

# BONSAI

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Master of Art & Design

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for the degree of Master of Art & Design in Spatial Design.

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements). No material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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## **Acknowledgements**

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All my clients for the opportunities to learn and work with them.

AUT for the opportunity to study design.

## Foreword

Bonsai has been our family business for more than forty years; we export bonsai to Italy, Germany, Spain and America. We also supply local garden centres.

When I was a kid, I used to play with my friends in our nursery during the weekend or after school, but I never paid much attention to those bonsai placed on the ground and displayed on shelves. After I finished my military service, I started to learn and work in the nursery. I looked after more than forty thousands of bonsai, everyday watering, pruning, trimming, repotting and wiring. Sometimes a big piece of bonsai would take me a couple of days to prune.

Taiwan has a big bonsai industry throughout the whole country. We collect bonsai materials from other nurseries where they are grown in the ground to better cultivate big trunks and roots, then we keep them in our nursery for a few further years waiting before for wiring, styling and repotting, at which point they are ready for shipping overseas.



Fig. 1 Family owned bonsai nursery in Taiwan.



Fig. 2 Family owned bonsai nursery in Taiwan.

In 2001 I came to New Zealand with my family to learn design. During my studies at AUT I was inspired by my tutors and classmates and started to think about doing something different with our bonsai business. My first bonsai project entailed a design for a bonsai retail shop on High Street in Auckland and was undertaken as a studio project (see Fig. 3 & 4 below). This bonsai shop was my first attempt to apply a contemporary approach to the traditional bonsai business. The proposed shop brought together an art gallery and a bonsai display space behind a hi-tech exterior cladding.



Fig. 3 building façade of bonsai Shop on High Street, image courtesy of the author, 2004).

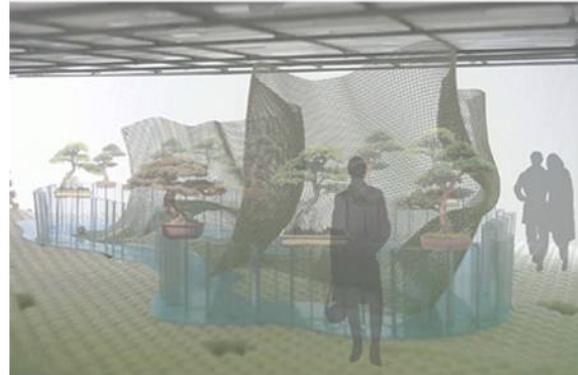


Fig. 4 Interior view of Bonsai Shop on High Street, (image courtesy of author, 2004).

I applied a similar approach in my project to redesign our existing nursery in Taiwan for my Honours Project in 2007 (see Fig. 5 & 6 below). The nursery was designed according to a Chinese painting concept known as “Leaving Blank”. The structure and the form of the nursery aimed to convey both a sense of smoothness and roughness. In turn all bonsai plants were hidden underneath a glass structure.

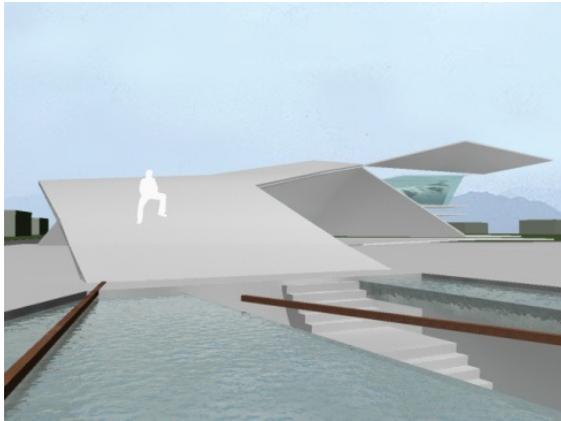


Fig. 5 Cut out on the ground connected to roof leads the visitor to a bonsai display area,(image courtesy of the author,2007)

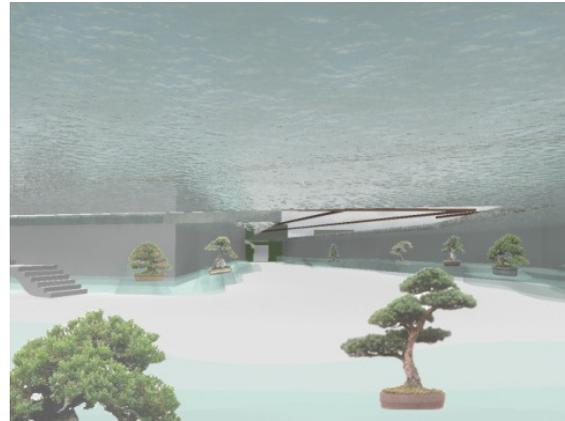


Fig. 6 Underground bonsai display area as covered with a water pond,(image courtesy of the author,2007).

By way of these projects my work has spanned from the large full scale of a Bonsai nursery in Taiwan to the smaller scale of a Bonsai shop in Auckland. In this Masters project it is the miniature scale that I am concerned with. I aim here to explore bonsai containers which are not just simply for display in the traditional sense, but which actively and playfully mediate between the miniature world of the plant-scape inherent to bonsai and the encompassing interior spaces they find themselves within.

My intention is to interrogate the capacity for different scaled worlds to both contribute to and to destabilise our perceptions of space. Important then to this project is the design of bonsai containers that evolve through a research process that examines traditional relationship between Bonsai and space, bonsai and viewer.

This thesis includes an introduction to my bonsai container design along with a history of bonsai, discussion of the philosophies of key bonsai masters, the details of two bonsai containers based on Japanese courtyard culture and Japanese architectural philosophy. It also documents the design process of all 1:1 scale Bonsai containers and the exhibition space, which includes bonsai planted in each container on the presentation day.



Fig. 7 author's bonsai collection in Auckland.(image courtesy of the author).



Fig. 8 author's bonsai collection in Auckland.(image courtesy of the author).

## **The History of Bonsai**

“BONSAI” was translated from Japanese - “BON” meaning “POT” or “TRAY” and “SAI” meaning “PLANTING”. It is a small scale tree grown in a pot as if a piece of living art which never reaches completion.

Bonsai was first undertaken in China over a thousand years ago and was known as “Pun-Sai” - a practice of growing single specimen trees in pots. During kamakura period, bonsai was introduced to Japan by means of Zen Buddhism. Over time, bonsai was not just confined to the Buddhist monks, but also later became a symbol of the aristocracy, and in turn the growing of small trees in pots became an accepted practice of the upper class.

In Japan, bonsai represents the harmony between man, the soul and nature. It became a part of life by being displayed outdoor on special shelves. In 18th century, bonsai culture developed a different understanding of nature. Japanese Zen philosophy also became the main factor in bonsai design and maintenance, with the removal of everything except essential elements. At around this time some bonsai artists gradually looked at reproducing miniature scenes of nature known as Bon-Kei – meaning? .

Through hundreds of years bonsai style and the philosophy of bonsai making has changed a lot. Significantly Japanese bonsai Masters Saburo Kato and Masahiko Kimura have become representative of modern bonsai.

Saburo Kato (1915 – 2008), the oldest son of Japanese bonsai master Tomekichi Kato, was one of thirty families of professional bonsai growers from Tokyo to re-established the Omiya Bonsai Village. He became the third generation owner of Mansei-en Bonsai Garden in 1946.

Saburo Kato's contributions to modern bonsai was to spread the art around the world, through publications like his "Yoseue: Ishizuki Bonsai" (1963). This small book provided readers with the most comprehensive techniques for making Ezo Matsu (Ezo Spruce) bonsai. Saburo Kato also became well known for his group plantings that were known as forest style bonsai.

In 1980, Saburo Kato presented a paper to the International Bonsai Congress in Hawaii. He described his philosophy of bonsai this way:

*People who love bonsai appreciate the beauty of nature and plant trees in small containers. In doing so, they learn from nature and learn a philosophy of life. Even a person who does not understand bonsai can appreciate and be moved by its beauty. The power of bonsai is in its ability to portray the utmost beauty of nature. This is the goal for all who grow bonsai. In each of your countries you have mountains, rivers, woods and forests. These are beautiful scenes to inspire you. Choose the most beautiful examples for your bonsai. Do not just copy anything. Rather, make your bonsai like the best parts of nature. **1***

1. The text can be found at [www.fukubonsai.com](http://www.fukubonsai.com) January 2001

The bonsai master at last started to make his own special exhibition bonsai at the age of 92, in what is regarded as a masterpiece in a forest style of Ezo Spruce. It was ~~is~~ the first time in his life that he had exhibited his own bonsai. The total number of Ezo Spruce composing to make this work was around sixty or seventy. This particular piece of bonsai aimed to recollect Kato's happy moments gathering Ezo Spruce in Russia with his father. It depicts the Russian scenery from which the trees where collected. Interestingly for this project all the trees were planted on rocks without any traditional bonsai pots being included.



Fig. 9 Saburo kato, image can be found at [www.fukubonsai.com](http://www.fukubonsai.com)



Fig. 10 Ezo Spruce forest style by Saburo Kato, image can be found at [www.bonsaibark.com](http://www.bonsaibark.com)

The other famous Japanese bonsai masters after Saburo Kato's generation is Masahiko Kimura as known the best bonsai artist alive. Masahiko Kimura's work has shown a new philosophy of bonsai creation including the perfect detailing, driftwood carving techniques and the possibility of planting layout. He has won many awards in Japan including Prime Minister Award in 1988, 1995, 2000 and 2001. Kimura's contributions to bonsai is exploding the possibilities on how the styling of bonsai can be done by publishing his work and also through demonstration. From his demonstration and books the bonsai enthusiasts can understand how detail and creative his bonsai are. especially the his early work made him quickly well known with amazing deadwood "Jin" and "Shari" carving skill.

"Jin" technique gives an artificial appearance of age to the branch trunk of a bonsai. Strip back the bark of the branch, using carving tools and rub it with sandpaper. "Jin" technique can also be used to reduce the size of tree to find the better proportion in-between tree and pot. "Shari" technique is quite similar to "Jin", but is normally only applied to older trees to give the appearance of age by peeling back strip of bark.



Fig. 11 Juniper creation by Masahiko Kimura with amazing "Jin" and "Shari" carving skill, image can be found at [www.helpfulgardener.com](http://www.helpfulgardener.com)

Saburo Kato introduced the bonsai art to the world, Masahiko Kimura has explored more possibilities of bonsai making techniques, both their works have shown the development of bonsai art form through generations, but the philosophies of their bonsai creation are still within some sort of traditional frame work. For instance, the golden proportion in-between bonsai and pot which make the out lines of bonsai almost the same. The pots are still the traditional materials such as ceramic or rock, and the purpose of bonsai creation is only for displaying or exhibition only like a piece of art.

In Europe, young bonsai creator Farrand Bloch has given us another aspect to appreciate bonsai. Farrand's bonsai are planted into contemporary art work and have become a part of it. This philosophy is the combination of eastern and western cultures. Farrand's interest in Japanese Zen gardens finally evolved into bonsai art and studies under some Japanese designers such as Hotsumi terakawa, Yuji Yoshimura and Suchin Ee. Farrand later traveled to Japan and followed workshops at Shigeo Kuroso's bonsai garden near Omiya. In 1993 opened his studio garden in Voorschoten Holland called Sozo bonsai studio and he begun a long journey of giving demonstrations and workshops. Farrand was one of the demonstrators during BCI in 1998 in Puerto Rico and he was a demonstrator in 1997 at Long Island Mid Atlantic event USA. 2

2. The text can be found at [www.artofbonsai.org](http://www.artofbonsai.org)

Farrand Bloch's Bonsai creations are described by Farrand as lead, iron and burned wood set together with junipers. Inspired by the harsh conditions in the mountains and the pollution and destruction of man. The junipers, adapt very well in harsh conditions, they represent life, which will always continue. **3**

3. The text can be found at [www.artofbonsai.org](http://www.artofbonsai.org)



Fig. 12 Farrand Bloch creation with common Juniper planted on iron figure,height 87cm, image can be found at [www.artofbonsai.org](http://www.artofbonsai.org)



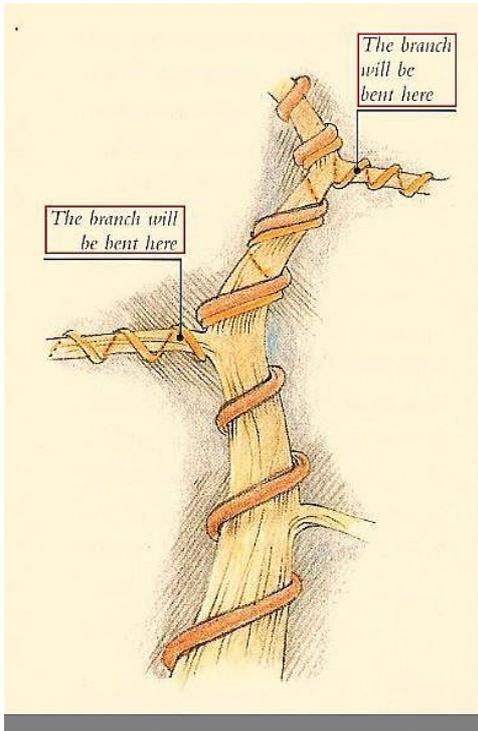
Fig. 13 Farrand Bloch creation with Juniper planted on a lead slab, iron wire holds the creation in position, image can be found at [www.artofbonsai.org](http://www.artofbonsai.org)

## Invisible framework

Time is the fourth dimension of bonsai, except with, depth and height. A bonsai can not exist without time, but time in developing bonsai and time in nature are different. In workshop, time is radically compressed. A ten years old pine grows in pot can appear age as hundreds years pine in nature by using bonsai techniques like styling, wiring, watering, “Jin” and “Shari”. It is the process of making miniature of nature. But the process gives the invisible framework (rules) to bonsai enthusiasts and bonsai itself.

The bonsai wiring is one of the invisible framework to control bonsai. It provides the better manipulation of the branches. Trees can be bended into the desired direction or position by wiring around the limbs. The branch or trunk are forced to stay in position after few months when wire is removed. Wiring technique is the shortcut of styling bonsai to create the illusion of maturity and realistic branch movement, because it will need to spend much more time waiting for shoots to grow in the desired direction.

Aluminium is usually considered to be best material for bonsai wiring, normally, wiring technique is applied on branch, but we can also apply wiring on shoot or trunk for young trees. Autumn is the best time to do wiring for some trees such as maple or acer, the leaves will fall by this time and give us a better visible picture of bonsai. An older bonsai trees will take more time to force the branch to



desired direction. Different style will also involve different amount of time for wiring, styles such as windswept, cascade or semi-cascade will require few more months of careful wiring than formal upright.

Fig. 14 demonstration of the process to coil the wire around the trunk and branches by using the appropriate thickness of wire, image and information can be found at [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)

“There are in fact many basic artistic principles at play when we design our trees; or, at least there should be. Many of these principles are already provided for us in the commonly applied “Rules of Bonsai”. The Golden Section appears time and time again within Bonsai rules. Nearly every time two design elements are placed in conjunction to each other, there is always an opportunity to satisfy the rules of the Golden Section. Since we are dealing with living plants or materials that are constantly changing through the seasons, the Golden Section is simplified to a ration of 1:2/3 or 1½:1. From the dimensions of the pot in relation to the bonsai, the distances between each branch level as it ascends up the trunk of the tree, to the position of planting within the pot, the Golden Section is often applied.”<sup>4</sup>

4. Text and more information can be found at [www.bonsai4me.com](http://www.bonsai4me.com)

The rule of Bonsai styling and the Golden Section are also the invisible framework to limit some bonsai enthusiasts' creation.

Normally, the shape of bonsai similar to the triangle. The triangle shape represents humankind, god and earth. The angle of the triangle is different depending on the shape of bonsai.

Traditionally, bonsai style includes The Single Trunk Style, The Multiple Trunk Style, The Multiple Tree and The Group Style. They can also be defined into seven groups:

- Formal Upright (trunk perfectly straight, branches symmetrically spaced)
- Informal Upright (trunk slightly bend to right or left, never towards the viewers)
- Slanting Styles (trunk leans at angle, stronger roots grow out on side to support tree)
- Cascade (trunks give impression of the force of nature pulling against the gravity)
- Semi-cascade (projects over the rim of container, but not drop below its base)
- Windswept
- Group (forest style)

## Styles of Bonsai Trees

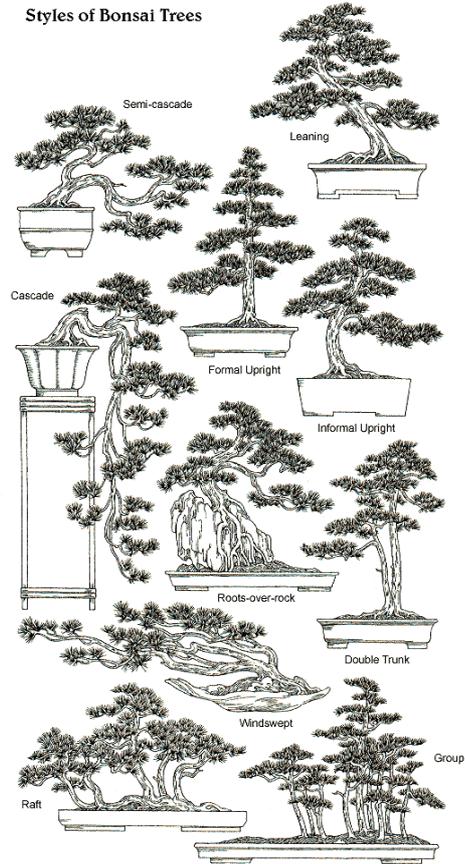


Fig. 15 Bonsai styles, image can be found at [www.bonsaistore.webs.com](http://www.bonsaistore.webs.com)

This seven styles are the replica and the imitation of nature, but in small scale. Li Edelkoort writes “imitation is not simply the imitation through form, but the importance of understanding the basis of which formal structure does not, and should not be, imitated through production purely as a replica. More importantly, it should be through the understanding of its structure within the material nature or the affect that nature could or would provide the importance of understanding how “scale” is an important factor...”. **4**

I adopted Li Edelkoort’s thinking to design the first bonsai container which the concept combines the Zen Buddhism (simplicity) and the invisible framework (bonsai styles). The container consists of rock and earth two elements. White box (rock) is supported by steel frame (earth). These two parts can be rotated and re-assembled to become different position to illustrate the seven different contours in nature. These combinations of two simple boxes simply convey the structure in nature.

4. For more information, an interview with Li(Lidewij) Edelkoort can be found at designboom  
Or [www.core.form-ula.com](http://www.core.form-ula.com)



Fig.16 combination for Cascade style.



Fig. 17 combination for Informal Upright style.



Fig. 18 combination for Semi-Cascade style.



Fig. 19 combination for Cascade style.

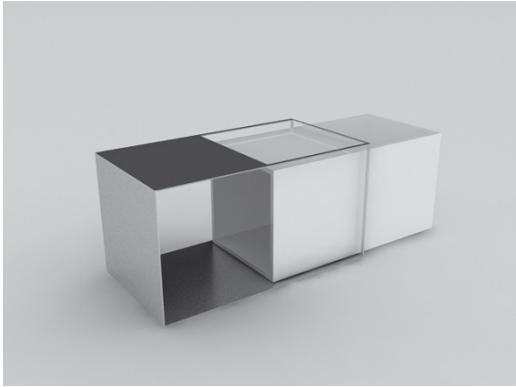


Fig. 20 combination for Formal Upright style.

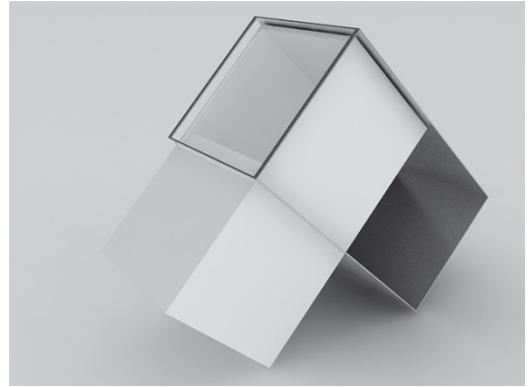


Fig. 21 combination for Windswept style.



Fig. 22 combination for Slanting style.

## Japanese Courtyard Culture & Pocket Garden

Reducing scale, symbolization, borrowing view and bringing natural light are the main principle to design Japanese courtyard garden. Tsubo Niwa is courtyard garden or pocket garden in Japanese, one tsubo is equally 3.3 square meters in Japanese measurement. In the Heian Era, tsubo means a area surrounded by fences and buildings with different landscapes for the pleasure of viewing. The first courtyard gardens were designed and made in-between houses and storage in the 15th century. The main elements to design a Tsubo Niwa are trees, stepping stones, rocks, flowers, grass and water feature. In many excellent designed Tsubo Niwa, they do not just simply provide a pleasing view by bringing a beauty of nature into a house, they also convey a sense of tranquillity of Zen or inspiration of the deep thought.



Fig. 23 a traditional Japanese courtyard garden (Tsubo Niwa), image can be found at [www.japanese-arts.net](http://www.japanese-arts.net)



Fig. 24 a modern courtyard garden, the architect has made a mark by blurring the lines between indoor and out, image and more information can be found at [www.trendir.com](http://www.trendir.com)

Tsubo Niwa is a small scale of nature within a house for viewing through a lower window, it is a space within a space, nature within nature. Similar to “Dollhouse” in the Western culture. “the dollhouse’s aptest analogy is the locket or the secret recesses of the heart: centre within centre, within within. The dollhouse is a materialized secret; that we look for is the dollhouse within the dollhouse and its promise of an infinitely profound interiority.”..... “use value is transformed into display value here. Even the most basic use of the toy object – to “play with” – is not often found in the world of the dollhouse. The dollhouse is consumed by the eye.” (Stewart, 1984, p.61)

Wall or window in-between indoor (Tatami room) and outdoor (Tsubo Niwa) or the dollhouse in a space are clearly separated. In recent architectural trend, boundary in-between indoor and outdoor is blurred. Wider opening, new materials and spatial layout allow inside and outside connected.

Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto’s project House N is the new philosophy to blend indoor and outdoor. “inside and outside are not necessarily partitioned by one wall. Imagine a gradual transformation from exteriority to interiority as if colours are dissolving. A city gradually becomes a house. A house gradually becomes a garden. There are infinite domains produced between categorical interiority and exteriority. Three telescopically enlarging boxes punctured with many fenestrations. Inside of the outermost wall is an external space where rain and wind pass through. By virtue of its box-in-box construct, the external garden becomes engendered with comforts of

interiority, and concomitantly, the interior space attains outward expansion through its continuity with the exterior. The boundary between inside and outside becomes infinitely obscured. (JA 70, 104)



Fig. 25 House N by Sou Fujimoto, image can be found at [www.cubeme.com](http://www.cubeme.com)

Another project “Extreme Nature” by Junya Ishigami (Architect) and Hideaski Ohba (Botanist) for Venice Biennale Giappone showing the alternative method of blurring indoor and outdoor spaces.

“In the Japanese Pavilion, Ishigami takes a completely different approach in order to present new possibilities of architecture by constructing “buildings” at a scale of 1:1. These buildings, which are designed with precise structural calculations so they are just barely able to stand, suggest the future possibilities of architecture and therefore pose the basic question: What is architecture? They are extremely delicate greenhouses with an ephemeral physical presence that blend into the environment. The architecture is not given the definite qualities of a physical object and there is no dualistic relationship between inside and outside. Nor is perceived the outside space as a void. The architecture does not have an imposing façade that determines our view of the outside landscape. It is the interior space of the greenhouses, with their transparent volume, seemingly filled with ether, that makes us think of external space. Furniture is also placed on the grounds along with the greenhouses, suggesting the interior of a room. The Japanese Pavilion itself is made to appear as an artificial environment or an element of topography. The original outdoor space overlaps with the space that emerges between the ephemeral steel structures covered with glass, causing the appearance of a doubled, ambiguous space. The condition of space produced here makes us aware that everything in it – the plants inside and outside, the furniture, the architecture, the topography, and the environment – exists.” **5**

5. The text and more information can be found at [www.ipf.go.jp/venezia-biennale/arc/e/11/01.html](http://www.ipf.go.jp/venezia-biennale/arc/e/11/01.html)



Fig. 26 "Extreme Nature" by Junya Ishigami and Hideaki Ohba, image can be found at [www.archnewsnow.com](http://www.archnewsnow.com)



Fig. 27 "Extreme Nature" Project, glass structures sitting around landscape, 8mm thick glass and 16mm steel structure blend the inside and outside, image can be found at [www.contessanally.blogspot.com](http://www.contessanally.blogspot.com)

In order to achieve the original concept, the team calculated and made the 16mm section steel covered with 8mm thick clear glass to create a light weight green house. The thickness of the glass play the important role in this project, the interface (glass) in-between inside and outside needs to be thin enough to blend the structure (architecture) into landscape.

Indoor and outdoor these two elements in traditional Tsubo Niwa are defined clearly like a dollhouse (inside) within a house (outside), but the “Extreme Nature” project used the “Greenhouse” concept to make the architecture transparent and overlap with landscape, as I always try to blur the boundary in-between Bonsai and viewer. If the Tsubo Niwa is the small scale of nature, bonsai will be the miniature of nature. Indoor/outdoor is the boundary between viewer and Tsubo Niwa, distance is the boundary between viewer and bonsai display shelves. To blur the boundary between viewer and bonsai is to make bonsai container functional. This concept is to design a functional bonsai container, once the element of “Function” is added into design, the “Display Value” is transformed into “Use Value” to “Play With”. Bonsai is no longer consumed with eye.

This “Tea Cup” concept consists of Container(top), Tray(middle) and Tea Cup(bottom). The top part is made of ceramic, the middle part is metal and the bottom part is wood. These three elements represents Tsubo Niwa(top), boundary(middle) and Tatami room(bottom). Three spaces are blended into different combination by placing them in different positions. With a function, bonsai is no longer a piece of art displayed on shelf, it can be on coffee table, on desk to enjoy and use.

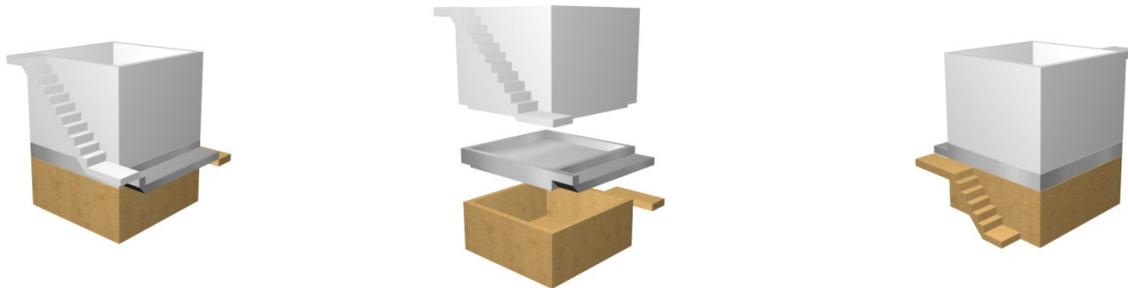


Fig. 28 “Tea Cup” bonsai container, consists of three parts, ceramic, metal and wood. Images show the combination 1.

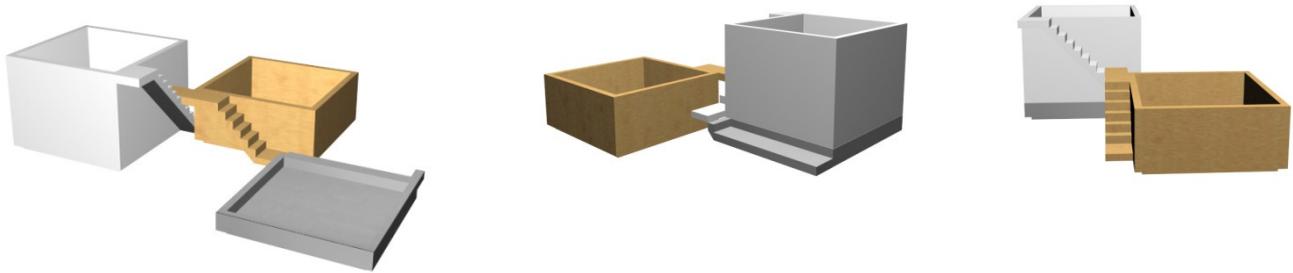


Fig. 29 "Tea Cup" Bonsai container, another combination, three elements are connected and have become a miniature landscape.

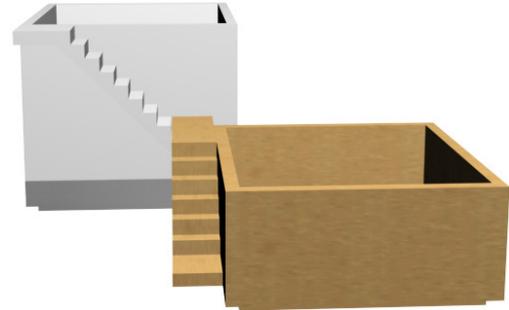
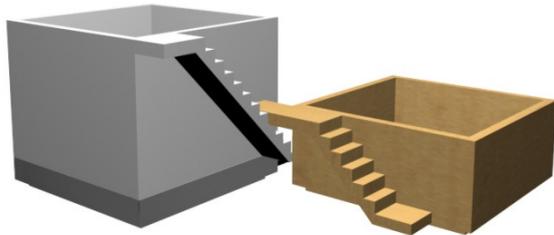


Fig. 30 "Tea Cup" Bonsai container, ceramic pot and wooden tea cup have become a courtyard garden.

Bonsai is a living art form and the miniature of nature, its making technique has been a huge development in last fifty years by those famous bonsai masters Saburo Kato, Masahiko Kimura, John Naka, and the young bonsai creator Farrand Bloch, but its traditional image has never been changed.

To me, Bonsai should be a piece of furniture, a tea pot, a table lamp, a product, a part of our everyday life which we can really enjoy and play with. This project is just a starting point for my bonsai product design. It is quite hard to find appropriate bonsai materials in New Zealand, so I have been spending seven years to cultivate my own bonsai materials since I came to this country eight years ago. I wish, through this project and design process, my products will bring a new definition to Bonsai Art.

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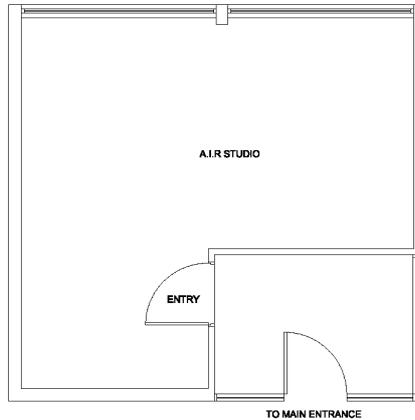
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## Installation @ AUT A.I.R Studio

The site for Bonsai Concept Store installation is the “A.I.R Studio” located on the entry level of the Department of Spatial Design WW Building AUT University. This studio is about 25m<sup>2</sup> and the entrance hall has full height glazing and a glass door to two sides.

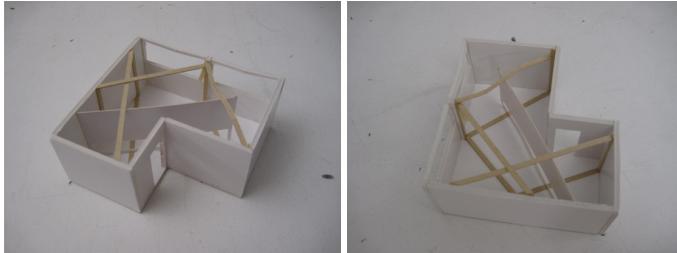
The size of this small room is similar to most of “Pocket Gardens” and “Courtyard Gardens” known as “Tsubo-niwa” in Japanese modern cities. Limited by space, in this small room I wanted to create a Bonsai store where people can experience and also have an entire “Bonsai journey”. It was an interesting concept to design such a small space to have cultivating area(outdoor), Bonsai workshop(indoor), Japanese tea room(indoor) and Dry Garden(outdoor).



At the beginning of conceptual stage, four study models were made from the traditional Japanese architectural elements - “Shoji Screen” – partitions with Japanese papers, “Dry Garden” and “Tea Room”. Blending these elements into contemporary design space.

The final presentation was a 1:1 full scale installation which developed from forth model.

Model no. 1



(figure.1 & 2)

Applying the concept of “Shoji Screen”. “Shoji Screen” is an important element in traditional Japanese Architecture and interior design in terms of function and form. The effect is softening and diffusing light to give a feeling of tranquility and warmth. Screens also allow the spatial flexibility. This space was divided by one “Shoji Screen” and another two frames across. Rooms are separated by frames visually but still linked together. When walking into store, different spaces can be seen partially through screen and frames(figure.1 & 2).

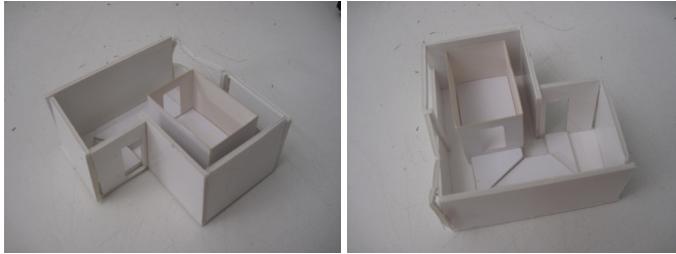
Model no. 2



(figure.3 & 4)

Multi-layer on semi-transparent curve wall as the object in space. This wall expresses nature and calm, therefore, colours in this room are muted. Light from windows are diffused. These curve walls have redefined the space by visually twisting existing walls and have formed another separated spaces. By using semi-transparent materials, these separate rooms share the entire “AIR Studio” but are still individually established space (figure.3 & 4).

Model no. 3



(figure.5 & 6)

Concept 3 was to insert a small box into the “AIR Studio”. The small box represents a Japanese tea ceremony room within a “Chaniwa” – Tea garden, which is related to the Japan tea ceremony which can be found around Japan. Two spaces were linked by a stone foot path which transports guests walking through “Chaniwa”. The intention of this concept was to create a place of total calm and ultimate relaxation(figure.5 & 6).

Model no. 4



(figure.7)

Concept 4 was developed from concept 3 plus applying the Bonsai wiring techniques. Wiring is an important part of the process of styling bonsai. It gives the bonsai better control and manipulation of the trunk and branches by coiling wire around the limbs. I extended the tea room and overlapped it with the existing entry hall. The outline of 'AIR Studio' represents the aluminium wire while tea room has become one of the branches which the over time through the wiring process has been bent into a desired position. The overlapped part appears as a growth of "AIR Studio" space there the bark has grown over and eaten the wire. The design incorporates a "Court yard Garden" theme including a patio, tea room and "Chaniwa". Tea room was formed with four pieces of Tatami mats, opened to garden but separated from patio. This effect makes this small 25m<sup>2</sup> room contain both an interior and exterior. Tea room and "Chaniwa" are linked and have become an open space. Natural light passes through the only uncovered window and into garden(figure.7).



(figure.8)

The Wall extended from tea room running through the entry door provides the function of direction and has removed the boundary of inside and outside(figure.8).



(figure.9 & 10 & 11)

The shop is designed to offer a relaxing space with “Wabi-Sabi” quality – Simplicity, Tranquility and Naturalness. “Wabi” is a way of spiritual path. “Sabi” means “Loneliness' or 'Solitude'. “Wabi Sabi” is not defined by superficial appearance.

It is an aesthetic idea which represents the imperfect, the incomplete and the impermanent. In other words, aesthetics is the acceptance of transience.

Entering the shop, you feel immediately at ease, a sensitive and quiet state of mind. It conveys a natural, unpretentious atmosphere where nothing appears contrived.

The space gives the holistic experience, and derives its beauty from the emotion conveyed, not from any particular detail of the work. Rooms are divided by unpolished thin panels which diffuse the light.

The foot path is covered with white stone chips. These rough materials reveal different sense of beauty in subtle and even barely perceptible detail. Walking along from entrance to tea room. The sound generated from stepping on stone chips give the sense of silence (figure.9 & 10 & 11).



(figure.12)

Looking out onto “Chaniwa” from tea room, hundreds of white strings hanging from ceiling in garden have formed a object which has become the objectification of “Wabi” in space. This object is not contrived but subtly intervenes to follow the capabilities and relevant physical characteristics of rain, to create a rain scenery(figure.12).

### “AIR Studio” 1:1 scale installation

The Bonsai store” was developed from previous concept to a full scale installation. The concept was also to redefine notions of Bonsai marketing.



(figure.13 & 14 & 15)

In entry hall, a piece of Bonsai is displayed in front of wall which extended from tea room and across the shop entrance. The Bonsai is planted in a traditional pot to imply this simple wall as an interface in-between tradition and creation(figure.13 & 14 & 15).



(figure.16 & 17 & 18)

The simplicity and abstract have been applied to express the process of Bonsai creation and the relationship between bonsai and space in a limited room. On the corner opposite to shop entry. About 10 pieces of Juniper saplings were set up there which have been in pots for 5 years.

A spot light was placed on floor behind trees. Spot light represents natural light which is one of the important growing elements for trees. Light passes through Junipers and casts shadows on ceiling have formed the clouds in the sky. It was the original concept to express the scenery of cultivating bonsai materials in natural environment(figure.16 & 17 & 18).



(figure.19 & 20 & 21)

Bonsai store was designed to offer customers the experience of the Bonsai making process. They can select Bonsai material from the cultivating area and bring it to Bonsai masters in the workshop. During the process of bonsai creation, Bonsai owners will have the opportunity to understand the Bonsai making techniques such as trimming, wiring and carving to achieve the basic form.

The corner area display the scenery of cultivation serves to expand the limited space to the unlimited. On the other hand, the bonsai creating process in workshop expresses a compression of time. When Bonsai masters receive materials from customers, they picture of finished piece of Bonsai in their mind.

Masters develop a small tree with their inspirations from nature reproducing it in miniature. Through trimming, wiring and carving techniques, the five years old saplings become hundreds of years old trees been living in the tough and cold natural environment.

When the bonsai process is finished to form a basic style, over time those removed branches and leaves on the floor around work bench will wither away. On the contrary, finished piece of Bonsai on work bench will continue to grow as a piece of living art form.

The movement, death and growth within this 4m<sup>2</sup> area clearly convey the essence of “Wabi-Sabi” which are old, imperfection, sustainability and ecology(figure.19 & 20 &21).



(figure.22 & 23 & 24 & 25)

The materials used here are not synthetic and not to be polished to appear contrived. Therefore, wood panels, Chinese painting papers, rocks, pebbles and stone chips express tactile, rough and non-materiality in “Wabi-Sabi” concept.

Light from garden passes through between two panels bring customers into a Japanese tea room. The materials to build this Japanese tea room are simple and rustic in the “Wabi” style. Tea room includes a “Tokonoma”, floor pillow, an old Chinese chess table and few tea cups. “Tokonoma” is a raised alcove in traditional Japanese homes which serves the subtle focal point of the room. In this “Tokonoma”, only a rock and white pebbles were displayed to convey the emptiness and the nature of universe(figure.22 & 23 & 24 & 25).



(figure.26 & 27)



(figure.28 & 29)

I raised the tea room 100mm higher than the dry garden with no wall in between. This has created spaciousness and sense of openness even in relatively small room(figure.26 & 27).

Natural light was diffused by multiple layers of Chinese painting papers. The texture on the old Chinese painting papers remains rough. Curved and aged papers showing the passage of time. Suspended papers above tea room and garden form relationship of ambiguity and blur the boundary between indoor and outdoor (figure, 28 & 29).



(figure.30 & 31 & 32)

The dry garden creates the atmosphere of loneliness and harmony with nature. White sand was used to form an organic shape to imply the movement and flow of water. Raked sand to represent the ocean and rocks are gods and mountains. Bonsai displayed in dry garden represent another spatial scale. Different from traditional Bonsai pots, they do not only provide the function of containing but

combine the spatial elements from architecture and landscape, furthermore, applying simple geometrical form and lines.

Looking onto Bonsai from tea room, space was transformed from reality into a miniature world, but when look at bonsai closely, the scenery in containers give observers a feeling of expansion and openness(figure.30 & 31 & 32).