be truly touched by the spirit of stones.

For the viewer to be touched by the spirit of the stones requires a nuanced and creative talent. As in *Fine Bonsai*, Jonathan Singer's photography, with compelling force, indicates why he is considered to be amongst the greatest nature photographers in the world. His photographs were, for the most part, taken with a Hasselblad H4D 40 camera. Some photographs were taken with a Leica S2 camera equipped with a special wide-angle lens. The equipment is important—it enables the Jonathan's artistry and passion to shine through. It is, however, the artistry and passion that make his photographs singular. In speaking of his work, Jonathan remarked: "it gives me something in my heart that nothing else can fill." It shows. Kemin Hu remarked that Jonathan's photography allows the viewer to see the stone but more importantly it allows for the spirit of the stone to be felt. The artistic decision to present the stones in duotone allows the viewer to appreciate form and texture more profoundly.

Top right; Figure 1: Taihu stone: "Accept While Pretending to Refuse"

Bottom right; Figure 2: Lingbi stone with original base: "Immortal Peak"





Both Kemin Hu and Tom Elias identify the attributes of collected stones that were, historically, most highly prized. The collection is heavily weighted toward the varieties of stone of the greatest historical importance—Lingbi, Taihu, Ying, and Kun stones. Many other stone varieties are included—some of which were collected in modern times. It is interesting to note that these may be measured with different aesthetic yardsticks than the classic stones. The plates depicting the stones are presented without annotation to invite the unhurried, meditative contemplation of the stones. A section of captions follow the plates. These include a poetic name for each stone and details of a stone's type, dimensions, origin, and description and cultural relevance. The captions are not cursory—they present a wealth of information. Together with the essays they present a superb first course in the appreciation of the great richness of viewing stones. I found the poetic names and captions authored by Kemin Hu very engaging. “Dancing Dragon Rivals”, “Little Miraculous Peak of Song”, and “the Romance of Mountain and Moon” are amongst those that I find to be most poetic. In conversation with Kemin, however, I discovered that she is sometimes reluctant to supply names as they may serve to constrain the impressions and emotions evoked by pure personal reaction to the stone. The stones are to be experienced, the power within them sensed, and a unique response constructed. Collectively, the poetic names do place the collection in a cultural milieu that educates as well as engages. I did find myself agreeing with Kemin and think that the presentation of the images by themselves with the captions presented in a following section is ideal.

The stones. The cover stone is a completely natural Taihu stone with the poetic name: “Cloud of Peculiarity.” In this case, the name derives

Top left; Portrait of Kemin Hu with painting of her father in the background. Taken by Jonathan Singer.

Top right; Dr. Thomas Elias. Dr. Elias is retired director of the United States Bonsai and Penjing Museum and a distinguished scholar and author. His expertise and enthusiasm for viewing stones have motivated him to found The Viewing Stone Association of North America (vsana.org).

Middle left; Jonathan Singer shooting an image for this book. A red background was used for the duotone images to reduce reflectance and enhance resolution and depth of field and to allow the shape and texture of the stones to emerge.

Bottom; Figure 3: Lingbi stone: “Xiang Zijing’s *Yanshan*”





Top left; Figure 4: Taihu stone: "Mi Fu Bows to the Rock"



Top right; Figure 5: Ying stone: "Thinker"

Middle right; Figure 6: Nine River Dragon Stone; "Morning Sunlight at Mt. Wuyi"

Bottom right; Figure 7: Youlan stone: "High Mountains and Great Rivers"

from small Chinese characters etched on the back of the stone. The harmony between the stones and the stands upon which they rest is absolutely stunning and is quite apparent with this stone. The small stand holds a relatively massive stone with its mass cantilevered over the base—it is a remarkable achievement. The same harmony is evident with the stone and base depicted in Figure 1, and throughout the entire collection. It is interesting to note that the bases are very different yet are in perfect harmony with their respective stones—both of which are Taihu stones. The stone and base presented in Figure 2 represent a different sense of harmony. This Lingbi stone, named "Immortal Peak" was likely collected before the Ming dynasty. It rests on its original gall-wood base. The base is simple yet provides an appropriate platform for the power of the stone. The patination of the stone and base are wonderfully complementary. Throughout the book, we find beautiful and evocative stones resting on wonderfully complementary and expressive stands. The combinations are breathtaking.

The scope of Kemin Hu's collection is astonishing. Tom Elias observes that with the great scarcity of the stones of this quality and the tremendous desire in China to repatriate objects of cultural significance that Kemin Hu's stones form a singular collection, the likes of which will never be seen again. To have this collection so exquisitely documented is a rare gift. What follows barely scratches the surface of what the collection holds. It is difficult to capture the grandeur and crystalline clarity of the images in small scale. Yet, it is possible to choose some stones that begin to represent the scope of the collection. Figure 3 presents a classic Lingbi stone. This mountain stone is one of the very earliest forms of stone collected. Figure 4 presents a horizontally oriented Taihu stone with the poetic name: "Mi Fu Bows to the Rock." This stone is representative in that it is easy to see a figure on the left bowing to the mountain on the right. Figure 5 is an ancient Ying stone with the poetic name "The Thinker." It sits firmly on its stone base. A figure can be seen with the external profile of Rodin's sculpture—





it is believed that this form conveys wisdom and great respect for the elderly. The stone shown in Figure 6 is a Nine River Dragon stone with the poetic name of "Morning Sunlight at Mt. Wuyi." Figure 7 depicts a Youlan stone. Youlan stones are popularly used to invite exploration of represented landscapes as is this stone with the poetic name of "High Mountains and Great Rivers." Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate the great scope of the collection. Figure 8, "Thousand-year-old Leaves", is exactly as its name suggests. The leaves were covered with calcium carbonate and disappeared with time so that now their mineral imprint is all that remains. Figure 9 takes the viewer in a modernist direction. This Moer stone, is similar in many ways to the abstract sculpture of Henry Moore. Its polished surfaces and fascinating curvature is certainly evocative.

The book also contains a section by Tom Elias that discusses how presentation can enhance and even

Top left; Figure 8: Calcified leaves: "Thousand-year-old leaves"

Top right; Figure 9: Moer stone: "Moore's New Work"





Top left and right Figure 10: One Linglong Ying stone in two stands and two orientations.
 Bottom; Figure 11: Three Gorges Stones: "Eight Eccentricities of Yangzhou"

determine the meaning of stones. In Figure 12, an adroitly structured display enhances the impact and power of a display of small stones. Figure 10 is fascinating. It presents two views of the same Linglong Yin stone on different bases and in different orientations. The same stone elicits two very different responses. Kemin Hu named the vertically oriented stone: "Grotesque Peak", whereas, the horizontally-orientation stone is named "Delicate Magpie Bridge." Quite clearly, the stand and the orientation afforded play a critical roll in influencing the sensed spirit of the stone. Synergy again.

The ripples of the serendipitous meeting of Jonathan Singer and Tom Elias have propagated through the worlds of bonsai and stone appreciation. Kemin Hu's decision to allow her singular collection to be photographed



Figure 12: A pleasing display of small stones. The impact of each stone in this harmonious display is greater than its impact in isolation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Michael Collins-McIntyre is a Canadian professor, psychologist, and writer. He is a Contributing Editor of BCI Bonsai and Stone Appreciation. His articles appear quite regularly.

was beyond generous. She and Tom also presented tremendous insight into the culture of stone appreciation and its role in the larger culture of China. So we have in this work the documentation of a singularly wonderful collection by one of the world's greatest nature photographers. These wonderful images are wonderfully printed in a size (the book measures 15.7 x 12.6 inches) and on paper that do them justice. Abbeville Press responded to the power of the images with all its resources and its commitment to the printer's art giving our community a prepossessing vehicle for this historic resource. The images are supported by the authority and passion for stones of two of the great authorities on viewing stones, on spirit stones working today. Synergy indeed. In deciding how to conclude, I decided to use the collection of stones presented in Figure 11. Each of the eight stones is beautiful and moving. Each can stir the spirit: yet, together they do more. The poetic name of this grouping is "Eight Eccentricities of Yangzhou." The eight Three Gorges

stones each have their own personality but they participate in a larger personality of the collective in a way that recalls a particularly playful and eccentric group of scholars from the Qing Dynasty. The larger meaning does not derive simply from the sum of the spirits of the eight stones. Point must have counterpoint. The whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.

I was quite satisfied with this ending until I had a conversation with Jonathan. He had stated that he thought that this was his best work, certainly the most personally meaningful. I asked him why that was, fully expecting him to talk along the lines of a unique collaboration and extraordinary material. He thought for a while and then said: "you know for Kemin that they are not just stones—they are family, beauty, love, heritage, and art rolled into one." He went on to say: "...for this book, I got to photograph a love story." 🌸



Lightning's Dance

The path to informality

By Massimo Bandera, Italy,
With Antonio Jesus, Pedro
Bandera, José Luis Gracia
Valentina, Simón Castillo, Blas
Cano, Josemi, Paco d'Istan, Emilio,
Fran de Ronda, Rafael Melchor.

In the autumn of this year we had the opportunity to restyle this nursery-grown Savin juniper, *Juniperus sabina*, I previously worked on in a demonstration in the early nineties (pictured with Miguel Angel Garcia Gil founder of the Museum of Bonsai Marbella), with the students from my school in Spain. The current museum director, Rodrigo Garcia, son of the founder, has accepted the challenge of working on this old bonsai in the formal upright style.

The idea was inspired by an old tree, solitary and vigorous, that has faced many centuries, struggling, and now the top begins to sag and twist: it is a tree that is transforming into informality, but still most of the trunk is erect and monumental. The example in nature is an old pine tree 20 meters tall growing in the same condition: a tree that is difficult to classify, a cutting-edge bonsai that marries art and nature. The old trees are our teachers.





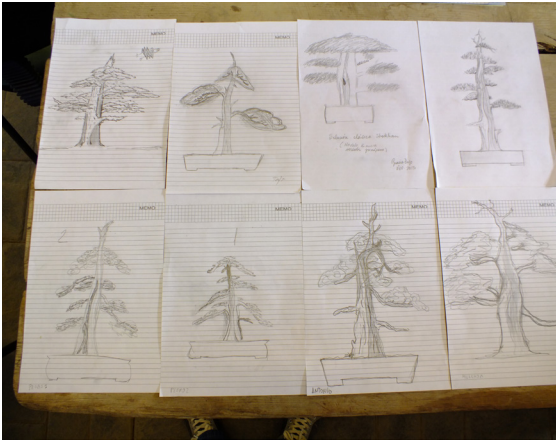
The uniqueness of this bonsai, its astonishing form, lies precisely in this: it tells the story of the life of the tree. A solitary tree that rises up, spreading its branches as if they were arms, to embrace the fresh breeze. The shape is broad, not too compact or twisted like a *moyogi*, very large, virile, fighting for its life: it is majestic.

Top left; the inspiration for restyling.

Top right; Miguel Angel Gracia Gil, founder of the Museum of Bonsai Marbella pictured with the tree after its first styling in the early nineties.

Bottom; The tree has grown vigorously over the last 20 years.





Top left and top right; Many drawings were created by the team to fully evaluate the potential for the restyling.

Its most expressive value is the twist at the top, where the wind blows to and fro, but it looks like the tree does not submit and one part is dead, a large *ten-jin* soars and the top begins to bend: the seems movement is not caused by the wind, but by an internal dynamic.

It is a lonely tree, a large singularity that towers above its smaller companions, where the solid and monumental trunk begins to twist, shaped by powerful forces, supreme in its height and its vast volume. Starting from the *nebari*, the elevation is dramatic in all its aspects: the trunk is marked by *shari*, a robust lower branch has become a *jin* and the naked rounded crown almost covers the entire sky. A heroic tree, where the drama is in the tree itself, in conflict with its form reacting against the wind; in this colossal aspect lies its profound grace and subtlety. The whole nature of the subject makes it very contemporary in appearance, it does not need much explanation because it has the nature of the tree where aging another twenty years will make it a fine specimen.

Its apparent age rises above all the values of the Japanese aesthetic, *Shibusa*, embodying simple, subtle, rustic and unobtrusive beauty. The irregular and rough texture of an old, magnificent bonsai, is an example of how the idea of rustic is not vulgar or coarse, but is refined because it is an expression of a love for nature. A bonsai that possesses this character will truly be *Shibui*, a refinement that gives spiritual joy of “restrained spontaneity.” 🌲



Above; The foliage is removed from branches in preparation for the work on the *ten-jin*.



Above; Using hand tools and power tools, the *jin* and *shari* are refined.

Bottom; Work continues on the *shari* and *ten-jin*.



This page; the styling team with deep concentration and cooperation slowly improves all the elements that will redefine this tree's style from formal to informal through carving, pruning, wiring and treating the deadwood with lime sulphur.

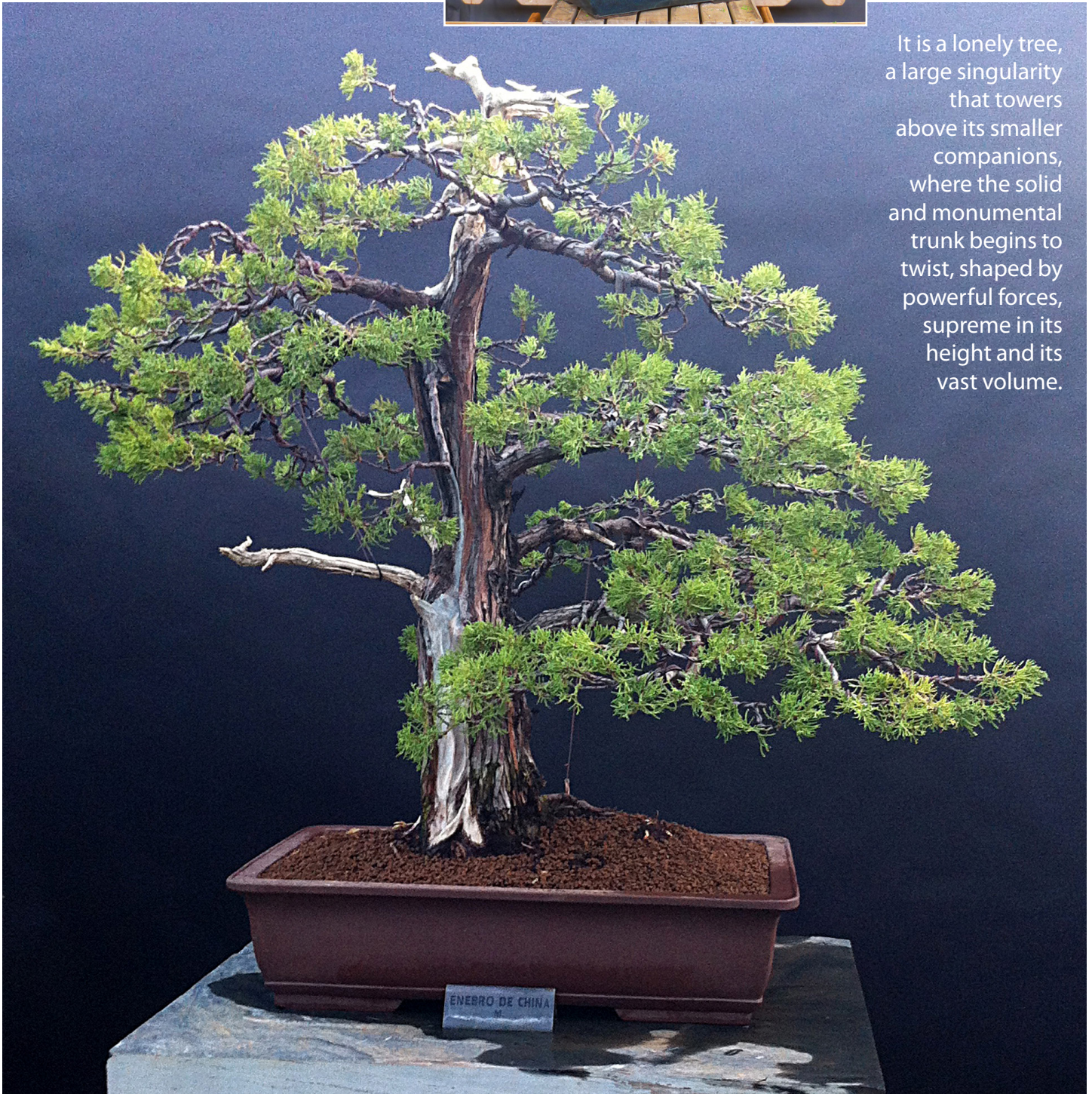




Top left; The current director of the Museum of Bonsai Marbella, who accepted the challenge to restyle this juniper is Rodrigo Gracia, the son of founder Miguel Angel Gracia Gil.

Top right; The result of the restyling, a formal composition is now an informal tree that has a powerful story of survival to tell.

Bottom; The tree was repotted six weeks later and now looks very comfortable in its new container.



It is a lonely tree, a large singularity that towers above its smaller companions, where the solid and monumental trunk begins to twist, shaped by powerful forces, supreme in its height and its vast volume.

INSPIRED BY MASTERPIECES

By Danilo Scursatone, Italy

Translation by Danilo Scursatone and Joe Grande

"Goshin," *Juniperus chinensis* 'Foemina' by John Y. Naka. North American Collection, National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, US National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. Photo, 2013, courtesy U.S. National Arboretum. Inspired by a forest of *Cryptomeria japonica* near a shrine in Japan, *Goshin* means "protector of the spirit," in reference to the forest shrine. The eleven-tree forest also represents Naka's eleven grandchildren.

In bonsai art, many masterpieces reflect the study and experimentation of great masters, according to the classical school that is rooted in the ancient history of this art. They were able to break the rules and free their spirit to create a special relationship between the tree and the artist—an extraordinary communion of man and nature conveyed by the bonsai masterpiece when we observe it.

A bonsai masterpiece, in many cases, is born from a chance meeting between starting material with great potential, often hidden, and the bonsai artist with great experience: the master, who recognizes in that material the qualities needed to make a masterpiece. Here then, the master, with great wisdom and experience, begins to evaluate all possible paths that lead to the soul of the tree with the aim of placing it on a proper bonsai path; fully respecting the species and its potential and highlighting its features so that even the most inexperienced observer can appreciate and take in the emotions conveyed.

At this stage, even if it is of a long duration, comes the styling process, the creative act of the master who at this precise moment decides to distance himself from the rest of the world, to focus on the tree and apply all his knowledge—technical and spiritual, to fuse his soul with that of a tree in an exclusive, timeless dialogue between man and nature.

With confidence, the master guides the tree toward a new life, revealing to everyone the vital force and beauty contained in it. The masterpiece is visible from the first styling, but time is essential for achieving the right balance, attracting the observer, guiding him or her in small steps to discover the micro universe that is the bonsai tree.

Among many bonsai trees, a masterpiece is instantly recognizable because it is able to attract anyone, expert or novice, through its "perfect imperfection." A play on words but it describes concisely what the masterpiece is. Almost always, in styling a bonsai, we try to force the refinement in search of perfection, but often, with this approach, we fall into the error of depriving the tree its soul, the imperfection that allows the tree to express itself and reveal its story that inevitably evokes the environment to which it belongs and to which we are deeply connected.

A sort of "fatal attraction" that predisposes us to identify with the masterpiece tree, unequivocally, without doubt, leaves us motionless in front of it, to observe in beautiful and exclusive moments of inner dialogue between us and a living entity permeated with beauty, and just for one moment project ourselves in nature, away from the modern world, far away from man. It is an important emotional experience that will forever imprint that little masterpiece tree in our minds, and sometimes makes us question the meaning we give to the bonsai tree, that maybe until now, was linked to some obscure stereotype.



Top; "Drinking Horse," Chinese elms, *Ulmus parvifolia*, 55 years old, with turtle-shell rocks portray a horse drinking water from a river. The "land" detail, with gentle slopes, features a vigorous tree in early spring, contrasting with the open "water" part. Created by Zhao Qingquan who describes his land and water penjing as three-dimensional landscape paintings that are created with media from nature.

Middle; Sargent Juniper, *Juniperus Sargentii* by Masahiko Kimura (photo, Jonathan M. Singer/Abbeville Press). Kimura advanced the art of bonsai by making the deadwood the focal point of his creations resulting in an elaborate starkness not ordinarily found in the wild, innovatively creative without historic models.

Bottom; "Bosco," *Pinus sylvestris* by Giovanni Genotti. Photo, Studio Bauducco, Italy. In the windswept alpine environment of Alpi Graie in Italy, we can see scots pine forests, formed in small glades. The shapes and forms of these trees have inspired the creation of this bonsai forest planted on a slab of quartzite from Barge (a small village in northern Italy famous for this type of stone) that enhances the naturalness of the whole.

A bonsai masterpiece is never an end in itself. It represents the maximum expression of this kind of art and it is proposed as a universal and absolute model, a reference for those who wish to walk the path of bonsai, for both the author who has created it and the technical and cultural attributes it possesses. This model conveys many messages that help us find our way—our bonsai path.

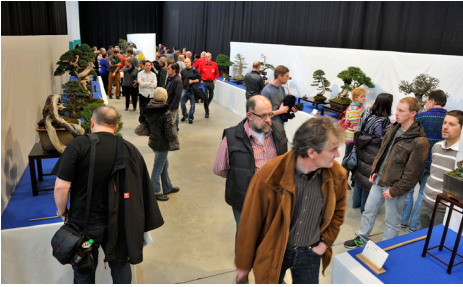
We often tend to imitate a masterpiece, as can be observed in many exhibitions. How many bonsai artists have tried to emulate the masterpieces of the Master Kimura, proposing as a focal point the deadwood of their bonsai, or have used starting material similar to the masterpiece? Definitely a lot! How many have succeeded in creating a work of art? Surely very few let alone masterpieces!

I believe that masterpieces are not to be imitated, but should be an inspiration for future masterpieces. In front of a masterpiece we need the humility to realize how we can acquire the ability to create a masterpiece. This is a good starting point on our bonsai journey. The measure of our growth will be dictated by our ability to learn from the messages inherent in the masterpiece that are not limited to the aesthetic expression or the architecture of the tree, but also our ability to comprehend nature and capture those special emotions that are fundamental to the bonsai master.

While considering the absolute value of the masterpiece, to better understand it, is important to know the context in which it was created, its history and the historical influences guiding its creator. It is useful for a bonsai artist to understand the cultural background that fostered its creation and on it, build his or her own artistic growth—an approach that maybe one day will lead to the creation of new masterpieces, masterpieces of the places and the time in which the artist lives, never forgetting that the tree is a living thing, just like the artist and as such should be respected above all, for it embodies the fundamental message of communion with nature, not restricting the creative act to just the artistic expression. 🌲



The Road to Heusden-Zolder, the Mecca of Bonsai Pilgrimage



Noelanders Trophy XV 2014

By Kath Hughes, UK

Photographs by Willie Evenepoel, courtesy Bonsai Association Belgium

They came by boat, they came by train, most by road and some by plane. Like the Faithful making the pilgrimage to Mecca, on the weekend of January 17th to 19th, a vast number of bonsai enthusiasts made the journey to the small mining town of Heusden-Zolder in Eastern Belgium to attend the Noelanders Trophy XV bonsai exhibition. And they did come from far and wide—from all corners of Europe, from Cyprus and Israel and further afield, from as far away as Japan and the USA.

A special occasion—this event has now been up and running for fifteen years and what an achievement. Fifteen years without a break and it gets better and better every year. All credit must go to Marc Noelanders and his team from the Belgium Bonsai Association. Their presence is evident at the event, being equally helpful yet unobtrusive. That is a rare achievement.

The previous year, 2013 was also an amazing show but it will remain etched in my memory forever, not just for the quality of the event but because the weather and in consequence, the journey, which was horrendous; snow, ice fog and sub-zero temperatures. It took snowplows clearing the motorway to enable exhibitors, traders and bonsai enthusiasts alike to get to the venue, let alone getting home at the end of the weekend!

January 2014 proved a very different story. Fine weather all the way and throughout the weekend.

To imagine the popularity of the Noelanders Trophy, you must envisage us leaving our home north of Birmingham (almost the centre of the United Kingdom) and heading for Folkestone, 200 miles southeast and the entry point for the Channel Tunnel. Such was the exodus to see Noelanders XV that we started to meet up with fellow travellers on the motorway from other parts of the country. That must surely tell you something. Some four hours later, we arrived at the Eurotunnel, oh what a blessing that has become. No overcrowded ferries, no sea sickness and no queues. The Eurotunnel car train service runs

between Folkestone and Calais via the channel tunnel in just 35 minutes. Once on board passengers stay with their vehicle throughout the channel tunnel crossing in bright, air-conditioned carriages.

The Channel Tunnel, colloquially known as the Chunnel, is a 31.4-mile-long (50.5 km) rail tunnel travelling beneath the English Channel. At its lowest point, it is 250 feet (75 m) deep. At 23.5 miles (37.9 km), the tunnel has the longest undersea portion of any tunnel in the world. The tunnel carries high-speed Eurostar passenger trains and Eurotunnel Shuttle roll-on/roll-off vehicle transport.

Arrival at the show on the Saturday morning found people eagerly queuing for admission long before the official opening time of 10.00 a.m. It proved well worth the travel and the wait for admission. Well over 100 top quality bonsai from all over Europe graced this extraordinary venue—vast, old, restored coal mine buildings, brought to state-of-the-art exhibition status. Over the weekend more than 3,000 visitors clamored to view the show.

If this alone was not enough, international demonstrators kept us entranced as we viewed with envy their ability to transform some sizable and daunting yamadori pines and larches into works of art—near-completed bonsai. The four demonstrators over that weekend were: David Benavente, Spain; Ryan Neil, USA; Sandro Segneri, Italy; and Kevin Willson, UK.

Finally, the icing on the cake for many present was the opportunity to purchase bonsai related items from over forty traders crowded into three areas of the venue. My only criticism of the event was that the traders were somewhat overcrowded. Such has become the popularity of this event and at times, the purchasing public could scarcely move.

Once again, it was a magnificent event! Next year, January 24th and 25th, come with my recommendation to make the trip—it will certainly be a worthy pilgrimage. 🌲



Overall winner; Erasmo Garcia
Fernandez; ES
Olea europaea silvestre;
Moyogi; Origin, Mallorca;
Pot: Tokoname; Height: 60
cm; Styled by Erasmo Garcia
Fernandez



Best Kifu, German Gomez
Soler; ES
Olea europaea; Moyogi; Origin,
Mallorca; Pot, Tokoname;
Styled by German Gomez
Soler



Report: XV Noelanders Trophy, 2014

By Christian Vos, Public Relations BAB
(Bonsai Association Belgium)

Fifteen years ago the Bonsai Association Belgium organized its first bonsai show in Heusden-Zolder. Year after year, the show becomes more and more important. In our advertising, we, the Bonsai Association Belgium, promised a wonderful exhibition, international demonstrators and many traders. And we did:

Wonderful exhibition

Over 100 bonsai on the show! All high level quality bonsai from all over Europe prepared by bonsai amateurs and professionals. They were proud to show their masterpieces at this prestigious event. The venue, a restored old coal mine building with large free parking facilities and restaurant, was again the meeting point for so many bonsai enthusiasts from Europe. There were even visitors from the US and other places beyond Europe. We were honored with the presence of the Omiya delegation of Japan.

Thanks also to good weather conditions the quantity of visitors was overwhelming: nearly 3,000 visitors came to enjoy the beauty of bonsai.

International demonstrators

This year the crème de la crème top demonstrators gave simultaneous demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

Ryan Neil from the USA and Sandro Segneri from Italy demonstrated their skills on huge mugo pines. Kevin Willson from the United Kingdom did a fantastic carving job on two yamadori larches from the UK. David Benavente from Spain did an extremely nice wiring and finishing on his two demo trees.

Many bonsai enthusiasts stayed for hours looking at the demos and listening to the entertaining and professional explanations of the artist and the moderators Marc De Beule and Walter Pall.

Many traders

Many visitors were attracted by 'the bonsai supermarket'. More than forty traders presented on a large scale what amateurs and professionals need for their bonsai cultivation: bonsai pots in different styles, tools, fertilizers, soil, bonsai tables and accessories for display, jewels, pre-bonsai, yamadori, and so on. The 15th Trophy was the most successful to date.

As for the previous events, a photo book with pictures of all the exhibited bonsai will be published: a must-have collector's item for every bonsai enthusiast.

The next Noelanders Trophy will take place at the same location on January 24 and 25, 2015. 🌲



The four top demonstrators at this year's Noelanders Trophy created superb trees. Left to right and top to bottom: Ryan Neil, USA; Sandro Segneri, Italy; David Benavente, Spain; and Kevin Willson, UK.



Best deciduous bonsai; Guaria Cañon; ES
Acer buergerianum; Moyogi;
Origin, Japan; Pot, Tokoname;
42 cm; Styled by Luis Vallejo

Best bonsai of a member of
BAB; Christian Vos; BE
Pinus mugo; Shakan; Origin,
Yamadori; Pot, moon stone;
110 cm; Styled by Christian Vos



Nomination category bonsai;
Jose Ontañon; ES
Cryptomeria japonica;
Chokkan; Origin, Spanje; Pot,
Tokoname; 90 cm; Styled by
Jose Ontañon

Nomination category bonsai;
Luis Baliño; ES
Pinus sylvestris; Bunjin, literati;
Origin, Spanje; Pot, Chinese;
90 cm; Styled by Luis Baliño





Nomination category bonsai;
Luis Vallejo; ES
Quercus faginea; Moyogi; Pot,
Walsall Studios; 60 cm; Styled
by Luis Vallejo

Nomination category bonsai;
Udo Fischer; DE
Rhododendron indicum;
Moyogi; Origin, Japan; Pot,
Tokoname; 54 cm; Styled by
Udo Fischer



Nomination category bonsai;
Luis Vallejo; ES

Juniperus procumbens; Moyogi;
Origin, Japan; Pot, Tokoname;
80 cm; Styled by Masahiko
Kimura

Nomination category Kifu;
Alvarez Iglesias Andres; ES

Taxus baccata; Fukinagashi;
Origin, yamadori; Pot, old
Chinese; 35 cm

Facing page:

Nomination category Kifu;
John Armitage; UK

Juniperus chinensis 'itoigawa';
Han-kengai; Origin, Japan; Pot,
Juko; 26 cm; Styled by John
Armitage

Nomination category
deciduous bonsai; Alain De
Wachter; BE

Zelkova serrata; Hokidachi;
Origin, seedling; Pot, Milan
Klika; 46 cm; Styled by Alain De
Wachter







Nomination bonsai of a member of BAB;
Alda Clijsters; BE
Pinus parviflora; Moyogi; Origin, Japan; Pot,
Tokoname; 80 cm; Styled by Alda Clijsters

Sonderpreis Bonsai Museum Düsseldorf;
Jorge Campos; ES
Fagus sylvatica; Yose-Ue; Origin, Spanje;
Cement slab; 90 cm; Styled by Jorge
Campos

EBA Certificate of Merit; Werner Busch; DE
Ulmus minor; Hokidachi; Origin, seedling;
Pot, Bryan Albright; 70 cm; Styled by
Werner Busch



Incredible India

By Min Hsuan Lo, Taiwan, with Jyoti & Nikunj Parekh, India.

India-Taiwan Friendship Bonsai Event was organized by Mrs. Jyoti Parekh and Mr. Nikunj Parekh, co-founders of Bonsai Study Group of The Indo-Japanese Association and their team in India from February 22 to March 3, 2014 with support of Mr. Chen Cang Sing, Chairman of 10th ASPAC and Chairman of BCI 2017 in Taiwan. Four Taiwan leading Bonsai artists included Mr. Min Hsuan Lo, Mr. Yu Ching Yuan, Mr. Shiu Wen Ren and Mr. Ho Yung Yu who participated in this grand event.

When we arrived at Mumbai airport on the night of 21 February 2014, I was shocked to see the contemporary new airport terminal T 2, depicting India as modern, technology oriented but yet with culturally rich heritage. It was very different than the old airport I had seen some ten years ago, when I visited Mumbai. Then Nikunj told me the terminal had just opened eight days back! We were so lucky to see the new airport!

We could not wait to meet all our friends in India. Intensive demonstrations and workshops started right from the morning of February 22. All of us Taiwanese artists were so excited and happy to share our knowledge and skills on bonsai art with our Indian friends. Although we are not accustomed to Indian food, we enjoyed the warm hospitality of our Indian friends.

For next three days, we conducted demonstrations in the mornings and workshops in the afternoons. The trees worked on included *Casuarina*, *Podocarpus gracillor*, *Elaegnus pungens*, *Fukien Tea*, *Buxus harlandii*, *Buxus semiperviens*, *Murraya exotica*, *Murraya paniculata* and *Poilaniella fragilis*. The Mumbai events were very systematically planned and most of the members did wiring themselves under our advice.

Our next stop was Bangalore, a top class software and garden city in south west India. Later, I was told, that India has mastered software technology similar to Taiwan having mastered the hardware technology. The domestic flight from Mumbai to Bangalore took only one and a half hours. I was surprised to see yet another new International airport of high standard that was very different than my last visit some seven years ago. The airport is beautifully landscaped with colorful greenery.

Vriksha Bonsai Circle of Bangalore was one of the affiliated chapters of the Bonsai Study Group of the Indo-Japanese Association who organized the two-day event. We could see from the eyes of their members, they were keen to learn newer bonsai techniques. We reached downtown Bangalore ready for the inaugural

ceremony followed by lunch with their members. We were taken around to see the trees by Nikunj and allowed to select material of our choice for the demonstrations in the afternoon session.

Although exhausted by the evening, we all felt happy to walk around the adjacent Cubbon Park with its majestic old trees. The city planners deserve our complements for creating such a large green area in downtown Bangalore, reminding me of Central Park of New York city. The city of Bangalore is a mix of old and new construction in the heart of the city.

On both days we conducted full day sessions of improvement workshops for Bangalore members on a variety of trees. *Ficus*, *Thuja orientalis*, *Juniperus*, *Cupressus*, and *Eugenia uniflora* were styled and grafting techniques, creating spaces for visual impact and harmony in design were explained and shown.

Next two days being a religious holiday, we went for a trip to the famous Nagarhole Wild Life Reserve



Top; Inaugural event at Mysore on March 1 with Patron saint, Senior Swamiji who has a large Bonsai garden and supports Bonsai activities with love and care.

Middle; On March 2, Bal Swamiji of Mysore Avadhoot Datta Peetham, Mysore, with Taiwanese guests, Jyoti, Nikunj and Revered Kusuma of Kishkindha Moolika Bonsai garden.

Bottom; Interactive session after work on a Jaboticaba tree by Min Hsuan Lo, Shiu Wen Ren and Nikunj Parekh kept the interest of large number of delegates.

Top left and middle; *Casuarina equisetifolia* of Mr. Krishna and Mrs. Archana Gupta that Min Hsuan Lo and Yu Ching Yuan styled at Mumbai events.

Top right; Kabini forest area near Mysore has many trees to inspire bonsai artists. Alongside is a Jungle Bison.

Middle left; *Ficus retusa* before work started and after styling.

Bottom left; A tray landscape-Saikei with *Juniperus chinensis* trees and vertical upright gray stones was created by Jyoti and Nikunj Parekh.

Bottom right; Ancient *Ficus* with many aerial roots attracted the attention of Taiwanese Bonsai friends. Bulls take a leisurely walk on a village road.



Park on the banks of Kabini River area. I had promised my Taiwanese colleagues visual delight—the giant old trees growing on roadside on our way to Mysore and how the trees welcome you with open arms. But sadly, my promise got broken as the huge old trees were cut down to widen the expressway. My good friends Nikunj and Jyoti always have rightfully been asking their Indian bonsai students never to dig naturally thriving trees for bonsai making. The situation in Taiwan was same some thirty years back, when with faster economic development many road side trees were removed to widen the expressways. As bonsai persons, we should be protective of old trees, our mother nature. When mother nature is gone, we the people become orphans! This thought tired our minds a bit.

Usually, tourists and tour guides concentrate on the wild animals like elephants, bison, monkey, stag horn deer, leopard, tiger and many birds. But we were looking at the most beautiful trees with interesting bark, root spread and the world's top class Bunjin style forests.

The predominant vegetation in this park is of southern tropical, moist, mixed deciduous type with a substantial eastern portion transforming into the dry

deciduous type. The upper tree canopy is dominated by *Terminalia tomentosa* in association with *Tectonia grandis*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Lagerstroemia lanceolata*, *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Adina cordifolia*, *Bombax malabaricum*, *Schleichera trijuga*, *Ficus* species and others. The lower canopy has *Kydia calycina*, *Emblia officianlis*, *Gmellina arborea* etc. Shrubs include *Solanum*, *Desmodium* and *Helicter*



species. Weedy shrubs like Eupatorium and Lantana now also dominate the natural landscape.

We took lots of pictures and time and again requested the coach driver to stop and park on the roadside for photos with old Ficus trees with aerial roots and cows grazing nearby! On our way back to Mysore, on a very narrow road, we found one outstanding Tamarindus indica tree. It was a treat to see the grand old Tamarind tree. We detoured on our way back to visit Kushal Nagar, a township full of Buddhist temples with gold leaf decorated Buddha statues and paintings of his disciples at the foot of Coorg Hill station.

We reached Mysore on evening of February 28 and stayed at the famous Windflower Spa resort along with Nikunj, Jyoti and Sujata who accompanied us from Mumbai and assisted us in this India-Taiwan Friendship Bonsai Event. Swamiji Ganapathy Sachchidananda and Bal Swamiji warmly greeted us on March 1 along with the Avadhoot Datta Peetham team in large area with hundreds of people watching the events. Inauguration over, the three of us showed grafting techniques on Ficus and worked on Geometry tree, Juniperus tree, Calliandra shrub, Casuarinas and Eugenia shrub with small fruits, *Cleradendron inermis*, *Buxus semperviens* and *Myricaria cauliflora*—Jaboticaba trees provided by

Swamiji's Ashrama. Swamiji, is the Patron Saint in promoting Bonsai art and he explains the virtues of Bonsai to Indian people.

On March 2, we had a two-hour workshop on trees for members of Srushthi Bonsai Study Circle, in Mysore, another affiliated chapter of Bonsai Study Group of The Indo-Japanese Association, Mumbai. The trees included Ficus, Sandpaper tree, Casuarina, Barbados cherry (*Malpighia glabra*) and bottlebrush tree (*Callistemon*).

On the last day, Jyoti and Nikunj gave three demonstrations of miniature landscapes, Saikei, with *Nea buxifolia*, *Juniperus chinensis* and *Serissa serissoides* with rocks and unique ceramic containers. India Taiwan Friendship Bonsai Event from February 22 to March 2, was a grand success, with over three hundred and fifty delegates from across India and from the world over. This was possible due to the teamwork of the Taiwanese and the hard work of teams from Mumbai, Bangalore and Mysore with support from all organizations in India and Taiwan.

This memorable event added a new leaf in India-Taiwan Friendship through Bonsai. I urge all readers to visit India to see first hand the scenery that is incredible India. 🌳

Left; EBA Award, Chinese elm, *Ulmus parvifolia*

Right; FoBBS Award of Merit, Chinese elm, *Ulmus parvifolia*



Swindon 'Winter Image Bonsai Show,' 2014

By Kath Hughes, UK

The First Show of the year hosted by the Swindon & District Bonsai Society featured displays from the host society, from invited societies and individuals.

The show was judged this year by Dan Barton. There were seven awards presented for the best in the different categories; Large evergreen, Large deciduous, Chuhin, Shohin, Club display, Accent and Tree/pot combination. As well there was an Award of



Top left; BCI Director Kath Hughes, BCI Award of Excellence recipient Mo Fagan and Master of Ceremonies Malcolm Hughes, President of FoBBS.

Middle left; Best chuhin, Chinese juniper, *Juniperus chinensis*.

Top right; BCI Award of Excellence, *Chamaecyparis nana gracilis*.



Excellence from Bonsai Clubs International, and two further Awards of Merit, presented on behalf of the European Bonsai Association (EBA) and the Federation of British Bonsai Societies (FoBBS).

BCI Award of Excellence was awarded by BCI Director Kath Hughes to Mo Fagan for his *Chamaecyparis nana gracilis*. 🌲



International Bonsai Art & Culture Biennale, October 18–21, 2014

Indonesia By Robert Steven, General Secretary



We are organizing a colossal bonsai event called “International Bonsai Art & Culture Biennale” on the theme: When Art and Culture Meet Through Bonsai, in Yogyakarta, an old historical/cultural city in central Java, Indonesia, renowned as the centre of classical Javanese fine art and culture. This event is jointly organized by Forum Hobby Indonesia (FHI) and Indonesia Bonsai Art Club Association (Aksisain), supported by Keraton King Palace of Yogyakarta, Vredenburg Fortress Museum and Culture & Tourism of Yogyakarta.

This is the first bonsai exhibition to present a new concept that accommodates creativity and innovation, to bring together bonsai art and other art forms, because we believe art is a living thing and has no limit in conveying messages of the creator. We hope this will open a new perspective to the bonsai word, and bring more fun to bonsai art. Yet, of course you will also witness many conventional displays.

The exhibition venue will be in an old historical Dutch fortress, the Vredenburg Fortress Museum. The International Culture Night will be hosted by our Yogyakarta Sultan in the Keraton Palace. All are within walking distance to the city center, Beringharjo Market Center,



and the Malioboro Street night market. After the opening ceremony, all guests will join the “andong” horse-carriage and “becak” city parade to enjoy the unique bonsai display along the city boulevard.

There will be “King Trophy” from Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, “Ismail Saleh Trophy,” “Saburo Kato Trophy,” “Iwasaki Trophy,” “Amy Liang Trophy,” “WBFF Trophy,” “BCI Award of Excellence,” “China Trophy” from the Chinese Penjing Artist Association, “Ryuga Dragon Trophy,” “The Best Bonsai Display Trophy” etc. There will be also numerous art and cultural activities during the event such as demo of batik

drawing, silver jewelry, ceramic making, painting, sculpturing, traditional music (gamelan) and dance, wayang (puppet) show; Gala Dinner with Ramayana Cabaret at Prambanan Temple, tours to Borobudur Temple, Taman Sari Water Palace, Kasongan traditional crafts center; we can also organize special tour for cave exploring, hiking, diving or surfing adventures; to Bromo Mt, Bali Island, Tanah Toraja, Toba Lake, or other specific trips.

We will also organize a picnic-trip where all guests will participate in the “Friendship Trees Planting Picnic” as part of our green campaign activity; last but not least, all international delegates will be requested to participate to perform their unique culture in the “International Culture Night” with their traditional costumes.

It will be from October 18–21, 2014, in concert with the celebration of 258th birthday of Yogyakarta City; so we will also celebrate together the “258 Lanterns Night for Yogyakarta.” We are expecting hundreds of guests from around the world, including world



famous bonsai masters; William N. Valavanis, Prof. Amy Liang, Mauro Stemberger, Chong Yong Yap, Cheng Cheng Kung, Sulistyanto Soejoso, Zheng Zhi Lin, Manoj Kumar & Sri Krishan Gadgil, Isao Omachi, Pedro Morales, and Jun Ilaga.

Please save the date, bring your family and experience the great fun. For other detail information and online registration, please visit our website: www.internationalbonsaiennale.com. 🌳



The Grand Indonesian Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition, October 11-19, 2014

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

The Indonesian Bonsai Society is the biggest, oldest and only national bonsai society in Indonesia that has over 200 chapters all over the country.

To inaugurate the 35th anniversary of the Indonesian Bonsai Society, we will have a very big bonsai and suiseki exhibition called The Grand Indonesian Bonsai and Suiseki Exhibition. The venue will be in two places: One in Bandung, West Java, from October 11 to 19. Over 500 of the best bonsai and 200 suiseki from all over Indonesia will be displayed.

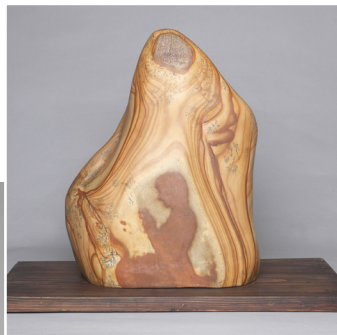
On October 11, 12 and 13 there will be demonstrations and lecture from world class masters like: Min Hsuan Lo, Shinichi Nakajima, Ng Shing Fat, Jose Luis Rodriguez, Huang Jiu Wei and Chiara Padrini on Suiseki. And there will be over 20 Indonesian artists who will also be doing simultaneous demonstrations on October 13.



The second place for inauguration is Bali, the paradise island. Over 500 best bonsai from the East of Indonesia will be displayed. The Exhibition will be

opened for public on October 17, 18 and 19. Bonsai demonstrations and critiques will be done on 17 and 18. International masters: Min Hsuan Lo, Shinichi Nakajima, Jose Luis Rodriguez, Poncevic Ceballos, Madhusudan Reddy, Rajeev Vaidya and many local artists.

Please come and enjoy real Indonesian bonsai and suiseki, our beautiful nature and the rich culture of Indonesia. For more details, visit <www.bonsai-ppbi.com/celebrate35>. 🌳




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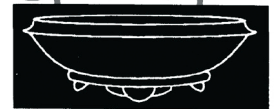
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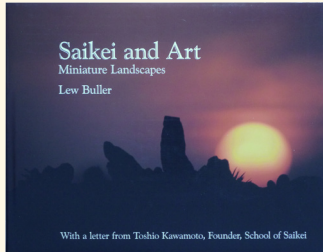
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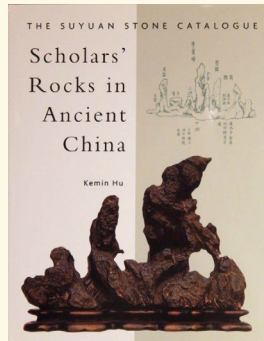
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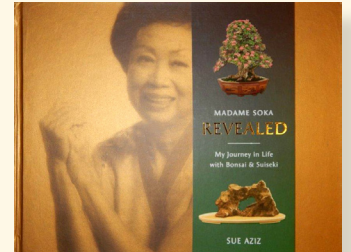
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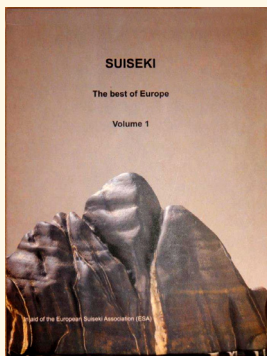
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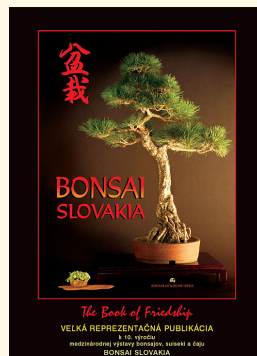
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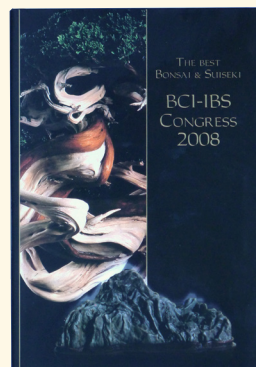
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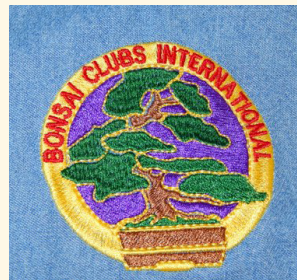
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