

# Bonsai as reflection of nature's beauty: styles and aesthetic value

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*Abstract:* The Art of Miniaturization is an Organic Architecture, thus a combination of art and science. The combination of elements of philosophy, painting, sculpting, architecture, design and gardening is what makes it a unique discipline. While working on living plants, the creator of this unique art is lead by the elementary rules of aesthetics, the skill of connecting various forms, board, colors and space. The Art of Miniature Landscapes is also dependant on the knowledge of nature: abilities to perceive the change of nature and the diversity of different forms met in nature.

In the European art of Landscape Miniaturization two tendencies are met; the first relates to the traditional Japanese art, the second is a link of the traditional Japanese and European Organic Art.

*Key Words:* Bosai, Bonsai styles, Landscape Miniaturization, Far-eastern Art, design theory, aesthetic value

## 1 Introduction

The introduction of the up-to-date achievements in this area should begin by introducing the most significant terms. The Art of Landscape Miniaturization is a combination of individual forms: *Bonsai* (tree in a pot), *Suiseki* (art of rock exposition), *Kusamono* (plant accenting). All three forms can function individually, while simultaneously imposing on some spheres. Despite the Art of Landscape Miniaturization issue still not being fully understandable, it is continuing to become more significant, accounting the active participation of artistic entourage in the creation process of organic and conceptual art. During the research, one concept of the Art of Landscape Miniaturization was examined – the Bonsai. The word “*Bonsai*” originates in the Chinese language and consists of two parts; “*bon*” – tray or vessel (container) and “*sai*” meaning tree or plant [6] [5]. It describes a miniaturized tree or a group of trees, which reflects a certain landscape.

Conventionally, the far-eastern form of shaping miniature *Bonsai* depends on the image of a freely growing tree in nature. The trunk(s) line process and the branch arrangement have been classified in Japan and

divided into style of *Bonsai* [9] [14] [18][21]. The traditional style classification is described by Naka J [15], Nakamura [16], Yoshimura [22], Chan [4], Ardle [8], Kato [9].

The current European miniaturization art has a tendency of forgetting about the classical far-eastern rules of designing *Bonsai* forms. Eager to create stronger and more dynamic forms, the Europeans abandon the classic and sedate forms of displaying the art of miniaturization commonly used in the Land of Rising Sun. The problem, which the Europeans encounter while performing this discipline of art is the lack of elementary rules of its shaping (no literature sources) and what follows, the lack of ideological consistency in the creation process.

## 2 Case studies

During the research of Europeans forms of *Bonsai* and its styles, literature sources were analyzed and studies were made over the work of art itself. The analysis of the work was made on the workshop and exposition levels between the years 2002-2006. In conclusion of the research, the main European rules of designing

*Bonsai* forms (styles) basing on Japanese aesthetics were found.

### 3 Origin of Bonsai

The bonsai art takes its root in China, even though it is commonly linked with Japan. There during the Han dynasty which ruled around 200 BC first landscape miniatures were created by the name of *pun-ching* by arranging few or several small trees embedded in a flat tray [6][7].



Fig.1, Composition by Wlodzimierz Pietraszko

Such landscapes were diversified by hills, rocks, water reservoirs and ceramic figures which depicted pagodas, animals and people. Pun-ching masters create these miniature landscapes so highly appreciated in China up until this day. Later during the Tsin dynasty singular tree and shrub specimen planted in pots were called *pun-sai* [4]. Back then the Chinese were fascinated with the natural trees growing in the mountains which thanks to extreme weather conditions were shaped in a unique and dramatic manner. Gardeners tried to capture such tree picture in a miniaturized way. A true breakthrough took place in 1664 when a runaway official Chu Shun-Sui arrived in Japan with his bonsai collection and professional literature. It was mainly for his knowledge and experience that helped to make bonsai popular amongst the

nobility, high rank officials and samurais. The Japanese as a flexible and open nation swiftly adapted the novelty being miniature trees. Simultaneously, they set rules of ways to shape bonsai and named particular styles which have been used up until this day. A major bonsai boom in Japan took place in Edo period (1603-1868) under the Tokugawa rule. Until today there is still a pine bonsai growing formed in first half of XVII century by the third shogun of Tokugawa family [8]. Probably it is the oldest bonsai in Japan. The story of trees and landscapes planted in ceramic pots had been promoted in poems and paintings and sketches. Tree miniature illustrations from Edo period show their creator's profound gardening experience and unique aesthetics feeling. The Japanese while looking after their bonsai patiently they have treated them as enchanted in a miniature tree microcosms, as in accordance with a saying of an ancient philosopher Lao Tsy who claimed that one can discover the world without leaving one's home [9].



Fig.2, Composition by Wlodzimierz Pietraszko

Today bonsai is known all around the world. Still it was not for China but for Japan that showed bonsai to the western world. First presentation took place on the international exhibition in 1878 in Paris and the following in 1909 in London [9]. Everybody was amazed

by the miniature trees but due to the lack of professional literature this art did not stay in Europe as the Japanese had not allowed during that period any professional information about bonsai to be published. Only during Second World War did the American soldiers start to bring miniature trees and the know-how to the US and thanks to a pioneer book of Jyuji Yoshimura "The Art of Bonsai – Creation, Care and Enjoyment" published in Great Brittan the informational barrier was breached and the miniaturization art flooded the whole Europe.



Fig.3, Composition by Wlodzimierz Pietraszko

#### 4 Reflection of nature's Beauty

Bonsai is not only a tree in a pot. It is also a reflection of strive to form and essence perfection. This art is based on tree picture that grows freely in nature. Bonsai differs from the natural trees. The Japanese introduced a division which helped to easily get ones bearings within this form of art. The plants have been divided based on genus, species, size, origin, final composition place and style represented by the trunk.

This last division depends on the tree trunk line (or several trunks) and branch composition. Hence one can say that style in bonsai stands for form one gives to a tree to depict its natural sort. It also depends mainly on the plant

material's characteristics. There are styles which expose a single tree in a pot and landscape forms – being an arranged tree group in a pot.

Style names as well as the whole professional language around bonsai comes from Japan which helps avoiding long descriptive definitions that are normally interpreted in a different way by the professional literature authors and the ones who plant the trees.

The usage of such original terms proves also helpful within the international bonsai communication.

Nowadays within the European modern art of tree forming there is a trend to move away from the classical style and go towards more eclectic forms.

Most probable is due to a fact that Europeans plan to crate more dynamic and stronger forms as they drop the classical approach and static way of showing nature so commonly used in Japan. This peculiar mannerism is a transition phase just like trends in architecture that come and go.




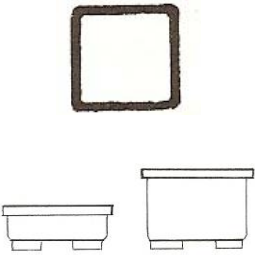
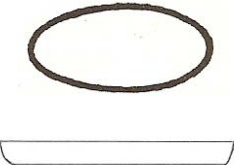
Fig.4, Composition by Wlodzimierz Pietraszko

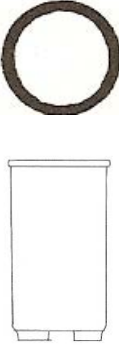


The table underneath presents a system of pot for style formations created by Katarzyna Pietraszko.

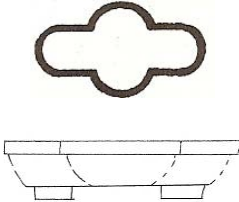
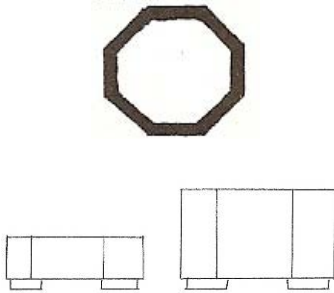
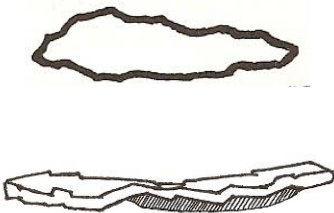
Tab.1, The table underneath presents a system of classification of style formations created by John Naka [15].

<b>JAPANESE STYLES OF BONSAI</b>		
<b>STYLE</b>		<b>CHARACTERISTICS IDENTIFYING STYLES</b>
<b>Bonju</b>		Bonsai tree
<b>Tachi - gi</b>		Upright tree
-	<b>Chokkan</b>	Straight trunk
-	<b>Shakkan</b>	Slanded trunk
-	- <b>Shō - shakan</b>	Minimum slant
-	- <b>Chu - shakan</b>	Midway slant
-	- <b>Dai - shakan</b>	Great or extreme slant
-	<b>Moyo - gi</b>	Informel upright
-	<b>Fukinagashi</b>	Windswept
-	<b>Bunjin</b>	Abstract and free style
-	<b>Bankan</b>	Granled trunk
-	<b>Nejikan</b>	Twisted trunk
-	<b>Sabakan</b>	Split or hollowed trunk
-	<b>Kobukan</b>	Knobby trunk
-	<b>Sharikan</b>	Peled bark trunk
<b>Kengai</b>		Cascade
-	<b>Kengai</b>	Ordinary or formal cascade
-	<b>Han - kengai</b>	Midway or semi - cascade
-	<b>Dai - kengai</b>	Great or extreme almost vertical
-	<b>Gaitō - kengai</b>	Top of cliff or dome cascade
-	<b>Taki - kengai</b>	Waterfall cascade
-	<b>Ito - kengai</b>	Trunk and branches cascading as mass of strings
-	<b>Takan - kengai</b>	More than two trunks cascade
<b>Sōkan</b>		Twin tree
<b>Sōju</b>		Spruto style
<b>Kōrabuki</b>		Multiple sprouts from a stump or ‘growing from a shell of a turtle’
<b>Netsuranari</b>		Multiple sprouts from a long surface root
<b>Yama - yori</b>		Sprouts from a fallen cone
<b>Ikadabuki</b>		Raft style
<b>Yose - uye</b>		Group planting
<b>Ishi - zuke</b>		Rock clinging style
<b>Tako - zukuri</b>		Octopus style
<b>Ne - agari</b>		Exposed up growing root style
<b>Saikei</b>		Group planting using trees, rock, plants and moss and created into a natural scene
<b>Jukei</b>		Shapes or outline of bonsai
-	<b>Matsu - zukuri</b>	Very traditional pine tree shape
-	<b>Hōki - zukuri</b>	Broom shape
-	<b>Tama - zukuri</b>	Ball or egg shape
-	<b>Rōsoku - zukuri</b>	Candle flame shape
-	<b>Kasa - zukuri</b>	Umbrella shape
-	<b>Hōshō - zukuri</b>	Exaggerated from of Matsu – zukuri, often used for background of “Noh” plays

Tab.2, The table underneath presents a system of pot for style formations created by Katarzyna Pietraszko.

<b>POTS USED FOR EUROPEAN FAMOUS BONSAI STYLES</b>		
<b>Pot form</b>	<b>Style</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> 	Bunjin	+
	Chokkan	+
	Fukinagashi	+
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	-
	Ikadabuki	-
	Kengai	-
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	+
	Moyogi	+
	Saikei	+
	Sōkan/Sōju	-
	Shakkan	+
<b>Pot form</b>	<b>Style</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2</b></p> 	Bunjin	-
	Chokkan	+
	Fukinagashi	+
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	-
	Ikadabuki	-
	Kengai	+
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	-
	Moyogi	+
	Saikei	-
	Sōkan/Sōju	-
	Shakkan	+
<b>Pot form</b>	<b>Style</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>9</b></p> 	Bunjin	-
	Chokkan	+
	Fukinagashi	+
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	-
	Ikadabuki	-
	Kengai	-
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	+
	Moyogi	+
	Saikei	+
	Sōkan/Sōju	+
	Shakkan	-

Pot form	Style	
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> 	Bunjin	–
	Chokkan	–
	Fukinagashi	–
	Hokidachi	–
	Ishi - zuke	–
	Ikadabuki	–
	Kengai	+
	Kabudachi	–
	Netsuranari	–
	Moyogi	–
	Saikei	–
	Sōkan/Sōju	–
	Shakkan	–
Pot form	Style	
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> 	Bunjin	+
	Chokkan	+
	Fukinagashi	+
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	–
	Ikadabuki	–
	Kengai	+
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	–
	Moyogi	+
	Saikei	–
	Sōkan/Sōju	–
	Shakkan	+
Pot form	Style	
<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> 	Bunjin	+
	Chokkan	–
	Fukinagashi	+
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	–
	Ikadabuki	–
	Kengai	–
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	+
	Moyogi	+
	Saikei	–
	Sōkan/Sōju	+
	Shakkan	+

Pot form	Style	
<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> 	Bunjin	+
	Chokkan	-
	Fukinagashi	-
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	-
	Ikadabuki	-
	Kengai	-
	Kabudachi	-
	Netsuranari	+
	Moyogi	-
	Saikei	-
	Sōkan/Sōju	-
	Shakkan	+
	Pot form	Style
<p style="text-align: center;">8</p> 	Bunjin	-
	Chokkan	+
	Fukinagashi	+
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	-
	Ikadabuki	-
	Kengai	+
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	-
	Moyogi	+
	Saikei	-
	Sōkan/Sōju	-
	Shakkan	+
	Pot form	Style
<p style="text-align: center;">9</p> 	Bunjin	-
	Chokkan	-
	Fukinagashi	-
	Hokidachi	+
	Ishi - zuke	-
	Ikadabuki	+
	Kengai	-
	Kabudachi	+
	Netsuranari	-
	Moyogi	-
	Saikei	+
	Sōkan/Sōju	-
	Shakkan	-

The following collation presents an animated collation and description of styles most commonly used for *Bonsai* creation in Europe. It has been generated by observing artists on expositional and workshop levels, later completed by literary sources.

#### 4.1 Solitary tree forms and its reflection on nature's beauty

**Chokkan** – classic straight style - “Majesty”[1]. A tree of an upright trunk based on solitaires growing away from other trees. Giving the space the tree receives, the branches spread out in a regular pattern in all directions. It is the primary *Bonsai* style, characteristic with its splendid (*nebari*) and straight and upright trunk proportionally narrowing towards the top. The branch arrangement technique is based on a scheme: first branch left, second goes right, third backwards and the fourth goes left again etc. [17]. The treetop is shaped in the form of a pyramid. The thickness and size of the branches is proportional to the position on the tree – the further up, the shorter and thinner branches are observed.

Forming a tree in such style is not an easy job, however. It requires great precision and tact of the form. A *chokkan* style tree shaped with branches reaching towards the sky appears to be a young one, the horizontally or reaching downwards should give an impression of aging. The gaps between the branches should be made in such manner, so that the tree appears harmonically shaped from all sides. The position of the lowest branch is based upon a mathematical calculation. Dividing the tree into five sectors (counting from the bottom), the lowest branch should be put at height of the second sector. Of course, this rule does not always apply – it is strictly dependant on the predisposition of the tree. *Chokkan* style trees should be pot up in rectangular, oval or circular pots. The aging trees should be put into pots of depth corresponding with the trunk diameter. The pot width cannot exceed the treetop's vertical projection. The types of trees recommended for shaping in *chokkan* style are: *Larix*, *Picea*, *Abies*, *Cupressus*, *Ulmus*, *Acer*, *Fagus* and *Quercus*.

Naturally irregular and fruit trees are inadequate for shaping in *chokkan* style.

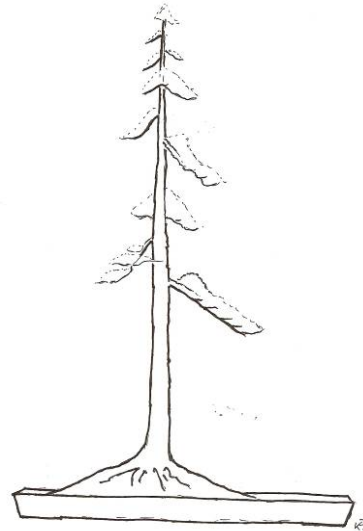


Fig.5, Chokkan by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Moyogi** – irregular straight style - “Artist happy with life”[1]. The trunk of this kind of tree is bent left and right severally along the length of the tree. The bump of each bend is a place for side branches. The bends cannot be over made, it is important to leave the natural look of the tree. In order to reach a perfect composition balance, the treetop should be placed in a straight line connecting it with the middle (*nebari*). The *nebari* in this style should look powerful, unlike in the previous style. This rule is abandoned every so often, forming a *shakan - moyogi* *Bonsai* style – meaning a tree in *moyogi* style leaning out characteristically for the *shakan* style [21]. This style is used for both conifer and leaf trees. The treetop should be formed in a way that one branch goes left, second right, third backwards and fourth left, etc. In order to emphasize the smooth trunk line, *moyogi* style trees are pot up on the sides of the pot, rather than in the middle. The tree trunk should be slightly slanting towards the middle of the container and the tree vertex should be leaning towards the observer. The *moyogi* style pots are rectangular or oval. In special cases, the pots could be circular or square. Recommended trees for *moyogi* style forming are: *Pinus*, *Juniperus*, *Carpinus*, *Taxus*, *Prunus*, *Malus*.



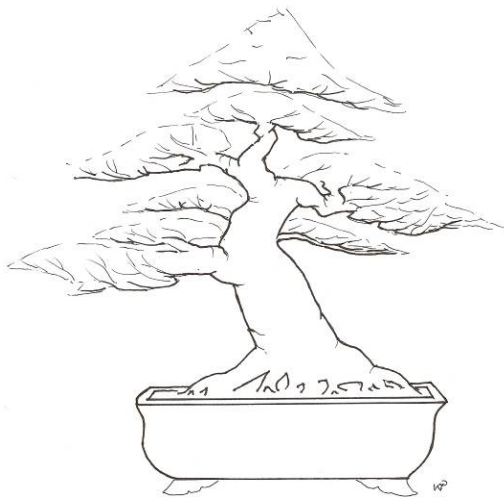


Fig.6, Moyogi by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Kengai** – cascade style - “one rock is enough to survive”[1]. This style imitates trees growing on rock cliffs. It is one of the most expressive styles – long trunk leaning downwards with a large amount of branches growing out from different places, arranged horizontally one above the other with visible gaps between them. The trunk end and branches end clearly below the pot bottom. Waterfall shaped *Bonsai* are commonly known as *Taki-kengai*. Miniature trees with a few casually hanging branches go by the name of *Ito-Kengai*. The highest tree point, middle trunk cap, middle bottom pot bank and the lowest point of the above-ground part of the tree are all in one line; this makes the *kengai* style the most proportionally balanced tree. Similarly to trees leaning out of rock ledges, *Kengai* style *Bonsai* must be deeply rooted, thus they are put in deeper pots to obtain better composition stability. Cascade style trees are also potted in kurama type pots – meaning shell-like pots [17]. The recommended types of trees and shrubs are ones with small leaves or needles and a bendable trunk. This style looks best with *Pinus*, *Juiperus* and *Cotoneaster* trees.

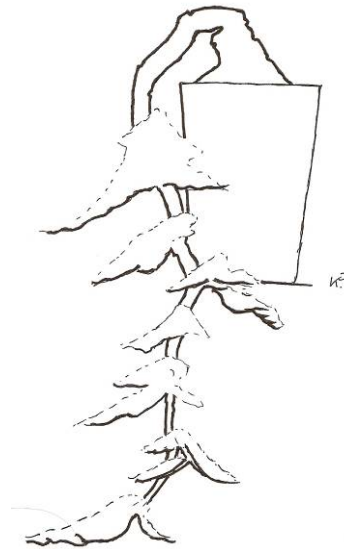


Fig.7, Kengai by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Shakan** – leaning style - “Slowly falling”[1]. The main characteristic of this style is the trunk, which tends to be more or less leaning. There are three *shakan* sub-styles: *Sho-Shakan* – the tree tends to slightly inclined, *Chu-Shakan* – mid-level inclined and *Dai-Shakan* – strongly inclined [15]. In natural habitat, *shakan* styled trees can be met on steep hill-sides or on fast-flowing river basins. The tree-top takes shape of an irregular cone, directed slightly in opposite direction to the trunk incline. (Nabari) must be strongly built, so the plant appears to be stable [18]. The branch arrangement system is identical to the one of *Chokkan* – always in horizontally or slightly leaned down positions.

Considering the trunk incline, the *shakkan* style trees are potted close to the pot side. The larger the incline of the trunk, the closer to the pot side the tree gets potted. In order to achieve the aging appearance of the tree, the trunk never extends beyond the sides of the pot. The balance is maintained by allowing the tree to have longer and more inclined limbs on one side.

The tree roots must stabilize the tree well. It is often acceptable to have the roots uncovered, creating a more dramatic effect, showing the trees will to survive. Oval and rectangular pots are most commonly used for *shakan* style tree containers. Square, circular and polygon pots may destabilize the composition. Pots can be deeper than the ones used for *chokan* style, allowing more base to be put making the whole

composition heavier. Thanks to this the tree does not get influenced by wind blows.

*Shakan* style looks best when *Larix*, *Abies*, *Cupressus*, *Ulmus*, *Acer*, *Fagus*, *Quercus*, *Pinus* or *Azalea* are used for forming.

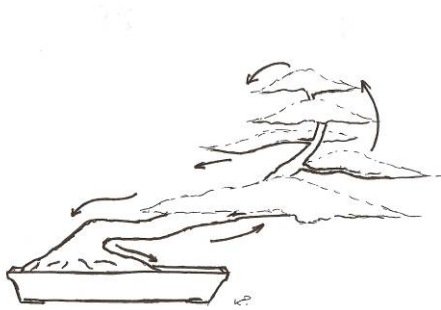


Fig.8, Shakan by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Bunjin** – literate style. (*Bunin-gi*) - “Reaching out to the light”[1]. It is a very complex style, giving the artist a creative freedom not connected to any rules. The only rule is that the branches are to begin at 2/3 of the trunk height [20]. The treetop is very ascetic, thin and wavy trunk, with many visible bends. This style is usually met on sea sides or places where the trees have a good light access.

The inspiration for this style is the *Pinus* drawn on works of the artists from southern Chinese school of landscape painting called Nanga [13]. The creators of this school were never professional artists. They used to travel and live alone in mountain shelters and dedicate themselves to painting, calligraphy and contemplation. They were commonly called “Literates” [14]. Their style is strongly based on the calligraphy. The expressiveness and creative freedom show that even conservative Bonsai masters have recognized its beauty. Pots should be modest, thin, and circular and have very toned in light colors. The pot diameter should not exceed 1/3 of the tree height.

Best tree types for bunjin style are *Pinus*, *Picea* and *Juniperus*.

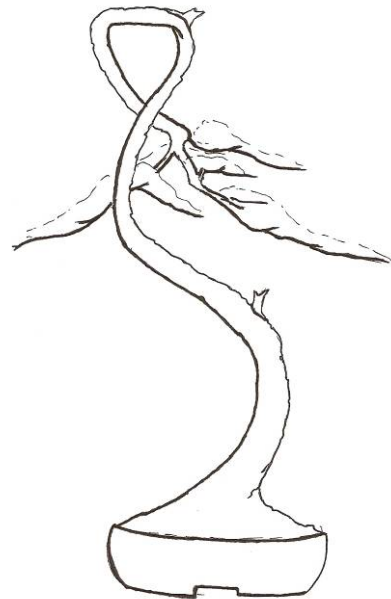


Fig.9, Bunjin by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Hokidachi** – broom style - “Complete harmony in light air”[1]. This style mirrors leaf trees usually met in open spaces. The name of *hokidachi* comes from its tree-top shape, which resembles an upside-down broom. The tree-top is very regular round shape and cover almost 2/3 of the total tree height. The branches should be of same thickness and should grow out of the top of the trunk. The trunk itself is very simple and has a strongly built (*nebari*). Plants shaped in *hokidachi* style mark their naturalness and simplicity, which reflect their unpretentious beauty.

The pots for the *hokidachi* style should be rectangular, oval, square, octagon or circular.

The often used tree types for shaping are *Ulmus*, *Cupressus*, *Betula*, *Acer*, *Fagus*, *Quercus* and blossoming and fruitful trees



Fig.9, Hokidashi by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Fukinagashi** – wind style - “Bent by wind”[1]. High mountain and seaside trees are the inspirations for this very dynamic style, because of the strong wind usually met in the above named places. The most characteristic feature of this style are the branches all turned in one direction, symbolizing the wind direction. The tree trunk may be inclined in the same direction as the braches or, in order to maintain the balance – in the opposite direction. The Bonsai masters recognize two sub-styles: trees reflecting the permanent wind or rather trees hit by spontaneous wind blows. The trees are never too dense, in order to achieve the lightness of the composition. In *fukinagashi* compositions fresh branches are not allowed to grow, because they would destroy the smooth style line. The pots should be very thin and of oval shape. The shaping process of the “wind shaped” tree is difficult, but the resulting effect compensates the work and patience. This style is usually formed with *Pinus*, *Acer* and *Ulmus*.

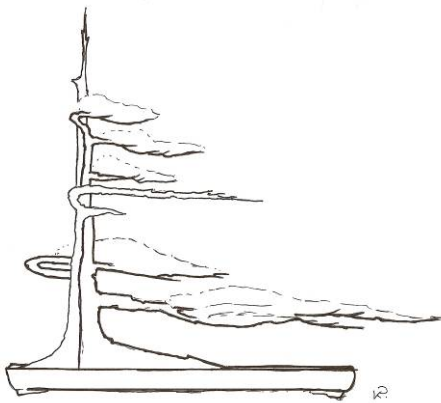


Fig.10, Fukinagashi by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Negari** – The *negari* style are formed with uncovered roots, its archer are trees growing on dams and on fast-flowing river basins. It is an expressive style, dominated by plant movement, similar to the one of the *bunjin* form. *Pinus* and *Ulmus* are recommended for this style. Circular pots should be very modest.

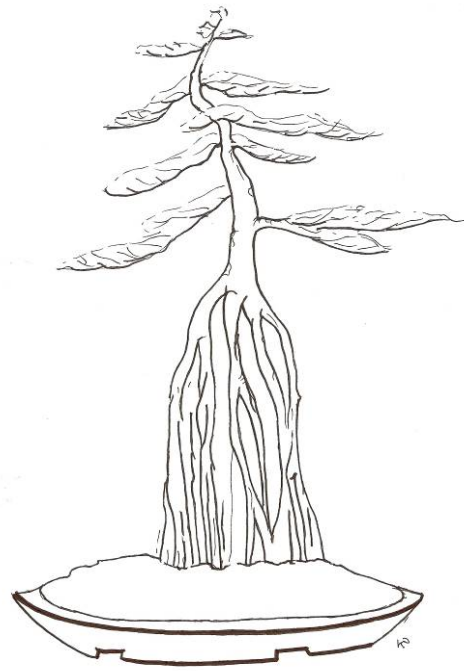


Fig.11, Negari by Katarzyna Pietraszko

#### 4.2 Landscape forms and its reflection on nature's beauty

The landscape forms are widely known for their experience with nature. During the process of shaping landscape forms a big role is given to the ability of connecting plant types. It is a region of excellence for landscape architects, since the rules for miniature and real-size landscapes are similar.

The landscape forms described underneath are characteristic because of multiple trunks, which reflect their natural look.

**Sokan/Soju** – Twin style tree. *Sokan*- “Man and woman” or “Mother and child”[1]. Primarily they are *Salix* or *Alnus* inclined over a brook. Bonsai in this style presents with dual trunk, the *soju* style, however, are two trees of same type put next to each other in one pot. Bonsai trees, in general, are potted in odd numbers per pot to achieve their asymmetry. As mentioned, despite its even number, they are differed by different heights and growth process.

Under the trunk connection, no branches are allowed to grow. In either of the styles it is allowed for the tree diameter and height to be the same. The difference in height should be rationally same as the difference in diameter of the two trees. The lowest branch of the lower tree should always be under the lowest branch of the higher tree. The branches of either of the

trunks cannot collide with each other. Recommended trees are *Pinus* and *Acer*.



Fig.12, Sokan/Soju by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Kabudachi** – This tree has multiple trunks. It is a Bonsai style, in which the single root system is used for multiple roots. The term is also used for Bonsai created from intertwined roots, which trunks touch at the bottom. The *kabudachi* style has same rules as the ones of sokan and soju, but the quantity must be odd (3 trunks – *sankan*, 5 trunks – *gokan*, 7 trunks – *shichikan*). Recommended trees are *Pinus*, *Juniperus* and *Picea*.

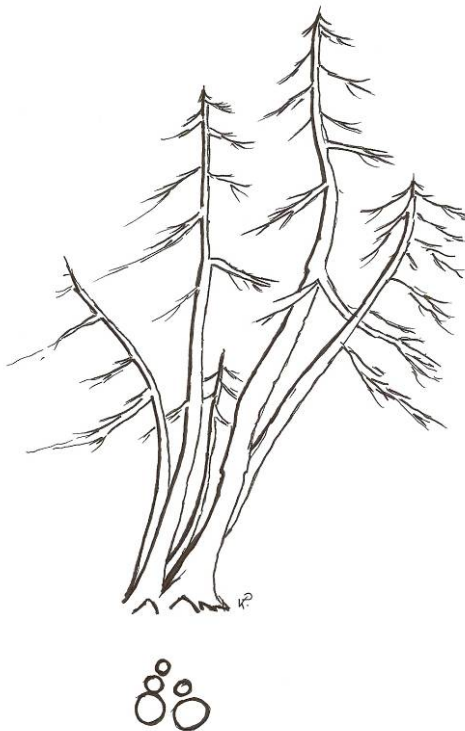


Fig.13, Kabudachi by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Ikadabuki** – Raft style. Ikada – “raft”. It is a forest, in which specific trunks are parts of the same plant. *Ikadabuki* is a form a forest, which specific trees are made of branches, horizontally growing out a trunk potted inside a pot of one of the trees. The advantage of this style is the uniform tree character, which color changes depending on season. *Ikadabuki* are usually met on swamps and moors. They are created from trees knocked over by wind. For this style both, conifers and leaf trees can be used and trees capable of a fast rooting of branches. The plant trunk used to create such a *Bonsai* must be put inside the pot so that it does not touch any of the pot sides. The plants should be put on the bottom of the pot and covered until 1/3 of the trunk and branch diameter is uncovered. It is important to remove all unnecessary roots.

The most popular *Bonsai* of this style are in the Japanese Horyn-ji monastery. The recommended trees are *Pinus*, *Ulmus*, *Fagus*, *Cydonia*, *Acer*, *Picea*, *Abies*.

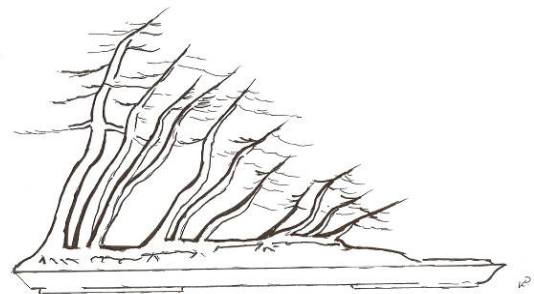


Fig.14, Ikadabuki by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Ishizuke** – rock style. The style name literary means uhi-rock and tsuki-connected to something [15]. The trees formed in this style grow directly on rock tops. The tree can also be potted in such a manner that the roots tangle around the rock. This style could be often met on eroded sand or chalk rock. In Poland, they are met on Table Mountains. In Bonsai art, *ishizuke* style resembles the miniature landscape mountains with steep valleys. In the process of formation, an ultimate number of trees and types can be used. The only rule is the need of keeping the natural balance – the conifers must be potted on higher parts than the leaf trees. The illusion that the rocks with trees are further away is achieved when Bonsai are made from small trees and big rocks. The

rocks should not be symmetric or have smooth edges. The rock should be carefully examined for the treetop, front and base. The necessary condition is the rock stability. If it is not stable, it should be flattened. They are usually young plants, raised from seeds. Older midget plants are exceptions.

Trees growing in rock holes are never moved and their roots are never cut. The only part changed is the soil which is added every couple of years. When moving the tree, the roots cannot be disconnected from the rock in order not to kill the plant. Recommended trees are *Picea*, *Pinus*, *Acer* and *Chamaecyparis*.

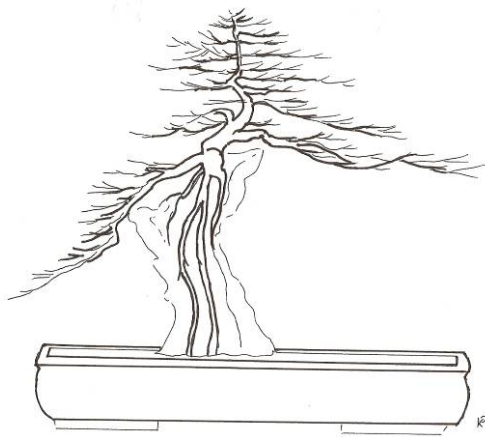


Fig.15, Ishizuke by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Yose – uye** – forest style. “Leaf whisper – forest silence”[1]. It is a group of trees potted in a big, thin container or on a thin rock. This style differs from others, because of the freedom given to the creator. Conifer Bonsai can show old forests, young coppice or a loose group of trees growing on open land. Trees with branches only on one side can be used on the outer sides of the composition. However, it does not mean that all defective plants should be used in such compositions. On the contrary, the plants used in such compositions must be carefully selected, because it is them, who decide on the harmony of the artwork.

The selected plants should have uniform leaf types. It is even better, if all the planted plants come from the same mother plant. The look of the forest seems to be more evened out, since the trees represent the same growth tempo and treetop color. They must also be adapted to extensive root cutting.

The selected trees may be of different age, allowing the composition to gain a more

natural landscape view. The quantity of trees in the composition may differ, but it is necessary to be an odd number above seven trees. Thanks to this, the composition does not have a symmetric effect. The care is much easier if the whole forest is made from the same type of trees, since all of them need the same amount of water, feeding value and nesting size. It is important to have a single species dominating and the rest being supplementary elements. After a some time, the composition becomes balanced, because of the domination of the stronger plants over the weaker ones. It is then necessary to correct the seeding places.

Recommended types for *yose-ue* style are: *Larix*, *Abies*, *Cupressus*, *Ulmus*, *Acer*, *Fagus*, *Quercus*, *Pinus* and *Zelkova*.

Pots should be rectangular or oval and very thin. Forests can be potted on rock or clay tables.

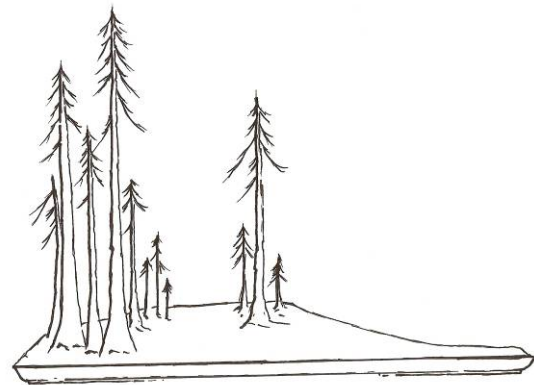


Fig.16, Yose-uye by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Saikei** – landscape style. The style name originates from Japan and stands for “a landscape on a plate”. It is an art of recreating a particular landscape as a miniature. The main idea of this style is to show the natural beauty of the landscape composition in a thin container. In this specific case, the pot plays a vital role, similarly to the painting frame. Saikei is very popular in China and most Pacific countries. The term saikei has been created in 1963 by an artist creating landscape compositions on Toshio Kawamoto tray [6]. Just as in natural landscapes, the materials used for the landscape may take different size and character. Although the saikei may take the view of the composition of the famous Bonsai artist, made by using materials widely found in the selected place, it can also be an exotic or amazing creation. In both cases, the elements must be carefully adjusted to create a whole composition.

There are three different style types. The first one is keto – bonkei. Its main feature is the usage of keto – dark brown clay mixed with peat from decayed plant substances and loam. Secondly there is bonseki, where sceneries are created with white sand on a black, covered in laque tray. Neither ground nor plant is used here. The third type is hako—niwa. This is art of creating miniature garden in all types of vessels with usage of artificial or natural resources. Saikei has often been made using the shakkei techniques. Distant mountains that are commanded at the small angle are often used for making „Shakkei” – borrowed scenery [8].



Fig. 17, Saikei by Katarzyna Pietraszko

## 5 Landscape aesthetics.

Aesthetics is one of the values next to ethics, which take care of the questions of harmony, disharmony, beauty and ugliness. It functions as a systematic thought of beauty and art. [18]. Landscape and natural environment aesthetics are conditional to the perception of nature and visual perception of buildings. The perception of nature largely depends on the local conditions, for example climate, relief, natural phenomenon and plants. Perception is a part of a larger aesthetic experience, which depend not only on natural conditions, but on time space and cultural region. This is why aesthetic values change depending on countries and cultures. These differences can be seen in planning, building and architecture. [17].

In order to understand the Japanese classical aesthetic terms, it is necessary to understand the general philosophical results, which created the final form. Japanese find the role of nature as the most important and it had great impact on the shaping of the social-cultural life. Facing natural disasters, on flat land, and oceans, the Japanese built the global view according to the terms of fragility, vanity,

passing and some philosophical systems (the religious ones gave a metaphysical strength and power). The aesthetic values have never been put on the Japanese, but introduced according to their sensitivity and the needs of aesthetics. The Japanese aesthetic need adjusted (next to theatre, poetry, painting) easily next to the noble everyday life like drinking tea, flowering, gardening and the art of miniaturization. All types penetrated by themselves and created aesthetic ideals.

According to Donald Kenne [10]: “The artistic character of the Japanese changes in the way of interpreting the simplicity of beauty”

“In painting, it looks as if the Japanese pallet had more colors and mixing them gives a greater literary meaning, which simply cannot be translated into most European languages.”[17]

The aesthetic rules below describe the basics of designing the art of miniaturization.

**Suggestion and being incomplete** – this rule is the highest value in terms of art work in the Japanese culture. Within art, most culture areas, as well as in daily customs one can find ambiguities standing for being incomplete. The latter gives the audience the possibility to fill the gaps with his or her own object or activity imagination [6]. While creating a masterpiece the author is supposed to suggest in a subtle way such potential matters by means of masterpiece construction that captures ideas but does not restrain interpretation. One has to bear in mind that a perfect completion of the masterpiece limits the interpretation, hence decreases its value.

The suggestion has been greatly influenced by shintoism, according to which the trees and rocks have been the location of spirit divinity (kami). It can be observed by introducing the aging techniques (*jin, shari, sabamiki* – which symbolize and suggest, that kami lives in the miniature trees) into the Bonsai art.

*Jin* means “sign of Gods”, it was the treetop. According to shinto it was the sign from God, who living in the old tree showed his presence. [14].

*Sabamiki* means “saba” – mackerel fish and “miki” – trunk. It was a fragment of the trunk showing the mythical fish.

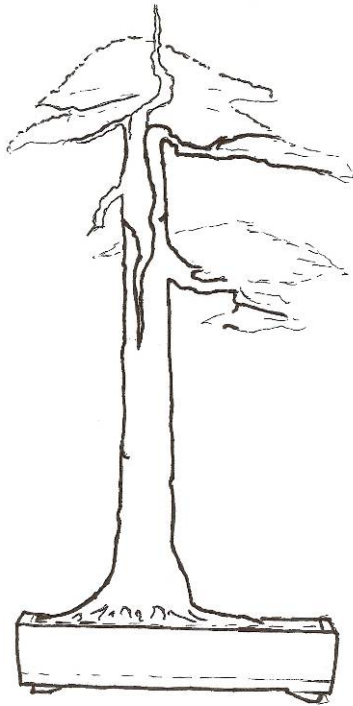


Fig.18, Jin by Katarzyna Pietraszko

*Shari* – “Buddha’s bone”. This was invented when the Korean and Chinese Buddhism began to impact Shinto.

“Perfection is an untouched sphere, which repels imagination. It does not leave any space for it to come through” – Donald Kenee [11]. This is where the general rule of avoiding perfection, regularity and perfect finishing came from. It suggested that perfection did not allow further development.

The base of Japanese understanding of beauty is the unfinished perfection and caducity manifesting by the raising and withering phases. The beauty condition is not immortality, but showing its effect of fragility and passing (...).

The imperfection judged from aesthetic point of view leads to aesthetic value of poverty and lack, which found its meaning in the following terms – Wabi and Sabi, Yūgen [10].

### **Wabi, Sabi, Yūgen**

The key term in Japanese aesthetics connects into one whole metaphysical-aesthetical concept, creating aesthetic answers [5]. The terms are based on the Buddhist Zen philosophy, tea ceremony and haiku poetry. They represent the state of mind of a person while looking at the work of art. Although, some of these terms have a similar meaning

and describe similar feelings, some differ by nuances and connotation.

Wabi can mean: melancholic loneliness, modest, deserted, calm, quiet, motionless, impoverished and unpretentious. Wabi is a subjective feeling provoked by an object, classically an abandoned fisherman’s home on a deserted windy beach on a gray winter day. In the essay *Heraty’s Road* by Toshihiko Izutsu [21] he writes: ...”Some things, like eroded rocks, exposed to the climate and because of an old piece of wood, an old brocade of bad colors, standing somewhere abandoned, an old border rock, which will soon disappear or will become immobile etc, create an amazing sensitivity in people from under the wabi sign”.

Sabi can mean old, calm, subtle, antic, mature and experienced, as well as deserted, empty and melancholic. The presence of Sabo is often suggested by patina and other symptoms of being time used or used on a valuable antique.

*Yūgen*. The term is hard to put in words, it bases on the emotional state of the object, bringing out what is complex, hidden in nature. State *Yūgen* can be compared to a blossoming flower, its understatement, rejection of what is fulfilled and finished on the phase of beginning or ending, when what is not present or yet to be, becomes suggested. [17].

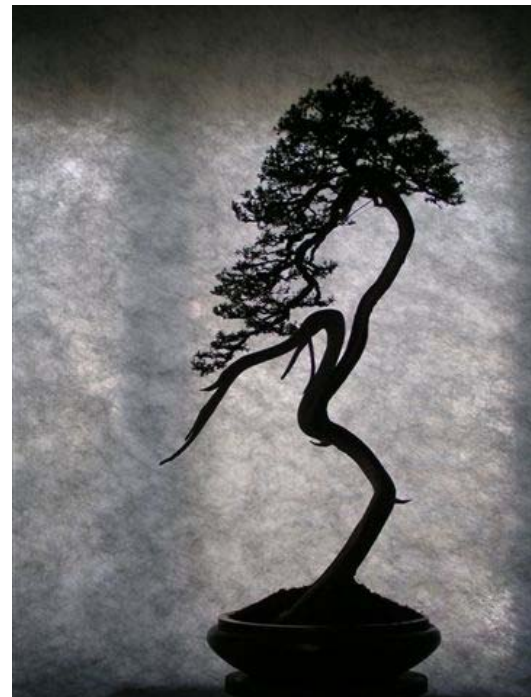


Fig.18, Yūgen by Katarzyna Pietraszko

*Yūgen* can mean unclear and dark, with the word “dark” being a metaphorical game of words “mysterious, deep, unsure, subtle”. The classical illustration of the word *Yūgen* is a scene showing the moonlight appearing from behind the clouds or by morning fog covering a mountain range.

Trees, which show these features aesthetically usually, have ripped roots, which have not given up for centuries. The trees itself are often admired for their stability, courage, strength and a great will.

**Irregularity and asymmetry.** Accenting the beginning and ending abandons the regularity and perfection. From early literary sources, we know that the Japanese have tried to avoid regularity and symmetry. They have probably thought that it interferes and limits the strength of imagination. The regularity has been avoided by not using evens and using the numbers 7 – 5- 3. The irregularity connects to the Buddhist Zen philosophy and creates triangular forms marking the arc. The arc is made by three lines: skyline (vertical), ground (horizontal) and human (slanting and connecting the two previous ones). The asymmetric creation bases on imperfection, creating a dynamic effect. A work built on these rules has an closed “power” and creates a tension connecting the construction.

**Simplicity and impermanence.** Zastosowanie najbardziej oszczędnych środków do uzyskania oczekiwanego efektu wynika z filozofii zen, która ma wielki wpływ na estetykę japońską. Prostota jest zasadą estetyczną, bezpieczniejszą niż obfitość. Decydując się na nią oraz dochowując wierności zasadzie sugestii, Japończycy utracili część możliwych efektów artystycznych na rzecz tworzenia uniwersalnych dzieł sztuki, nietkniętych przez zmienne tendencje upodobań. Za zamiłowaniem do prostoty i naturalnych właściwości rzeczy idzie najbardziej charakterystyczny dla Japonii ideał estetyczny - nietrwałość. Jest ona także bardzo bliska ogólnemu pojęciu piękna, ponieważ przelotne spojrzenie na obiekt może w pewnych okolicznościach stymulować zmysł piękna [17] Prostota osiągnięta była poprzez dopracowanie każdego detalu i tworzenie atmosfery naturalności.



Fig.17, Impermanence by Katarzyna Pietraszko

**Fūzei** This word means “breeze” and feeling, thus the word can be understood as an atmosphere or mood. Fūzei gives a place spirit – genius loci and shows the architect's taste. This term explains the impact of the garden plan, showing off its specific perception feature arrangement. These features seem to balance between the artwork and observer, giving the composition a unusual character, showing the materials used. If the garden architect realizes the strength of the composition, he will not have to restate the natural landscape features in order to gain the mood the composition gives. It is important to remark that it was believed that the landscape made the mood. It was believed that the local Shinto kami (ghosts) lived in specially selected rocks, trees and flowing water.

## 6 Conclusion

Bonsai treated as a living sculpture can be a model of trees in nature: from single ones to dense forests located around fields or on hillsides.

The art of miniaturization is a special discipline of knowledge, connecting in itself



elements of philosophy, painting, sculpture, architecture and gardening. The artist performing such work on a living plant is lead by the basic rules of aesthetics: feeling of beauty, simplicity, asymmetry and suggestibility. The artist must also show great feeling of balance and connecting many forms, texture, colors and space. The art of miniature landscapes is also dependant on the knowledge of nature: abilities to perceive the change of nature and the diversity of different forms met in nature. This art should be examined from different far-eastern designing philosophy, environment psychology, natural aesthetics, European designing rules and aesthetic values. The basics of Bonsai art is the eastern perspective of the world. The Asian way of life unchangingly goes in harmony of humans with nature and the whole universe. The interactive influence between the human and Bonsai have a deeper base in Buddhist and Taoist philosophy. In the European culture, the art of landscape miniaturization is successfully functioning since not long ago.

In a broader manner the concept of landscape design may be described as the „big idea” that is often obtained from information extracted from the local geographic, agricultural, topographic, environmental and anthropological studies. In relation to the designer’s experiences and philosophical approaches towards nature, landscape, aesthetic and global composition [3].

This happens, since during the process of creating landscape design there are always ideas and designs in mind that directly or indirectly influence the designer [7]

John Burley said: “The importance of concept is that it drives the design solution, creating an environment that is more than just a collection of unrated shapes and forms” [3].

It is also pursued by landscape architects, who are fascinated by designing landscapes reflecting the nature scaled into miniature pots.

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