

promoting
international friendship
through bonsai



bc

Bonsai & Stone Appreciation

2023 Q4

Daniel Coffey

"Interstellar"

Rocky Mountain Juniper, *Juniperus scopulorum*

Age : +100 years (collected)

Height : 39 inches (above container)

Container : Daniel Coffey, Suiban: Ross Adams

"Bonsai as a Fine Art" Exhibition at Blue Spiral 1,
Asheville, North Carolina



The Art of Bonsai Exhibition
Bonsai as Fine Art in North Carolina
Bonsai in Rohnert Park, California
Bonsai in Grow Zone 3

The BCI Regional Convention, Indonesia
Best-in-Show Dwarf Scots Pine
Landscape Bonsai in Taiwan
Crafting 'Quebec Islands' Larch Forest
Harmony in Stone

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"Critical to any world-class Bonsai are the tools and other supporting elements." – Ryan Neil

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President's Message

During the recent board meeting, I have been nominated and elected as president of BCI. Here, I would like to give thanks to the board for their trust and support. It is my honor to have a chance to serve in the position, and I will most definitely serve the presidency to the best of my abilities. I am hoping that my personal experience and years of passion and dedication to Bonsai art can make a great contribution to BCI. I am excited to set sail on this journey with all of you.

As president, it is my pleasure to share some exciting news with our community. BCI's 2023 Annual International Convention and Tour was held in Shuyang, China, in conjunction with the 10th Shuyang Flower and Tree Festival and has just drawn to a close. International delegates from thirteen countries participated in the event, and I can surely say that the event was spectacular and a major success. It has created many world firsts and will apply for three World Guinness Records. First, with 1360 pieces of Bonsai on display, it is the largest Bonsai exhibition with the most Bonsai works ever displayed in a single historical event. Second, it is the first time that Forty-Six Bonsai Masters were present on the judging panel, making it the largest judging panel in scale. Lastly, it is the first time ever that the same artist created 1st place, 2nd place, and 3rd place award winners of Bonsai works. Through this event, we have accomplished a lot, and we will have a full report in the next issue of the BCI Magazine.

The BCI board of directors is also pleased to announce that we have approved Houston, Texas, for hosting a BCI regional convention in the USA in Spring 2024. "Bonsai on the Bayou, 2024," a collaboration between the Lone Star Bonsai Federation and Bonsai Clubs International, hosted by the Houston Bonsai Society, will take place from April 25th to 28th at the Houston Marriott Westchase. The event will feature renowned artists Bjorn Bjorholm, Sergio Cuan, Min Hsuan Lo, and Sean Smith.

BCI Everything Bonsai Auction will be on Facebook from November 24th to December 2nd, 2023. Keep an eye on your emails for important details about this significant and rewarding event. We encourage your active participation through donating and bidding. 🌳

Sincerely,
Chen, Chang
BCI President



Mr. Chen, Chang
BCI President

BCI is thrilled to announce that the Board of Directors has approved Houston, Texas, as the host for a regional convention in spring 2024. "Bonsai on the Bayou, 2024," a collaboration between the Lone Star Bonsai Federation and Bonsai Clubs International, hosted by the Houston Bonsai Society, will take place from April 25 to 28 at the Houston Marriott Westchase. The event will feature renowned artists Bjorn Bjorholm, Sergio Cuan, Min Hsuan Lo, and Sean Smith.

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.

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

For more information contact:

Mr. Chen Chang, president@bonsai-bci.com

Message from the Editor

In this edition of BCI Magazine, we are on the cusp of the Annual BCI International Convention, where most BCI Executives and Directors have gathered in Shuyang, China. The host of this grand event is **Mr. Chen Chang**, the distinguished General Director of the Flower Bonsai & Suiseki Branch of the Chinese Society of Landscape Architecture, the Director of Bonsai Clubs International (BCI), China Region, and the Director of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation, China Region. He has been instrumental in advancing the art of penjing and bonsai in China and beyond. An emblem of his passion for this art form is his sprawling Baowen Garden, home to over 5,000 trees. The BCI Convention, a showcase of 1,300 bonsai and Penjing exhibits, is a testament to the global impact of this art. Watch for a full report in this magazine's Q1, 2024 edition and on the BCI website.

In this issue, **Budi Sulistyo** reports on the regional convention in Tangerang City, Bali, Indonesia. It was a cultural extravaganza for attendees, and the bonsai and suiseki on display left an indelible mark.

Within these pages, we delve into bonsai as a fine art. The **Blue Ridge Bonsai Society** in North Carolina stands out as a beacon of passion, committed leadership, talented instructors, and generous patrons who have elevated bonsai into a refined art form. Meanwhile, my bonsai colleague, **Matt Majkut**, presents an article on an exhibition at a prestigious art gallery in frigid growing zone 3, curated by **Bonsai Winnipeg**, my local club. The **Redwood Empire Bonsai Society** in California shares insights from their annual exhibit, where beautiful bonsai abound. In our News section, **Joan Greenway** shows us more exquisite bonsai from the temperate climes near the Great Lakes in Canada.

An exceptional dwarf Scots pine claimed the best-in-show title at the recent 8th edition of the US National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester, New York. The story behind this masterpiece and the creative efforts of bonsai professional **Bjorn Bjorholm** embodies the very essence of this art. In Central Canada, **Pierre Leloup**, a true Renaissance man, contributes to this issue with his multifaceted talents. His "Quebec Islands" creation introduces a fresh perspective on the forest style.

Our next stop is Taiwan, courtesy of **José Rodríguez**, where a gifted architect is crafting large landscape trees in the bonsai aesthetic. The tools and techniques used on towering 7- to 8-meter-tall trees offer fascinating insights. From Italy, **Aldo Marchese** uses a beautiful suiseki to ponder the purpose of rules in the world of stones.

To round off this enriching edition, we turn to the wisdom of award-winning bonsai artist **Tony Tickle**, who shares valuable insights into the myriad benefits of exhibiting our bonsai creations and participating actively in the social aspects of bonsai and suiseki.

So whether it's stones or trees, it is art if it has the physical and meta-physical attributes that garner emotional responses from those who gaze upon it. If it tells a story, makes a social, spiritual, or political comment, explores the nature of perception, and creates a sense of beauty.

With these captivating narratives and insights, BCI Magazine remains committed to celebrating the art of bonsai and suiseki. 🌳

—Joe Grande, Canada

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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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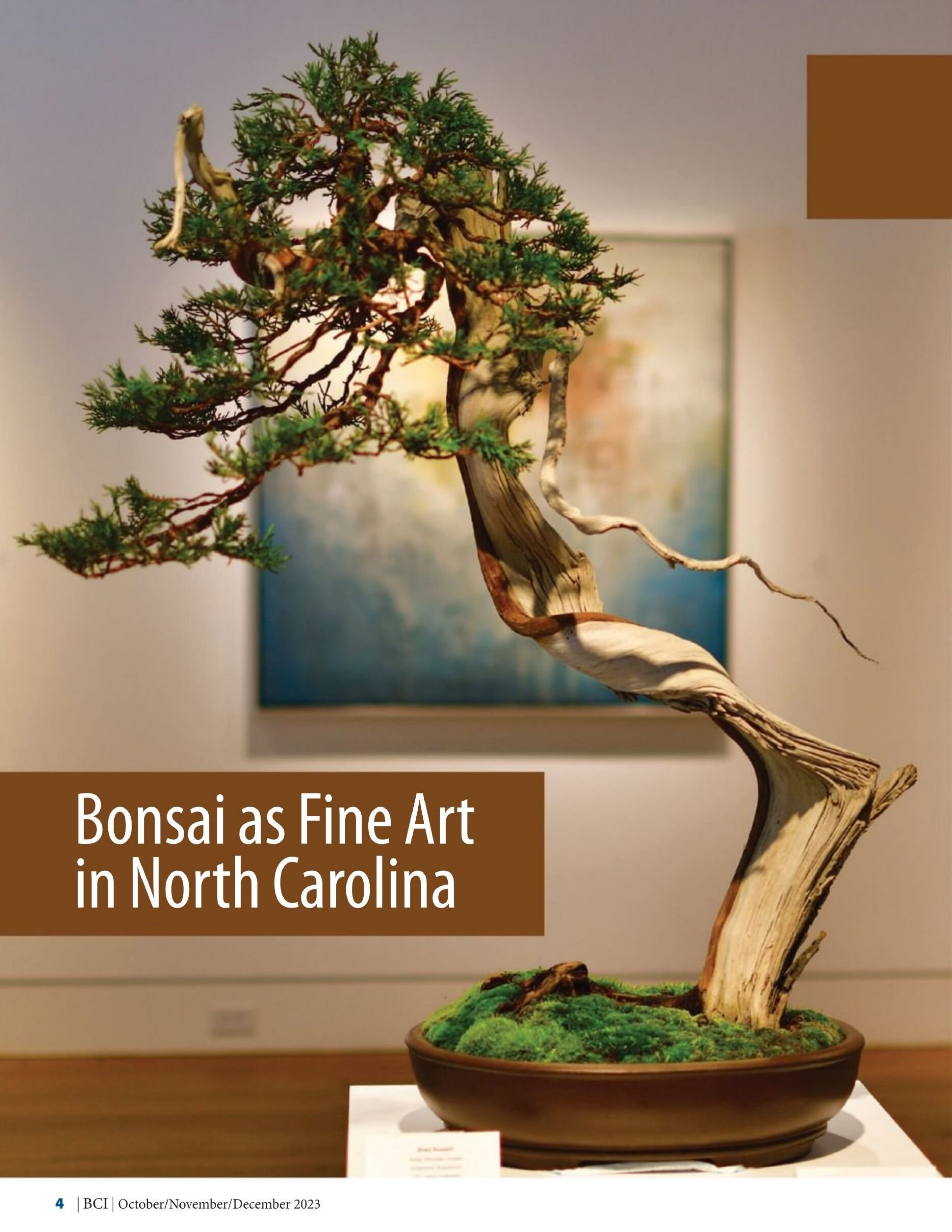
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FEATURED ON THE COVER: Daniel Coffey, “*Interstellar*,” Rocky Mountain Juniper, *Juniperus scopulorum*. Age : +100 years (collected). Height : 39 inches (above container). Container : Daniel Coffey, Suiban: Ross Adams. The aim of this composition is to create dynamic living sculpture with mesmerizing view points from any angle. By maintaining the natural shape and texture of the juniper dead wood and applying minimal techniques to the foliage, the artist preserves much of this tree’s hard-earned evidence of age and untamed demeanor. The vessel is made from a very old root/stump, torched black, coated and accented with genuine 24k gold leaf.



Bonsai as Fine Art in North Carolina

The Inside Story of The North Carolina Arboretum, The Blue Ridge Bonsai Society, and Blue Spiral 1

By Chris Pazoles and Felix Laughlin, USA

Photos courtesy Blue Ridge Bonsai Society

Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, the city of Asheville has a vibrant and energetic art scene, featuring hundreds of fine artists, numerous art galleries, and a new art museum. It is home to The North Carolina Arboretum, with its widely-acclaimed Bonsai Exhibition Garden; the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society, whose membership includes around 100 bonsai enthusiasts and practitioners; and Blue Spiral 1, one of its top art galleries.

The North Carolina Arboretum*

Emergence. It was serendipity that, when the Arboretum was established in Asheville in 1986, Dr. John Creech, the former Director of the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., who had relocated to nearby Hendersonville, N.C., became its Interim Director. Creech had orchestrated the 1976 Bicentennial Gift of 53 bonsai from the Nippon Bonsai Association to the people of the United States. This gift established the cornerstone for what became the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, located at the US National Arbortum, the finest bonsai collection in the United States and one of the premier public bonsai collections in the world.

In 1987, George Briggs became the full-time Executive Director of The North Carolina Arboretum, with Creech continuing as a member of its Board of Directors. In 1992, while considering whether the Arboretum should accept the donation of a large private bonsai collection owned by Cora Staples of Butner, N.C., Briggs invited the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society to organize the Arboretum's first bonsai show, which an estimated 500 people attended. After the show, in consultation with Creech, Briggs decided to accept the Staples bonsai collection, laying the foundation to initiate the Arboretum's Bonsai Program.

* From the annals of The North Carolina Arboretum, with comments by George Briggs, Executive Director.

Bonsai Curator, Arthur Joura. On the Arboretum staff in 1992 was a young member of its Horticulture Department, Arthur Joura, whom Briggs had hired in 1990. Joura had studied at the School of Visual Arts and the Art Students League in New York City and had an interest in learning about plants, so Briggs put Joura in charge of the Bonsai Program. Joura proved perfectly capable of this challenge, moving the Staples donated bonsai (numbering about 100) to the Arboretum, building relationships with members of the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society, and recruiting knowledgeable people to join in with the care and culture of the bonsai.

In 1993, Dr. Creech arranged for Joura to go to the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum in Washington, D.C. to study under Curator Bob Drechsler. In the same year, Joura attended the World Bonsai Convention in Orlando, Florida. There, he was introduced to the international reach of the art of bonsai and met both national and international masters. These relationships continued to blossom over time as the Arboretum's Bonsai Collection grew through additional donated specimens and compositions begun by Joura himself.

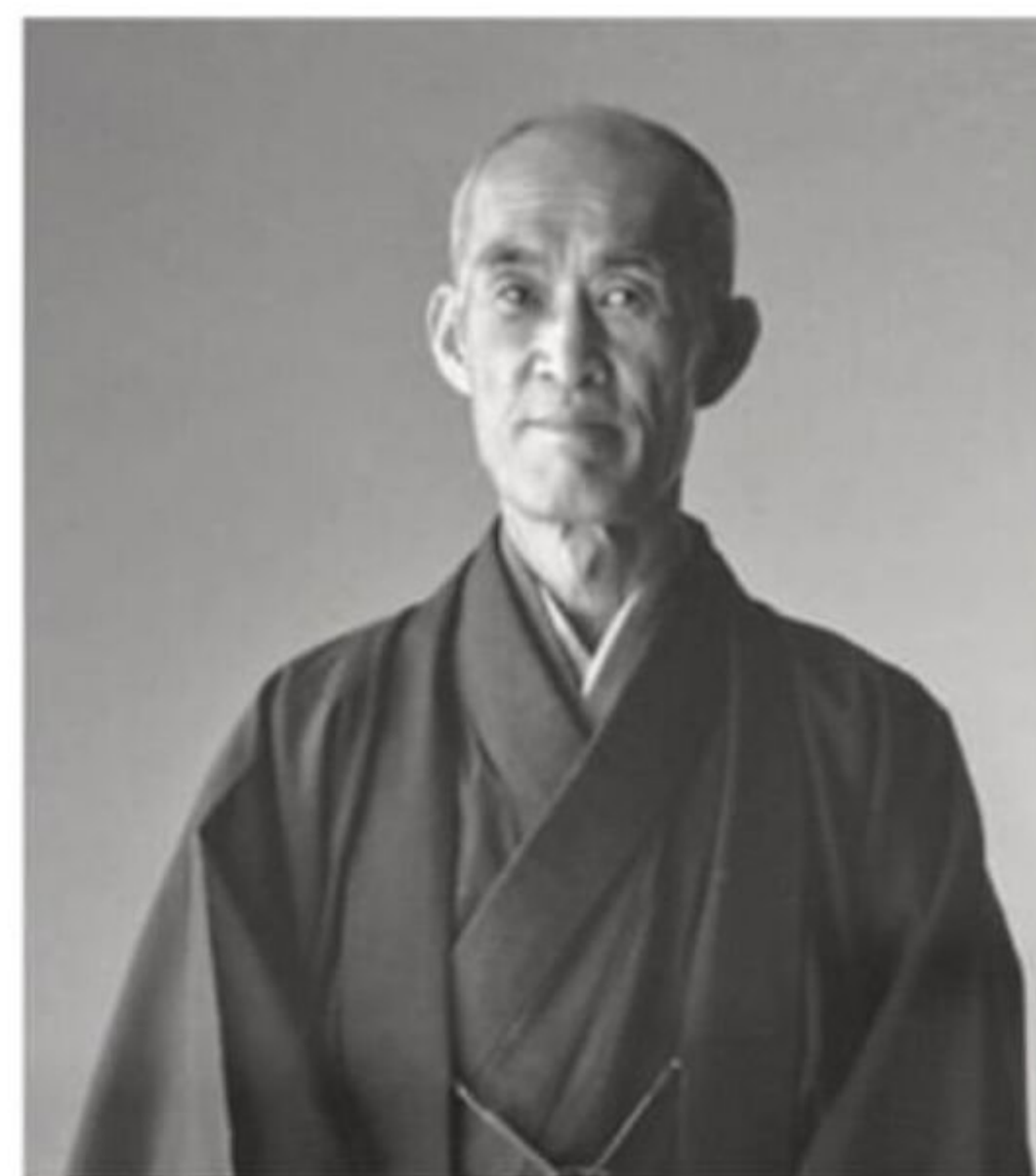
One of those relationships was with Yuji Yoshimura, known to many bonsai enthusiasts

Top: Dr. John Creech, the former Director of the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.

Middle: George Briggs became the full-time Executive Director of The North Carolina Arboretum

Bottom left: Arthur Joura, Bonsai Curator of The North Carolina Arboretum's Bonsai Exhibition Garden

Bottom right: Yuji Yoshimura, known to many bonsai enthusiasts as "The Father of American Bonsai."





Top: A post-and-beam pavilion at the Bonsai Exhibition Garden became a feature for teaching and demonstration, while its basement became a cold storage facility for dormant bonsai during the winter.

Below and on facing page: On Friday morning, June 2, the Blue Spiral 1 staff, along with members of the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society and exhibiting bonsai artists, set up the Exhibition, and professional photographers Steve Mann and Jason Scott Furr were present to record the event.



as “The Father of American Bonsai.” In 1993, Yoshimura was at the end of a long and distinguished career as a bonsai teacher, artist, and author. Joura later would spend time with him at his home in New York State, and Yoshimura helped Joura create one of the hallmark bonsai forests in the Arboretum’s Bonsai Collection. Yoshimura became Joura’s first teacher and, as it turned out, Joura was Yoshimura’s last student.

In 1997, Creech assisted in arranging for Joura to spend a month studying bonsai in Japan under the auspices of Saburo Kato, Chairman of the Nippon Bonsai Association, and Susumu Nakamura, an NBA director who was his host and teacher. It was an experience that confirmed Joura’s respect for the skill of the Japanese bonsai masters and yet deepened his belief that bonsai did not have to carry with it a national identification.

The Bonsai Exhibition Garden. In 2001, Briggs acquired funding for a new \$1.8 million Bonsai Exhibition Garden, with Joura to lead the design committee. The Bonsai Exhibition Garden opened to the public in 2005, displaying up to 50 bonsai at a time and increasingly featuring specimens and compositions reflecting the local region. A post-and-beam pavilion became a feature for teaching and demonstration, while its basement became a cold storage facility for dormant bonsai during the winter.

With the Bonsai Exhibition Garden, the Arboretum offers an experience that cannot be found anywhere else in the United States and can be compared with only a small handful of other American public bonsai display facilities, all of which are found in substantially larger markets than Asheville. As with the Bonsai Collection, the Bonsai Exhibition Garden stakes out original territory—a contemporary Southern Appalachian garden with connections to a centuries-old tradition.

Beginning in 1996, Joura initiated an annual Bonsai Expo at the Arboretum, bringing bonsai experts, bonsai



clubs, and interested visitors to the Arboretum through 2019—a run of 24 years. Over the years, the Bonsai Collection has become renowned for its unique character, attracting national attention for its diversity of species and the inclusion of a substantial number of native species. This includes a distinctive naturalistic style of bonsai that is consciously outside of the normal Asian-identified aesthetic that predominates in American bonsai.

In 2012, the World Bonsai Friendship Federation named the Arboretum as the second WBFF Cooperation Center in the United States, following on the heels of a similar designation of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum.

Today, the 600,000 annual visitors at The North Carolina Arboretum enjoy the Bonsai Exhibition Garden as a signature feature of the Arboretum. Visitors also now enjoy the Arboretum's annual celebration of World Bonsai Day on the second Saturday of May each year, which signals the seasonal re-opening of the Bonsai Exhibition Garden.

Honoring The North Carolina Arboretum's Bonsai Program

Having made Asheville an internationally-known bonsai destination, the members of the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society wished to honor the Arboretum's extraordinary success in promoting the art of bonsai by organizing an innovative bonsai exhibition. Their objective was to have a bonsai exhibition that would transport the art of bonsai from the benches of the Arboretum, professionals and hobbyists alike, to an indoor bonsai display mounted on the pedestals of a top-tier art gallery, thereby demonstrating that the magical power of bonsai can be enhanced if concentrated in such a venue.

They found a welcoming reception from Michael Manes and Blair Guggenheim, Director and Assistant Director, respectively, of Blue Spiral 1, an acclaimed art gallery in the center of Asheville. Together with



Bottom right: The winner of the "Outstanding Bonsai" award, John Geanangel's Bald Cypress bonsai, was chosen by Blue Spiral 1 gallery Director Michael Manes and Assistant Director Blair Guggenheim based on their artistic judgment as fine art curators.



Their objective... a bonsai exhibition to transport the art of bonsai from the benches of the Arboretum, to an indoor bonsai display mounted on the pedestals of a top-tier art gallery, Blue Spiral 1.



Arthur Joura, they planned and executed, over 10 days in June of 2023, both a ground-breaking “Bonsai as a Fine Art” Exhibition at Blue Spiral 1 and a series of complementary bonsai events at the Arboretum.

On Friday morning, June 2, the Blue Spiral 1 staff, along with members of the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society and exhibiting bonsai artists, set up the Exhibition, and professional photographers Steve Mann and Jason Scott Furr were present to record the event. That evening, the opening reception was held from 5 to 8 p.m. for the public and invited guests.

During the reception, beautifully-boxed certificates of award sent from South Korea by Chairman Sae Won Kim of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation were presented on behalf of WBFF to George Briggs, Arthur Joura, and Chris Pazoles (the Society’s President) in appreciation for their work in promoting the art of bonsai.

The exhibition at Blue Spiral 1 continued from Friday, June 2 through Sunday, June 11 and included 21 bonsai creations by professional bonsai artists and members of the Blue Ridge Bonsai Society. The professional bonsai artists were Bjorn Bjorholm, Daniel Coffey, John Geanangel, Arthur Joura, and Brad Russell. The exhibitors from the Society were Jeff Aldridge, Felix Laughlin, Dan O’Neal, Troy Schmidt, Peggy Snow, and Rob Wallace. The bonsai were displayed alongside paintings and other works, curated as companion pieces for the bonsai, from Blue Spiral 1 artists as part of its “Beyond the Horizon” show.

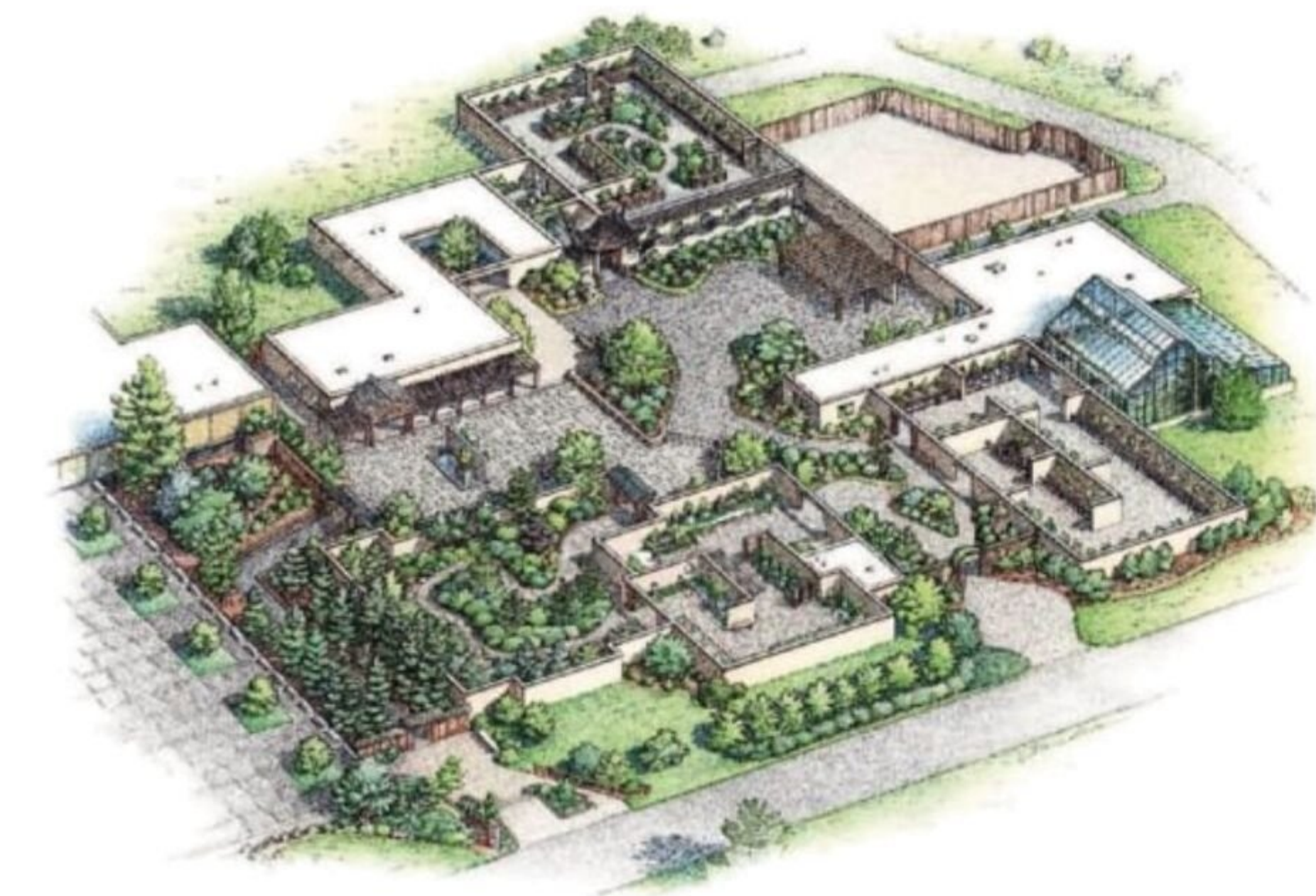
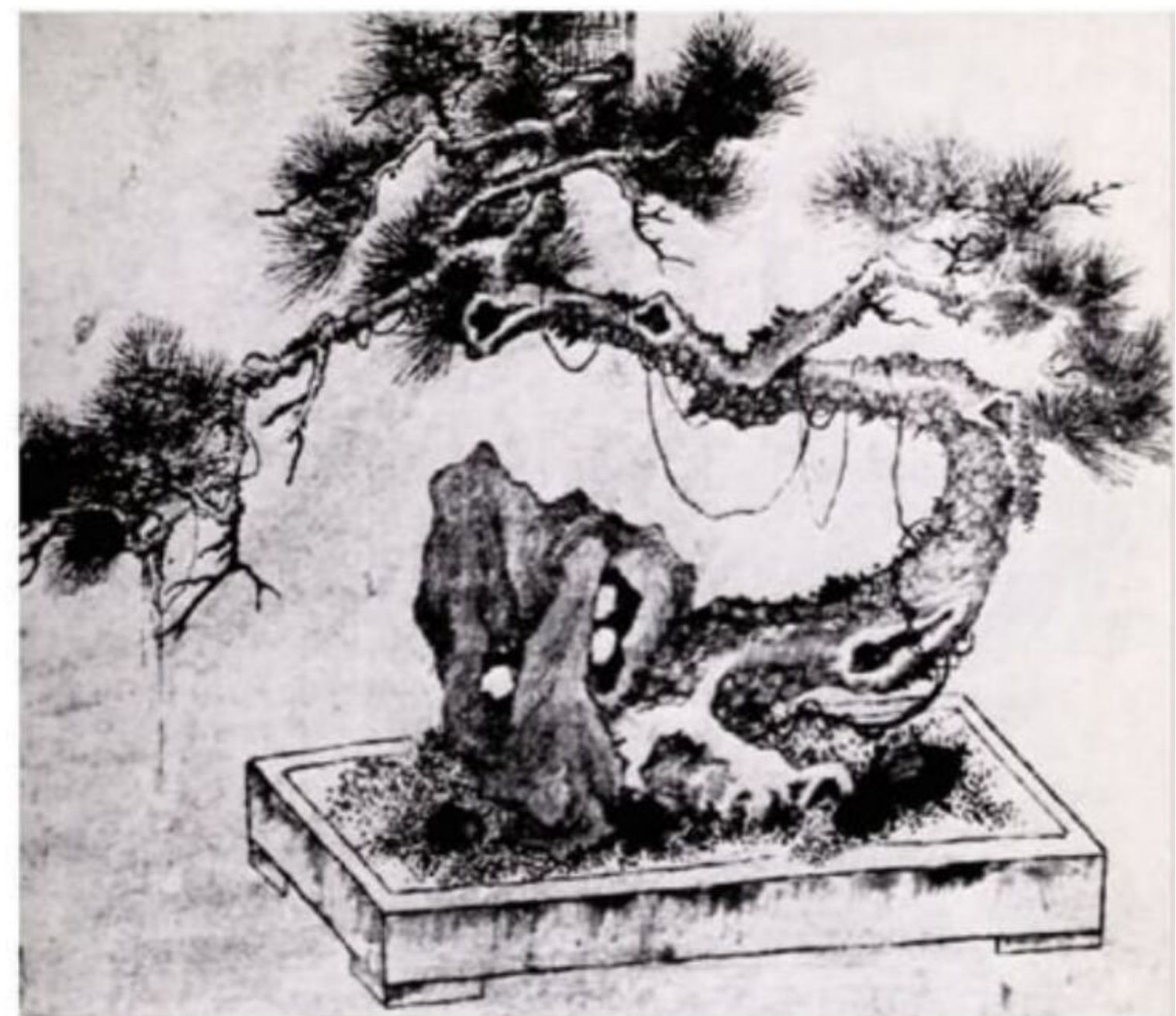
During the culminating weekend of Saturday, June 10 and Sunday, June 11, the Arboretum invited visitors



Middle and bottom: The Blue Ridge Bonsai Society put on an exhibition of both bonsai and kusamono

to enjoy special educational events, exhibitions, and an auction, along with tours by Arthur Joura of the Bonsai Exhibition Garden—where fine art, landscape design, and horticultural skill come together to highlight the Arboretum’s world-renowned bonsai collection. The Society put on an exhibition of both bonsai and *kusamono*; the featured potters—Eli Akins, Mark Issenberg, Preston Tolbert, Rob Wallace, and Byron Myrick—held a show and sale of their containers; and Arthur Joura officiated a major auction of bonsai and bonsai-related items with proceeds supporting the Arboretum’s Bonsai Program.





Top left: Omiya Bonsai Art Museum in Saitama, Japan (outside garden shown above)

Top right: "The Drooping Pine" by Li Shih Hsin (Yüan Dynasty 1280–1368). From the collection of Mr. S.M. Siu of Hong Kong, in *Chinese Ancient Paintings Collected by S.M. Siu*.

Middle and bottom: The National Bonsai & Penjing Museum in Washington, DC, features a bonsai at the entrance. The plan view of the museum shows the Exhibits Gallery and the Chinese, Japanese and North American Pavilions.

Bjorn Bjorholm gave two well-attended demonstrations, one at Blue Spiral 1 on the first Saturday and the second at the Arboretum on the second Saturday. He also made a video of the "Bonsai as Fine Art" Exhibition at Blue Spiral 1 that is available under the caption "Is Bonsai Art" on YouTube.

The Aesthetic History of Bonsai

The historical lineage of potted trees can be traced back to when humans in ancient India and elsewhere were planting trees in containers for transport and ready access to a living organism that provided food and medicine. But a few thousand years ago, a transition occurred in China with the development of the art of penjing, and its two expressions, *penzai* (the Chinese equivalent of bonsai) and tray landscapes (a combination of trees and stones representing scenes in nature), both satisfying the human need to be in close communion with our natural world. This is when humans began to consider potted trees not for their functional use but instead for their aesthetic, emotional, or spiritual value—that is, as "fine art."

The term "fine art" is a European concept from the Renaissance that generally refers to a creative work judged for its beauty, meaningfulness, and purity of discipline. The object may not possess any practical utility except to satisfy aesthetic, emotional, or spiritual yearnings. Among the visual arts, this definition typically encompasses paintings, drawings, and sculpture.

The Western understanding of fine art was not well known in Asia until the late 19th century, though the traditional visual arts of Asian culture, among them painting, sculpture, and calligraphy, would certainly have been considered fine arts by any definition and now are preserved and presented as such in Eastern museums, art galleries, and educational facilities.

The Commemorative Album that the Society is publishing to memorialize the "Bonsai as Fine Art" events in Asheville will include a detailed essay entitled "The Aesthetic History of Bonsai." The essay details

key developments in the centuries-long history of the treatment of bonsai as art up to the present.

The developments include royal tomb excavations in China, the role of ancient Chinese landscape paintings, the transmission of Chinese penjing to Korea and Japan, early Japanese works of fiction and poetry, a famous *Noh* play, and the significant influence of Buddhism and its concept of wabi-sabi. Additional factors discussed are the origination of the Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, the establishment of the Japanese School of Keido, and the creation and ongoing importance of the present-day Omiya Bonsai Art Museum in Saitama, Japan and the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum in Washington, DC. The essay also discusses the people, organizations, publications, etc. that have been instrumental in promoting the appreciation of bonsai as art.

Conclusion

The works we in the West have treated as fine art since the Renaissance have all had certain features in common. For one (and most importantly), they are created by an artist with skill and discipline with the intent to evoke an aesthetic, emotional, or spiritual reaction and are not created for any functional value. They are presented to the public in a special place like an art studio or gallery, museum or sacred setting where the work can best be appreciated or revered. The works are celebrated in songs, literature, theater, films, paintings, and photographs, and they are included in books and catalogs.

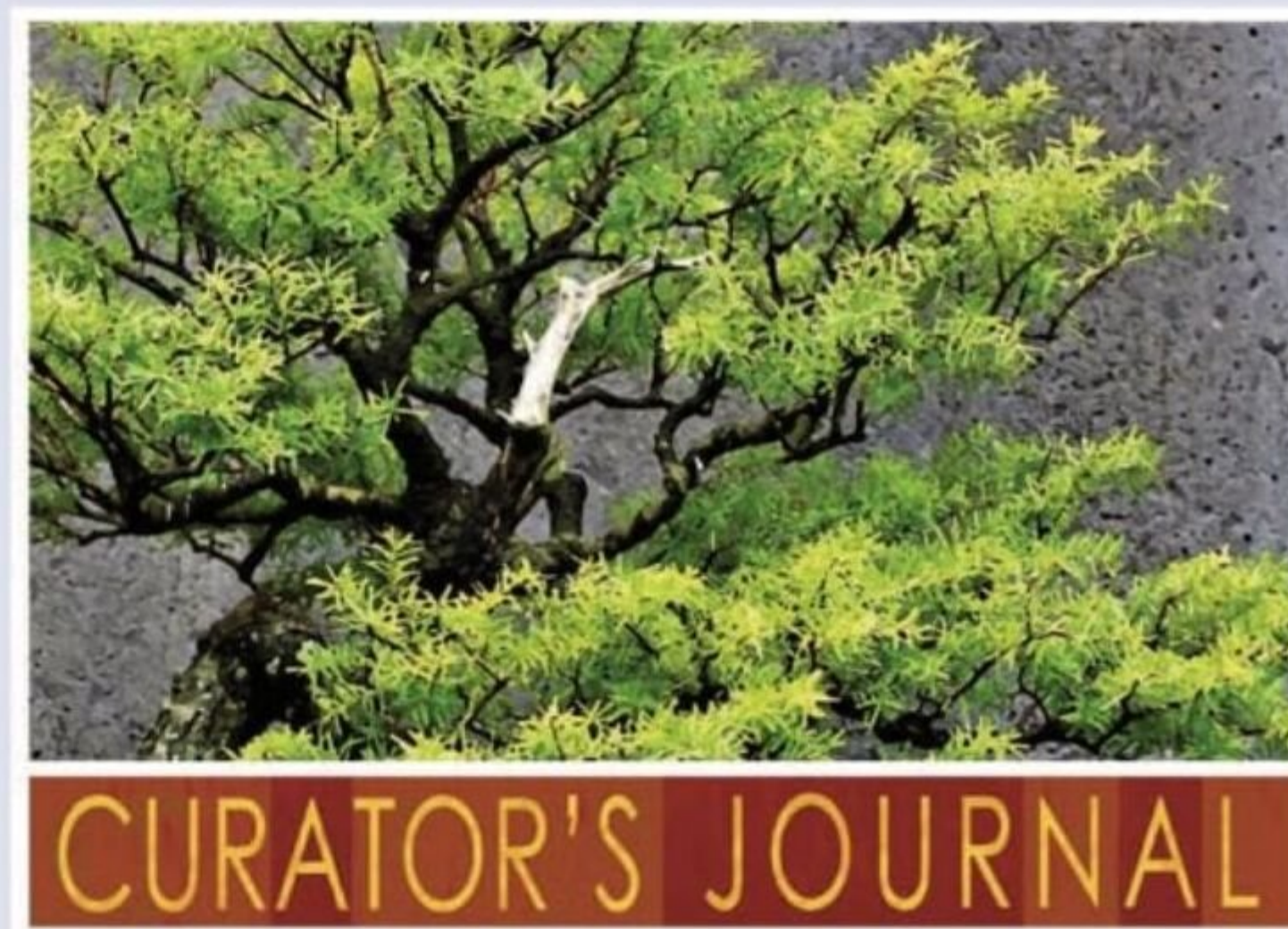
An artwork can become iconic by being reproduced or referenced in paintings, professional photographs, and films. Another important signifier of fine-art status is having a title or name like the *Mona Lisa* by Da Vinci or *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli. A further significant distinction for an artwork is in preserving and recording the artwork's history or provenance (both documented and anecdotal), publishing it, or, at the very least, passing the provenance along when a work is donated or sold.

While as a living art bonsai are usually on display outdoors, they have a long history during which each of these common features of fine art has been satisfied.

The magical power of a bonsai lies in its ability to remind us of something essentially ineffable but of incomparable value that reconnects our consciousness to the beauty and majesty of our natural world. That power is present in the bonsai enjoyed in many outdoor collections, as witnessed by the growing popularity of public bonsai collections, including the Bonsai Exhibition Garden at The North Carolina Arboretum. Still, as the *Bonsai as Fine Art* show validated, this power can even be enhanced when fine bonsai are removed for a few days from their outdoor setting and displayed individually as works of art in an art gallery such as Blue Spiral 1. 🌳

The Curator's Journal

Those interested in the ultimate insider's view of bonsai at The North Carolina Arboretum may subscribe to the Curator's Journal by Arthur Joura at <<https://curatorsjournal.net/subscribe-info>>. The Journal is a year-long course with regular entries that chronicle growing an art and growing an enterprise.



The Album, "Bonsai as Fine Art"

Those wishing to pre-order the "*Bonsai as Fine Art*" Commemorative Album, with over 100 pages of photographs and text celebrating the Exhibition at Blue Spiral 1 and the complementary events at The North Carolina Arboretum, may do so at <<https://www.blueridgebonsaisociety.com/copy-of-work-space>>. The Album also will include (a) an in-depth Aesthetic History of Bonsai from thousands of years ago to the present, and (b) the fascinating history of TNCA's unique Bonsai Collection and Bonsai Exhibition Garden.



The Remarkable Journey of a Dwarf Scots Pine Bonsai

A Rebirth to Best-in-Show Glory

By Joe Grande, Canada

Photos courtesy
Bjorn Bjorholm,
Eisei-En Bonsai



**This Scots
Pine bonsai
took home the
prestigious
Best-in-Show
award at the
8th edition
of the US
National Bonsai
Exhibition in
Rochester,
New York.**

In the world of bonsai, where patience and dedication are key, a story unfolded that epitomizes the art's essence. The tale of a Dwarf Scots Pine bonsai, which took home the prestigious Best-in-Show award at the 8th edition of the US National Bonsai Exhibition in Rochester, New York, is not just about the tree itself, but the dedication and collaboration of

passionate individuals who brought it to life. Bjorn Bjorholm, a renowned bonsai professional and owner of Eisei-En, takes us through the incredible journey of this magnificent Dwarf Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris* RAF).

The story begins with a man named Harvey Carapella, a respected figure in the world of bonsai. When Bjorn initially designed the tree, his primary concern was to

impress Harvey. “I have a tremendous amount of respect for Harvey and the work that he’s done in bonsai over the decades,” Bjorn reflects. This deep admiration led to a vision for the tree’s future, one that ultimately led to its Best-in-Show triumph.

Preparation for the US National Bonsai Exhibition started when Michael Kidder became the tree’s owner. Bjorn had a vision for this Scots Pine and shared it with Michael, who fully embraced the idea of it being a top contender for the show. The stage was set, but there were still many challenges ahead.

Transporting a bonsai of this stature is no small feat. As Bjorn recalls, “All I could think on the way to the National was ‘I hope we packed it properly in the truck and the pot doesn’t shatter’ as it’s such a large container, it’s easy for it to break in transit.” The journey to the exhibition was filled with uncertainty, but it was met with unwavering determination.

What makes this story even more intriguing is the way the spotlight is shared. In the world of professional bonsai, it’s not always the creator whose name is in the limelight. As Bjorn explains, “It’s an interesting feeling winning an award like Best-in-Show at National as a



Top: September 2018. It’s evident how unwieldy the tree had become. It had fallen off the bench and the pot had broken, held together by duct tape.

Middle and bottom: When Bjorn initially designed the tree in December, 2020, his primary concern was to impress its owner, Harvey Carapella.



December 2020. The extensive styling process involved heavy bending and manipulation to recompress its canopy. Two more seasons of recuperation and fertilization followed, stimulating back budding and rejuvenation.



professional, because my name is not directly attached to the tree, and Michael was the one who received the award on stage. I actually really enjoy that feeling of being behind-the-scenes more than in the spotlight.” This sentiment reflects the deep humility and camaraderie that is often seen in the bonsai community. “It’s very similar to feeling one gets as a professional entering a tree on behalf of the owner at the Kokufu-ten in Japan.”

The journey of the Scots Pine bonsai is a tale of generations. The tree’s history traces back to 1970 when it was initially propagated by Richard A. Fenicchia in Rochester, NY. It belonged to a special cultivar (RAF) named after Fenicchia’s own initials. The tree then passed through the hands of Bill Valavanis before finding its way to Harvey Carapella in the early 1980s.

By the time Harvey acquired it, the tree had grown into a massive specimen. In a photo from September 2018, it’s evident how unwieldy the tree had become, to the point where it had fallen off the bench and the pot had broken, held together by duct tape. It was at this juncture that Harvey turned to Bjorn, asking him to bring the tree to Eisei-en in Nashville, TN, for a rebirth.

The tree spent two growing seasons recovering at Eisei-en before it was styled in December 2020. This extensive process involved heavy bending and manipulation to recompress its canopy. Two more seasons of recuperation and fertilization followed, stimulating back budding and rejuvenation.

In 2022, the tree found a new owner in Michael Kidder, a dedicated Nashville bonsai enthusiast. Michael’s goal was to showcase the tree at a future US National Exhibition, and he agreed to keep the tree at Eisei-en for its ongoing development. The tree’s journey



came full circle in September 2023 when it returned to Rochester, NY, to compete in the 8th US National Bonsai Exhibition. There, it captured the hearts and admiration of all, securing the coveted Best-in-Show award.

Today, the Scots Pine bonsai stands as a testament to the unwavering dedication of bonsai enthusiasts and their commitment to preserving and showcasing the art of bonsai. This magnificent tree, serves as a living embodiment of the enduring beauty of nature. This is a story that reminds us that, in the world of bonsai, the most remarkable trees can find their place in the spotlight and leave a lasting impact on all who have the privilege to behold them. 🌲

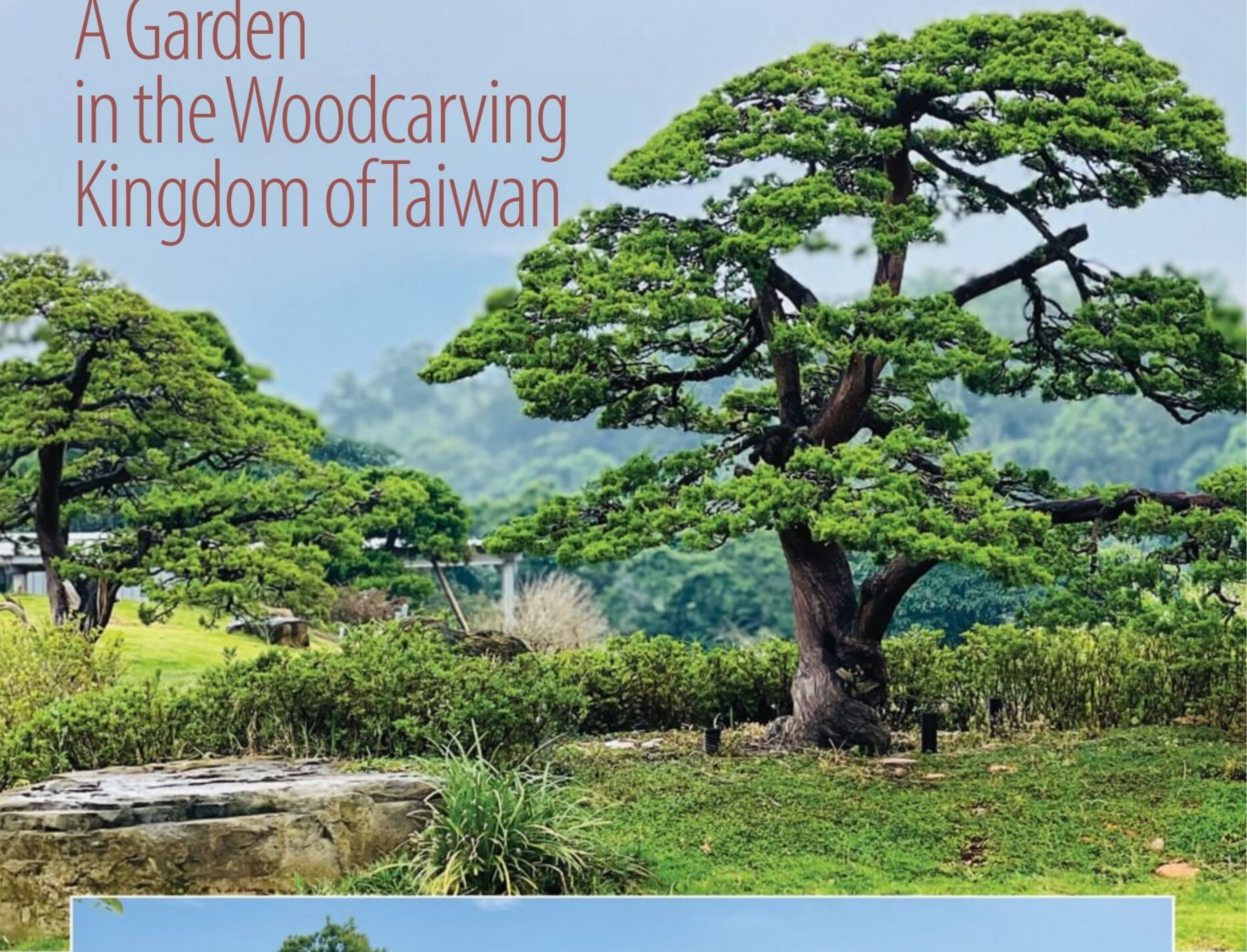
Top: Bjorn Bjorholm at Eisei-en in 2023, preparing the Scots Pine for its debut at the 8th National.

In 2022, the tree found a new owner in Michael Kidder, a dedicated Nashville bonsai enthusiast. Michael’s goal was to showcase the tree at a future US National Exhibition.

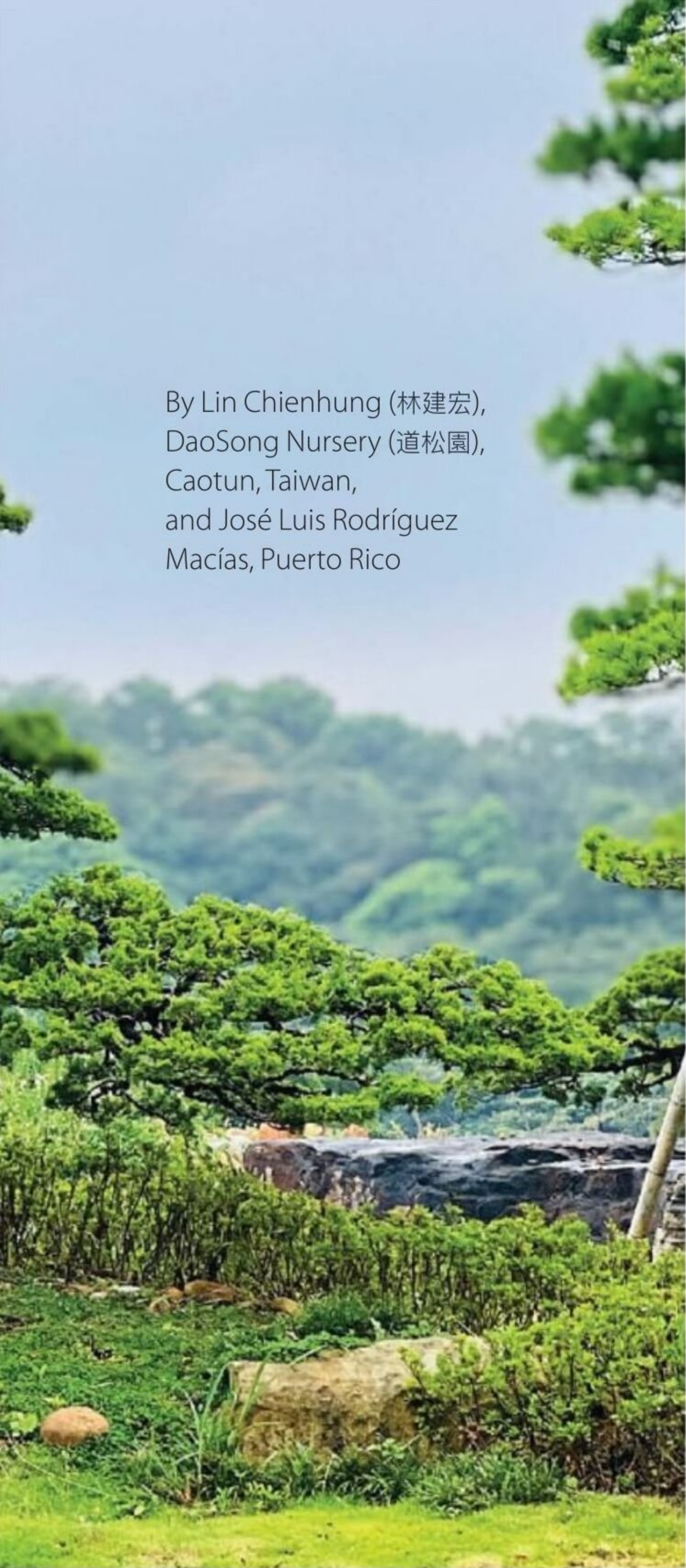


Landscape Bonsai

A Garden
in the Woodcarving
Kingdom of Taiwan



By Lin Chienhung (林建宏),
DaoSong Nursery (道松園),
Caotun, Taiwan,
and José Luis Rodríguez
Macías, Puerto Rico



Sanyi Township (三義鄉), a rural town in southern Miaoli County, Taiwan, is famous for its woodcarving industry (木雕), earning it the title of the Woodcarving Kingdom of Taiwan. Located in the mountains of northwestern Taiwan, its northeastern boundary is Sanjiao Mountain (三角山), and to the east lies Huoyan Mountain (火炎山), known for its jagged exposed laterite surfaces that resemble fire. Among its famous attractions, the Sanyi Wood Sculpture Museum (三義木雕博物館), opened in 1995, showcases the development of local wood carving from a craft in the late 19th century to contemporary art of the 21st century.

This rich history and mountainous terrain offer breathtaking views that become even more marvelous



A steep site calls for a strong structural concept, whereas a flat site may need to address its exposure.

during the Tung Tree 桐樹 (*Vernicia fordii*) flowering season, thus providing a pivotal opportunity for tea gardens and bonsai art. Tea culture and plant arrangement are deeply embedded within Chinese traditions.

Chinese tea culture (中國茶文化) includes all facets of tea, both physical and spiritual, and has significantly influenced Chinese culture throughout history. Hand in hand, Chinese gardens play an important role in Chinese history. Throughout several ruling dynasties, modifications to the trends and appreciation methods of Chinese gardening underwent changes, particularly due to the emperor's tastes or the ruling official who commissioned them. Nonetheless, three elements have been highly intertwined: tea consumption, calligraphy, and scenic garden appreciation.

Tea consumption and gardening arts are integral parts of Taiwanese national identity. Taiwan is one of the premier tea-producing countries in the world, with Oriental Beauty, Alishan, and High Mountain Oolong being some of the top-ranked teas in the world trading markets. So, what makes tea consumption a part of Bonsai Culture and Landscape Gardening? Let's take a closer look.

As mentioned before, the evolution of Chinese landscape garden styles has transpired for over three thousand years, with Chinese emperors, members of the imperial family, and high-ranking government officials among those who commissioned them for pleasure and to impress their guests. They created spaces where scholars, poets, former government officials, soldiers, and merchants could reflect and escape from the outside world. In the same sense, their purpose was to create an idealized miniature landscape that expresses the harmony and correlation that should exist between man and nature.



Wiring, removal of branches, and foliage mass distribution should have two main objectives: contributing to the projected design, and tree and plant health.



Given the dimensions of the trees, the use of scaffolding is essential. This enables the team to focus on pruning, branch placement, shari, and Jin creation within a safe environment.



Taking advantage of the surrounding scenery is an essential element in landscape art. It allows the viewer to integrate the natural elements, creating an image of boundless beauty.

Integrating landscape bonsai in Chinese painting and other folk art traditions requires human intervention and accurate techniques. If properly employed, the tree and complementary elements will reach a level of maturity that should eventually achieve the ultimate goal: a self-sustaining garden that expresses age and subtle beauty.

Although the goal-setting is by all means serene, reaching the end result requires hard work and attention to detail. For instance, the use of wire, steel cables, and ensuring that the trees have a healthy vascular system, are among the most critical tasks that enable the creative team to deliver quality results on a much larger scale.

Taiwanese Red Pine (*Pinus massoniana*) and Taiwanese Five-needle pines (*Pinus morrissonicola*) are among the trees favored by landscape patrons. In recent times, raw-farm cultivated landscape Taiwan junipers

have been the material of choice in Taiwanese landscape bonsai art. Their steady growth habit, adaptation to form, ability to heal, and forest green color makes them a choice species in landscape bonsai. These have been under careful cultivation for over 50-60 years, so some plant materials can fetch hefty prices. In a sense, landscape bonsai art adopts the principles of Shuihan penjing (水旱盆景), effectively combining the depiction of one or more trees and optionally other plants shaped by the creator through trimming, pruning, and wiring, resulting in living sculptures or, in a sense, three-dimensional poetry.

Botanical knowledge and experience play an essential role in the initial phase and planning setup of the tree material. For instance, like in bonsai art, landscape junipers need a free-flowing live vein to conduct nutrients to the branches and leaves that encompass the leaf mass. If sap flow is interrupted, and because *Juniperus* species are root-specific and unable to fuse, the continued growth of the surrounding tissue will eventually cut off the flow of nutrients to the branches and leaves fed through a specific vein, eventually causing them to die off. As one can understand, delivering a landscape bonsai garden that relies on health and form represents key points for a successful composition meeting the client's demands. Like in bonsai, employing techniques for immediate results without the foresight of longevity would be useless, as sustainability is essential! In other words, we firmly believe that technique is in the service of health and should not be used to achieve instant results; impressive at first, but fatal later! Wiring, removal of branches, and foliage mass distribution should have two main objectives: 1) contributing to the projected design and 2) tree and plant health.

In recent years, the focus of the bonsai market in Taiwan has shifted from solely focusing on potted artistically shaped trees to landscape scenery. Due to this change in trend, local up-and-coming young

masters have devised modern ways to meet client demands. As an architect from a building contractor family background, Lin Jienhong has incorporated ideas from these disciplines into the work.

For example, the topography of a site can be used to develop many different conceptual approaches, such as the environment the building provides, the surrounding land, their structural approach, and how the projected outcome will be perceived by the public. For instance, a steep site calls for a strong structural concept, whereas a flat site may need to address its exposure, how the building interacts with its north, east, south, and west-facing aspects, and the natural background. All of these concepts must flow and merge to accommodate various architectural structures (gazebos or pavilions), bridges, ponds, rocks, and grottoes, necessarily adding to the overall aesthetics of rare species of trees and flowering shrubs, planted both singly and in groups.

This unique site in Sanyi offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity in Taiwan, given the topography and surrounding mountainous features that encompass the project, offering opportunities to conceptualize and construct an unprecedented bonsai park.

Given the dimensions of the trees, the use of scaffolding is essential. This enables the team to focus on pruning, branch placement, shari, and jin creation within a safe environment. The use of wire is instrumental, as it enables the design team to make the proposed shapes come to life. Sometimes, the magnitude and girth of the tree limbs preclude the use of wire, so steel cables are employed to direct the branches and trunk portions into the desired range. Very much in the same way as one would shape a bonsai tree, landscape bonsai techniques are, in principle, the same, with the added burden of forcing the creator to develop ways to cope with elements on a grander scale. The main

idea of the Chinese garden is to create a miniature world of nature. The Chinese say, “A single mound of stones can evoke innumerable responses in the soul; a stone, even the size of a fist, evokes many feelings,” and, “A handful of earth and a spoonful of water attract boundless thoughts.”

The Chinese garden embodies traditions that consider each particular area’s geographical conditions. In a way, besides the development of sound and sustainable gardens, the site has to be designed so that, when it matures, human intervention becomes invisible. Like the old Chinese proverb states: Without standards, no boundaries are set. (无规矩不成方圆) This adage means that nothing can be accomplished without norms or standards or, without rules, we’re nothing but savages. Although a landscape bonsai garden’s wild, untouched nature is the main goal to reach the highest standards, careful steps and planning are necessary. In contrast, human ingenuity and employing techniques, like the boundless beauty of the garden in Sanyi, have to be limitless. 🌲

“A handful of earth and a spoonful of water attract boundless thoughts.”



Left: Lin Chienhung (林建宏), is a practising Architect and second-generation bonsai master at DaoSong Nursery (道松園), Caotun, Taiwan. (Dao Song means the way of the pine) His father is one of the pioneers of adapting the Taiwanese five-needle pines (*Pinus morrissonicola*) to bonsai culture.







Photo © Lothar Geiger

From the French Riviera to Quebec's Shores: **Crafting 'Quebec Islands'**

By Pierre Leloup, Canada

Photos courtesy Pierre Leloup

Being born in the southeastern region of France, on the well-known French Riviera, I spent a significant part of my life near the sea, lakes, and “azure” rivers. That’s why, upon my arrival in Quebec, I was immediately fascinated by the deep brown-black color of the lake water, attributed to its high iron and manganese content. As a bonsai artist, I knew right away that I was going to create a work that would capture this vision. Here is the story of the making of my “Quebec Islands.”



I decided to create three islands: a small one, a medium-sized one, and a large one. I opted for an aluminum base to minimize weight.

Next, I gathered a large number of river rocks and cut each rock in half using a water saw typically used for ceramic cutting. I arranged the rocks on the aluminum plates until I achieved a pattern that suited me.

I marked the location and outline of each rock on the plate and numbered each stone.





Then, I cut the aluminum plates and glued each rock in place with epoxy glue.

All that remained was to weld a few aluminum feet, create drainage holes, and attach the trees securely.



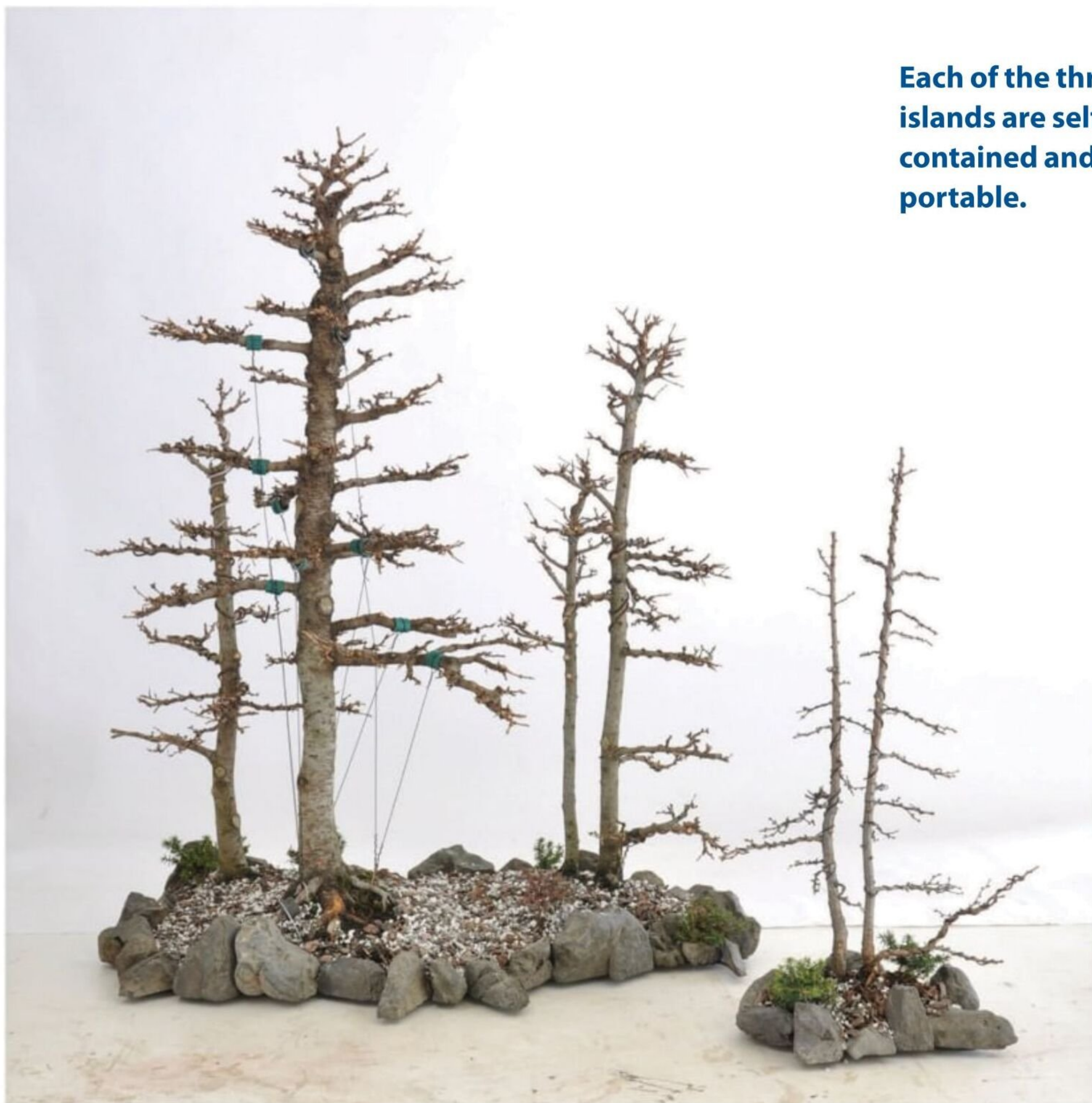


The trees are larches that I either purchased or collected myself.

After pruning and reshaping the trees, I followed the rules of creating bonsai forests for the assembly and planting: an odd number of trees, varied trunk sizes, asymmetrical construction, etc.

As I contemplated how to present my three islands, I envisioned a piece of land torn from the Earth's crust.





Each of the three islands are self-contained and portable.



For the platform to support the islands, I cut out a shape from plywood (which I split into two halves for easier transportation). Then, I built and glued a thick border with varying heights.

Afterward, I hand-sculpted and textured its surface using both manual and power tools.





After staining and varnishing the wood, I placed this platform on a thin metal structure to create the illusion that the entire assembly was floating.

Regarding the water effect, I first had three smoked glass plates made, which broke during the initial transports. Subsequently, I cut three other pieces from polycarbonate, which produce the same visual effect but are more prone to scratches.

When I display my islands, I add some cut rocks to the islands to enhance the natural appearance of the whole ensemble.

The photo at the beginning of this article was taken two years after the completion of the work. Last weekend, I exhibited the islands at the Montreal Bonsai

and Penjing Society exhibit, Montreal Botanical Garden, from September 1–3, 2023. See photo below. 🌲

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Pierre Leloup is a designer specializing in clean contemporary styles and modern or traditional Japanese styles such as *sukiya*. He has been practicing the art of bonsai for more than thirty years.

He designs interior, commercial and residential fittings and gardens, and manufactures the various typical elements himself: shoji doors, friezes, tokonoma, suiseki, etc. In addition, he creates tea bowls and ceramic bonsai and kusamono pots.

To see more of Pierre's work, visit pierreleloup.com and on Instagram: [creations_pierre_leloup](https://www.instagram.com/creations_pierre_leloup).

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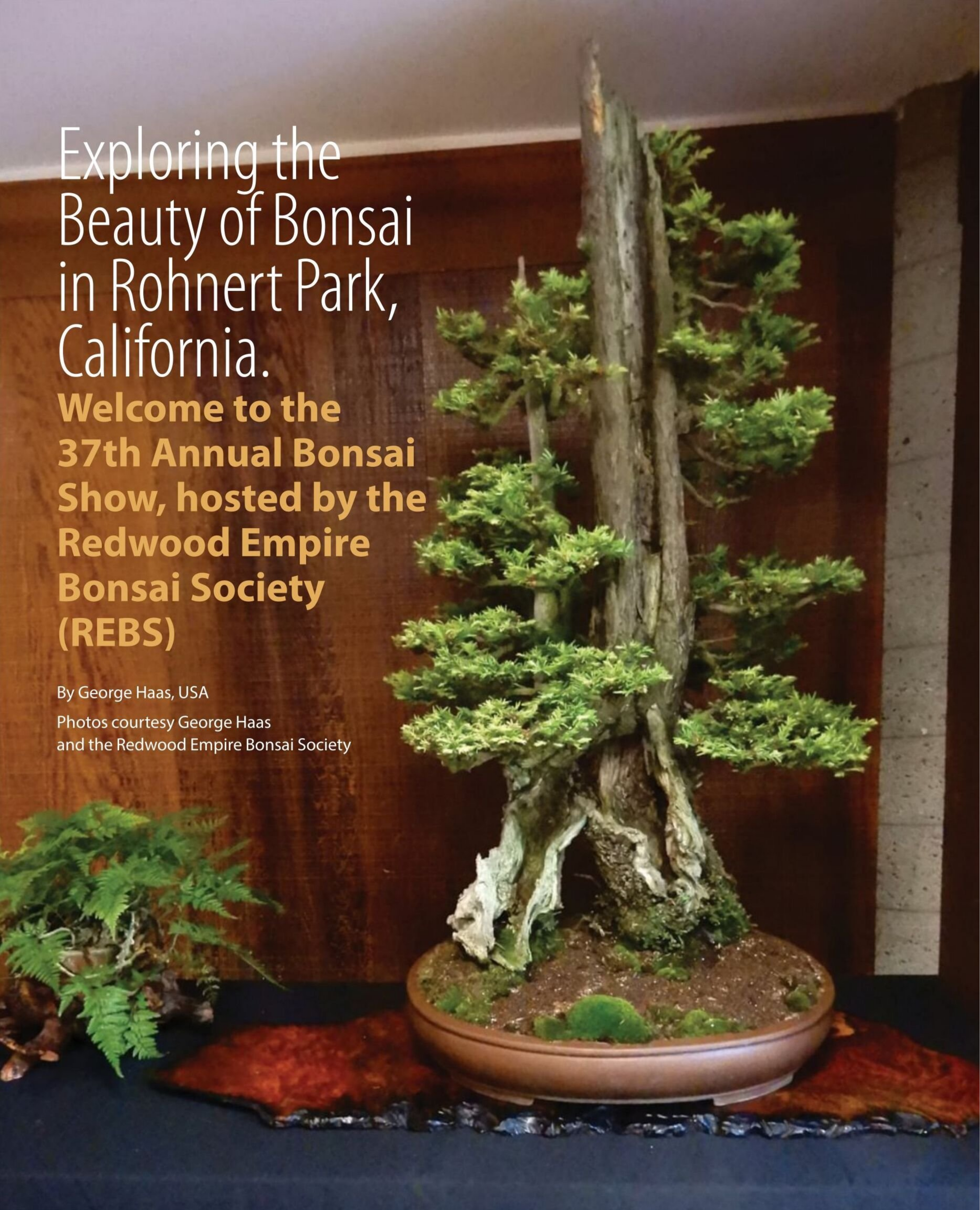


Exploring the Beauty of Bonsai in Rohnert Park, California.

Welcome to the 37th Annual Bonsai Show, hosted by the Redwood Empire Bonsai Society (REBS)

By George Haas, USA

Photos courtesy George Haas
and the Redwood Empire Bonsai Society



What makes our annual bonsai show truly special is our early start—and when we say early, we mean exceptionally early. We commence planning for the next year even before the current show concludes on Sunday afternoon. The 37th annual show had to be postponed for three years due to the Covid pandemic. Our dedicated and long-serving member, Bob Shimon, meticulously established the dates and took the necessary steps to secure the venue for our show a full year in advance. In January 2022, we relocated all club activities to a state-of-the-art facility, the Rohnert Park Community Center, nestled in the heart of Rohnert Park, California. Bob assembled a committee to craft the show in its new environment. Although the venue was smaller, it mirrored the downsized club due to three years of the COVID pandemic. Our return to the annual show was intended to be a celebration of the art of bonsai, and it came to fruition on August 26 and 27, 2023.

The internationally acclaimed Ryan Neil, hailing from Mirai International Bonsai in St. Helens, Oregon, took the center stage as the headliner of the event. With Ryan on board, REBS commenced advertising the annual show in November 2022. Ryan's performances were nothing short of spectacular. He conducted two morning Bring-Your-Own-Bonsai workshops, followed by two afternoon demonstrations where he meticulously worked on "yamadori" pygmy cypress and shore pine raw trees. To top it off, he delivered an evening show critique for a select audience.

Our show boasted a variety of quality bonsai vendors offering a diverse range of bonsai-related items, including trees, pots, tools, suiseki viewing stones, and more. Member sales featured budget-friendly bonsai, pots, and art objects. After a three-year hiatus, the member sales room was brimming with donations and consignment items on both days.

Over the span of two days, our exhibit and show activities graciously welcomed over 1,100 visitors.

Standing proudly at the entrance to the exhibit hall was a California coast redwood, measuring between four and five feet in height. This awe-inspiring bonsai is a legacy tree that may one day find its place in a museum. The tree originally came into the owner's possession with just a single root, barely clinging to life. It spent 13 years in a nursery tub and underwent 12 years of meticulous training before being showcased for the very first time.

The exhibit hall was thoughtfully divided in half, with one section accommodating the 80-plus audience for Ryan's Saturday and Sunday afternoon demonstrations, while the other half was adorned with covered tables showcasing 74 bonsai specimens. A total of 22 members submitted and exhibited their prized bonsai creations, with many others actively participating in various facets of the show. 🌲

REBS website: www.rebsbonsai.org



Left: Bob Shimon and Ryan's Saturday demonstration on "yamadori" pygmy cypress

Right: Ryan's Saturday demonstration on "yamadori" pygmy cypress



Left: Ryan's Sunday demonstration on "yamadori" shore pine



Above: Ryan's Saturday demonstration on "yamadori" pygmy cypress



Left: Ryan's Sunday demonstration on "yamadori" shore pine

Facing page: California Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)

Ryan's performances were nothing short of spectacular.



Over the span of two days, our exhibit and show activities graciously welcomed over 1,100 visitors.

*Top left: San Jose Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* 'San Jose')*

*Bottom left: Satsuki Azalea (*Rhododendron indicum*)*

*Bottom right: Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)*

Facing page:

*Top left: California Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)*

*Top right: Boxwood (*Buxus* sp.)*

*Bottom left: Common Olive (*Olea europaea*)*

*Bottom right: Common Olive (*Olea europaea*)*



A total of 22 members submitted and exhibited their prized bonsai creations, with many others actively participating in various facets of the show.

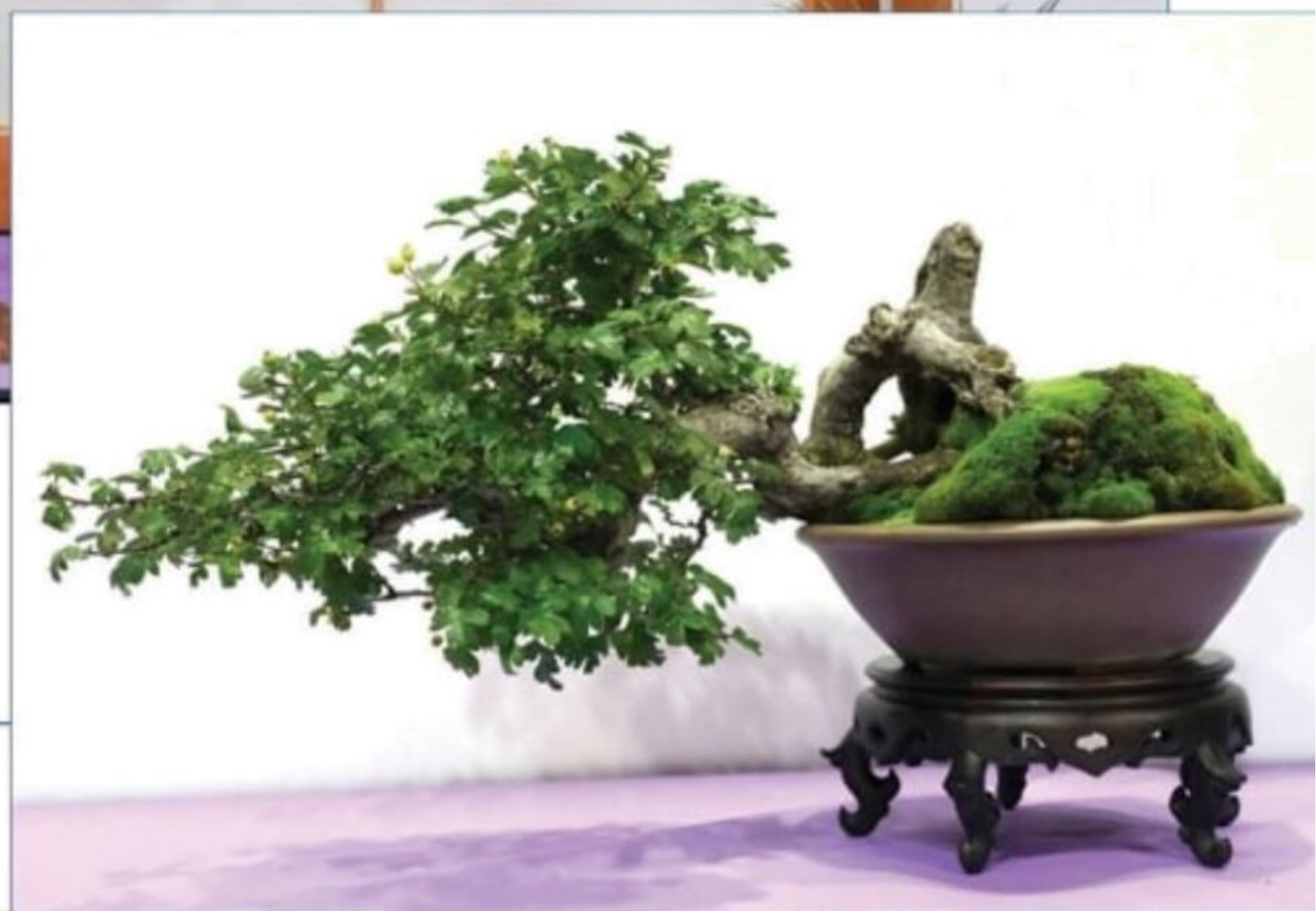


Top: Juniper (*Juniperus* sp.)
Middle: Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*)
Bottom: Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*)





Top: Juniper (*Juniperus* sp.)
 Middle: Hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.)
 Bottom: Juniper (*Juniperus* sp.)



Integrating Cultures and Artistry

The BCI Regional Convention in QBIG, Tangerang, Indonesia 2023

By Budi Sulisty, Indonesia

Contributing Editor José Luis Rodríguez Macías, Puerto Rico

On the afternoon of August 4, 2023, the “On Fire” BCI Regional Convention formally opened in QBIG, Tangerang, Indonesia. As is common elsewhere after the pandemic, it was an event eagerly awaited by local and international bonsai and suiseki enthusiasts within Indonesia and abroad. On a historical note, I recall that it was in Zunyi, China, in September 2019 when The Indonesian Bonsai Society (PPBI) was formally awarded the right to hold the event, initially scheduled for August 2020. Preparations were made, artists were contacted, and formal advertisements were ongoing. However, as it happened all over the globe, everything came to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which left PPBI with no choice but to postpone the convention. Year by year, we waited until we dared to make the final decision to have it in August 2023.

This yearning to attend an international bonsai and suiseki event is also felt in neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Two conventions were announced before our event in the Philippines: the Regional BCI in Vigan City and ASPAC/ABFF



Top: The Reog show, traditional Indonesian dance
Bottom left: The welcome dinner

Top inset: Judging suiseki
Bottom right: The opening ceremony



The best in show; A *Casuarina equisetifolia*



Top: The Indian group with the penjing they created.

Middle right: Organizers of the Convention, Alex Tankulung, Chairman of PPBI Tangerang chapter and Budi Sulisty, Chairman of the convention.

Bottom left: Master Ho Jan Lee in action.

Bottom right: Memorandum of Understanding between BCI and WBFF.

Facing Page:

Top left: Chairman of BCI-China, Chen Chang, and Min Hsuan Lo with his demonstration tree.

Top right: Nakajima san with his demonstration tree.

Middle left: A twisted tamarind created by Master Ranto with the inspiration of a juniperus bonsai.

Middle right: Master Li Chonghong.

Bottom left: Making the daiza.

Bottom right: Ho and the pine.

We invited many bonsai and Suiseki artists from various countries.

in May and June, respectively, and later in September 2023, the annual international BCI Congress in Shuyang, China.

As you can imagine, the advent of so many bonsai events prompted friendly competition among countries. We must “fight” to lure participants and delegates to attend! Luckily, we managed to attract 102 overseas delegates and 80 local participants for the “On Fire” event.

The opening ceremony began with a traditional “Reog” performance from Ponorogo, East Java, which garnered much attention from many guests. After the protocol speeches from the various bonsai leaders present, all guests were guided to witness the ribbon cutting and formal opening of the bonsai exhibition, which featured 226 selected bonsai. This time, quantity was not very important; quality became the sole focus of the show, as the participants wanted acknowledgment from the international panel of judges, consisting of five Taiwanese, one Japanese, one Chinese, one American, and three Indonesians.

We invited many bonsai and Suiseki artists from various countries: Li Chonghong, Ho Chih Hsung, Huang Ching Fu, Lo Min Hsuan, and Ho Jan Lee from Taiwan; José Luis Rodríguez from Puerto Rico; John Wang and Frank Mihalic from the USA; Bernabe Millares, Roy Sito Domingo, and Anthony Gedang from the Philippines; Michael Siow from Malaysia; Liu Chuangang from China; Hiep Ninh Hu from Vietnam; Yong Muk Kim from Korea; Ravindran Damodaran, Mamta Mishra, and Sudhir Jadhav from India, who were part of the delegation led by Madame Sneh Prasar, and Phisit Ari from Thailand.





Award-winning *Pemphis acidula*

The bonsai were divided into small, medium, and large categories.



Pemphis acidula awarded the best in the medium category





During the first selection round, the judges chose the 30 best bonsai, except for the small bonsai, of which only 15 were selected.

A big size *Pemphis acidula*.



A *Premna nauseosa*.

The bonsai were divided into small, medium, and large categories. Senior Grandmaster Li Chonghong of Taiwan presided over the Jury, while Senior Master Ho Chih Hsung handled the duties of Vice-Chairman. During the first selection round, the judges chose the 30 best bonsai, except for the small bonsai, of which only 15 were selected. For the second review, the number was further scrutinized to the best ten, and finally, the top three of each category, plus the best in show, were awarded. Furthermore, we also incorporated best-in-species categories for *Wrightia religiosa*, *Pemphis acidula*, and *Ficus sp.* Lin Chiehung from Taiwan conducted a tabulation of the scores and the organization of the process, and Rudi Julianto

of Indonesia worked diligently to calculate accurate results.

There were 256 suiseki displayed in the exhibition, allocated by origin (river stone and mountain stone) and subdivided into four categories: landscape, object, pattern, and abstract stones. Before the exhibition and because the Indonesian stone market was once flooded with artificially altered stones, a rigorous pre-selection process was conducted before each entry could be exhibited. The six judges were from Malaysia, Puerto Rico, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Michael Siow from Malaysia was appointed Jury Chairman, with José Luis Rodríguez from Puerto Rico as Vice-Chairman. The first round of selection



Top: 3rd champion small
Wrightia religiosa.

Bottom: Large *Celtis* sp.

Facing Page:

Top: The suiseki on display.

Middle left: A puppy.

Middle right: Exotic river stone.

Lower middle right: Shading
place, suiseki from Sijunjung,
West Sumatra.

Bottom left: The narrow gate.

Bottom right: Bowing to the
Teacher



included roughly thirty percent of each category, of which, if selected, qualified the stone to enter the next round of scrutiny, and finally, one which would be awarded best in class. Due to the large number of landscape river stones (over one hundred pieces), this category incorporated the best ten and top three. Once all categories were duly approved, the best in show was selected among the stones that won their respective categories.

Of course, as is commonplace in bonsai conventions, skill demonstrations became one of the highlight programs that garnered the attention of countless participants. To give the audience more activities before the main events, a joint group of Indians led by Sudhir Jadhav created a large landscape penjing using Blue Bell plant material and rocks.

For the main event, we prepared seven stages for the demonstrators to conduct their respective performances. Locally cultivated Taiwan Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*), grown in the Indonesian highlands, which had been meticulously curved for the future artists to have a platform on which to work, were chosen by some artists like Li Chonghong, Ho Jan Lee, John Wang, Yong Muk Kim, Shinichi Nakajima, and Yayat Hidayat. Extraordinary *Tamarindus indica* programmed trees by Zainiranto were the second most popular choice by José Luis Rodriguez, Michael Siow, Min Hsuan Lo, Liu Chuangang, and Zainiranto. Abdul Hakim Lutfi and Mamta Mishra chose Blue Bell (*Trifidacanthus unifoliatus*; formerly *Desmodium*) as their demonstration trees. Phisit Ari worked with an old air-layered *Tamarindus indica*,



There were 256 suiseki displayed in the exhibition, allocated by origin and subdivided into four categories: landscape, object, pattern, and abstract stones.

Black rabbit, river stone from West Sumatra.

The welcome party, singing, and subsequent dinners during the convention created warm social interactions among participants!



while Ravindran Damodaran worked on an old yamadori *Casuarina equisetifolia*. For the first time in Indonesia, Taiwanese Pine Bonsai Experts Ho Zhi Xiong and Huang Ching Fu did something unusual. They requested *Pinus merkusii* or Indonesian Red Pine, a species long forgotten in the Indonesian Bonsai heyday and that hadn't been used as bonsai anymore. On a side note, searching for suitable trees was not an easy task, and finding good material was a challenge in itself. Finally, the Taiwanese showed us the necessary skills to make *Pinus merkusii* an excellent source of material for bonsai.

As suiseki is a popular and integral part of the bonsai community, suiseki demo sessions were started by Roy Sito Domingo, who showed us how to properly make a daiza from scratch, followed by Sudhir, who led a demonstration on Indian stones. Also, an interesting suiseki lecture was conducted by Anthony Gedang of the Philippines, followed by a warm discussion of suiseki lovers in an interactive forum.

Of course, the welcome party, singing, and subsequent dinners during the convention created warm social interactions among participants,





resulting in memorable friendships and happiness that will surely be recalled for years.

Special thanks are due to Alex Tankulung, Alexander Bambang, John Sawari Garden, Soeroso Soemopawiro, Adhitya Aja Pamungkas, Alisyah Elsa Pratama, Yayat Hidayat, Abdul Hakim Lutfi, Erwin Lismar, the foreign demonstrators and guests, and the PPBI family. 🌳

Top: The Bazaar offered many bonsai and bonsai-related items

Middle: Judging the bonsai.

Bottom: Some of the many guests at "On Fire."





Harmony in Stone

Exploring Nature, Rules, and Artistry

By Aldo Marchese, Italy

Photos courtesy Aldo Marchese





“In essence, this scholar rock, a mere few centimeters in size, encapsulates profound evocations within its modest dimensions, reminding me of a lost world.”

“Refuge”

From the Pollino near the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Armi (Cerchiara di Calabria, Catanzaro). See photo at bottom right.

The measurements of the stone are 13 cm in height, 6 cm in width, and 5.5 cm in depth. The base cannot be defined as a daiza because it is not minimalist at all but prominently accompanies the viewing stone.

This small sedimentary limestone rock comes from the Pollino near the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Armi (Cerchiara di Calabria, Catanzaro). The geological history of this Apennine mountain complex is surreal, the result of a powerful carbonate succession, Jurassic-Cretaceous. The carbonate succession consists of crystalline limestones, oolitic limestones, dolomitic limestones, whitish or ochre calcarenites, often organogenic, intercalated with saccharoidal white Jurassic dolomites.

Ascending the mountain, one encounters compact limestones, dolomites, and gray-brown or ochre calcilutites, often rich in shells and fragments of bivalve shells, along with bituminous black dolomites and reddish-greenish argillites from the Cretaceous. All of this originated from an ancient ocean (Tethys), giving rise to compact gray calcarenites, fossiliferous limestone breccias, reddish marls transitioning



Views of "Refuge" from all sides and top.

The hardness of this stone on the Mohs scale is slightly higher than that of Calcite, which has a hardness of 3/3.5. On similar stones, it can reach 4.



to predominant tobacco-colored marls, interspersed with green and black calcarenites and argillites. Such formations are found in small patches near another sanctuary, Madonna del Pollino.

The hardness of this stone in the photo on the Mohs scale is slightly higher than that of Calcite, which has a hardness of 3/3.5. On similar stones, it can reach 4.

From this last consideration regarding the hardness of the stone, my analysis and question begin. Should we adhere to rules and codes from texts or be guided by emotions in a cause-and-effect relationship with sentiment? Can such a borderline hardness detract from the dignity of this stone? And what about Kikka-seki? With their delicate flowers, especially on the saba-kiku stones?

Most kikka-seki requires removing some of the stone matrix followed by mechanical polishing to expose the beauty of the flower-like mineral formations embedded in the rock. Saba-kiku do not require any polishing or alterations to view the patterns and fall into the suiseki classification system, demonstrating that the classification system is not based on naturally occurring features.

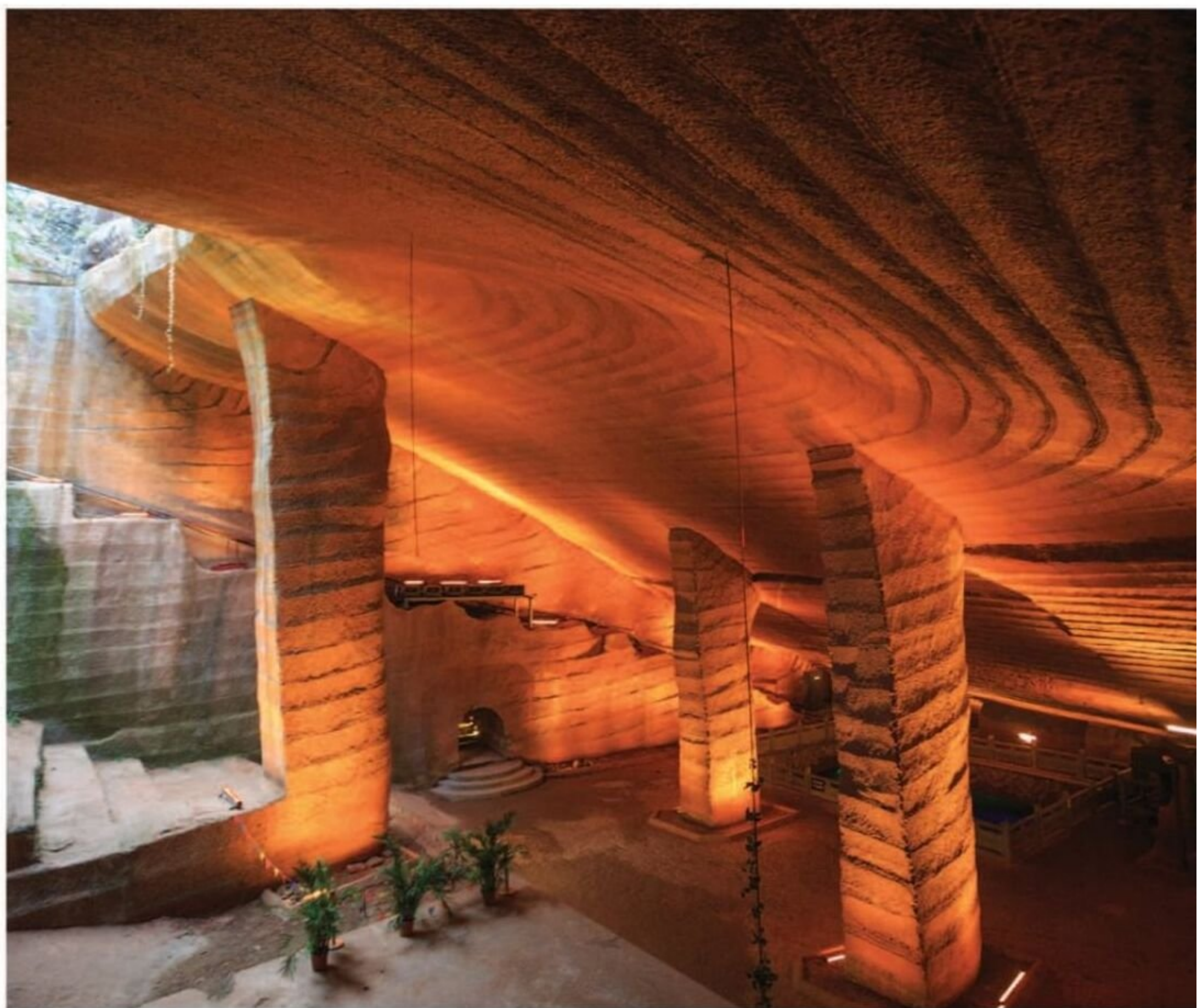
If Suiseki incorporates the term “JO” (empathy) in its original text, should something prevail over the rule?

I am reminded of the treatise by Shitao or Shi Tao, born into the Ming dynasty imperial clan as Zhu Ruoji. He was a Chinese Buddhist monk, calligrapher, and landscape painter during the early Qing dynasty. Born in Quanzhou County in Guangxi province, Shitao was a member of the royal house descended from the elder brother of Zhu Yuanzhang. One of his 18 chapters is titled “The Fulfillment of the Rule, Where the Foundation of Rules Lies in Their Absence.” He considers Nature the master way, allowing the naturalness of things and actions to have primordial relevance in artistic expression.

Many believe that the artistic, creative process should be free of connotations and rules and that for viewing stones, especially for Suiseki, Nature is the artist, and we are interpreters. What purpose do rules serve?

I have found one answer. Rules are fundamental in the process of study and comparison to provide discretionary spaces or concepts that differ from free will. The rule sets the boundary to remain consistent with the object of study. Only when we have reached a deep study process should we open these doors on these boundaries and look out from the right side towards Nature and naturalness. Aesthetics belongs to Nature, while aestheticism belongs to humans. I conclude my thoughts with this idea: it is important to remain eternal students and have that constant drive for study and improvement on one’s “path,” based on moral rules, but it is especially useful to have Nature and its intimate observation as a guide, both macro and micro. The rule of balance is to practice what we love, be aware that we can do it better, and create emptiness in the mind to be one with the practice.

The measurements of the stone are 13 cm in height, 6 cm in width, and 5.5 cm in depth. The base cannot



be defined as a daiza since it is not minimalist at all but prominently accompanies the viewing stone.

In this sense, its classification brings me to a viewing stone that evokes the scenarios of rock caves that were the first homes of humans in China. In the context of macrocosm and microcosm, in these few centimeters, we can remember the Chinese anthropological aspect due to the characteristics of the holes and verticality. If there are people who have used caves since ancient times to protect themselves, it is the Chinese, also due to the abundant presence of karst terrains. How is it possible to remain underwater for centuries without any signs of erosion? How is it possible to create chambers 30 meters high with tools and equipment from thousands of years ago? This and much more are the Chinese Longyou caves.

We are now accustomed to it. Everything done or discovered in China is always monumental! Incredible monuments emerge almost by chance from the earth or water, like the Longyou cave complex that emerged from the water. These incredible quarries, clearly dug by human hands, are so large that they can contain an entire multi-story palace. It is a still unresolved mystery but already an accessible and fascinating monument that has come to light. Or how can we forget Zhongdong, the unusual community that was born in a cave in the Getu River National Park before the reserve became a climber’s paradise? In 2008, Beijing offered to replace the caves with brick houses, but the population, which is poorly adaptable and fears losing control of the land, wants to remain anchored in the caves as they have for centuries. 🏡

One of Shi Tao’s 18 chapters is titled “The Fulfillment of the Rule, Where the Foundation of Rules Lies in Their Absence.”



Bonsai exhibitions educate the public about the intricate world of bonsai.

The Art of Bonsai Exhibition

Cultivating Shared Experiences, Constructive Critiques, and Social Connections.

By Tony Tickle, UK

Photos courtesy Tony Tickle

I've had the pleasure of sharing my bonsai creations in various exhibitions across Europe, both big and small. It's been an incredible journey filled with love for crafting these beautiful trees. Along the way, I've picked up some valuable insights on how to enhance my work.

Beyond its aesthetic appeal, exhibiting bonsai at shows and exhibitions offers a multitude of benefits that extend far beyond the effort put into preparing these miniature marvels. In this article, we'll explore the advantages of showcasing bonsai trees at exhibitions, highlighting the shared experience, constructive

critique, and social connections that make this art form truly exceptional.

Bonsai exhibitions provide a unique platform for bonsai practitioners to share their passion and knowledge with a broader audience. The shared experience of displaying our trees allows enthusiasts to connect on a profound level. It fosters a sense of community among bonsai artists, beginners, and the general public.

Exhibiting bonsai offers an opportunity for artists to learn from each other. Sharing techniques, styles, and experiences can inspire individuals to refine



Top: Acer palmatum in its Autumn splendor.
Bottom: An amazing juniper by David Benavente, winner of Best-in-show at the 20th edition of the Trophy, hosted by Bonsai Belgium Association.



Bonsai exhibitions serve as a meeting ground for like-minded individuals who share a passion for this art form.



Top and bottom: Bonsai events are great for meeting old friends, making new ones, and of course, overspending in the traders' area.

Facing page: A dramatically presented pine by the author at the Trophy, hosted by Bonsai Belgium Association.

their skills and develop a deeper understanding of this art form.

Bonsai exhibitions educate the public about the intricate world of bonsai. Visitors can witness the artistry and dedication involved, fostering a greater appreciation for nature and the art of bonsai.

Bonsai exhibitions serve as a meeting ground for like-minded individuals who share a passion for this art form. The bonds formed during these events often extend beyond the exhibition, leading to lasting friendships and mentorships.

Constructive critique is a fundamental aspect of any art form's evolution. Bonsai exhibitions offer artists a unique chance to receive feedback from peers, experts, and the audience, ultimately aiding in their growth and development.

Exhibiting bonsai allows artists to receive valuable feedback on their work. Constructive criticism helps identify areas for improvement, encouraging artists to refine their skills and enhance their creations.

Bonsai exhibitions attract enthusiasts with varying levels of expertise. This diversity of perspectives ensures





a well-rounded critique that considers both technical aspects and artistic interpretation.

Artists are encouraged to experiment with different styles, species, and techniques when preparing trees for exhibitions. Constructive critique enables them to refine their artistic vision and make more informed choices in their future projects.

Bonsai exhibitions are more than just gatherings of trees; they are gatherings of people. These events create a vibrant social environment where relationships are formed, knowledge is shared, and the bonsai community flourishes.

Exhibiting bonsai provides an excellent platform for networking within the bonsai community. Artists can connect with collectors, fellow practitioners, and potential clients, opening doors to new opportunities.

Interacting with experienced bonsai artists at exhibitions allows beginners to gain insights, tips, and guidance. This mentorship can be invaluable in one's bonsai journey.

Bonsai exhibitions contribute to the growth and cohesiveness of the bonsai community. They serve as focal points for enthusiasts to come together, exchange ideas, and collectively advance the art of bonsai.

Effort vs. Benefit: Is It Worth It?

Preparing bonsai for exhibition undoubtedly requires a significant amount of effort. From selecting the right trees to meticulously preparing them, the process can be demanding. However, the benefits of exhibiting bonsai far outweigh the effort involved.

The shared experience, constructive critique, and social connections gained through exhibitions are immeasurable. They enhance one's skills and knowledge and foster a sense of belonging within the bonsai community. Additionally, the exposure garnered at exhibitions can lead to opportunities for selling or trading bonsai, advancing one's reputation, and even participating in prestigious shows.

In conclusion, the world of bonsai is enriched by the tradition of exhibitions. These events facilitate shared experiences, provide valuable critique, and strengthen social connections within the bonsai community. While preparing bonsai for exhibition may require considerable effort, the benefits from these experiences make it a rewarding endeavor for both beginners and seasoned practitioners. So, whether you're a bonsai artist or an admirer of this timeless art form, attending or participating in a bonsai exhibition is an experience not to be missed. 🌳

While preparing bonsai for exhibition may require considerable effort, the benefits from these experiences make it a rewarding endeavor for both beginners and seasoned practitioners.



Intrepid Bonsai

A Gallery Exhibit for Grow Zone 3

By Matthew Majkut, Canada

Photos by Ian McCausland,
courtesy the Bonsai Society of Winnipeg.

View of the "Bonsai in Manitoba" exhibit in Galleries One and Two at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG-Qaumajuq).

NEAR THE TOP OF EVEREST, CLIMBERS CONFRONT THE DEATH ZONE, THE POINT BEYOND WHICH LIES DEMISE. The horticultural equivalent is Zone 1, the tree line. As a bonsai artist climbs closer to the limit, everything becomes harder. Decisions are perilous, life and death. The growing season shortens, the time to work on tree roots fades, and the species available for bonsai steer far from convention. Therefore, bonsai in Zone 3 is for only the most intrepid of bonsai artists.

Zone 3 is a fierce adversary. Its limit is sometimes hard to fathom. Winter regularly reaches -40°C and summers can reach $+40^{\circ}\text{C}$! The species that thrive in this zone require vernalization (a duration of cold), meaning suspending bonsai in dormancy, letting years

of bonsai training face an impossibly long and harsh winter. In Zone 3, the time from bud to dormancy is five months. Yet, bonsai in this zone has its rewards. While tropical and temperate species require significant barriers to be overcome, boreal species like amur maple (*Acer ginnala*), apple (*malus sp.*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), birch (*Betula papyrifera*), eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), hawthorn (*Crataegus sp.*), jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), larch (*Larix laricina*), and spruce (*Picea glauca*) offer grizzled specimens waiting the lavishing of a bonsai enthusiast. Robust trees that can respond well to zone-specific bonsai technique and produce untamed elements for an appreciative eye. As impossibly slow as bonsai progress may be in Zone 3, the result is deeply gratifying.



In Zone 3, the time from bud to dormancy is five months.

Assembling a collection of top-quality trees grown in Zone 3 is an accomplishment. This occurred July 28 to 30, 2023, at the prestigious Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG-Qaumajuq), home to the world’s largest collection of Inuit Art. The strongest examples of various bonsai species in Manitoba—Canada’s geographic centre—were set among masterworks of paint and sculpture. Trees were loaned to the “Bonsai in Manitoba” exhibit from some of central Canada’s most notable bonsai artists under the careful curation of the Bonsai Society of Winnipeg. The exhibit was a three-fold statement: 1) central Canada has trees that merit attention, 2) bonsai is a fine art, and 3) a small bonsai club working on the margins of the possible can execute excellence.



1) The Trees

The bonsai on display were important for unconventional reasons. They attest to techniques central Canadian artists have developed for over forty years. *And* the trees were splendid. Given how little formal information is available on the species in Zone 3 and the severe environment the zone poses, the bonsai on

Top: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Trieu Vo.
Bottom: Siberian pea shrub, *Caragana arborescens* “Walker,” by Stephen Ahing.



Top: Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG-Qaumajuq), home to the world's largest collection of Inuit Art. Photo courtesy www.wag.ca

Top right, bottom left and right: Views of the exhibit on the main floor.

Facing page:

Views of the exhibit in Galleries One and Two.

Top left: Trembling aspen, *Populus tremuloides*, by Scott Samson.

Top right: Larch Saikei, *Larix laricina*, by Laszlo Szabados.

display attested to skill, creativity, and determination. To be clear, these were not necessarily the trees of bonsai professionals but were important works by fifteen artists using rarely tamed species in a difficult environment.

Of note were six trees presented by **Joe Grande**, perhaps central Canada's most well-known bonsai enthusiast. (Full disclosure: Joe is Bonsai Club International's magazine and website editor.) Joe focuses on local *yamadori*, which he has cultivated over 40 years of bonsai practice. He is a gentleman, artist, outdoorsman, and committed bonsai educator and organizer. Joe's trees often evoke Canada's taiga landscape. They are deliberately rugged while achieving an incredible style that avoids stylization. Joe is appreciated as an artist and prized as a keystone member of Bonsai Winnipeg.

Trieu Vo displayed four trees and two forests. Trieu is one of Canada's most underrated bonsai artists. His trees are characterized by balanced growth, vivid health, and significant scale (even Imperial). Many of Trieu's finest trees are *Larix laricina* he has collected. This species grows as far north as the arctic tree line and survives to -65°C . Trieu has mastered these deciduous conifers and uses their habit of dropping needles in autumn to aggressively train his trees into traditional bonsai forms. His trees have startling ramification, which he uses to craft masterful silhouettes that invite

the viewer to enter a world just slightly more fanciful than real. Trieu's success is equal parts botany and artistry; the health of his trees enables decisive choices that he executes with aplomb.

The gallery was also a fitting stage for well-heeled artists who have shown trees in the past but have yet to be at a venue equal to their talent. Of note are master gardener **Linda Gebel**, whose varied species reflect bonsai knowledge across many zones; **Dean Laughren**, a 40-year bonsai veteran and essential bonsai educator; **Laszlo Szabados**, who composes highly refined trees, collected ethically (his priority); **Lorne Downie**, a *shito* and *mame* specialist, who develops endearing little trees; **Aaron Frost**, a passionate artist, important volunteer and committed naturalist; and **Denis Girardin** who is the most significant *yamadori* collector in the region.

Likewise, the exhibit provided a stage for new talent, like **Jamey Baker**, who has grown a reputation for identifying nursery stock with redeeming bonsai quality and quickly producing exquisite informal upright bonsai; artist **Stephen Ahing**, whose approach across many mediums (including ceramics) is based in a universal, high-fidelity reductionist aesthetic; and **Matthew Majkut** who keeps one eye on Japanese bonsai culture and another on the Canadian wild.



The strongest examples of various bonsai species in Manitoba—Canada's geographic centre—were set among masterworks of paint and sculpture.



2) Bonsai is Fine Art

BCI members appreciate bonsai as fine art, but we rarely see this reflected in the world's galleries. There are renowned permanent bonsai displays found worldwide; much rarer are bonsai found alongside masterworks of different mediums. The Winnipeg Art Gallery braved this lapse and set bonsai among the works of renowned painters and the world's premier collection of Inuit sculpture. This was bold for many reasons. Bonsai require water, can convey pests, may only be displayed indoors for short periods, and are relatively difficult to move.

Although there are many obstacles to showing bonsai alongside priceless works of art, **Dr. Stephen D. Borys**, the WAG-Qaumajuq's Director and Chief Executive Officer knows that obstacles are meant to be overcome. Dr. Borys's general approach has been inviting audiences into the WAG-Qaumajuq and creating meaningful dialogue. This tact has revitalized the gallery, which has grown in size and reputation under his care. To overcome the bonsai obstacles to a gallery show, members of Bonsai Winnipeg:

- Carefully planned, installed, and raised the exhibit, giving primacy to other works on display
- Treated all bonsai with prophylactic insecticide to ensure they did not introduce pests to the gallery
- Watered trees in the evening after the gallery had closed
- Used trolleys to move trees throughout the gallery, to avoid potentially damaging other works

The result was staggering. Seeing bonsai in a large, sophisticated, publicly funded gallery alongside some of the best art on Earth was provocative. Living, breathing bonsai amongst eternal, fixed paintings was cognitive dissidence defined. Gallery display boxes made some

Top left: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Aaron Frost.

Top right: Jack pine, *Pinus banksiana*, by Matt Majkut.

Bottom: Silver Birch, *Betula pendula*, by Matt Majkut.

Facing page:

Top left: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Joe Grande.

Top right: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Denis Girardin.

Bottom: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Scott Samson.





bonsai seem fragile compared to the imposing, large paintings that surrounded. The trees seemed to give the other works a stronger sense of permanence. The bonsai interact with the paint in a way that makes the audience appreciate both differently. This crossing of mediums was adventurous and showed how relevant bonsai and a gallery can be to attract a different audience. The display felt like “haute culture,” not horticulture. And the audience appreciated different elements of the trees than one finds at a bonsai ‘show’; comments focused on color, texture, and shape rather than classification, pot size, and companion plant. The vibe was artistic, and those whose work was displayed were made to feel like artists, not tree farmers.

This was the vision of **Scott Samson**, Bonsai Winnipeg President, who had been working towards a gallery exhibit for a few years with the intention that hobbyists come to appreciate that they are, more correctly, artists. The exhibit was the most important bonsai event in the Canadian prairies ever, and Mr. Samson is almost wholly responsible for its success.

To accompany the exhibit, the Bonsai Society of Winnipeg prepared a handsome exhibit folio profiling the artists and describing the bonsai on display. The resource allowed a potentially uninitiated audience the wherewithal to appreciate the exhibit at an elevated level. The display was also staffed by knowledgeable bonsai club members who served as exhibit docents, who enriched the audience’s experience by answering questions and sharing the techniques underpinning the bonsai being viewed. Combined, the docents and the folio gave apt artgoers a discerned encounter.

The bonsai on display received a subtle but essential lift: the provenance needed to elevate craft to art. Just as artists were buoyed by the gallery, the bonsai went



Top left: Dwarf Korean birch, *Betula nana*, by Jamey Baker.

Top right: Amur maple, *Acer ginnala*, by Stu Innes.

Bottom left: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Joe Grande.

Bottom right: Colorado blue spruce, *Picea pungens*, by Jamey Baker.



For such a small club in such a harsh zone to have sufficient trees to hold their own, surrounded by artistic masterworks, is an accomplishment.

forward with an air of importance. If not for the deliberate goal to profile Zone 3 species, many of the bonsai would never have had the level of refinement dictated by such an august stage. Unlike other mediums, bonsai is a living art. Having a tree align horticulturally, artistically, and aesthetically is a feat whose aura will stay with the bonsai long after the exhibit. In fact, a professional photographer was commissioned to document these trees at the height of their development (to date). In a region of North America void of a permanent display, the Winnipeg Art Gallery provided 49 bonsai a landmark in their history with inherent value, injecting cultural significance onto trees that would likely not garner such a staging in other growing zones and geographies. In a way, these short little trees stand a little taller for the venue and exhibit execution.

3) The Might of Bonsai Clubs

The WAG-Qaumajuq has panache and may give rise to the thought that Winnipeg is a large, metropolitan city. This is untrue. Winnipeg has a vibrant art scene but is only home to ~750,000 people. Like a wolf tree standing out from the forest, Winnipeg is close to nothing. The nearest true city, Minneapolis, USA, is 750 kilometers south. Lonely, isolated, and deprived, the Bonsai Society of Winnipeg comprises a plucky ~100 members. One ventures to think that the Society is emblematic of most bonsai clubs: a bit out of the way, challenging growing conditions, a little too far from a permanent display, lacking local resources and expertise, with no local source for suitable pre-bonsai material and supplies. So, how did Bonsai Winnipeg pull off a sophisticated gallery exhibit?



Top left: Manitoba apple, *Malus domestica*, by Laszlo Szabados.
 Top right: Jack pine, *Pinus banksiana*, by Dean Laughren.
 Bottom left: Balsam fir, *Abies balsamea*, by Scott Samson.
 Bottom right: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Dean Laughren.

Leadership. President Scott Samson took ownership of the exhibit. He worked tirelessly to ensure that the opportunity was used to feature species, artists, and trees that reflect the region's challenges and opportunities. In short, Mr. Samson set his eyes on an authentic, heuristic exhibit. One that would resonate with the club he leads and showcase trees representative of a zone rarely considered for bonsai. His approach was for visitors, particularly those from other parts of the world, to confront top-quality trees they would not see elsewhere.

The exhibit coincided with the 2023 World Police and Fire Games being held in Winnipeg, meaning gallery visitors the weekend of the exhibit were global in composition. Many were not only seeing bonsai for the first time, but they were also seeing tree species for the first time. This was no accident. President Samson struck a curation

committee comprising himself, Joe Grande, bonsai apostle and forest dynamo, **Deborah Sutcliffe**, and bonsai artist, organizer, and volunteer **Kathy Gutheil**, which ensured the exhibit comprised a balance of *bona fide* bonsai artists, showing credible specimens, and as many local species as possible. The arrow found its target: a worldwide audience for "Bonsai in Manitoba," exhibited as art, using species and techniques germane to Zone 3 and Canada's taiga.

President Samson stands on the shoulders of giants, successive and engaged Society executive members, many of whom were able to attend the exhibit. Special mention goes to **Paul Collard**, who had led the Society for the 15 years preceding Scott assuming the reigns. Paul has a collection of important Suiseki. Mr. Collard's presidency may be characterized as an era of hands-on instruction



Top left: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Denis Girardin.

Top middle: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Trieu Vo.

Top right: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Trieu Vo.

Bottom: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, by Joe Grande.

Facing page:

Top left: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Deborah Sutcliffe.

Top right: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Denis Girardin.

Bottom: Larch, *Larix laricina*, by Trieu Vo.



and knowledge transfer. He brought many visiting artists and bonsai masters to Winnipeg and organized varied workshops. Many of the trees on exhibit at the gallery were the product of these learning opportunities. Unfailing dedication at the top has resulted in relatively consistent membership. As a result, when President Samson drew his bow, he did so with intent, patience, and practice. He knew the strengths (weaknesses) of club members, those he could rely upon, when to push, and how to motivate.

For such a small club in such a harsh zone to have sufficient trees to hold their own, surrounded by artistic masterworks, is an accomplishment. The Bonsai Society of Winnipeg has benefited from visiting masters as much as from local knowledge honed from experimenting with techniques and species that work in such an inhospitable environment. On this front, **Stu Innes** bears citation. He has devoted his life to horticulture and is an essential bonsai educator. Stu is a retired engineer and the scientist behind many techniques and advances that have made bonsai a reality in central Canada. His collection of over 100 trees is a variable lab where different substrates, lighting systems, and over-wintering techniques are honed for Zone 3. As a result, his trees are vibrant, but it is his *kusamono* that truly shine. Mr. Innes's attention to detail is intense. His countless accent plantings feature wee foliage that contradicts and complements in shape and color. They are lively, contextual, and creative, often relying on local flora to invoke a story that resonates in Zone 3.

Conclusion

While other clubs likely have “better” trees, a more optimal environment, and more frequent opportunities to display trees in a suitable venue, the exhibit at the Winnipeg Art Gallery displayed trees that reflect the *sisu* and fellowship of a band of resolute artists. A group that has come to define its artistic identity by its imposing foe, Zone 3, and a galvanizing backdrop, the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Other bonsai clubs may find that displaying bonsai beyond convention forces a conversation on club identity that is soul-searching, rousing, and rewarding. The intrepid who climb the mountain confront a wonderful vista—peaks previously only imagined. 🌲



Top: After demonstration.
From left to right, Liu Chuang
Gang (劉傳剛), Budi Sulisty,
Min Hsuan Lo, Chen Chang
(陳昌).

Middle: Before Demonstration,
Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*).

Bottom: *Pemphis* sp.



**As usual,
Pemphis and
Casuarina are
the kings and
queens of the
exhibition.
Also, I noticed
significant
progress in the
quality of Ficus
bonsai this
time.**



My bonsai journey in Indonesia

Min Hsuan Lo & Andrew Lo, Taiwan

I am so honored to have been invited to be one of the bonsai headliners for five times in Indonesia, starting from the ASPAC 2007 in Bali, then in Bandung, Tangerang, Bandung, and finally back to “Tangerang on Fire” for the BCI/PPBI in August 2023. The first time I was invited as a bonsai judge in Bali in 2007, I was shocked by the high standard of Indonesian bonsai. Pemphis and Casuarina were highlights of the convention, especially Pemphis, which skillfully and harmoniously fused nature and artificial elements together to create magnificent bonsai. There were so many masterpieces that it was almost impossible to identify which was better or the best.

The same scenario occurred to me again sixteen years later. This time, in “Tangerang on Fire,” we spent two days to complete the bonsai judging. As usual, Pemphis and Casuarina are the kings and queens of the exhibition. Also, I noticed significant progress in the quality of Ficus bonsai this time. Besides the ones I was familiar with, there were plenty of tropical bonsai varieties I had never seen before, which amazed me. One of the newest and most popular varieties is the Shohin Water Jasmine. There are so many breathtakingly beautiful Shohin Water Jasmine bonsai that no matter how hot the weather is, it cannot dampen my enthusiasm for appreciating them.

During the two-day lecture and demonstration, as many as 20 international and domestic headliners gathered here to share and exchange their bonsai knowledge and techniques. The committee provided



great materials for all the demonstrators. Almost all the materials came from cuttings or seeds, which means besides Yamadori, Indonesia can also produce bonsai materials by themselves through the powerful bonsai industry. Based on my observation, there are two varieties coming up this time. The first is twisted Tamarind, which only exists in Indonesia. The second is Taiwan Juniper, which made me aware that there are good Taiwan junipers outside of Taiwan. We should work harder.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Chairman of the Indonesian Bonsai Society Tangerang Chapter, Alex Tangkulung, the Chairman of Indonesian Bonsai Society-the Capital city of Jakarta Region, Alexander Bambang, and especially my old friend, the Chairman of the Convention, Budi Sulisty, who invited me to come to Indonesia several times, and all my bonsai friends in Indonesia. I greatly appreciate the hospitality we received during our stay in Tangerang, especially the banquets in nice restaurants every night and the performances of the band and singer for all the guests. It was an unforgettable bonsai trip. I consider this to be one of the top conventions I have ever attended.

Last but not least, I was informed that Surabaya, in east Java, will host the Indonesia National Bonsai Exhibition in June 2024. Save the date! I believe you will have a great bonsai journey, just like I have experienced and enjoyed. 🌲



Top: *Sabinea* sp.
Middle right: *Casuarina* sp.
Bottom left: *Pemphis* sp.
Bottom right: Water Jasmine

I consider this to be one of the top conventions I have ever attended.





Bonsai Marvel: *Melaleuca nodosa* Wins Top Honors at Bonsai Society of Queensland's 50th Anniversary Show

By Glenis Bebb, Australia

Melaleuca nodosa, commonly known as the prickly-leaved paperbark, is a plant belonging to the myrtle family *Myrtaceae*, and it thrives exclusively in the eastern regions of Australia. This versatile species can be found as a shrub or a petite tree, featuring slender, occasionally needle-like leaves, and it showcases vibrant yellow blooms, which can grace its branches as early as April or as late as January.

At the recent Bonsai Society of Queensland's Annual Show held on September 10th, a remarkable *Melaleuca nodosa* Bonsai, owned and meticulously styled by Tony Watt, earned the prestigious **BCI Excellence Award**. This event was doubly significant as it also marked the celebration of the club's 50th anniversary.



Watt's bonsai masterpiece further claimed the title of **Best Native in the Show**. The prickly-leaved paperbark is renowned for its ability to produce copious creamy pale yellow flowers, making it a magnet for birds, bees, and butterflies. Its thorny foliage offers refuge to small native birds. Typically, this species attains a medium-sized stature, reaching a maximum height of 20 meters.

Watt's journey with this tree began seven years ago when he acquired it as a stock tree during a local club sales day in Brisbane. He allowed the tree to flourish for a few years, permitting it to grow naturally before embarking on a five-year bonsai training regimen.

Over the years, this bonsai specimen has undergone several transformations as branches naturally wither and are replaced. In the last 12 months, a significant shift was made to alter the tree's front, enhancing its overall aesthetic appeal.

The secret to its thriving existence lies in its love for water. During the scorching Queensland summers, Tony Watt ensures that the bonsai is strategically placed in a tray of water, quenching its thirst daily.

In addition to the bonsai's magnificence, the presentation was further enhanced by a splendid scroll crafted by Brisbane artist Antony Cheung, and the pot, a work of art in itself, was created by Brisbane artist Marie Hewartson. Marie Hewartson is not only recognized as one of Australia's premier Bonsai potters but is also an esteemed member of the Bonsai Society of Queensland, contributing to the artistry that graced this remarkable exhibition. 🌳

The Canadian Bonsai Scene: Recent and Upcoming Shows

By Joan Greenway, Canada

Photos by Joan Greenway, Vianney Leduc, Steve Ulrich, Patrick Blandeau, and Michele Melady.

The herald of fall shows in Canada is the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, Ontario. Exhibits cover 350 acres of fairground every year but no bonsai show. Just a tree made of butter at the dairy farmer's exhibit! Canada's fall bonsai shows are much farther apart—all over Canada.

The first fall show was a three-day exhibition at the Montreal Botanic Garden organized by La Société de Bonsaï et de Penjing de Montréal, held on September 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. Definitely a three-day bonsai wonder!

The next show involved crossing the US border to Rochester, where Canadian bonsai artists were invited to attend. The US National Bonsai show gets better every year thanks to Bill Valavanis and company, who bring together fascinating bonsai from all over the United States. For me, it brought together fun, friends, and flawless bonsai.

Just getting to the US National Bonsai show involved a train ride from Courtice, Ontario, to Burlington, a bus to St. Catharines, and another 90-minute car ride across the border to Rochester. Many others traveled there from farther away, attending from Japan, England, and Australia. Covid had prevented the last National, so everyone was excited and ready to be there.



Top and middle right: Mike Roussel from Toronto won the award for "Finest Bonsai from Canada" with his semi-cascade eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*).

Middle left and bottom: Mike McCallion from the Bonsai Society at Royal Botanic Garden Hamilton with his two entries at the US National Show, Trident Maple (*Acer buergerianum*) and American larch (*Larix laricina*).



Top left: Mike Roussel also entered in the US National Show an American larch forest (*Larix laricina*) with the controversial moose.

Top right: David Easterbrook from the Karamatsu Study Group Montreal entered his American larch (*Larix laricina*) for exhibit only as he led critiques for the US National Show.

Bottom left: Another of Mike Roussel's Eastern white cedars (*Thuja occidentalis*).

Bottom right: David Johnson from the Toronto Bonsai Society displayed his spruce yamadori (*Picea sp.*) at the US National Bonsai Show.



Seven Canadian bonsai artists brought their bonsai to the US National Bonsai Show over the September 9th and 10th weekend. The Canadian contingent included Gerry Raineville from BC, who was a co-presenter with Koji Hiramatsu from Japan. Gerry and Koji, plus Corin Tomlinson from Sherwood, England, were the judges.

It was a wonderful surprise when Mike Roussel from Toronto won the award for "Finest Bonsai from Canada" with his semi-cascade eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*). It was his first time showing at the US National, and the Canadians cheered loudly as he accepted his award at the Gala.

The weekend was busy trying to decide which pots to bring home, and of course, it was fun to go over budget. But most of all, renewing friendships and making new ones was a highlight during the show.

Robert Kempinski, a past president of BCI, had a wonderful shohin display. A new friend, Tiffany Slaton, an archery college coach, rode her motorcycle from Indiana with her first pot and John Naka's book in her saddlebag! She has yet to get a tree.

John Kim, with Michelle Hong, the new owners of Joshua Roth Tools in California, had supper with us as supportive show sponsors. They also support BCI—it was serendipity fun!

Many Canadians traveled for hours, and some struggled at the border because they had live plants and improper paperwork. Bringing a lot of trees, pots, stands, and stones to Rochester to show, sell, and attend makes this show a major destination for Canadian bonsai enthusiasts in North America.

After the US National Show, the Canadian Fall Bonsai Shows continue at various Ontario destinations. Traveling great distances within Canada happens frequently even for regular club meetings. A Winnipeg club member from Boissevain, about 25 km from the American border, near the International Peace Gardens, makes a 3.5-hour drive to the Winnipeg Bonsai Club.



In Waterloo, just across the border from Rochester, is the KW Bonsai Society Show on September 30th, 2023. The Ottawa Bonsai Club has its fall show in the Japanese Embassy on September 23rd and 24th, 2023.

And an even farther destination is the Quebec City Club Show on September 30th to October 1st, 2023. This competes with the Misseto Show, in Mississauga, on October 1st, 825 km away from Quebec City.



Ottawa Bonsai Club
 Top left: Japanese white pine, *Pinus parviflora*, Joe Greenspon
 Top right: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, Steve Ulrich
 Middle: Elephant bush, *Portulacaria afra*, Anthony Kabuasa
 Bottom left: Dwarf Japanese garden juniper, *Juniperus procumbens nana*, Owen Marsh
 Bottom right: Eastern white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, Vianney Leduc



The final show of the fall season is on October 14th and 15th, 2023, with the Toronto Bonsai Club at the Toronto Botanical Gardens. That will round off the season with some bonsai that were shown at the US National.

Bonsai Penjing Canada features all these fall shows and other Canadian Bonsai Shows on its Facebook page. In the spring, Bonsai Shows across Canada will begin the 2024 season with shows in April/May that are held at the Hamilton Royal Botanical Garden by their Bonsai Society, the Toronto Bonsai Society Spring Show at the Toronto Botanical Garden, and the Matsuyama Bonsai Society in Oshawa.

We will also look forward to the Victoria Club and Vancouver Club shows, and the Winnipeg Club that held a curated exhibit at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the last weekend in July. The Montreal and Quebec Clubs are advertised on the Bonsai Penjing Canada Facebook page as they set up their dates in the summer.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the Canadian clubs could come together in one spot? It is a dream to have a Canadian National Bonsai Show in one place and to bring together the "finest bonsai" from all the Canadian Clubs. The possible sites are spread across Canada. The Canadian National Exhibition (The Ex established in 1879 in Toronto) or perhaps the Montreal Botanical Garden, or Butchart Garden in Victoria, BC, where bonsai was first displayed in Canada, would make lovely venues. Ultimately, a bonsai is a source of inspiration. By linking with the beauty of our bonsai, we can be reminded of our dreams and the steps we need to make them a reality. 🌲



La Société de Bonsaï et de Penjing de Montréal

Top left: Coastal redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, Part of Montréal Botanical Garden collection

Top right: American larches *Larix laricina*, Pierre Leloup

Middle: Sargent juniper, *Juniperus chinensis sargentii*, Pierre Leloup

Bottom: Trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*, David Easterbrook

Unlock the Secrets of Bonsai with the Kimura Masterclass

By Joe Grande, Canada

Are you ready to embark on a journey that will transform your understanding of Bonsai artistry? Welcome to Bonsai Empire's Kimura Masterclass, where the world of Bonsai will be unveiled before your eyes. This unique course offers you an unprecedented opportunity to learn from the master himself, Mr. Kimura, often referred to as 'the Magician' of Bonsai. If you have ever dreamt of wielding power tools to create exquisite *Shari* and *Jin* features on your Bonsai or mastering the art of changing foliage on Junipers, this course is your golden ticket.

Craftsmanship Beyond Ordinary

This masterclass is not your average Bonsai tutorial; it's a masterful exploration of techniques that have been honed through years of dedicated practice and love for the art. Mr. Kimura, in collaboration with Bonsai Empire, has carefully designed every lecture in this course. Before the recording commenced, the trees used had been lovingly nurtured for over two years, making it a labor of true passion. The result is a collection of lessons that will elevate your skills to new heights and impart an understanding of Bonsai that goes beyond the ordinary.

The Course Contents

- **Introduction (Lecture 1):** Begin your journey by acquainting yourself with the course and your new mentor, Mr. Kimura. Discover the ethos and spirit behind the art of Bonsai, setting the stage for what lies ahead.

- **Taxus Techniques (Lectures 2 - 7):** Mr. Kimura unveils the secrets of working with power tools, from chainsaws to grinders, to sculpt and style a magnificent Taxus. Dive into the intricate world of deadwood creation and preservation, as well as the art of bending old branches. This section promises to transform you into a master of power tools and Taxus.

- **Juniper Techniques (Lectures 8 - 13):** In the second part of the Masterclass, witness the transformation of a Juniper that was specially grafted for this course. Learn from Mr. Kimura as he shares his insights on grafting, fertilizing, pruning, and wiring. Delve into the nuances of Juniper Bonsai, and harness the skills to create your own masterpiece.

- **Conclusion (Lectures 14 - 16):** Take a glimpse into the world of Mr. Kimura's private backyard, where few are privileged to enter. Explore his ongoing projects and hear the concluding remarks that encapsulate the essence of the Masterclass. And, upon successful completion, receive your course certificate, marking your journey from a novice to a skilled Bonsai artist.

A Rare Opportunity

The Kimura Masterclass is not just a course; it's a rare opportunity to learn from one of the greatest Bonsai artists of our time. Each lecture is carefully structured to provide you with hands-on experience and insights that



Masahiko Kimura explains and demonstrates all the tools he uses to carve deadwood with details on deadwood treatment, gives a master class on wiring techniques and two lectures are devoted to grafting.

go beyond traditional Bonsai tutorials. The 'Magician' himself will guide you, sharing techniques, tips, and secrets that have been passed down through generations.

To make your journey even more enriching, you can mark your progress by clicking on the 'Mark as complete' button after each lecture. Additionally, you can engage with fellow Bonsai enthusiasts and have your questions answered by Bonsai Empire staff members, ensuring a supportive and interactive learning experience.

Don't miss out on this extraordinary opportunity to delve into the world of Bonsai artistry with Mr. Kimura as your mentor. Enroll in the Kimura Masterclass, and let the magic of Bonsai unfold before your eyes. This course is more than a lesson; it's an invitation to be part of the legacy of one of Bonsai's greatest artists.

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