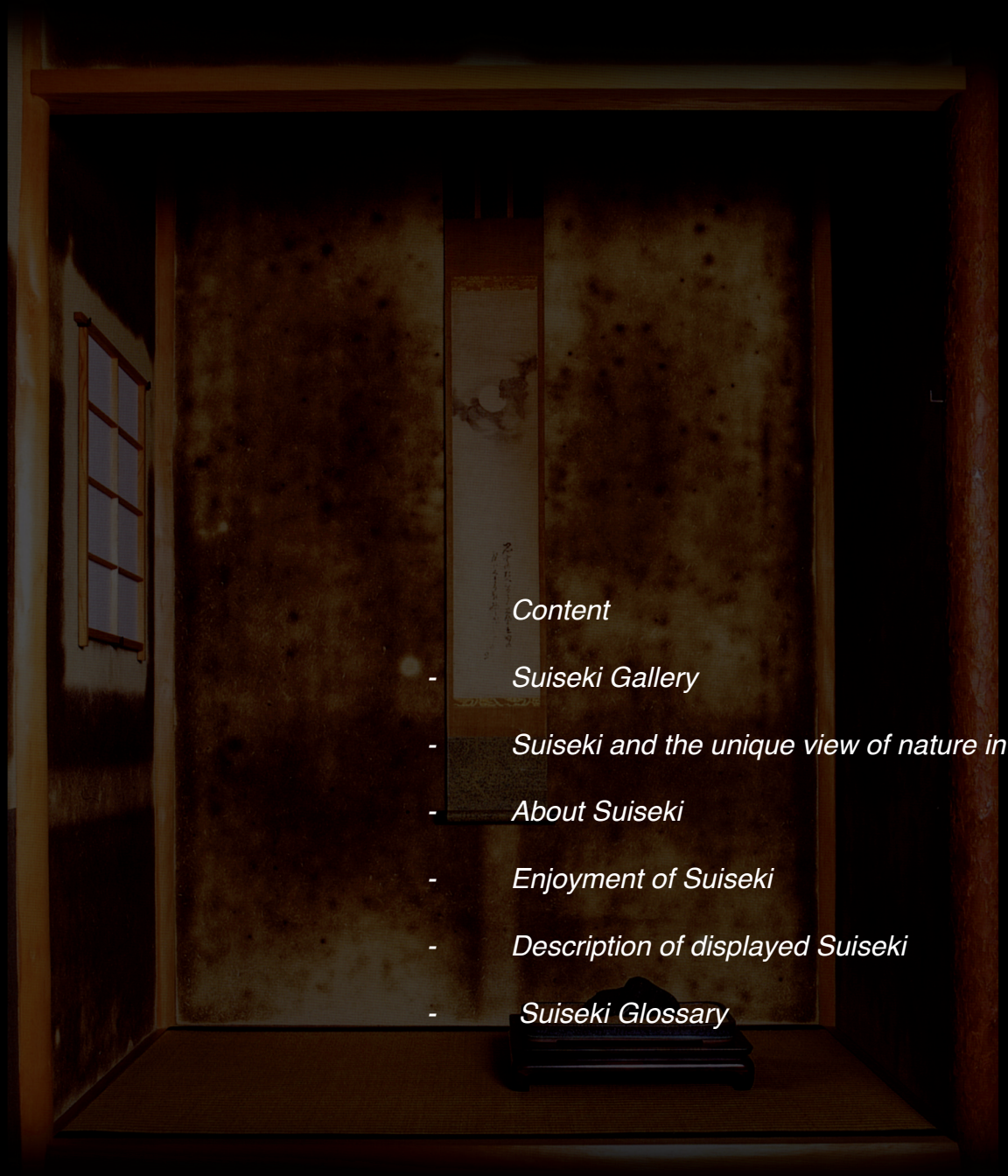
SUISEKI

The Japanese View of Nature and the Art of Stone Appreciation



A SELECTION OF FINE SUISEKI

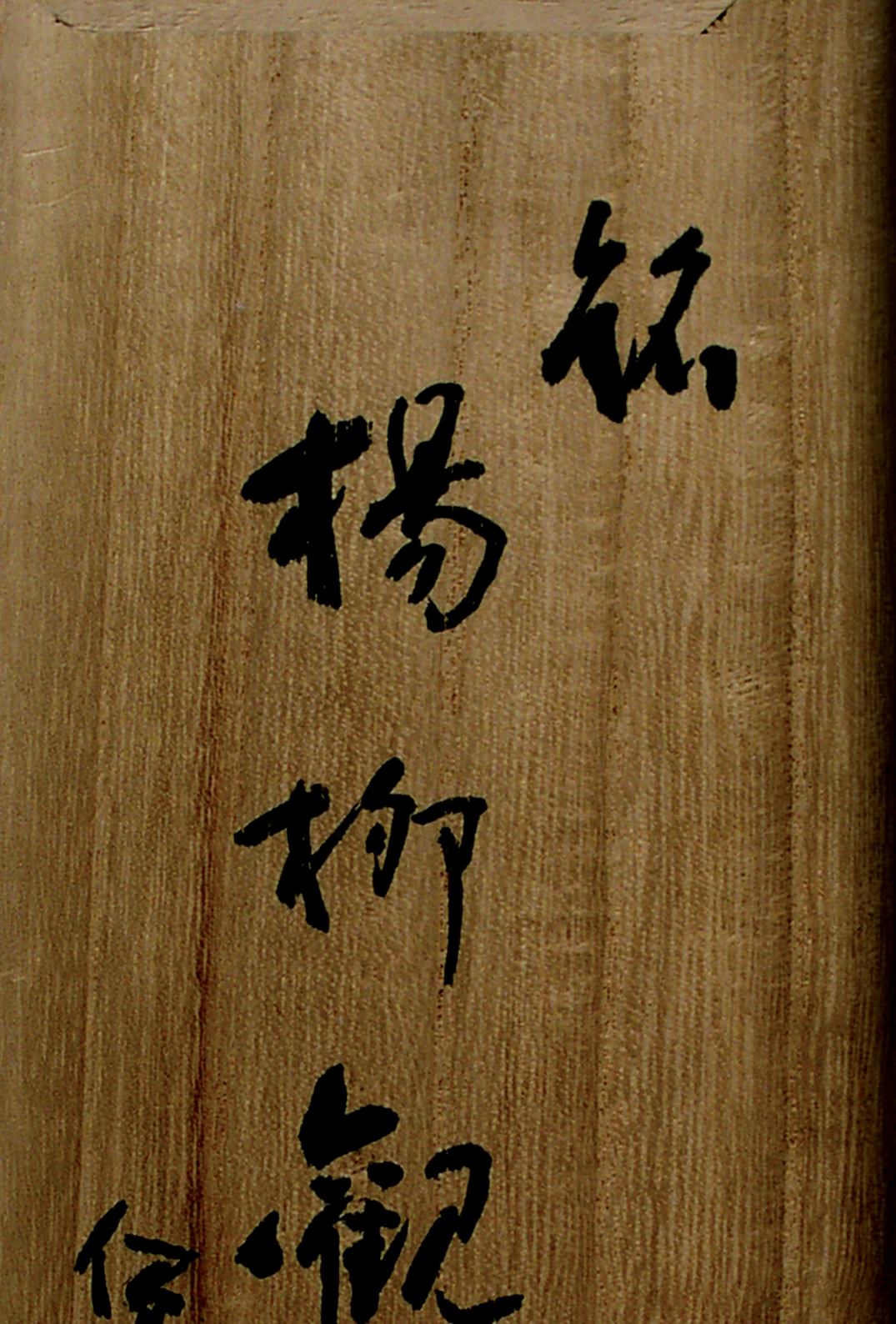


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楊柳觀


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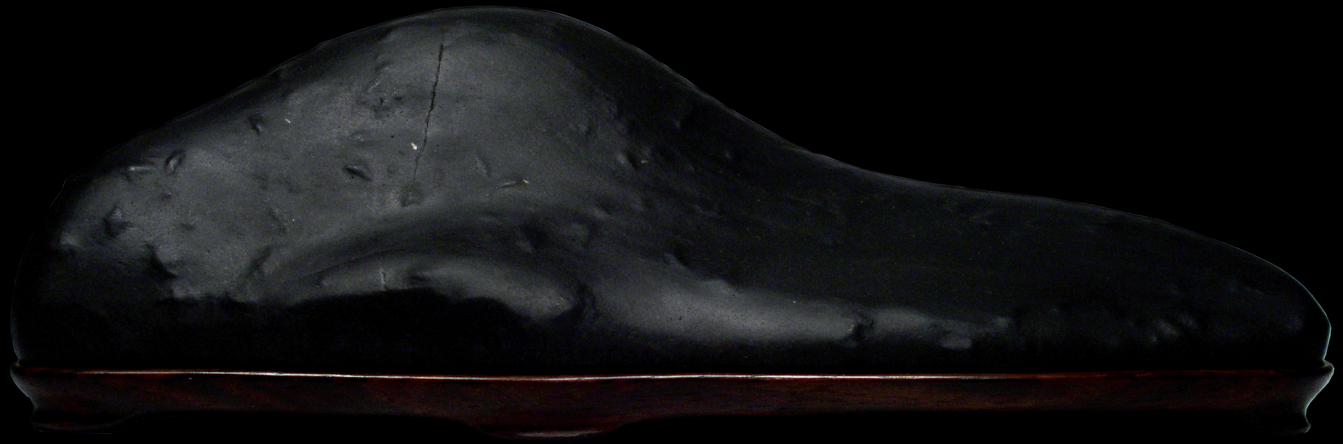








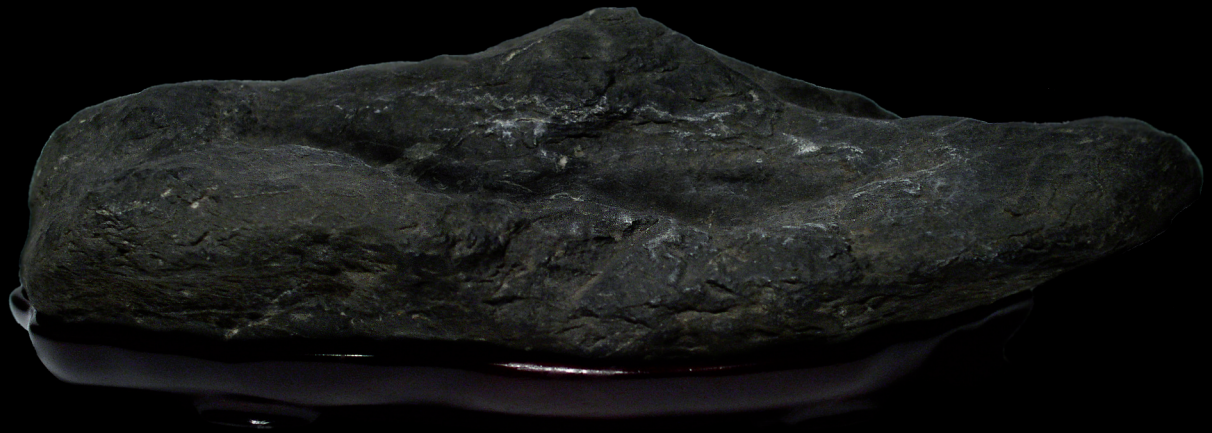














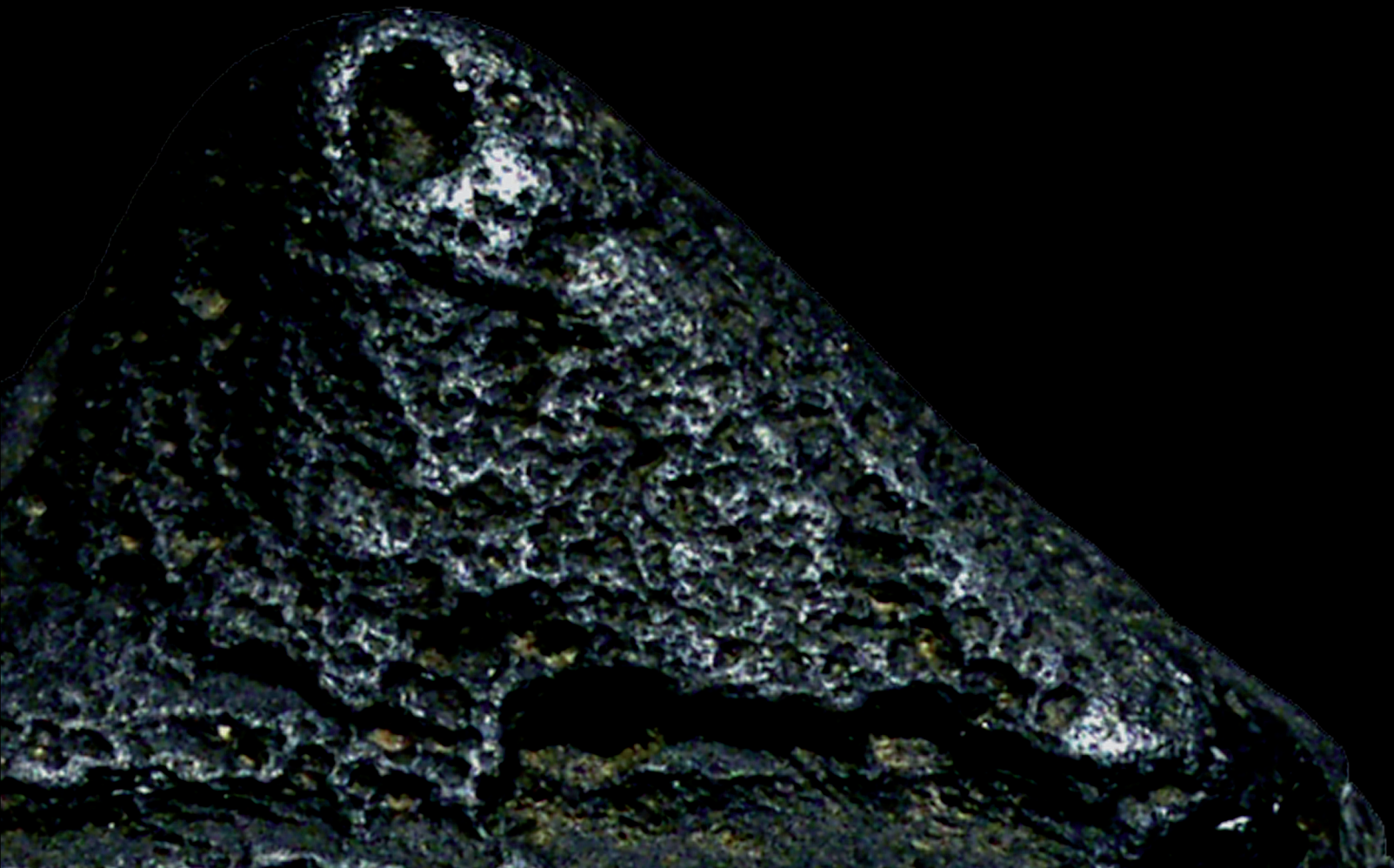










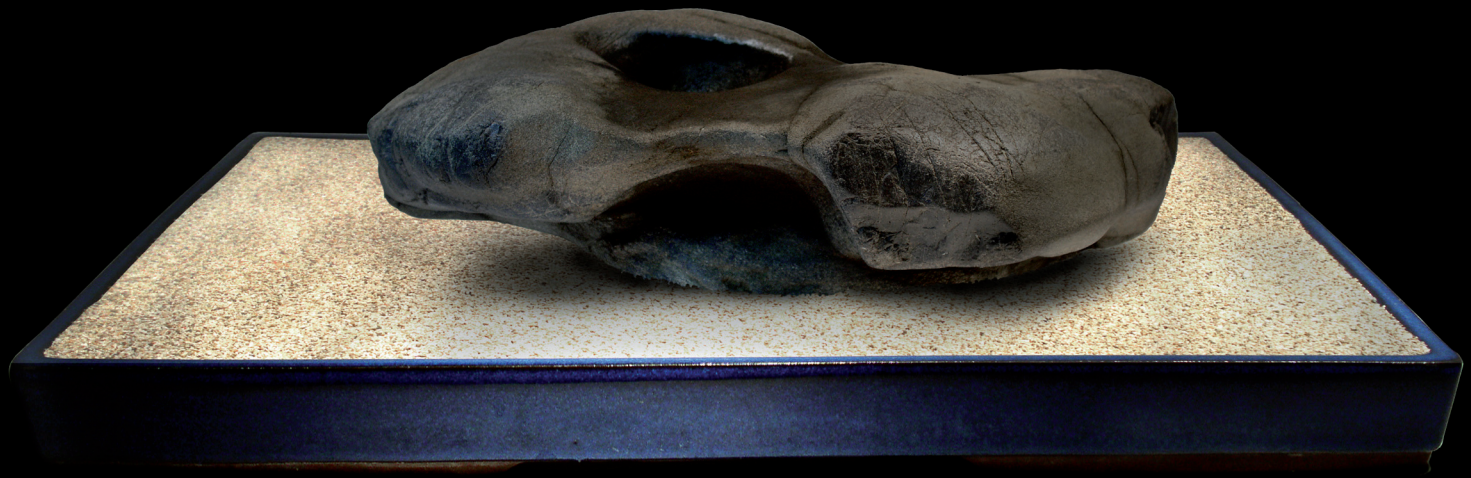






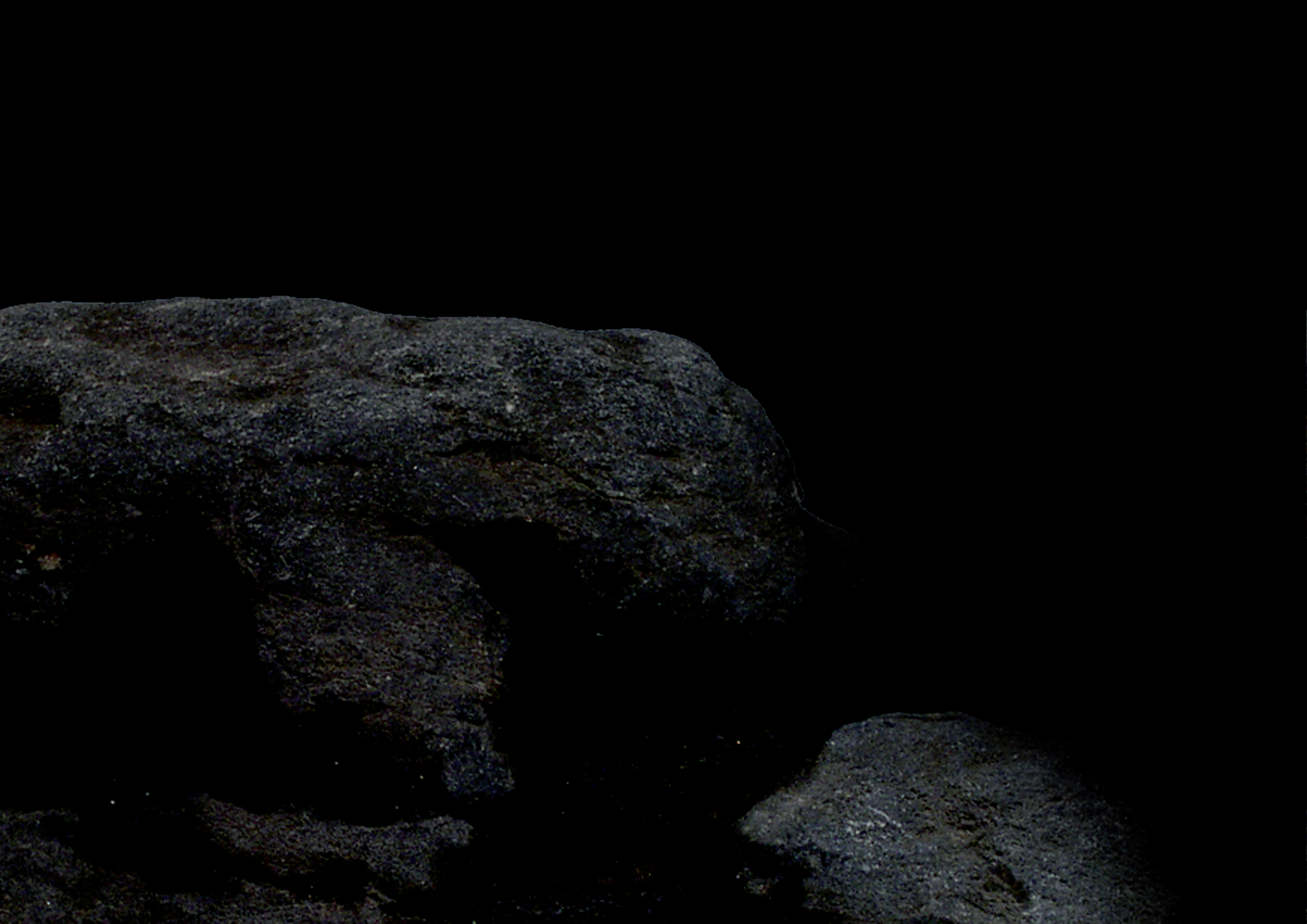


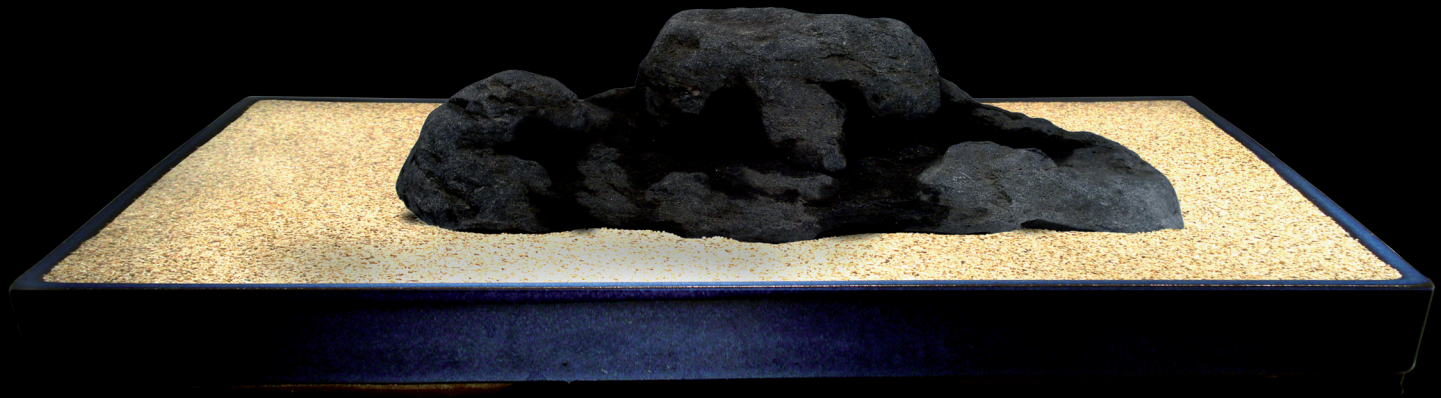








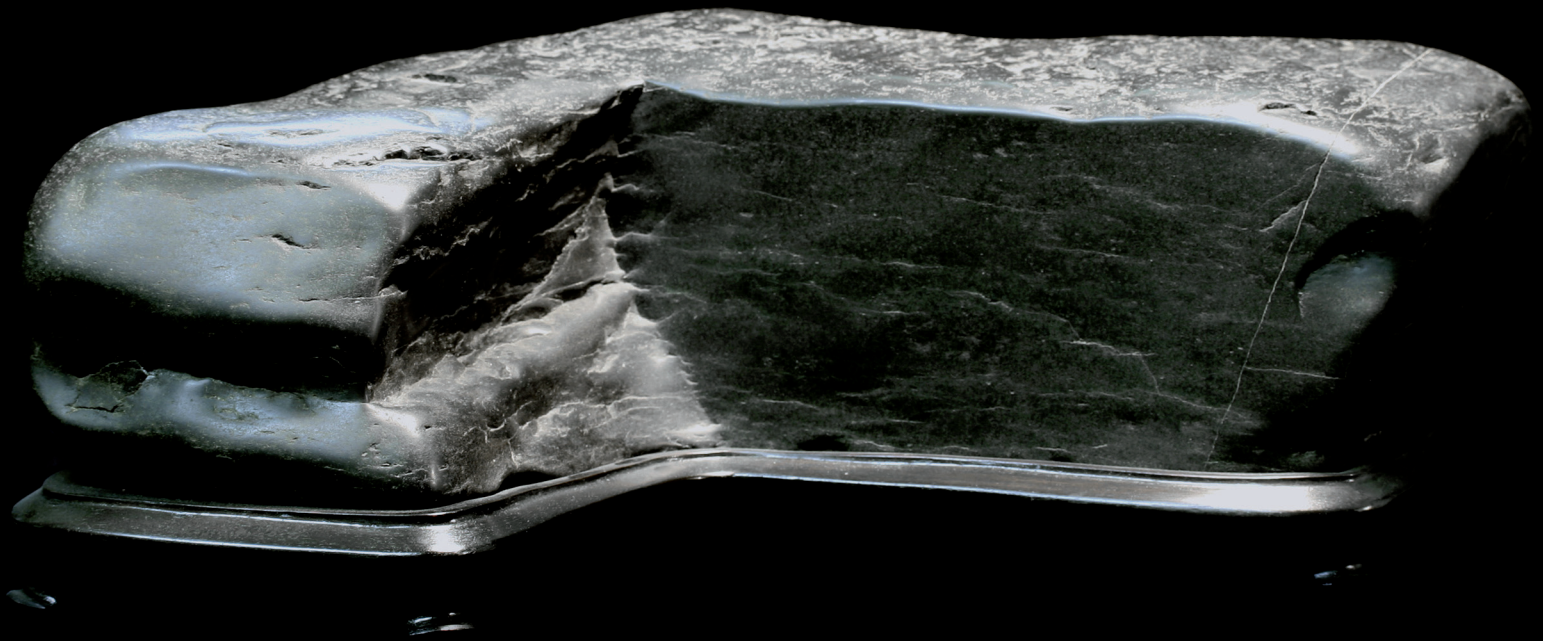






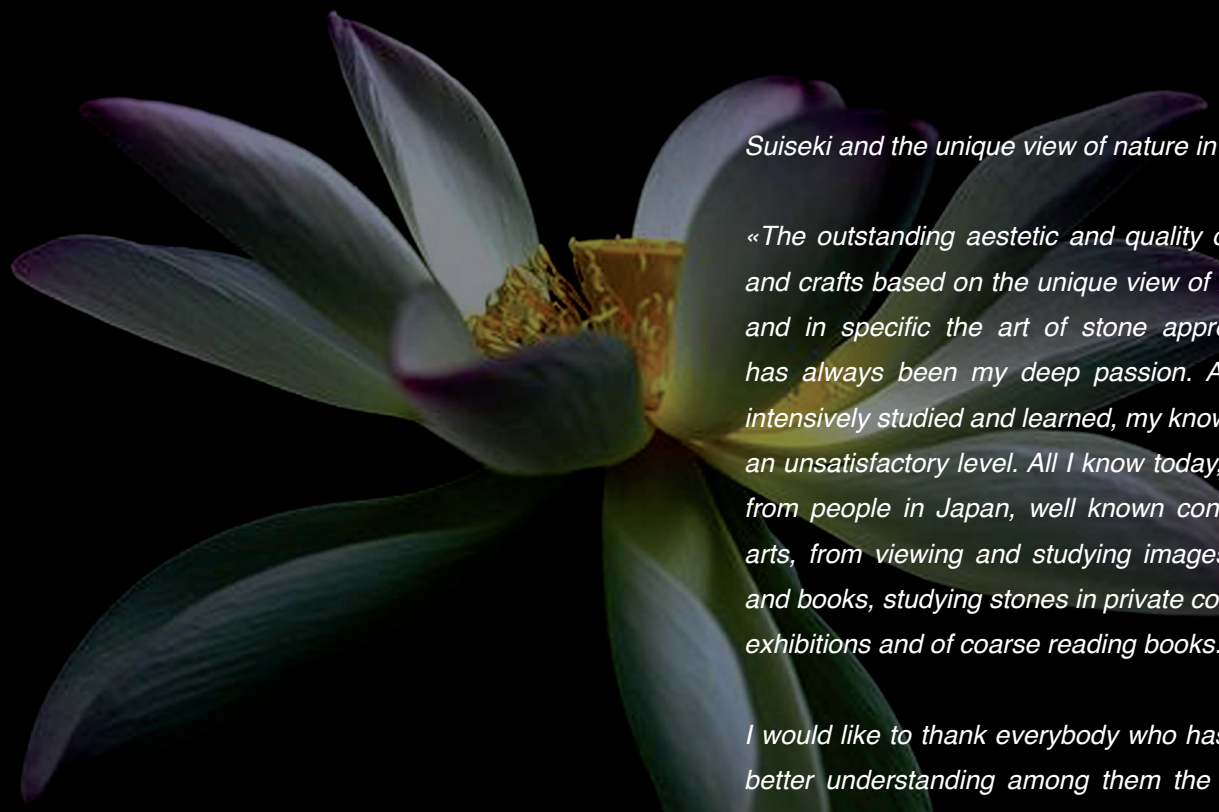












Suiseki and the unique view of nature in Japan

«The outstanding aestetic and quality of Japanese art and crafts based on the unique view of nature in Japan and in specific the art of stone appreciation suiseki has always been my deep passion. Although I have intensively studied and learned, my knowledge is still on an unsatisfactory level. All I know today, I have learned from people in Japan, well known connoisseur of the arts, from viewing and studying images of catalogues and books, studying stones in private collections and on exhibitions and of coarse reading books.

I would like to thank everybody who has helped me for better understanding among them the most important ones are Arishige Matsuura, president of the Nippon Suiseki Kyôkai, a person with an extremely refined taste, who has thought me the real essentials of suiseki and the Japanese art. Seiji Morimae who I first met some ten years ago at the beautiful house of Chikufuen, where he worked as a student at that time, showing me his boss collection while he was out.

I also received deep insights through important publications like «Zen no Kenkyû“ of Kitaro Nishida, the founder of modern Japanese philosophy, „Die Philosophie Japans“ of Peter Pförtner and Jens Heise, Inoue Tetsujiro, Die japanische Philosophie, in „Die Kultur der Gegenwart“, Nakamura Hajime, „A history of the development of Japanese thought“, the tales of Lafcadio Hearns, Curd Glauser in his books on “Die Kunst Ostasiens”, the marvelous book of Izutsu and Toshihiko “The theory of beauty in the classical aesthetics of Japan” and many more.

For me particularly mention-worth still are the remarkable publications of Professor Isamu Kurita: Ippen shônin: „Tabi no shisaku-sha“ (Priest Ippen: a poet on the road) Asuka-Yamato: „Bi no junrei“ (Asuka and Yamato: a pilgrimage of beauty), „Setsugekka no kokoro“ (A heart of snow, moon, and flowers), „Dôgen no yomikata“ (How to read the works of Priest Dôgen), „Nihon no Kokoro“ (Japanese Mind) and least but not last his genius essay: „Setsugakka“ on which the following compilation about nature bases.
Martin Pauli

Preface

We always tend to mystify things, which we don't understand. If we want to understand Japanese fine arts, no matter if it is bonsai, suiseki, ikebana or kendo, judo and karate, we not only have to pay attention to the art we are interested in. We have to study the Japanese history, culture and philosophy. At a certain point we start to understand and many things we didn't understand before will become simply clear and comprehensible.

"In the first place, we should note that the Japanese are willing to accept the phenomenal world as absolute because of their disposition to lay greater emphasis upon intuitive sensible concrete events, rather than upon universals. This way of thinking, with emphasis upon the fluid, arresting character of observed events regards the phenomenal world. What is widely known among post-Meiji philosophers in the last century as the "theory" that the phenomenal is actually the real" has a deep root in Japanese tradition" ("Nihon no shisôkai" The intellectual world of Japan, 1967 by Nakamura Yûjirô)

"They also have rites and ceremonies so different from those of all other nations that it seems they deliberately try to be unlike any other peoples. The things which they do in this respect are beyond imagining and it may truly be said that Japan is a world the reverse of Europe; everything is so different and opposite that they are like us in practically nothing. So great is the difference in their food, clothing, honors, ceremonies, language, management of the household, in their way of negotiating, sitting, building, curing the wounded and sick, teaching and bringing children up and in anything else, that it can neither be described nor understood.
Now all this would not be surprising if they were like so many barbarians, but what astonishes me is that they behave as very prudent and cultured people in al these matters. To see how everything is the reverse of Europe, despite the fact that their ceremonies and customs are so cultured and founded on reason, causes no little surprise to anyone who understands such things. What is ever more astonishing is that they are so different from us, and even contrary to us, as regards the senses the natural things and in specific their view of nature". ..

…it is no less astonishing to see the importance that they attach to things which they regard as treasures in Japan, although to us such things seem trivial. They have a kind of earthenware bowl from which the "cha" is drunk. The king of Bungo once showed me such a small bowl for which, in all truth, we would have no other use than to put it into a bird's cage as a drinking-trough; nevertheless, he paid 9'000 taels (or about 14,000 ducats) for it. Although thousands of similar bowls are made, the Japanese can immediately pick out these valuable items from among thousands of others, just as European jewelers can distinguish between genuine and false stones… (Allessandro Valignano 1539-1606)

Setsugakka

Painting subjects of winter snow, the autumn moon, and spring cherry blossoms, often presented in a triptych format. The subjects are thought to originate from a verse by the Chinese poet, Bo Chui (772-846; Jp: Haku Kyoi or *Haku Rakuten), which contains the line, „Setsugekka no toki mottomo kimi wo omou." (When I see the snow, moon, or flower, I always think of you.) The theme was also worked into Japanese waka poetry and later appeared in "renga" poetry from the 15th century. The earliest known use in Japanese literature occurs in "The pillow book" (makura no sôshi ; ca.1000) by Sei Shônagon. The subject not only represents seasonal changes, but also holds various literary allusions. In painting, the theme was often combined with the views of famous places (meisho-e). For example, the winter snow might appear atop a depiction of Mt. Fuji, the moon in a scene of autumn foliage along the banks of Tatsutagawa, and the cherry blossoms in a view of Mt. Yoshino. Setsugekka was a popular yamato-e subject, and it was also favored by "rimpa" artists. In ukiyo-e the theme was often used as a parody (mitate-e) in pictures of beauties (bijin-ga), or incorporated into landscape scenes (fûkeiga).

The unique view of nature in Japan

Japanese artists have turned more frequently to nature for their subject matter while Western artists have tended to focus primarily on human subject. Ancient Buddhist art containing representations of human form is above all concerned with expressing the truth of Buddha's law. Buddhist images symbolized, in iconographic form, a universal view that set forth humankind's relation to nature.

Subsequently, art expanded beyond the realm of religion, evolving first through the Heian imperial court (794-1185), then into the austere period of samurai ascendancy during the Kamakura (1185-1333), Muromachi (1333-1568), and Momoyama (1568-1600) periods, and further still into the modern aestheticism of the Edo period (1600-1868). Through every era, despite numerous changes in modes of expression, one common artistic thread persisted: a profound interest in natural scenery and landscape.

For Japanese, it seems that the portrayal of nature by its symbolic beauty, its harmonious interplay, its inherent order, and its evocative power should be the predominant subject of art.

In early Western art, nature was mostly a backdrop for depictions of Christian figures and narratives. Then through the renaissance and up to the modern time, portraiture and figure painting tended to dominate artistic concerns.

In Western art nature has generally become a prominent theme only in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and it was only in the 19th century that paintings of people at work or at prayer in nature began to appear.

Nature always had a special significance for the Japanese, especially in the arts.

Non-Japanese often say that they find the thinking of Japanese people difficult to comprehend. The rules that define the norms for Japanese people are different. Underlying their guidelines are a number of basic tenets: nature is beautiful, nature is harmonious, it has an intrinsic order and rules, and in certain way it can be seen to have an ethical or moral dimension.

These ideas are shaped by the belief that humankinds exist with the order of nature. Where the Japanese perhaps differ from other peoples sharing these same views is in their seeming inability to define nature's laws in clear, objective terms.

Among the terms used by Japanese to define their sensibilities, are "mono no aware" (the pathos of things). The term informs the norms believed to govern Japanese behavior, and is based of a deep affinity with nature and beauty, and a spontaneous, emotional response toward them.

The term is also used in a broader sense to describe a corresponding emotional affinity between humankind and the other creatures in the natural universe, or the love that exists between a man and a woman.

The capacity to be moved deeply, an aesthetic ideal associated with Heian period literature and aristocratic values. An empathetic response to the ephemerally of existence, aware usually implies sadness, although implications of joy and amazement are also possible.

The word, a conjunction of the exclamations a and hare, first appeared in the "man'yôshû", but reached its peak of popularity in The Tale of Genji „genji-e", where it is used 1,044 times as either a noun, a verb, awarebu or as adjectival phrases, awarenaru and awareto. Aware was used often as a critical term, hanshi, in poetry competitions, utaawase, and also appears in waka criticism such as Fujiwara Shunzei's (1114-1204) "korai fûtaishô" and later in theory on linked-verse "renga". In this linked-verse usage, aware acquired a connotation of elegant beauty. Although aware most properly distinguishes an internal, personal response to external phenomena, the association of the term with ephemeral beauty had repercussions for Heian art, adding a layer of depth to the outer expression of courtliness "miyabi". The presence of aware in literature, such as the tale of Genji and the tales of Ise "Ise Monogatari-e" then provided subjects for various forms of art, including painting, thus extending the influence of aware well beyond the Heian period. The phrase mono no aware the "pathos of things," was used by Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) to distinguish the broader Heian use of the term from the personal and idiosyncratic Edo period usage.

Japan has continued to believe in ancient spiritual elements that at one long time, until the Christianization was implemented in the western world, where actually global viewpoints.

It is only these elements that in fact set the Japanese apart. You can see Japanese uniqueness as simply

coinciding with the most ancient fundamental notions that have governed humankind's behavior everywhere on Earth since the earliest times.

Setsugakka, the three symbolic elements

To understand how the Japanese have traditionally looked upon nature, we can look up on the well-known speech of the author Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972) when he received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1968. Entitled "Japan the beauty and Myself", the oration focused on a discussion of the phrase setsugakka, which is linguistically lycomposed of tree elements: Snow (setsu), Moon (getsu) and Flowers (ka).

The phrase however is more than mere descriptive terminology. As the artworks on display here vividly demonstrate, these three elements appear repeatedly in Japanese painting and fine arts. Snow expressing the winter season, moon providing a year-round constant in the night sky. Flowers symbolizing the myriad plants and trees in endless transition amidst the cycle of the four seasons.

The perceptive observer will quickly discover, that the elements represented by setsugakka appear not only in Japan's work of fine art. They also appear in all kind of design elements of daily life and even in the family names of the Japanese, indeed they are a part of almost every aspect of Japanese life.

Flowers (ka)

Flowers – especially cherry (sakura) and plum (ume) blossoms – are an integral feature of Japanese painting. Wherever they appear, flowers and plants in general are usually depicted in their natural, wild state.

In Japan, flowers, grasses and trees are not viewed merely as tangible objects but as symbols of life itself. In flowers we perceive the universal laws of nature, the unending cycle of life, birth, death and rebirth. As evidence, consider the numerous flower-related festivals and events that have been celebrated each spring in Japan since ancient times.

The first record of cherry blossom viewing appears in Tale of Genji, the pinnacle of classical Japanese literature, written in the 12th century. One entire chapter of this work is devoted to a description of a cherry blossom to make merry with food, music and poetry until late into the night. It is here that Genji meets his eternal love, Oborozukiyo, the lady of the misty moonlit night for the first time.

Cherry-blossom viewing has long had special significance in Japan. Yoshinoyama, located in the historic heartland of Nara, is said to have been the earliest center of religious faith in the country. Still today the entire mountain is covered with cherry trees.

A legend speaks of Konohana Sakuyahime, daughter of the god of agriculture, who was herself viewed as a goddess of spring and vernal abundance. According to popular belief, her spirit takes possession of a cherry tree, enabling her to descend from heaven to earth.

Through the ages people have gathered under blossoming cherry trees, believing them to be sacred, and offered up their prayers to Konohana Sakuyahime for a plentiful year's harvest. Other festivals incorporate flowers offerings to ward of illness and nature disasters.

Blossoming cherry trees have been a revered symbol of spring, while brightly tinged leaves have symbolized autumn. Since ancient times, people have gathered to admire autumn foliage. The Japanese fondness for making excursions to view autumn leaves was recorded by the Portuguese as early as the 16th century.
A pair of painted screens dating from Muromachi period is providing early evidence. One is depicting a cherry blossom-viewing scene, the other an outing to view maple leaves. Together these screens demonstrate the strong affinity that the Japanese have long felt to cherry blossoms and autumn's brilliant foliage. But what is the meaning behind these activities?

The repertory of the Noh theater, which emerged in the late 14th century, includes a song about gathering autumn leaves. It describes a courageous man who passes a night in a forest underneath the shedding trees. There suddenly appears an alluring enchantress who drives the youth to distraction.

While the cherry blossom of spring represent the birth of new life, autumn foliage, as this Noh song reveals,

symbolizes the final burst of flame, of life, that precedes the arrival of winter, that represents death.

Autumn is also a time of heightened sensuality, and the time when we become most intimately conscious of death – together with the promise of rebirth in the spring – within the dynamic cycle of nature.

The Japanese do not look upon flowers and fall foliage as objects or pretty decorations, flowers are imbued with connotations of the grand natural flow between life and death.

Snow (setsu)

Snow is a symbol of winter. A white covering that blankets all that which is visible in other seasons. At the same time a snows cape, through seemingly devoid of everything, in fact offers a hint of new life, weather it be a single plum blossom coming into bud or a tiny blade of new grass – harbingers of a scene that is soon to unfold. Snow is a favored backdrop in Japanese drama, especially Noh theater and Kabuki.

A snowy landscape heightens the tension of the story through its inherent, vivid contrast. The contrast between a completely white snow cover that buries all life and creates a frigid world of death and the stalwart portrayal of life in the fact of, and even overcoming, death.

Flowers and fall foliage reveal the life force of nature, snow serve as a symbol of the world of winter, darkness and death and as a foreshadowing of life to come.

Moon (getsu)

In Japanese culture, the moon is more than simply a heavenly body. Since ancient times the Japanese have believed that the moon is the abode of the god of moon viewing.

In Buddhism it is seen as a symbol of the truth of Buddhist law. This belief originates from the fact that the moon always remains in the sky; no matter how much a person might move about, walk from palace to place or even travel across the world. It reveals itself again and again, in perfect form, everywhere. As a reflection it can appear in the water of a pond or drop of water in the palm of one's hand.

The moon is constant, something that never leaves us. And because it always remains in the sky, the moon represents the fundamental truths of the universe.

Obviously, Japanese have not viewed or portrayed nature simply in the terms in which it appears. Japanese have taken elements of nature, flowers, snow and the moon, symbolizing the continuum of nature, the nature's life-given powers and the comprehensive and unchanging truth that governs all things, which itself includes the first two elements, and understood themselves to be an integral part of this context.

Japanese people wish to be at one with nature and they work toward this through the creation of works of beauty. Japanese art is a manifestation of this desire to be one with nature.

When a Japanese artist draws a landscape painting, it is not so much a description of a particular or isolated scene, but rather a suggestion of a universal idea underlying the overall composition.

Instead of reproducing visual scenes just as they appear to the eye, Japanese artists prefer to crate scenery in a symbolic and stylized manner. Japanese art is expected to be replete with profound significance, philosophically, literally and ideologically. This multidimensionality is perhaps most recognizable in ink paintings and landscapes.

Landscape (sansui)

The Japanese word for landscape is sansui. The term is composed of two elements: San (mountain) and Sui (water). The majority of Japanese landscape paintings include depictions of mountains and flowing water. In Japan, mountains traditionally have been regarded as sacred locations, places where spirits dwell or to which they descend from heaven. Ideally, mountains should be viewed from afar and worshipped.

Rivers on the other hand have been regarded as places where mortals can wash away their spiritual impurities, clean their souls, and thus become more vigorous, more vital. No wonder that many Shinto shrines in Japan face

onto rivers or streams.

After visitors cleanse themselves in the river water they are sufficiently purified to worship at the shrine.

Given this background, Japanese landscape paintings, depictions of mountains and water, and occasionally including the sun or moon, do not represent isolated scenes from nature in realistic detail. Rather at their deepest level they attempt to portray the universal framework and natural truths that underlies such scenery.

Elements behind the Japanese view of nature

There are three mayor elements in the Japanese view of the natural world.

The first element can be defined as the changes that occur through the passage of the four seasons, a repetitive and orderly cycle of flux.

The second element relates to the invisible forces that effect nature, creating the shape of a tree, the form of a mountain or a stone.

The third element is the energy that creates life ad all forms of living.

Together, these three elements exert their various effects on the physical world, sometimes in clearly manifested ways and sometimes in unseen ways.

In the Japanese view, these events all occur due to the existence of a mysterious, spiritual power. In other words, Japanese people view nature as part of a total cosmic realm.

This Japanese view diverges widely from the view of nature we have in the West. The Japanese view relates to the ancient word musubi, literally “birth giving spirit”, which implies life is generated spontaneously.

The modern western view sees nature in material parameters, as negative and passive, a created, statistic work. In the West, the belief in the existence of sacred, life-giving force in all objects is referred to as animism. But, there is a difference between Western animism and the Japanese view of nature. According to animism, each object, whether it is a rock, a tree or water, is home to its own peculiar spirit that makes the object what it is.

In the Japanese view, at the root of these myriad manifestations exists one invisible, underlying and uniform sacred entity, the one life-giving force. This sacred entity exists in all objects as itself. This is why the Japanese believe that nature is in close relationship with the sacred, a view somewhat akin to animism.

The modern Japanese word for nature is shizen. It is a relatively recent coinage dating only to the Meiji period (1868-1912). Its adoption as a translation for the Latin word natura was first proposed by Amane Nishi (1829-1897) a leading philosopher of his days.

Prior to that time, the Japanese view of nature was expressed by the word zôka, made up from two characters meaning “creation” and “change”. The fusion between this early connotation of creation and change and the Japanese notion of nature signifies the inseparable relationship between these two concepts in the Japanese view.

Matsuo Bashô (1644-1694), one of the most well known proponents of the Japanese view of nature said that a close rapport with zôka is the continuous thread that binds all of Japan’s most famous thinkers and artists down through history.

Transcending human knowledge

One of the common criticisms of Japanese art is that it is merely decorative or “artistic” in character. Given the thinking that underlies it, as described above. Japanese art, in truth, has a profundity that transcends many of the conventions associated with modern art.

The Japanese do not see art as a message from one human being to another. Nor do they believe that art has value because it is entirely “human” in character or origin. In the field of ceramic for example, prized everyday utensils made by unknown artisans, and works imperfect or irregular in shape, sometimes even cracked have been highly appreciated.

For Japanese not only admire artworks that are geometrically perfect, such as Chinese celadon or white porcelains, but often display a strong affection for beauty that appears to be imperfect. This Japanese love

of the imperfect stems from an acknowledgement of the inherent limitations of human creative powers. No matter how hard a human being might try, we are ultimately incapable of creating something that is absolutely perfect. Perfection, on the contrary, is the product of the creative powers of nature, zôka.

The ceramic piece that emerges from kiln is the end product of spontaneity beyond the power of human control. It is evidence of the powers of nature. Ceramic is only one manifestation of the grand and mysterious power of nature.

Another example is ikebana. The Japanese art of flower arranging. Flower arranging is no unique to Japan. In the West as well, flowers are placed in abundance in both public and private settings. But unlike the West, where flowers are typically seen as an interior accessory, in ikebana the goal is to arrange the flowers in such a manner as to reproduce them in their natural, uncut setting.

The principal location for displaying an ikebana arrangement is the tokonoma, in a Japanese-style tatami-matted room. The tokonoma is not regarded as part of the interior space, rather like a sacred place. Even a single flower serves as a symbol of universal truth, providing the medium trough, which humans can become, one with the nature.
For this reason, an ikebana arrangement, particularly when created for the tea ceremony, is usually kept simple. Rather than a flower at the peak of its bloom, a flower still in the bud is welcomed, for it demonstrates all the more vividly and clearly the process of life unfolding.

Indeed, it is said that nothing is more magnificent than an ikebana arrangement that, once set in place, spontaneously settles overnight into its own arrangement, confirming to the order of nature without the touch of a human hand. The Japanese thus view even a single flower in the wider context of its relationship to nature, part of the totality of the world that embraces humanity.

The Japanese do not view art as decorative ornamentation. They view it as an integral element of everyday life. The inherent function of art is to transport one into close and harmonious union with nature.

The superior or successful work of art is not an object that has achieved perfect beauty. To be truly outstanding, a work of art must serve as a means to morally purify and elevate the world of universe, the environment, and in turn, the beholder. This notion can perhaps best be understood through the specific, if perhaps atypical, examples of Japanese art described below.

The way of art as a moral force

Japan, of course, is not without its many artistic geniuses and skilled and specialized artisans. In all areas of the traditional arts, the ordinary person commonly participates in the production, performance and enjoyment of artistic endeavors.

Almost one thousand years ago, in the tale of Genji, Genji is portrayed not as one of the leading statesmen of these days, but also as an accomplished poet and painter.

Artistic undertakings where not only reserved for the elite. Traditional Japanese verse, for example, in both its waka (31 syllable) and haiku (17 syllable) forms, was an immediate part of the life of the ordinary person to relay their deepest sentiments to the object of their affections.

Within the circles of the imperial court, the ability to compose poetic verse was regarded as the highest asset of a truly skilled functionary. This view derived from the power that poetry was seen to have harmonizing human relationships and in infusing harmony, beauty and moral astuteness into every human setting.

A corresponding situation also exists in tea ceremony. Although there are headmasters (iemoto) of the various schools of this art, the tea ceremony continues to be practiced and enjoyed by people from every station in life. Ikebana, likewise, is not restricted to a special few, but is common part of life. Similarly Noh, Kabuki and other related forms of art.

Also calligraphy, a basic task of everyday life, was elevated to a status approaching, sometimes even transcending, that of a painting. In religious contexts, calligraphy was even believed by many to be imbued with spiritual power.

During the mid-nineteen century, it was common practice for children to take lessons in calligraphy as an indispensable artistic, and practical accomplishment. These pursuits and also the so-called martial arts like kendô, judô and so on, typically contain the suffix dô. The term is normally translated in English as “way” and in effect implies a code of behavior that follows the laws of nature, which the Japanese see as the morally upstanding way to live.

The Japanese suffix dô has its origins in China. It corresponds to the Chinese word Dao, the Japanese transformed its basic principles into concrete terms that served as a practical and ethical way of life, in accordance with the law of nature. It might also be mentioned here that Buddhism was similarly accepted into Japan, where it flourished as a “way” of life, the way of Buddha.

Japanese people look upon nature as the fundamental truth of the universe and believe that humanity is able to live in harmony with nature precisely by pursuing and maintaining the various “ways” described above. These notions continue to live in the hearts of Japanese people even today.



Suiseki
One of the most exceptional Japanese arts, representing this unique view of nature, is “suiseki”.

Suiseki is the art of striving to symbolize natural phenomena, from countryside to the universe, using a stone a few inches to a foot and a half in dimension.
The art of suiseki begins with the acquisition of stones in nature and consummates in a sensation of beauty and in a spiritual connection between the collector and the stone. The stones are natural and not to be worked on or altered in anyway by human being.

The five main elements
Many different things have been written about facts and terms from the world of suiseki during the last few years. I am writing this text in the hope it can clear up some inconsistencies about the art suiseki.

A beautiful suiseki is a natural stone, which suggests, in its natural form, a scene from nature (sansui), a personage or an object (sugata), an animal (dôbutsu) for example.

This act of association evokes a spirit of calm and restfulness in the soul of the viewer. In order to grasp this concept in concrete terms it is important to understand what are known as the five elements of suiseki. In other words, the aesthetic value of a stone is influenced by the shape, quality, color, texture and age of the stone.

The final judgment of a stone is an overall appreciation of these various elements interweaving and interacting with each other.

First at all, it is important to accept, that the suiseki is a pure Japanese art form developed during several hundreds of years by peoples with refined taste, well educated in chado the way of tea and a deep understanding of nature.

If one have found a nice stone in Europe or somewhere else and you ask a Japanese person to judge it, one will mostly be disappointed. The reason why is, that a Japanese person was brought up in a world totally different to ours in all aspects of life and culture, religion, symbolism, colors, shapes, food, signs, language and his profound relation with nature.

Sansui ishi (landscape stone)
In Europe a typical mountain is such one like the Matterhorn with its sharp edged, vertically oriented shape. The ideal mountain in Japan is Mt. Fuji, a horizontally oriented, well balanced mountain with slopes descending softly to the ground, its peak surrounded by clouds.

Sugata-ishi (human shape stone)
If a person in the West will be approached by a stone representing a human shaped it would rather by a stone looking like a famous actor or a garden dwarf. A personage in the eyes of a Japanese person would rather be one of the 33 appearances of Bodhisattva Kannon or an appearance of Daruma, maybe a dancer from the Nara period.

Keishô ishi (object shape stone)
If a stone suggest us a boat, we see a steamboat or a sailboat, the Japanese see a vague suggestion of the treasure boat (takarabune), which plays an important role in Japanese history.

Dokutsu-ishi (animal shape stone)
Westerner sees a dog, a wolf, a dinosaur a cat just because of, it reminds us to it. Japanese do not have the same relation to dinosaurs or wolfs, they appreciate a vague suggestions of animals, which play a specific role in their culture and life. The fox «Inari» for example is one of the many commonly known ghosts (kami), if something goes wrong it must have been the fox.

There are many stories about the fox and if you have a stone suggesting a fox in a certain position, Japanese know exactly which story it tells. There is also a very famous story about the ox and a boy. However, the more one knows about Japanese culture the better one understand suiseki.

First element: Shape (katachi)
This is the most important element in judging the relative qualities of a suiseki. The most common method of appreciation is to sit at some distance in front of the stone and gaze at it. Any stone that has an unnatural feeling at the first glimpse is considered unsuitable. We

can also mention the following about the ideal method of viewing a stone.

Three Surface Method (sanmen no ho)

This is considered to be the most basic approach to appreciating suiseki. Three surfaces (sanmen) refer to the front & back, the left & right, and top & bottom of the stone. A balance among these different surfaces is considered to be basic when viewing and judging a stone.

When viewing a stone from the vantage point of these three surfaces, there should be a balance in terms of mass and shape. An outstanding stone is also one in which there is a harmony regarding the size, thickness and shape of the three surfaces.

For an example, if there is a mountain foot on the front of a distant mountain stone (tôyama ishi), there ideally should be a foot section on the back as well.

If the right side of the mountain protrudes out, there must also be an extension of some degree on the left side as well. The bottom of the stone is good when the stone „sits“ well in the center in relation to the whole. However, these are all ideals. In actual practice, the three surfaces should basically display a representative form and a certain degree of unity.

Unnatural feeling

Note that suiseki are representing an idealized picture of Japanese nature and culture. ”Sanmen No Ho”, the Japanese system only plays with these 3 surfaces, but it judges all 6 sides. Front and back: As Matsuura Arishige says, the front of a stone is the most important side of the stone because of stones are presented in the “tokonoma” alcove and you sit or stand in front of it to view the tokonoma display (tokokazari). Likely a human being, Japanese understand a tree or a stone as a creature or a „living been that cannot speak“ they somehow personify Mountains as Fuji-san or stones suggesting Kannon as Kannon-san. Lafcadio Hearn mentioned in one of his books: Japanese believe, that there are to kinds of existences such with “wishes” (humans) an such without wishes

A stone lover has said once: „An outstanding person is hardly to be found, to find an outstanding stone is even worse.“

Front and Back means all aspects like the stones contour or outline, the depth and so on. The line of the mountain ridge should be soft and rhythmical and the viewer’s eye should be able to follow easily. The slopes descent softly to the ground and the mountains foot should run out to the viewer. On the backside, the mountain should not look like cut or broken and it should not bend in. There should be a mountain foot running out as well but not as far as on the front side.

Left and Right: Same like front and back, the mountains shall look harmonious and natural. The mountain food shall run out on the left side and on the right side. The peak of a mountain shall ideally stand one third from the left or right side, following the principle of the golden section.

Top and Bottom: Seeing from top, the stone should bend a little toward the viewer, as bonsai should. The stones middle section shall be deeper than its ends. The stones bottom should be - more or less - flat, natural, not cut It’s allowed to remove a small protrusion if it makes it difficult to place it in the tray (suiban) or carved wooden stand (daiza).

Mass and Shape

Thickness: A stone can be slim, light and elegant, another can be powerful and heavy. A stone should “sit” well. If one place a stone in a suiban one will immediately see what is mend. If a stone is laid in the suiban, the whole base should touch the sand. Sand is always representing a lake or the ocean and shall be ideally of the color of ivory.

A suiban has not necessarily to be very shallow. There are also deep suibans used to present a suiseki with an uneven base. But the dimension of a suiban shall always harmonize with the dimension of the stone.

Second element Quality (shitsu)

As for the qualities stone suited for suiseki, the stone should be hard and dense enough that it does not immediately change in quality and where there is no

danger of breaking. Moss grows readily on soft stone that absorbs water. Lava can break readily.

On the other hand, if the stone is too hard it will lack that special element of beauty that appeals to our hearts. In other words, a suiseki should have the proper hardness to maintain its shape but also have a tactile element that exudes peace and repose. It should also be suited to pouring water on it to maintain a moist feeling over a long period. Such stones are known as «mizumochi no ii ishi» good water-holding stones in the world of suiseki. But such characteristics are difficult to bring out in stones, which have been newly retrieved from rivers, known as araishi; ara comes from atarashii (new). In order to improve the water holding qualities of the stone it is important to expose the stone to the daylight and to irrigate it. Even if the stone originally have poor water absorption qualities, it is possible to improve those qualities by „breaking them in“ over a long period. By exposing the stones to the elements it is possible to bring out the qualities that allow them to harmonize more readily with water.

In preparing stones, it is common to place them on bonsai shelves or in sunny areas of the garden and to pour water (in Europe rain water would suit best) on them every day. The position of the stone should also be changed once a month. However, when exposing the stone to the daylight this is generally limited to stones, which will be exhibited in the suiban.

For stones to be appreciated on daiza pedestals, such as stones with a beautiful texture, such a method outdoors is not suitable. In this case, the stones are kept indoors and rubbed with a dry cotton cloth regularly.

Yôseki

This period and treatment of bringing out the qualities of the stone is actually the most important element of suiseki. The types of stone appreciated on daiza pedestals include some Kamuikotan-ishi, Seigaku-ishi, Furuya-ishi and Chrysanthemum stones (Kikkaseki).

“Breaking them in” means, that the continuous process of watering and sunshine opens the surface of the stone. It erodes and physically seen, the surface becomes more and more porous and extended and the colors of the surface appear darker.

Third element Color (iro)

Important in this case is that the color of a stone does not evoke a feeling of the strange or unnatural. Instead it should call to mind natural scenery and feelings. In the word of suiseki, the dignity and composure of the stone are especially important. That means solid, well-defined dark colors with a feeling of depth are most appreciated.

A black stone, which produces a feeling of refined taste and sleekness when water is poured on, it is considered the ideal. The black stones from Kamogawa (Kamo-River) are rated best in this regard. How ever, connoisseurs also appreciate Kurama stones with their dark brown color close to that of iron rust. Then there are good dark tones as blue-black or gray-black. Black colord stones of simple and elegant shape are often called “bonseki” and are used by tea masters for “chanoyu” events.

An unusual and strange color is a color, which is not to be seen in (Japanese) nature.

Colors symbolize seasons. For example the rusty brown color of the Kurama-ishi is representing late summer or autumn. When the Japanese maples on the mountain slopes “bloom” (sakari), turn in to a wonderful red. There is another specific color very much appreciated by suiseki lovers the carmesine red (Beni) found on stones from Kamo-River (kamogawa). They are known as kamogawa-beni-nagashi-ishi. It is said that this was the preferred make-up color used by the ladies of the court during the Heian period.

Fourth element Texture (hada-ai)

Natural stones are washed by the motion of the water in rivers or the ocean, creating a unique texture on the surface. This is known as “hada-ai” in the world of suiseki. The section, which has resisted erosion, is known as the “hame”. The softer section, which has been worn by wind and waves, is known as the “hadame”. The areas where the hadame has been carved with particular depth are known as the «shin» bone of the stone.

The texture must not necessarily be smooth. There are also stones with a rough texture. There are also special

words used to express the features of the texture.

For example, “jagure” is the word used to describe irregular indentations and protrusions on the surface. “Sudachi” refers to a texture featuring multiple round holes measuring 1-2 mm across. Rice grain (beiten-moyo) refers to a surface with mainly small protrusions of rice grain shape and size. There is also “shun” which refers to a pleated surface. Such a texture is often found on Furuya stones. A word of similar meaning used to express complex and fine pleats on a stone surface is “shiwa” wrinkles.

A texture in which quartz on brown sandstone surface creates irregular lines horizontally and vertically is known as “itokake” or “itomaki” thread.
Pear skin surface (richi-hada) refers to innumerable spots on the surface like the skin of a pear. Then there is “ryûgan” dragon eye to refer to the spot like veins of quartz and limestone in the main stone as often found in the white section forming the waterfall of stones of that name or “kane” a surface structure similar to the shell of a crab.

Another type is one in which the softer section of a natural chrysanthemum-shaped stone falls off due to the weathering so that the center of the petals appears. This is generally referred to as “saba”. The common term “sabahana” refers to this “saba” state on chrysanthemum shaped stones.

Unique texture

In Japan it is said that the water of the rivers produces the best stone surfaces. Such stones are called “sawa ishi”. There are only few places at the shore of the ocean where good stones can be found and they are called “kobi ishi”. Sawa-shi and kobi-ishi have normally a much more interesting and smoother surfaces than stones found in the mountain.

A very few places up in the mountain are known where good stones can be found for example the Furuya-ishi and Seigaku-ishi. Stones found in the mountain are called “yama ishi”. There are also stones found in caves they are called “do ishi”.

Important note: The place of origin has nothing to do with the form of “yôseki”.

Fifth element Age (jidai)

As in the case with bonsai, there is also reference to the age “jidai” regarding suiseki. This word refers to the composed nature and texture, that is, the special character of the stone, which appears a result of aging “yôseki” of the stone mentioned above.

The shape, quality and texture of the stone all come to completion when the proper age “jidai” is reached. This is the feeling of quiet composure resulting from the physical process of weathering. But this requires the care and attention of the owner to bring out the unique qualities of the stone.

It is said that it takes at least ten years to bring out the true suiseki qualities of a new stone. Indeed, depending on the stone’s character, this can take as long as twenty years to bring out the age “jidai” or old color “ko-shoku” of the stone. In short words: The harder the material of a stone the longer it lasts to bring out the quality.

There are famous suiseki, which earlier have been rocks used for “Sekijoju bonsai” root-over-rock style or “Ishizuke bonsai” growing-in-a-rock style in the early 20th century. At that time this was the dominant bonsai style. I can not exclude that the practice of “yôseki” can draw conclusions to this aspect.

To be resumed. A new, young stone with a good shape, good quality, good color and a good texture is not jet a suiseki it’s called an “araishi” new stone. When you are viewing an old dark stone placed in a old suiban, the water disappearing slowly from its surface, it will give you an impression of age that you will never get from a new stone. An old stone’s satin like surface seems to be eager for water. If you blow on it, it takes the liquid of your breath and keeps it for a while.

Enjoyment of suiseki

A suiseki is nothing more than a chunk of rock. We cannot expect to immediately feel the movement of nature in the stone and let our spirits play in that world. However, if there is something that attracts you in viewing stones, that is enough to develop an interest in suiseki. Interest in suiseki takes on depth together with the spiritual development of the individual person.

When a person examines the way of “tokonoma kazari” presenting the suiseki in the tokonoma, one can immediately tell the taste and skill of this person. When one view a suiseki presentation one can tell what thoughts the person had and what world he had entered. One can feel his sensibility, not to mention his aesthetic eye and consciousness. Persons of like tastes will feel the same thrill and joy on viewing a particular suiseki kazari.

In other words, presentation of a stone “kazari” requires deep knowledge and learning in several fields such as poetry, literature, hanging scrolls, symbolism and writing utensils. This is why it is said, that an interest in suiseki extends into the deep recesses of the human spirit.

Nevertheless, one need not consider suiseki as an exceedingly demanding interest. One can start out by simply finding a stone, which suggests some shape, such as that of a mountain, and placing it in a water basin or on a pedestal for enjoyment. Rather than just the bare rock, you can let your imagination take wing and consider possibilities for the background.

An interest in suiseki develops a feeling of repose and richness in the soul, which can then be a source of energy in your daily tasks. Please take this opportunity to develop an interest.

Kazari

“Tokonoma kazari” or “tokokazari” is the term used for the presentation form in the alcove “tokonoma” of a traditional Japanese house and “suiseki kazari” is the term used for the presentation form for exhibitions in the public. The kazari in the tokonoma underlies seasonal themes, which are expressed.

The room and objects in the Japanese house

The architectural development of the house determined shape and artistic character of utensils and objects, in Japan as well as in the west. The most important factor determining the development of the style of objects in Japan is the absence of solid walls, the danger of fire and the covering of the floor with mat. These thick, soft rice straw mats, tatami, are used for dining, sitting and sleeping and they are conforming to size standards.

Home life therefore takes place at a low level making tables, chair, beds and most of the other, rather bulky, furnishing known in Europe superfluous. Small, handy tables are used for reading, writing and eating and simple mattresses are rolled out when it’s time to go to bed.

All of these objects disappear during the day behind the sliding doors of the built in wall cupboards. However, even these cupboards hold only the most necessary objects.

Due to the great danger of fire, caused by earthquakes and accidents, valuable objects are well packed in wooden boxes, deposited in the fireproof containers, which can be found next to all Japanese houses. The rooms contain only those objects momentarily in use - quite apart from that not much more could be put up, as the walls are not solid. Flexible, easily removable sliding doors close the rooms on three sides. Those on the outside are covered with transparent paper called “shoji” and those on the side of the neighbors are covered with opaque paper called “fusuma”. The fourth wall is solid and holds the cupboards and/or the tokonoma.

The Tokonoma

The place of honor of the house is a slightly raised niche – generally the size of one tatami mat, 90cm in depth, 180cm in width and approx. 200cm in height - in which selected objects are exhibited either in honor of a guest or simply to enrich the quality of the room.

The Japanese room is principally more or less empty. Nothing overbearing or bulky spoils the room. The niche might contain an ink drawing or calligraphy in a carefully chosen, matching brocade frame set off by the refined, harmonic background of the subtle brown, “cha iro” tee-green or “ha iro” ash-grey of the tokonoma wall; the noble

shades of the wood and the delicate, modest colors of the tatami and the walls.

Possibly there might be an old, brass vase with a fresh, flowering branch, an iron or ceramic incense burner “koro”, a book, a writing case “suzuribako” or a stone “ishi”.

That which is otherwise required appears upon need and disappears when it becomes superfluous. Japanese objects are there for practical reasons and have no decorative character. The magic of their beauty and simplicity unfolds only then when they are put into use.

Lit. alcove room. A tatami mat room with a small alcove. There are various theories about the origin of the alcove. It may have been a sleeping alcove, built just large enough for bedding. Later the alcove floor was raised above the level of the floor. The alcove was then enlarged to the size of two mats, and then it contracted again to one raised mat.

The alcove thus became the honored seat for a guest of high rank. The other mat was placed at floor level. On occasion, screens surrounding this type of arrangement formed a cozy alcove. In the Kamakura period (1185-1333), to the latter part of the Muromachi period (16c.), the alcove had a raised floor and could be used as a seat or a platform. By the end of the Kamakura period, a Buddhist picture was hung on the wall and was the focal point of the tokonoma. A board to display objects, “oshi-ita“ was set before the wall hanging, on which were exhibited a vase of flowers, an incense burner and a candlestick. These three things are important to Buddhism and are referred to as the three implements, “mitsugusoku“.

In the Muromachi period (1392-1568), it became customary to hang a scroll with a Zen priest’s calligraphic inscription, along with the vase of flowers and the incense burner. The candlestick was omitted then. By the Momoyama period (1568-1615), the alcove took on its familiar form and was used principally for displaying treasured art objects.

The size and arrangement of the alcove varied according to the diversified tastes of the tea masters. An old record, for instance, mentions an alcove 180 cm long attached to a tea ceremony room used by Murata Jukô (1423-1502). This alcove was pasted with white Japanese paper called „torinoko“ and had frames that were covered with black lacquer. Takeno Jô (1502-1555) preferred a smaller alcove and tea ceremony room.

Sen Rikyû (1522-1591) used alcoves with styles familiar today. Characteristics from both the “shoin“ style alcoves and the styles of alcoves found in tea architecture were fused to produce the alcove common to ordinary dwellings. Tokonoma are called a great variety of names such as “kamizadoko” (lit. upper seat alcove), and “shimozadoko” (lit. lower seat alcove). Sometimes tokonoma are named after the tea master who designed them, for example “oribedoko“, or for the particular width of the alcove, such as „daimedoko, a „tokonoma“ with a wooden base, found in a small tea ceremony room that seldom exceeds 4.5 mats, “yojôhan“.

How to deal with the room

The word “ma” space has a very special meaning for Japanese people. Space is not only that which we occupy and where we live.

Even whilst talking they value the physical space between people, the rhythm of the sentence as well as the silence between words. Space is a necessity of their daily lives. In the world of arts and crafts, space has always been a topic of discussion and the goal of a quest of adequacy.

Tokonoma kazari puts emphasis on space for the same reason. Tokonoma kazari does not disqualify the meaningless placement of items; it indicates the rank of items to be displayed by designating the principal and subordinates through the use of space. Tokonoma kazari strives to elevate space itself as a beautiful element of the whole.

The spirit of display

The significance of the art of display is to give status to a person’s creation or collection and, on the other hand, to exhibit cultivated techniques as well as the innate aesthetics of the scene.

A small, natural seasonal setting within a limited

space allows the viewer's imagination to capture the limitlessness of the universe. Thus the essence of life itself unfolds before the viewer. The verb „to stage" is often used in relation to tokonoma kazari. This verb emphasizes only the act of creating the display; whilst the intent of tokonoma kazari, suiseki and bonsai is impart grace, taste and elegance. Refined taste and grace place emphasis on the artist.

To display objects effectively may require staging but the method is never the goal. Tokonoma kazari does not necessarily require costly bonsai or suiseki nor expensive tools and accessories. An atmosphere of elegance calls only for simplicity and modesty. Tokonoma kazari can be thought of as the art of understatement.

Aesthetic

For a better understanding of the unique Japanese aesthetic it could be helpful to study three important aesthetic systems used in Japan to express beauty; sabi, wabi, yûgen.

Sabi

An idea of beauty particularly important in the tea ceremony and haiku poetry. The beauty of materials or spaces, which have been worn down over time to become withered and aged. Seen particularly in teahouses, tea utensils and tea gardens. Initially a medieval aesthetic ideal, sabi included aspects of resignation, age, decay, loneliness, detachment, and tranquility. The noun "sabi" derives from the verb "sabu" to wane and the adjective "sabishii" lonely, and also sounds the same asthe noun "sabi" meaning rust or an aged quality.

Fujiwara Shunzei (1114-1204) used sabi as a critical quality to judge in poetry, where it referred to a mood of desolation. Sabi can also be seen in the feeling of beautiful loneliness described by hermit poets such as Saigyô (1118-1190). For 15c writers such as Zeami (1363-1445) and Shinkei (1406-75), sabi became a kind of cold beauty associated with the positive qualities of "kare" withered and "hie" chill. Its presence can be detected in a range of arts during the 14 and 15c. In the late 17c, a modified interpretation of sabi was particularly important to haiku poets it was naturally an important aspect of "haiga" or "haiku painting," and indirectly influenced other styles of painting related to haiku. This tendency was represented by Matsuo Bashô (1644-94) and others of his generation.

Wabi

A medieval aesthetic that finds beauty and philosophical depth in things humble and the poverty-stricken. The concept of beauty is found in "waka", "renga" and haiku poetry. It also forms the dominant tenant in „chanoyu". The tenant is often referred to as "wabi cha" or wabi-style tea.

Derived from the verb "wabu", to languish and the adjective "wabishi" spiritual loneliness", wabi was first used in early poetry to describe the "despair of a forlorn lover, but later came to denote the barren physical and spiritual circumstances of the poet-recluse. The original negative connotations of the word evolved with the more positive view of reclusion that began to develop with regard to the hermit's hut. Specifically, an appreciation for the imperfect and irregular aspects of nature.

Wabi was first developed in the "chanoyu" by Murata Jukô (1423-1502). He used terms like chill "hie" and withered "kare" to express the bleakness and earthy and natural quality of the tools he introduced to his tea ceremony. His students began tea ceremonies in a thatched hut "sôan" or "chashitsu". These structures, imitations of a hermit's grass hut, were to become the preeminent symbol of "wabicha".

Takeno Jô (1502-55) added deeper more metaphysical elements to wabi when he called it an open and straight forward attitude, modest and considerate and free of arrogance." Jô cited Fujiwara Teika's (1162-1241) "waka, which said that the essence of wabi was captured by a tea crimson leaves, but was simply a hut perched on the edge of a bay at evening.

The synthesis of wabi and chanoyu was achieved by Sen no Rikyû (1522-91) when he developed the two-room sôan chashitsu or thatched, hut tearoom, which used simple rustic tea ware such as "raku" ware, and included rustic bamboo flower containers and other utensils. Rikyû also added a metaphysical element to wabicha emphasizing the tea hut as the locus for the Zen-like experience of a freeing of the mind.

The aesthetic finds richness on poverty, beauty in simplicity, and a type of enlightenment attained through artistic discipline that has been termed “wabisuki” a fusion of wabi with the word “suki” or aesthetic appeal. Wabisuki is reached in its ultimate stage as “gokuwabi” or “wabi in the extreme” the state was devised and aspired to by Rikyû’s grandson Sen no Sôtan (1578-1658).

The influence of the wabi infused in a variety of chashitsu disciplines including architecture, ceramics and other arts affiliated with chanoyu. Wabi also played a role in the connoisseurship and collecting of paintings, calligraphy, suiseki and ceramic. Moreover, wabi dominated the aesthetic of late 15c and 16c painters, embodied by the rough and natured style of Sôtan or grass style.

Yûgen

Lit. Profound mystery. A multivalent and influential medieval aesthetic ideal expressing darkness, depth, mystery, transience, ambiguity, calm, sadness, and elegance. The term originated in China as youxuan and meant Daoist or Buddhist truth beyond intellectual comprehension. In the Chinese preface to the “kokinsû”, Ki no Yoshimochi (d.919) used yûgen to denote profundity in ancient poetry. By the 12c yûgen was used as a critical term in poetry contests “uta-awase” again referring to a profound meaning.

Fujiwara Shunzei (1114-1204), however, considerably broadened yûgen to embrace the complete effect of a poem, including both style and concept. Shunzei integrated yûgen with aspects of “yojô” or overtones, evoking associations not overtly expressed in word or form that reflect a subtleness of thought and emotion. Yûgen is also linked to the Tendai Buddhist idea of “shikan” which paradoxically interrelates form and formlessness, surface and depth, suggesting the interpenetration of all things.

Shunzei’s son Teika (1162-1241) generally subscribed to this ideal, but added an aspect of “yôen” or ethereal charm that held great appeal in later generations. Kamo no Chômei (1155-1216) emphasized yûgen as an uncertainty of heart and words expressed in that, which is colorless, indistinct, and emotionally restrained. For later writers such as Yoshida Kenkô (1283-1350) and Shôtetsu (1381-1459), yûgen was a feeling that could not be put into words, a stifling of chromatic intensity, and an elegant emotion. Chômei’s yûgen, with its emphasis on the incomplete, the old, and the faded, saw an evolution in the surface appeal of the term but weakened its intellectual or spiritual element.

The “nô dramatist and theoretician Zeami (1363-1443) applied yûgen to the sublime level of acting that expressed a vivid yet tranquil beauty, describing the term metaphorically as a white bird that holds a flower in its beak. The renga master Shinkei (1406-75) reemphasized the spiritual essence of yûgen, associating the creation of elegantly beautiful poetry with a pure state of mind born of Buddhist acceptance of the world. Shinkei’s austere conception of yûgen, linked with “hiesabi” chill melancholy, was further refined in the stark, withered beauty advocated by the nô dramatist Komparu Zenchiku (1405-68).

Yûgen played a formative role in the aesthetic ideals of “sabi” and “wabi” and was thus expressed indirectly in the whole range of arts associated with “chanoyu” as manifest in wabicha. The conception of beauty derived from the imperfect aspect of nature that could suggest spiritual depth below the surface is the ideological essence of wabi. Moreover, Shinkei’s yûgen or a specifically “withered” and “cold” beauty seems to have directly influenced the early developers of wabicha, Murata Jukô (d.1502) and Takeno Jôô (1502-55).

Yûgen was brought to bear directly on tea in the mid-17c “kireisabi” aesthetic of Kobori Enshû (1579-1647) who took Teika as his model. Even the name “Tan’yû” given to the Kanô artist previously called Morinobu (1702-74) by the Daitokuji priest Kôgetsu Sôgan (1570-1643) is likely related to the taste for yûgen as both men studied tea under Enshû.

Reproduced Suiseki

1 - Kamogawa Beni Fubuki Ishi *mei* “Yoryu Kannon”.
Very old stone found in Kamo river, has been the property of a Buddhist temple in Kyoto in the early Edo period. Its name is *Willow Kannon”. “Beni” is the term for Karmesine red quartz appearing in the stone. “Fubuki” is the term for dancing snow flakes of early winter. The stone surface is covered with red quartz inclusions called “beni fubuki”. This “meiseki” has been in the collection of Tokugawa Rairin in the 19th century.

2 - Ibigawa Murasaki Ryûgan Ishi *mei* “Zan Setsu”
Old stone from Ibi River. Its name is “Lingering Snow”. “Murasaki” is a term used for the color purple. “Ryûgan” is the term used to decribe the white inclusions and spots on the stone surface and means literally “Dragon Eye”. This meiseki can be displayed as a mountain stone “yama” as well as an island stone “shima”. The stone with its large while dominant spot suggests the picture of a reflection of the full moon on a small lonely island far out in the ocean.

3 - Kamogawa Maguro Beiten Monyô Ishi
Old stone from Kamo river. Maguro is the word for deep black color. “Beiten” means rice grain, “Monyô” means pattern. The stone represents an extremely well balanced distant mountain. Its surface is “sakari” blooming with rice grain pattern.
This Meiseki has been displayed the first time in public in early 1940.

4 - Sajigawa Mizutamari Ishi
Stone from Saji River, showing a beautiful wide landscape with a large mountain lake or water pool “mizutamari”. This fine “meiseki” has been displayed the first time in public in early 1970.

5 - Setagawa Maguro Ishi *mei* “E-boshi”
This stone was found in Seta river. Maguro stands for jet-black color. Such black stones are very rare among Setagawa stones. “E-boshi” is the name of the small black hats which have been worn by the officials of the Nara period. This fine stone was a gift from Matsuura Arishige, President of the Nippon Suiseki Kyôkai

6 - Kamogawa Maguro Danseki
Stone from Kamo river. It features a great landscape with one domonant and several smaller plateaus. It has a very well balanced shape and a very good old patina.

7 - Tôyama Ishi - Distant mountain stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland

8 - Tôyama Ishi - Distant mountain stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.
This “meiseki” has been exhibited at the Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten in 2002

9 - Iwagata Ishi - Costal Rock stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.
This “meiseki” has been exhibited at the Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten in 1999

10 - Shimagata Ishi - Island stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

11 - Shimagata Ishi - Island stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

12 - Shimagata Ishi - Island stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

13 - Yamagata Ishi - Mountain stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

14 - Iwagata Ishi - Costal Rock stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

15 - Tôyama Ishi - Mountain stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

16 - Iwagata Ishi - Costal Rock stone found in the river Aare, Switzerland.

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Suiseki Glossary

Abegawa-ishi Place of origin Japan
Abura-ishi Place of origin Japan
abura Oil,
abura-ishi Stone, found in Japan, significantly oily jet-black surface
Aganogawa-ishi Place of origin Japan
aiseki Love, passion with stones
aka Red
akadama Red Jasper
akebono Dawn
aki Autumn, Fall
amadare Rain drop
amagata-ishi Rain pattern stone
amamizu Rain water
amayadori-ishi Shelter stone offering protection of wind and rain
ame Rain
amegumo Rain cloud
ankoku Darkness
anshô Hidden reef
an'un Dark cloud
ao Bue
aodama Blue stone
aosagi Heron
Aragawa-ishi Place of origin Japan
ari Ant, symbol of industriousness
Arishige Matsuura President of the Nippon Suiseki Association
asagiri Morning fog
asagao Winds, symbol of the moth July, Symbol for Affection, emotion
asahi Morning sun
asatsuyu Morning fog, morning dew
asa-yake Dawn
Asuka Asuka-Periode 552 - 645 AC
aware Moment of contemplation, seen in the feeling of autumn, the Erroson and the ephemeral are.
bai Plum tree, symbol of Spring, the month February
baishô Evening bell
baiu Rain season "Plum mountain rain"
baku Dark, vague, wide
basu Lotus, symbol for the month August, symbol of purity
beitenmoyô Exalted rice grain pattern which is found only rarely on stone surfaces
biseki Beautiful Stone, not a suiseki, can be altered and polished. Among them Kikka-seki.
baika-seki Japanese plum blossom pattern stones
banseki Stone, that well can be presented in Suiban or Doban***beni*** Crimson red color (Make-up color of the ladies of the cort of the Nara period)
beninagashi Crimson red Quartz, is often found in stones from the Kamogwa.
bigaku Aesthetics
bijutsuhin shûshû Art collection
bijutsu kanshôgan Artistic feeling
bijutsu kanteika Connoisseur of art
bijutsushi Art history
biteki kanjô Sense of beauty
bôfû Storm, heavy wind
bokujû Liquid ink used in ink painting
bokuseki (Tree-Stone) Inanimate nature
bonseki Small, handy dark stones that are used in the art of tea by tea-masters. Often without Daiza. An ancient form of stone-presentation, which develops into the now famous Suiseki. The earliest legend states that an emperor of the Heian period, has received a special gift from Korea, an incense burner, which had incorporated a mountain shaped Jadestone on the lid. Overnight, usually the imperial crown was placed on a lacquer tray. But instead he put the crown on the small jade tablet. Thus arose the custom of stones present on trays. This custom has been refined and up to 16 Century, especially in the tea-art uses. Bonseki are compact, dark mystical stones that were viewed without additional decoration in the small niche in the tea-house.
bonzan Old Japanese name for miniature landscape stones
bukkyô Buddhism
bunjin Japanese scholars and writers who painted during the Ming period, as laymen and amateurs. They paid homage to classical Chinese painting and formed a special bunjinga painting school. They were Confucianists and refused to Buddhism as an alien religion.
bunjinga Japanese painting in the classical Chinese style.
bunkazai Heritage
bunmei kaika Civilization and enlightenment, the period 1868 - 1882 - after the Restauraton of 1868 - was heavily influenced by the West and transformed Japan into a modern state
bunsho Document
bunten Short for "Monbusho Bijutsu tenrankai". First national art exhibition opened in 1907, initiated by the Ministry of Education
chabana Flowers, used in the tea ceremony
chadô Way of Tea, art of tea
chaire Tea container
chairo Brown
chajiru "tea water". A tea solution used to color iron objects, mainly for kama and Tetsubin (iron kettle)
chakasshoku Tea color, Maroon
chashaku Teaspoon of bamboo, mostly made by the tea master of his own hand
chasen Bamboo tea whisk
chawan Tea-cup, matrimonial heavy, thick-walled tea-cup, which is used during winter
Chichibu-ishi Place of Origin in Japan
chikeigen Horizon
Chikuzen-ishi Place of Origin in Japan
chô Ebb and flow, tidal
chôhô "Overlapping method". Technique of brushwork in calligraphy
chôkin Chasing engraved in metal
chôkoku Carving
Chôsen Korea
chôyu Long life
chûô Center
chûshô-seki Stones with abstract or geometric pattern on the surface
chûtetsu Cast iron
chûto no Mediocre
chûzo Casting, stamping of metal
daikon "Larger root" translated radish. An important element for the coloring of metals
daiza Base for Suiseki carved from wood, mostly from sitan Indian mahogany. Often the word Dai is used, this is wrong. Dai means base or seat, on the other hand Daiza means for an object produced fitting base
dankyû Terrace
dan-seki Plateaus or stepped stone. At least two horizontal stairways are required
dô Copper
dôban Trays without holes made of bronze or copper
dôbutsu-ishi Animal shaped stone
do chu no sei The movement in the silence. Attitude concept in martial arts but also in the tea-art
doha-ishi Stone, which is a flat landscape in the lowlands with one or more hills. do = lowlands, plains, hills = ha
dôkutsu-ishi Stone showing cave. The best show deep caves, turn right at the end to one side
dômon-ishi Stone, which shows a rock in the surf, which has one or more gaps. For these stones, fantastic shapes are very popular.
donten Clowdy sky
doshaburi Downpour, cloudburst
dôshokubutsu Animal and plants
dôyô same, identical
dôyobi Saturday (Earth day)
dôzô Bronze Statue
e-boshi Little black hat, worn by the courtiers of the early Heian period
Echizen-ishi Place of origin in Japan
edakiri Pruning of trees
edatsugi Refining graft,
Edo Earlier name of Tokyo

Edo jidai Edo Periode (1600-1868).
eizô Silhouette
enkei Circular shape, round shape
enzan-seki Distant mountain stonen. Mostly called “tôyama”
ensô With ink painted circle
fû Wind
fûu Wind and rain
fubuki Snow storm or swirling snowflakes
Fugooroshi-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Fujieda-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Fujigawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
fuken Stability, immutability
fûkô zekka Scenic Beauty
fun Fog
funagata-ishi Boat shape stone
furui/ko Old (for things)
Furumichi-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Furuya-ishi Place of origin in Japan. Are not found in the river but unearthed. Are rarely present in Suiban.
fushigi Miracle, mystery
fuyu Winter
fuyugeshiki Winter landscape
fuyuzora Winter sky
fuzei Describes emotions and artistic sensibility
ga Elegance, grace
ganpeki Cliff
ganshô Rocks, cliff
Ganzan-ishi Place of origin in Japan
gata, kata Shape
gawa, kawa River in Japanese
gehin Vulgar
geido The aesthetic WAY
gekiryû Tearing River
gendai Modern, presence
gembu-iwa Basalt
Genkai-ishi Place of origin in Japan
genshô-seki Celestial pattern-stone
getsuyobi Monday (Moon-Day)
gin Silver
go Enjoyment, pleasure
gofu Talisman
gogatsu May. Iris (***shobu***). Victory
gogo Afternoon
go-sanke Three families of the Tokugawa
goshiki-ishi Fife-color stone
gozen Morning
gyôkai Fish and clam
gyokushi Chaff and wheat / Good and badt
gyôson Fisherman village
hachi Bee
hachigatsu August Lotus (***basu***), Purity
hacho Asymmetric Balance
hada Skin, inclination, temperature
hada ai Surface of a stone (hada = Skin)
hadame Skin surface of the stone, which were washed out by water
haiku Japanese verse form, consisting of 17 syllables
hako, bako Box
hakuboku Chalk“White Ink”
hakumei Dusk, twilight
hamamono Export goods. Export goods are manufactured to the Western taste. Usually much more striking and baroque than the products that were produced for the Japanese taste.
Hame Surface of a stone
hamon Water circles
hana Flower
hanabira Petal
hanadoki/hana-zakari Heyday
hanagumori Slightly cloudy skies during the cherry blossom
hanaike Flower vase
hanamatsuri Flower festival
hanami Flower show
handan-ryoku Analytical ability
Hakkaizan-ishi Place of origin in Japan
haku butsushi Description of nature
Hakuhô Early Nara-Period 645 - 710 AC
haru Spring
hashi-ishi Bridge-shaped stone
hayaku Hundred
hayashi Wood or forest
hebi Snake
Heian Jidai Heian-Period 794-1185 AC
hekiga Wall picture
higashi/tô East
higata-ishi Sun pattern Stein
ho Rice ear
hôgyôku Gem
hokan To store
honami Waves in the cornfield
honmono Real, Original
hosagi Tip of the spike, knife, brush
hoshigata-ishi Star pattern stone
hôshin Guide lines
hotaru, kei Firefly
hotarugari Catching fireflies
hyôga Glacier
hyôjun suiseki Stone of standard size 30 to 50 cm of length
hyôzan Iceberg
Ibigawa-ishi Place of origin. One of the three major rivers in Japan“san mei gawa”
ichi One
ichiban The best, Nr.1
ichigatsu January, Pine (***matsu***) Longivety
ichiryû Class
igata Mold
ii Good (ii ishi = good stone)
ike Pond
imono Castings, cast things
inaka Land, Province
inari Harvest God, Fox God
inja Recluse, hermit
inkan Stamp, seal
in-yô Yin and Yang
iro Color. In Japan especially appreciated colors are “makuro” jet-black, “kuro” black, green black “aoguro” and “haiguro” ashe gray
iroka Beauty (iro = color, ka = Fragrance)
ishi or seki Stone, the choice of the word occurs more from sound-aesthetical considerations.
ishigaki Stone wall
ishizuke Stone planting in “suiban”
isogata-ishi Stone resembling a cliff
ito Tread
itodake (itomaki) Net or tread pattern on stones
iwa Rock
iwaya Cave Dwelling
iwagata-ishi Eroded coastal formations performing stone. Among the different classifications themost frequently found are iwagata-ishi
Iyô-ishi Place of origin in Japan
jagure Irregular holes and depressions on the surface of the stone
ji Porcelain, Magnet
jiban oder jiita Flat plateau for the presentation of stones, Accent or figures okimono, made of lacquered wood or burl.
jidai Age of a stone. Important to know that jidai in Japanese aesthetics is themost important attribute above all others relvanten attributes. Japanese do not love shiny new things, ceramic bowls are set aside for 30 years in the garden before they are attractive enough to be used in the presentation. Even with a bonsai the artist trim the tree to look aged, by leaving the branches grow down by wire. Branches of old trees bow down, the young trees that grow point up
.***jiki*** Porcelain vessel
jimbutsu-seki Stone suggesting a person. Very popular such as the goddess Kannon. These stones are to represent a person only vaguely, never to realistic
jinja Shintô Temple
jiyuka “Free Flower”style of flower arrangement
jo To tell, to describe
jô Earth, ground
jôgen First quarter moon
jôgen no tsuki Waxing moon
jûgoya The “Fifteenth” evening. Moon viewing is the most important festive occasions in Japan and is true to the tradition of the 15th day of the 8th Month under the old calendar as particularly suitable. (Mid-September of modern calendar).

jôhin Fein, distinguished, elegant (description of things)
jûryô Weight
jokei Landscape description, description of nature
Jômon-jidai Jomon-Period - 4500 - 200 BC
jôshu Artistic Effects
jûgatsu October, Chrisanthemum, (***kiku***), Long life
jûichigatsu November, Maple (***momiji***), Autumn, changing affection
jûnigatsu December, Narcissus (suisen), Devotion
ka Gnat, mosquito
kachô Flowers and birds, belonging together in the painting or other art forms
kadomatsu New Year's pine
kagen Last quarter Moon
kagen no tsuki Waning Moon
kai/umi Sea, Ocean
kaigan Coast
kaigara Clam shell
kaisô Memory
kaju Fruit tree
kakemono/kakejiku "Hanging-Thing". Skroll, allways in the middle of the Tokono-ma. Note that no duplication arises. For example that a scroll doesn't shown a hut when we will present a Kuzuya-ishi.
kakkô Cuckoo
kakôko Crater Lake
kakô-seki Stone that has been processed
Kamakura Jidai Kamakura-Period 1185-1333 AC
Kamanashigawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
kami Spirits of the Shintô religion
Kamogawa-ishi Place of origin. Is one of the three major rivers in Japan "san mei gawa"
Kamuikotan-ishi Place of origin in Japan
kan Intuitive perception
kangeki Deep feelings, enthusiasm
kanki Cold, Frost
Kannon Goddess of Mercy. In Japan, 33 kinds of Kannon are known
kara-ishi Stone from China, matching the Japanese taste
karakane "China-Metal" A yellow copper alloy of copper, tin and lead, similar to brass
karako Chinese child. We often find Karako displayed on various art objects
karasu Crow or raven
karayô Chinese Style (kara = China)
karedaki-seki Dry waterfall showing stone
kasshoku Brown, refers to the color of a brown, padded garment "katsu"
kata, gata Shape
katachi Shape of a stone
katchi Partial surface pattern, which is highly appreciated on stones. Nests of small quartz lines that are woven back and forth.
katei Bottom of the river, river bed
katte Direction of a stone. Right ongoing stones "migi-katte", left ongoing stones: "hidari-katte".
kawa, gawa River in Japaneese
kawa-dôjô River bed (School of stones)
kawagishi Riverside
kawaguchi Estuary
kawa-ishi Stones found in a river
kawa kami Upper reaches of a river
kawa shino Lower reaches of a river
kawazure The fine surface on stones, which are only produced by water.
kayobi Tuesday (Fire-day)
kazan Vulcano
kazari Decorating, to design
kazari-dana Frame with usually two stages in staggered shelves, or presentation layers
kei Valley, Gorge
keihan Kyoto and Osaka
keiko Exercise
keiran Down in the Valley
keirô Respect for the Aged
keiryû Mountain stream
keiryû-seki Stone showing a mountain stream
keishô-seki Object stone suggesting forms of living things like animals, people, etc.
Kentoshi Japanese emissaries during the T'ang dynasty, China 618 - 907 AC. There is evidence that one Kentoshi group in the 7th Century, brought beautiful stones from China to Japan.
ketten Error, flaw, blemish
ki Yellow
kibun Mood
Kibune-ishi Place of origin in Japan, part of Kamogawa
kidama Yellow-stone
kigata Plant pattern stone
kigô Sign, Symbol
kihitsu Beginning of a brush stroke "shodo"
kikka-seki Chrisanthemum stonen
kiku kigata Plant pattern stone
kikumon-seki Chrisanthemum pattern stone
kiku no gomon Imperial chrysanthemum crest
kimpaku Gold leaf is a very popular material that, in the Japanese House and partitions often is used. Gold leaf in the Japanese house, which was lit only by candlelight, and its paper windows allow no bright light to enter the room produce inimitable and extremely charming reflections
kin Gold
kingyo Goldfish
kin-iro Gold color
kinkô Gold shine
kinkô-seki Yellow-Red stone
kinran Gold brocade, often used for the back ground of skrolls
kinseikin Goldware
kinuorimono Silk fabric
kinyobi Friday (Gold-day)
kinzan-seki Near view stone
kiri Fog
kiri-bako Box made of Pauwlonia "kiri" wood for storage of Suiseki and other Japanese art objects. Kiri is a soft, lightweight wood that is hard to set on fire
kirikabu Tree stump
kisetsu Seasons
kita North
Kitakamigawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Kizugawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Kumogahata-ishi Place of origin in Japan
ko, kurenai Deep red
kô, kôshitsu Hard, dense
kô Ore
kôan Idea, Design, to invent
kobai Plum tree with red blossoms
Kobi-ishi Stone was found in the ocean, by the way very rare
kôbutsu Mineral
kodai Antiquity
kôdo Grade of hardness
koeda Branch
Kofun Kofun-Period 200 - 500 AC
kôgai Gloss
kogata suiseki Small suiseki 15 to 30 cm of length
kôgen Plateau
kogo Obsolete word
kohaku Red and White
kôhô High mountain
kohô-seki Mountain stone with one peak
kokoro Mind or spirit, stimulated by external things and events, creating, producing different ideas "Omoi", immediately expressed by the poet in the words, the sensible things and events as they are being seen and heard.
kokkasshoku Black-brown
komen Surface of a lake
komyô Skill
kongôseki Diamond
koniro Darkblue
koro Incense burner
koryû "Old style" / traditional art system
kôseki Crystal, Mineral
kôsen Light beam
koshoku oder koiro The "old" color of a stone, caused by many years of Yôseki.
kotaki-ishi Stone showing a small waterfall

Kotarô-ishi Place of origin in Japan
kotô Deserted island
kowatari "Old crossing". Pottery that was imported during the Edo period 200 to 300 years ago from China. These goods are considered as the best ceramics. This ceramic is lightweight and on the bottom there are many small holes visible that originate from the nail bed, on which it was dried.
koyama Hill or small mountain
kôyô, momiji Colorful autumn leaves
kôyô "Yellow leaves" autumn leaves
kuchiba Withered, dry leaf
kugatsu September, Seven Autumn grasses: Lespedeza (***hagi***), Arrowroot(***kuzu***), Pampa grass (***susuki***), Wild Carnation (***nadeshiko***), Maiden flower (***ominaeshi***), Chinese Bellflower (***kikyo***)
kuge Imperial aristocracy consisting of 155 families, their lineage can be derived from the first emperor "mikado"
kun Fragrant smell
kuni Land
kunpô Light summer breeze "Scent-Wind"
Kurama-ishi Place of origin in Japan, part of Kamogawa
kuro-ishi Black stone
Kurobegawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
kurôto Connoisseur
kurôto-rashi Expert view
kusagata-ishi Grass pattern stone
kusô Reverie, fantasy
kusuri mono Glaced ceramic
kuzuya-ishi Stone resembling a decaying hut in the nature
kyô Narrow gorge
kyû, oka Hill
kyûreki Ancient lunar calendar
kyûshiki no Old fashion
ma Space, interval. Refers to the design of the Tokonoma or other rooms.
machigata Craftsman who lives and works in the city. Wile "Hangata" are artisans live and work in the country .
mae Front
makkô-ishi Place of origin in Japan
makuro-ishi Jet.black stone
mame suiseki "Bean" Suiseki. Small Suiseki smaller than 15 cm length. Small Suiseki are normally called "shôhin suiseki"
man Ten thousand
mangetsu Full moon
matsu, shô Pine, stands for the month of January, a symbol of long life
matsuba Pine needle
matsubara Pine grove
matsubayashi Pine forest
mei Name, for example Kamogawaishi mei Akebono (Dawn)
meian Light and shadow, shading
Meiji Jingu Meiji Temple, where the annual Suiseki Meihin Ten is held
meikiki Surveyors and explorers of good objects, such as tea utensils, ceramics, suiseki
meiseki Award-winning Suiseki of excellent quality
meisho A famous place,
meishô Term for famous artisans
migata-ishi Fruit pattern stone
mikaeshi Back side of a Suseki
mikiri The ratio between high and low peaks
Mikura-ishi Place of origin in Japan
minami South
mingei Folk Art
misemono Forgery, counterfeiting
mitsuba Trifoliat
Mitsuminegawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
mitsuke Front of a Suiseki
mizu Cold water
Mizuishiyama-ishi Place of origin in Japan
mizumôchi This term describes the ability of a stone, to keep water on its surface for a long time. This ability arises on stones of not to hard quality by yôseki. "Mizumôchi no ii ishi" is a stone that has excellent such abilities. Suiseki presented in Suibans in Japan are regularly moistened with water to get to the natural experience even closer. The moisture on the stone surface gradually disappears, suggesting the scenery of a mountain that starts from the damp morning dew to dry slowly.
mizu o yaru Pour with water
mizutama Water drop "water gem"
mizutamari-ishi Pond or lake showing stone. Mizutamari are ideal to use "tenkei" small figurins. A small deer can make the pool a lake, a not too large hut makes it a pond.
mochikomi The aura of elegance, caused by years of care "yôseki". A term used for bonsai but also Suiseki
mizuumi The lake
mokuyobi Thursday (Wood-Day)
momiji Maple stands for autumn month of November, a symbol of affection changing
momo Peach stands for the month of March, a symbol of long life
momoiro Rose color, pink
mokuseki Made of wood, wooden
mokutan Charcoal
Momoyama-jidai Momoyama-Period 1573 - 1615 AC
mon Crest, pattern
mono Thing
monshô Family crest
monyô-seki Stones with image patterns on the surface, such as plants, butterflies, etc.
mori Small forest
mukashibanashi Ancient History, sage
mumei Unknown, anonymous
murasaki Purple, violett
murasaki-suishô Amethist "Violett-Crystal"
Muromachi/Ashikaga-jidai Muromachi Period 1333 - 1568 AC
mushigata-ishi Insect shape stone
mutsu made mukizu Expresses the notion that a newly-produced cast iron kettle, used to boil the tea water, has less than six holes (faults) and is therefore acceptable.
Nachiguro-ishi Place of origin in Japan
naga/chô Long, length of something
nakasa Sand bar in the river
nakawatari "Middle passage", ceramics, was imported from China during the Meiji period (1869 - 1911) . This products are considered as similar good as "kowatari".
namari Lead
namari-iro Lead color
nami Wave
nantô Peninsula
Nara-Jidai Nara-Period 710 - 794 AC
Naraigawa-ish Place of origin in Japan
nare "Worn", hand produced patina appears when things or surfaces have been touched by human hands over many years
nashiji hada Stone surface, skin "hada" of the Japanese nashiji fruit. Is also appreciated on ceramic
natsu Summer
natsu yuki First snow in the year
Neodani-ishi Place of origin in Japan. Most Kikka-seki are found in Neodani.
ne-joku, neshoku Table whose legs look like natural roots, but are carved
nenga New Year Greetings
nettai-seki Tropical suiseki
nichiyobi Sunday(Sun-Day)
nigatsu February Plum (***ume***) Spring
nihonfû Japanese style
nihonshi Japanese History
niji Rainbow
nijimi "Blossoms" wet brush strokes in calligraphy
Nippon sankei The three most beautiful landscapes of Japan
Nippon Suiseki Kyôkai Nippon Suiseki Association, founded 1961 Kanroji Ukenaga, the high priest of Meiji Jingu was the first president
nishi West
nonme Weight unit 3.75g
no tan Alternating use of dark and light ink in calligraphy

Notohantô-ishi Place of origin in Japan
nu, to Paint, painting
nunodaki-ishi Stone waterfall with large and wide waterfall. nuno = Sheets
ôeda Branch
ôgata suiseki Very large Suiseki, 60 cm and larger. (Are onlyused in exhibitions, as they are to large to be presented in the Tokonama with its limited space.
ogawa Creek (small river)
ôgigata Fan shape
ô-haguro Black color, was used to blacken the teeth. Is also used to blacken cast-iron objects
ôka Cherry blossom
okimono Stand-thing. Figures in bronze, silver, lacquer, iron, ivory, which can support the creative idea of a tokonoma-kazari. For example, a sparrow, which conveys the idea of the summer. Okimono are used in the tokonoma-kazari and not in public Exhibitions "Suiseki-kazari"
oku 100 Million
omoi Word
Ôôgi-ishi Place of origin in Japan
ôogon-seki Golden yellow stone
ôzora Sky, firmament
Okutama-ishi Place of origin in Japan
osozaki Late flowering
Ponpira-ishi Place of origin in Japan
raikô-seki Flash pattern-stone
raimei Thunder
rain Thunderstorm rain
Raysanyo Writer and scholar, and suiseki lover, has contributed significant to the development of today's Suiseki Art (1780 - 1832)
reiheki-ishi Chinese stone with jagged, openwork form
reihô Sacred mountain
renpô-seki Suiseki with many mountain peaks
renzan-seki Suiseki, resembling a mountain range
rettô Island chain
richi hada Pear skin, as it rarely occurs on some stone surfaces
rikka Beginning of Summer
ringo Apple
risshû Early fall, beginning of Autumn
risshun Beginning of Spring
rittô Beginning of Winter
rô Wave, floating
rokugatsu June, Peony (***botan***), youth,Spring
Wisteria (***fuji***)
rokushô A mixture of verdigris and radish, used to color various metal alloys.
rônin Abandond Samurai "Wave man"
rui Storm
Ryokushô-ishi Place of origin in Japan
ryû Dragon
ryûgan Dragon eye, round, white patches of quartz or calcite in astone surface
saba Parts of the surface of the stone, which were deeply washed out in groundwater
saba-hana Protruding Chrisanthemum pattern whashed out in the ground water
sabaki Movement
sabaku Desert
sabi The feeling that awake when one look at "wabi" things
sabi-iro Rust color
sabiru To rust
Sado-ishi Place of origin in Japan, where the best "Akadama-ishi" are found
saimoku Detail
Sajigawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan. Is one of the three major rivers in Japan "san mei gawa"
saki Headland, promontory
sakura Japaneese cherry, stands for the month of April, a symbol of loyalty, national flower
sakurairo Cherry color
same Rayskin, often mounted on handles of Japanese swords
sampuku Mountain slope
san Silkworm
Sanaku-ishi Place of origin in Japan
sangaku Mountains
sangatsu März, Peach (***momo***), Long life
sanmen no hô Three sides (san men), which are important in the judgement of the shape of a stone. This is understood as the three sides: left and right, front and rear, bottom and top. From all these directions, the shape of the stone must be considered beautiful and natural and well balanced. This rule goes back to Etsuji Yoshimura
sankaku Dreieck
sankyaku no Three-legged
sankyô Gulch
sanshi Silk tread
sansui Term for landscape in Japaneese (san = Mountain, sui = Water)
sansui kei iseki Stone suggesting a lndscape
saru Ape
sawa Moore
se Size of land 100m2
sei Family name
seidô Bronce "Blue-Copper"
seigan West bank, west coast
sekkasshku Russet
semmon Knowledgeable, competent
Sengen-ishi Place of origin in Japan
senkô Incense
Sensyô-tsubo Place of origin in Japan
Senbutsu-ishi Place of origin in Japan
sensu, ogi Van
seihôkei Square
seiji Seladon ceramic, imported from Song-China, fire glazed green product
Sejgaku-ishi Place of origin in Japan, these stones are not found in the river but unearthed. Are rarely present in Suiban.
seki oder ishi Stone
seki kessô Quartz crystal
sekkai Lime. Since water in Europe is very calcareous, only purified water or rain water shall be used to moisten the stones. Sometimes it appears that tap water is used at an exhibition and lime remains appear on the surface. To eliminate these, we lay the stone in rain water for one or more months and after a while, the remains are dissolved and have disappeared. The use of acidic would ruin the stone surface.
sekkei Snowy valley or gorge
semi Cicada
sen Thousand
sennin Eremite
Setagawa-ishi Place of origin. Is one of the three major rivers in Japan "san mei gawa"
seto-mono Porcelain from Seto
setsugakka, the three symbolic elements, a metaphor for nature (setsu = snow, getsu = moon, ka = flower)
shaku Linear measure 30 cm
shaku Aristocracy, nobility rank "danshaku" = Baron, "Kôshaku" = Earl, "hakushaku" = Count
shakudô Frequently used Japanese alloy of copper and 3 -7% gold. Colored with Rokusho - depending on the alloy appear between a dark-gray and pink feathers of the cormorant "eggplant color***"***
hakuyaku oder botan Peony stands for the month of June, a symbol of youth
shiaka Scarlet color
shibuichi Japanese alloy of four parts (shi bu) copper and 1 part (ichi) silver. Colored with Rokusho. Depending on the alloy between a light pink, pearl gray and dark gray can be produced
shibumi/shibui Aesthetic concept describes such as elegance and simplicity, but also noble unartistical. Includes "the art of omission", less is more.
shibutsu Private property
chichi fukujin The seven lucky gods, which are often found on Satsuma Pottery
shichigatsu July, affection, emotion
shigatsu April, Cherry (***sakura***), loyalty
shikakuki Harvest time

shikki Lacquerware
shiki The four seasons
shikisai Color, coloration
Shikô-ishi Place of origin in Japan
shikkoku Pitch black
shimagata-ishi Stone representing an island. Similar to the “yama ishi”, only the sides are steep sloping.
shimagata-tôyama-ishi Island stone with mountains seen from a distance
Shimantogawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
shimizu Fresh water
shin “Bones”, areas of the stone surface “hame”, deeply eroded by water
hin New
shinobashira Hoarfrost
shinshintô Ceramics been imported from China to Japan, until the end of the second World War
.***shinô*** The four seasons of the year
shinwatare **or (shintô)** Ceramics, which have been imported from China to Japan after World War II, 1911
shinsa Judgement. In Japan, art and cultural objects are divided into different ranks and quality certified with papers by the authorities. “Kicho” important work (white paper) “Tokubetsu Kicho” exceptional work (green paper) “Koshu Tokubetsu Kicho” very exceptional work (blue paper), “Juyo” very important work, “Tokubetsu Juyo”” extremely important work. “Nihon kokuhô” National treasure.
shinya Midnight
shiroi White. Where is meant by Shiroi a light ivory color. The pure color white is not popular in Japan.
shirôto Amateur
shisso Simple, easy
shisô Idea, thought
shitsu Material quality of the stone, should not be to soft and should not be too hard. If it is to soft, it resolves itself over the years, is it to hard, “yôseki” cannot change and refine the surface
shitsuboku Simple, easy
shiva Wrinkled lines on the stone surface, especially visible on Furuya-ishi
shizen genshô Natural phenomenon
shizen kansatsu View of nature
shizen no bi Beauty of nature
shizen-seki Natural, untreated and unprocessed stone. (shizen = originally)
shô Cliff
shô Bell
shobu Iris, stands for the month of May, a symbol of victory
shôdô WAY of Calligraphy
shôgatsu New Year. There are painted scrolls on which the moon is painted in a strong red color. These will be usedonly on New Year‘s Day
shôgo Noon
shokudai Candlesticks, candle holders. In the traditional Japanese house, candles were used as the only light source. Looking at Japanese objects should take this factor into account. Japanese preferences for colors, shapes and surfaces have been formed in exactly this light. Japanese things one should not look in bright light.
shoku Table for the presentation of Suiseki
shu Pearl
shuchu-ryoku Power of concentration
shuhitsu The entire movement of a brush stroke in calligraphy
shuin Red seal
shuiro Scarlet, Vermilion
shunn Areas on the surface of the stone, which recalls the folds of the mountains, as it was used in the technique of “shunn” of the “nanga” painting (Southern Painting)
shuniku Red paint used with for sealing
shuji Hand writing
sitan Mahogany, rosewood, from which, most “shoku” and “Daiza” are manufactured
sôan Grass hut, hermit hut, according to the wabi aesthetic
shindare yanagi Weeping willow
shinshoku Erosion, corrosion
siyôh-edaka Branches and leaves (a minor)
so, ara Coarse (structure, material), rough (surface)
sô, kuwa Mulberry
sôhitsu The middle area of a brush stroke
sohô-seki Suiseki with two mountain peaks
sôzoryoku Imagination
sudachi Uniform collection of small depressions on stone surfaces
suge Withering Wisps
sui Water
suichohu Vertical
suiden Rice paddy
suishô Rock crystal. The rock crystals found in Japan are different than those found in the Western, permeated by misty veils and inclusions, which corresponds tothe Japanese aesthetics.
sugata-ishi Stones represent humans or a religious person
sugi Japanese Cedar
suigyû Water buffalo
sumi Ink
sumi-e Ink painting
sun Linear measure 3 cm
suna Sand.The sand that is used for the presentation of suiseki in suiban or dôban, consists of ivory shell sand, which is cleaned by hand while all dark parts are removed. This sand does not get dark when it is moistened. The sand in the Suiban suggests water, the ocean. Therefore only stones are presented in suiban or dôban that resemble landscape. “kuzuyaishi” or “sugata-ishi” shall be presented only in daiza
suiban Ceramic pots without drainage holes for presentation of stones. Tokoname pots are traditionally never used for Suiseki presentation. The old pots from China are considered the best and can be easily recognized because they are very lightweight. Suiban are always glazed inside and outside.
suiseki-kazari Suiseki presentation at public exhibitions. There, additional items are not traditionally used as stones are exhibited regardless of the given season.
suisen Daffodil, stands for the month of December, a symbol of devotion
suiyobi Wednesday(Water-Day)
Surugawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
suwari The seat of a stone. How good a stone “sits” in a Daiza or Suiban
suzumushi Insect
suzuri Inkstone
suzuri-bako Lacquer box for writing instruments
Tadamigawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
taigan Opposite bank
taikai The ocean
taiko-seki Chinese stones, Japanese word for stones from the famous Taihu (Grand Lake)
Tamba-seki Place of origin in Japan
taka High, expensive
takara-fune Treasure boat
take Bamboo
takegaki Bamboo fence
taki Waterfall
taki-guchi Beginning of the waterfall at the upper end.
taki-ishi Stone showing a waterfall
taki-tsubo Pool under the waterfall
taku Wooden table for the presentation of Bonsai and Suiseki
Tamagawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
tamago Egg
tanabata Star festival (7. July/August)
tani Valley
tanigawa River in a valley
tanima Mountain Gorge
tansai Light colored
tasai multi-colored, colorful
tatami Rice straw mat. Standard Size 6 x 3 Japanese foot, 182 x 91 cm. Japanese rooms and Tokonoma are measured in tatami

tatamiomote Surface of the tatami
tayô Sun
teichi Lowland plains
teiten The art exhibition of the Imperial Academy of Arts
tekitô Suitable, matching
ten Point, dot
Tenchô-seki Place of origin in Japan
tennen shoku Natural color
tenkei Small figurines made of copper or bronze, which are used for the presentation of suiseki. Small cottage, boats, animals can help the natural scenario to be determined.
tenko-ishi Weather pattern stones
Tenryûgawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
tensambutsu Natural product
tera Buddhist temple
tetsu Iron
tezukuri Hand made
to Capacity measure 18 L
tô Tower, Pagoda
Tô T'ang Dynasty in China 618 -907 AC
toge Mountain Pass
togeidô WAY of pottery
togemichi Mountain passage
tori Bird, birds
Toyoni-ishi Place of origin in Japan
toko-kazari Suiseki presentation in the private tokonoma. One knows in the design of tokonoma three styles: "shin" very strict and formal form, "gyo" free form and "sô" free and open form. Toko-kazari with suiseki are held almost exclusively in the shin and gyo form. A toko-kazari is always arranged according to the current season. In winter you do not decorated Summer arrangement
tokonoma Alcove or niche in the Japanese house.
tokoutsukuri Consistency in terms of tokonoma design, where all the objects presented must match each other. in shape, size, color and expression.In the arrangement, it is important that things look to one another. For example, if the bird on the kakejiku flies to the right, the suiseki has to stand at the right side and must be oriented to the left. Also important to know that the design of the tokonoma always and exclusively reflects the exact current season. Kakejiku, okimono, suiseki, plants, bonsai and have always a meaning, representing a season or seasons.
Tomarugagawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Tonegawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
tora-ishi Tiger stripes stone. The best are found in Setagawa
torigata-ishi Stone representing a bird
tôyama-ishi Distant mountain stone
Toyoni-ishi Place of origin in Japan
tsubo Land unit 3.3 m2
tsugumi Throttle
tsuki Month
tsuki Moon
tsuki akari Moonlight
tsukigata-ishi Moon pattern stone
tsukimi Moon viewing
tsuki no eikyo Phases of the moon
tsukiyama Artificial, man-made hill
tsuki-yo Moon night
uendo Loam, clay
ukibori Relief
uma Horse
ume Plum, stands for the month of March, a symbol of spring
umemi Plum blossom viewing
uminari Ocean noise (roar of the sea)
un, kumo Cloud
uogata-ishi Stone representing a fish
urushi Japanese lacquer. Urushi doesn't drie but hardens and is resistant to acids and alkalis
urushi nuri Lacquer objects, lacquered, lacquer
ushiro Behind
wa Harmony
wabi A complex aesthetic concept or ideal of beauty, which manifests itself in the tea-art, combined with dark colors, old patina, rust, transience, darkness, silence, loss, asymmetry, imperfection. The viewing of things that possess wabi awake sabi. The raku tea bowl represents wabi in the narrowest sense, with its characteristics.
waka Japanese poetry form composed of 31 syllables. The waka poem is literally defined as self-expression through natural description.
wan Bay
yagata-ishi Stone representing a house or hut
yagyû Buffalo
Yahagigawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
yamagata-ishi Mountain representing stone. Fundamental term that includes all stones represent mountains.
yama-ishi Stone, found in the mountains
yama no se Mountain Ridge
yama no teppen Mountain peak
yama no yokai Mountain spirits
Yamato The old, ancient Japan
yamato-e Picture in the Japanese style
Yamatogawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
Yamizo-ishi Place of origin in Japan
yanagi, ryû Willow
Yase-ishi Place of origin in Japan, part of Kamogawa
yashu Rural atmosphere, rustic charm
Yayoi Yayoi-Period 300 BC - 300 AC
yôkô Sunshine
yoru Night
Yôryu kannon Willow-Kannon
yoshi Reed
Yoshimagawa-ishi Place of origin in Japan
yôseki The long-term care of the stone in the garden. Most important in Yôseki is to expose a stone to Sunlight and in second place, to poure the stone with water. One turn the stone in the sun, so each side gets the same amount of sun. A day in the month the underside of the stobe should be exposed to the sun. If a stone was found in the river, its surface is rough, abraded by rolling in flow. Only many years of lying in the garden gives a stone his old, aged and noble appearance. Think of the difference between an old or new stone in the garden.. The many repetitions of wet and dry make, t hat the surface erodes with time and thus becomes larger. The light reflects differently on the surface and the colors appear darker and more subdued, older.The word yo means raise rather than maintain. yo is part of the word, that is used to bring up children (yôsei).
yûgen Complex concept of Japanese aesthetics, in relation with the Noh theater and poetry. "yû" =weakness, Shadowmeld, "gen" = dimness, darkness, blackness, an aesthetic darkness beyond the visible. The beauty of yugen is quiet, soft and lingering.
yubishugi Aestheticism
yûgiri Evening fog
yuki oder setsu Snow
yuki dama Snowball
yukigata-ishi Snow pattern stone
yume. mu Dream
yurai-seki Historically significant Suiseki. Stones, which were owned by famous people such as the Yume-no-Ukihashi carried by the Emperor Godaigo (1288-1339) in his flight, the only thing he supposed to have taken with him. yume-no-Ukihashi means flowting bridge of dreams and the stone is originally from China.
zôkei-seki Suiseki, whose form has been changed, not a real Suiseki



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