

## Appreciation

This year flew by. Our programs began with **Chiara Padrini** followed by **Larry Ragle, Richard Turner, Wanda Matjas, Kit Blaemire, Kengo Tatehata** and **Ken McLeod**. Newsletter contributors included **Rick** and **Mimi Stiles, Richard Turner, Ray Yeager, Peter Bloomer, Buzz Barry**, and our amazing staff: **Linda Gill, Jim Greaves, Flash Partch** and **Larry Ragle**. Because of you, **we won the best (long) newsletter award** at the GSBF convention! Thank you **Bill** and **Lois Hutchinson** for our break table and **Joe James**, Yuha Desert Trip Leader. We would be standing still without all of you! And speaking of getting somewhere, thank you **Ralph Johnson**, for getting us everywhere in style! Your dedication to our club never ceases to amaze us. We are forever grateful to you. ~Nina 



**Peter Bloomer** was this years recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the International Stone Appreciation Symposium. Well deserved, **Peter!**

### Huntington Show Schedule of Events

**Dec 21** - set up day. Tables and backdrops will be set up beginning at 9AM.

**Dec 22- Bring your displays between 9-12. Bring bonsai and complimentary plants for set up. Take plants home, return them on 12/27 by 9:30**

**Dec 27 - Jan 2** -show opens at 10:30 and closes at 4:30. Closed Jan 1. **Jan 2** - Take down at 4:30.

Please do not forget to sign up for security / docent duty! **See page 11 for the schedule**. Check your calendar, select times you will be available to help and call **Linda Gill** with the dates and times. **Exhibitors:** participation is a must. **Kit Blaemire** needs to know what you plan to display so she can make the labels. **Please refer to page 11 for labeling instructions.** **Kit** also needs to know if you are planning a multiple piece table display for the perimeter. The **deadline for labels is Dec 10th**. Call **Kit: 213-445-7211** or email her: [blaemire@aol.com](mailto:blaemire@aol.com)

**Limit 5 displays per person (thematic displays count as one) ~space available, curator's choice.**



## Aesthetics

I apologize for leaving Mr. **Matsurra** holding that cut stone over the trash can for this past month. And I apologize for leaving him there a little longer. I promise I will get back to that moment.

But first, a reminder of **Peter Aradi's** question. "Our understanding of Japanese stone appreciation needs to be put in writing. Presently too many partial and contradictory ideas float around and we might as well ask, *Japanese stone aesthetics as described by whom?*"

**Peter** studied in Japan, in a monastery, experiencing the day to day life of a monk for an extended period of time - and presented a paper on his experiences at one of the stone symposiums in Pennsylvania. We have asked **Peter** to write an article, or series of articles, that expresses his understanding of Japanese aesthetics as it applies to stone appreciation.

**Peter's** view may be scholarly, so I'll write as a student, a collector who values, but lacks the education in the deeper connotations of Zen.

Aesthetics defined are '*guiding principles in matters of artistic beauty and taste*'. We will have to wait to see **Peter's** point of view but it would seem to me that Japanese aesthetics are not just personal tastes and emotions. It is shared by the larger community and goes beyond any single art. For example, calligraphy, tea ceremony, dance, bonsai...these different art forms all share a commonality, a quiet, understated, elegance.

The Japanese aesthetics of stone appreciation reflect the same principles as other Japanese arts. It includes respect for the viewer and the culture. It is careful and deliberate. It is refined.

Although there are many ways to appreciate suiseki, different styles of display, for example, what is interesting is the idea of trying to reflect that aesthetic as best we can. The best way to do that is to approach the subject with humility and an open heart and mind.

**Nina** and I have been fortunate to have studied with **Uhaku Sudo** at his studio along with **David DeGroot** and **Hideko Metaxas**, experiencing the Japanese aesthetic. Additionally, we have enjoyed many hours with **Seiji Morimae** at his studio and at the home of **Shoichiro Negishi**, a longtime student of the Keido school of display. We have attended presentations by **Morimae** and **Sudo**, as well as,

### October Meeting Notes

ANNOUNCEMENTS: We welcomed a new member, **Dee Fann**. We fine tuned plans for our Yuha Trip. We talked about an exchange of stones with the Aiseki Club in Japan. We announced the talk by **Anna Rosenblum** at the Huntington on March 13. We discussed our show so please read all the details in this newsletter. Docent sign up and label information on page 11.

**Ray Yeager Wants Us to Know:** Many of us are following the latest Mars space mission where, on August 6<sup>th</sup>, the Curiosity Rover touched down on the red planet with much exciting fanfare. Aiseki Kai has a connection to this historic event. One of the main missions is to travel to a 15,000-foot mountain in the center of Galen crater to take soil samples and photographs. The mountain has been named Mount Sharp, in honor of the late **Robert Sharp**, a geologist from Cal Tech in Pasadena. In 1971 **Bob Sharp** directed **Bob Watson** and **Cliff Johnson** to Late Hill, in Panamint Valley, one of our most popular stone hunting sites (see page 6).

**Cliff Johnson** is home and mending from his accident last month. We all wish him a speedy recovery.

STONE OF THE MONTH (A favorite stone).  
Sizes are in inches, length x depth x height



Janet Shimizu 3 x 1.5 x 3.5



Richard Turner 5 x 5 x 12



Hanne Povlsen 11 x 4 x 2.5



Uyen Troung 10.5 x 5 x 1.75



Buzz Barry 6 x 3 x 1.75



Linda Gill 7.5 x 5 x 3



Barry Josephson 11 x 5.5 x 4



Jim Greaves 13 x 3.25 x 3



Paul Methot 14 x 8 x 5



Lois Hutchinson 5.5 x 4 x 3.5



Phil Chang 9 x 5 x 3

The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.



## October Program Notes *by Linda Gill*

**Larry Ragle's** talk was called, "What a Month (or 2)!"

**Larry** showed pictures of the following activities:

**Kengo Tatehata** and **Wil's** visit from Japan in August, Ko Fu Kai's bonsai show with 10 stones from Aiseki Kai and the International Stone Symposium in Pennsylvania!

The Bowers Museum Show was extremely well attended over the course of 5 days. **Manny Martinez, Ralph Johnson, Lois Hutchinson, Paul Vasina, Marybel Balendonck, Joe James, Harry Hirao** and **Larry** and **Nina** participated as well as **Wil**. He showed a stone he found in Orange County during his visit in August. He used 2 bronze cranes in his display. Please see the October newsletter, pages 6-7, for pictures of the stones.

While they were here, **Wil** and **Tatehata** went to the Kern River for a little rock collecting (below) and



to **Ralph Johnson's** (below) and then to **Jim Greaves's**



(see top of next column) before their Aiseki Kai talk at the Huntington. Next they flew to San Francisco and went rock hunting on the Eel River with **Hideko** and **Tony Metaxas, Ben Nanjo** and a dozen more San Francisco Suiseki Club members. See October newsletter, pages 8-11.



At the symposium in Pennsylvania Mr. **Seiji Morimae**, assisted by **Wil** as translator, and **Peter Warren**, spoke of the Keido style of tokonoma display (see pages 8-10). He sent the dimensions of the tokonoma he used in his talks to **Sean Smith** who fabricated it for the stage at the symposium. We were treated to **Larry's** photos of the talks, the sponsors and some of the stones. There were two stone displays, one by the presenters and one by the registrants. **Larry** remarked on the increasing number of locations across North America where viewing stones are being found.

One of the presenters was **Anna Rosenblum** whose father, **Richard**, was an artist and an expert on scholars stones. He had a collection of almost 1500 stones. His wife was a Harvard professor who was not a fan of his hobby so he took his daughter to China for the first time when she was just 10 and every time thereafter. She became as knowledgeable as he was and she displayed a number of stones (below, her favorite)



at the symposium. **Larry** shared a number of photos with us including one of a very good sculpture of two wrestlers that her dad had made when he was eight years old. **Richard Rosenblum's** good friend, **Kemin Hu** was also on the program as was **Chung Kruger**.

Thank you for sharing, **Larry**.

# Ask GuyJim

*Dear GuyJim,  
Do parts of a body qualify for use as a figural suiseki?*

*Joseph Gaytan, Whittier, CA*

Dear Joseph,

Having no wish to herein become embroiled in a discussion regarding the appropriateness of including figures under *suiseki*, let alone parts of figures, let me give you my random thoughts for acceptability within the wider latitude of viewing stones.

The human head, especially the face, is so imprinted in our subconscious, that we would likely include stones evoking them. Those with a recognizable visage having a historical/cultural connotation would be especially palatable – think **Lincoln**, not E.T.

[Similarly, but less often, an animal or bird head may express essential qualities.]

For any other body part to be considered, there would seem to be a need for some cultural context, for



Torso, Eel River, Richard Aguirre

example, a torso that conjures an image of a fragmented classical sculpture (left). With more fragmented body parts and extremities, there would seem to be an even greater need for a specific traditional/cultural context. Images associated with Buddha provide numerous

examples that might be appropriate within the context of a given display: Buddha’s foot, an elongated ear, navel, gesturing hand. Note however, that a finger that represents a finger or a foot that is simply a foot would appear foolish and degrade an exhibit...Still, it might be tempting to display **Katisha**’s elbow?

This raises the question of stones suggesting sexual organs, most often penis stones, that one occasionally finds inexplicably included in the back of *suiseki* books and magazines. Generally they would be inappropriate for our public venues, but within the narrow context of a didactic display on the origins of art and stone collecting, they might find a limited place. Throughout history and cultures there has been a universal use of sexual imagery in the naming of

landscape features. Thus, stones with less obvious sexual imagery might be subsumed under the guise of the Grand Tetons, Virgin Waterfalls, or a phallic-shaped desert hoodoo. Perhaps, a sensuous buttocks stone might draw in the modern art crowd as it reprises a sculpture by **Maillol**, etc.

Further, the recognition of other partial forms within natural landscape features leaves an avenue for appropriating poetic landscape designations to legitimize less than complete figural forms, for instance: a coastal stone designated as ‘skull rock’. I am not sure about a skull as skull or a heart of the ever-popular valentine shape (rather than being an anatomical glob). Again, might we be dancing around the concept of symbolic representation rather than specifically seeing the stone as an actual object.

Although you specifically asked about the use of stones suggesting parts of a body, note that the same basic considerations apply to embedded-image stones (picture stones) – but with even greater limitations. Because the picture image upon the stone surface is two dimensional, we eliminate the possibility of a direct connection to recollected sculptural forms. Once again, the head is most likely to present an acceptable partial image; a picture of an isolated body part, less so.

As you can see, this answer has been a bit ambiguous, more subjective than definitively objective. All stones having forms and pictures that provide imagery fall under the broad definition of mimetoliths (stones that look like something). Whether a stone is kitsch or aesthetically acceptable becomes subjective, the answer ultimately being determined by the viewer’s perception, perfection of image, and stone quality. We must evaluate the type of image, the material, the cultural connotations, aesthetics and perhaps even the specific parameters of the venue and intent of a given display in determining whether a given ‘fragment’ may be elevated to the level of a ‘viewing stone’.

GuyJim

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for GuyJim to jimreaves@roadrunner.com or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 or call (310) 452-3680

## Stone of the Month

continued from page 2



Bill Hutchinson 6.5 x 4 x 6



Jesse Krong 8 x 5 x 10

We all have more than one favorite stone, right?

Nina Ragle's favorite stone is a two-fer. With 2 lovely daiza, each carved by Mr. Suzuki, Nina has 2 displays with the same stone. Mr Suzuki, also known by his artist name, Koji, has been carving daiza for almost 50 years.

See the article about Koji and American daiza carver, Sean Smith, in the latest issue of BCI Magazine, pages 24-29. This quiet stone was purchased from Mr. Seiji Morimae a year ago in Japan. 6 x 4.5 x 1.75



## Aesthetics

continued from page 1

**Matsuura** at the International Viewing Stone Symposiums on the subject of Japanese aesthetics. Although I'm an outsider and most likely will never fully grasp the deeper meanings of these aesthetics, I have a deep respect for the art of suiseki and bonsai and will live by these principles as closely as I can, not trying to re-invent it to compensate for my ignorance.

*"We are on an endless road to achieve what we are looking for – enjoy every moment along the way"* -

**Uhaku Sudo**

#### Recommended Reading – Some Guides to Japanese Aesthetics

*An Introduction to Suiseki*, **Matsuura Arishige**, Translated and Adapted by **Wil Lautenschlager**, 2010.

Mr. **Matsuura**, yes, the man holding that stone, is the author of the only book, in English, that explains today's Japanese principles as practiced by the Nippon Suiseki Association. There is no overt attempt to describe their aesthetic in this book because this book illustrates Japanese suiseki aesthetics as practiced today. (Our readers know **Wil** as "Wil of Japan" author of many articles in our newsletter.)

*In Pursuit of Beauty, The Story of Genkokai, The Formal Practice of Displaying Suiseki*, **Seiji Morimae**, translated by Wil Lautenschlager (yes –that **Wil**).

This publication is, page to page, Japanese aesthetics focusing on display. Having spent time with Mr. **Morimae**, I know he recognizes appropriate stones can be found in the West and that many of us have some understanding of the mechanics of display. However, the message of this publication is to introduce

hobbyists to the "essence - the spirit and soul" of display. This publication was available at the 2012 International Stone Symposium. We hope to serialize this work in our 2013 newsletters.

*The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation, Suiseki and Its Use with Bonsai*, Vincent T. Covello and Yuji Yoshimura, Charles E. Tuttle, 1984.

This book became our first "bible". Although much of the specifics of suiseki have evolved, this book remains unique, in that, in Chapter 2, *Characteristics and Aesthetic Qualities*, the authors explain balance, suggestiveness, subdued color, and the emotional impact a stone can evoke in terms beginners can grasp. They introduce and explain the numerous Japanese words that are used to give meaning to the emotions one may feel viewing a suiseki, by defining or explaining, for example, *wabi*, *sabi*, *shibui* and *yugen* and other Japanese terms.

*"Unkon Fu, Soul of the Stone"*, **Ben Nanjo**, Golden State Bonsai Federation, Inc., 2005.

A small book that will quickly introduce one to this art form with examples and definitions of Japanese traditions.

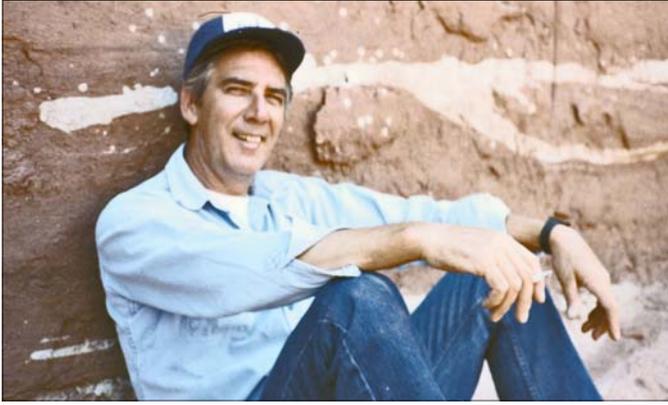
*Proceedings of the International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones*, National Bonsai Foundation, Washington, D.C. 2002.

It was at this event that **Matsuura** held that stone over the trash (but he did not toss it) and said that 70% of the value was lost when the stone was cut. To me, that meant that the Japanese value a natural, uncut stone. Naturalness must be the most important part of the Japanese aesthetic.

~Larry Ragle

## Aiseki Kai in the Early Days ~ Part 2

by Ray Yeager



Cliff Johnson in those early days



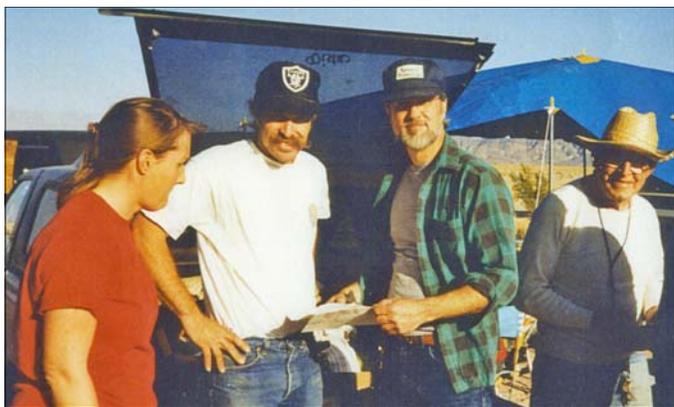
Joe and Arlene James, 1994

Saddle Peak Hills was our other favorite desert stone-hunting destination. First discovered by **Bob Watson** and **Cliff Johnson** in the early 1970's, it is located about thirty miles north of Baker on Hwy 127 west of Dumont Dunes. We usually met at Pikes Restaurant in Baker on Friday night. After a thirty-mile drive north and an easy four-mile dirt road ride took you to a large open flat area where we camped with a fire pit in the middle. **Tony Thomas** led many of the early trips and would bring his dune buggy which was a big help at the end of the day. He brought **Michael Schleggel** along as well, to drive the buggy. He would drive out and help tired souls with their load. **Tony** also would bring a few large wood pallets for our fire. **Chuck Kantzer** built a probable toilet held together by ropes but it did the job. Unfortunately this is illegal in the open desert and a passing Ranger told us to take it down. Luckily creosote bushes are legal.

The dirt road continued on to sand dunes, a talc mine and very nice stones. The now famous Indian Blanket Stones were found in the hills to the north. This is where **Chuck Kantzer** found many of his best stones. **Lois Hutchinson** found her famous "bonsai" image stone there.

The 1992 trip was typical. That Saturday night we had a big campfire. **Lois Hutchinson** passed out her wonderful chocolate chip bars and **Jim Greaves** shared some delicious tenderloin he cooked over the fire. Stories and jokes were told with much laughter. The local animals would have surely complained if they only knew how. A stone memorial for **Tony Thomas** (who passed away in 1986) was erected near the road west of our campsite.

In 1994 our two favorite desert sites were about to be closed by the Desert Protection Act that expanded the southern border of Death Valley. I contacted geologist **Bob Sharp** and asked him if he could direct us to a new collecting site. He gave us directions to an area at the southern end of Panamint Valley that didn't pan out that well. We also made a few trips to Indian Ranch Road, about five miles north of Ballarat Road, with some success. The roads into Lake Hill and the Saddle Peak Hills were not immediately posted so we still could get in for a few years beyond the signing of the Desert Protection Act.



Chris Westvig, Marty Hagbery, Jim Greaves, and Chuck Kantzer

In the spring of 2001, **Bill Hutchinson** led a group to Dumont Dunes near Salt Spring Hills. Extreme winds shortened their stay but a few good stones were found. Another problem was the off roaders who frequent the area. This area was close to the **Melba Tucker** memorial that was erected earlier that year (see May 2012 newsletter, page 10).



The club has made a number of trips to the Kern River over the years and is about the only local river (160 miles from L.A.) where you can find high quality black stones.

**John Naka** claimed that in the late 1950's or early 60's, **Frank Toji** and **Morihei Furuya**, both members of the Southern California Bonsai Club, (now called California Bonsai Society), first collected stones from the Kern. Also, members of the L.A. Bonsai Club often visited the Kern in the 1960's (below).



Clockwise: Kazuo Sakaida, Frank Iura, Roy Okita, Kazuo Handa and Yasotomo

The November 2006 excursion was memorable. Early arrivals on Friday night followed **Joe James** to the local watering hole and finished up at the **Yeagers** motel room as more members arrived. For some reason very few stones were collected on Saturday. The dinner that night was held at a local steakhouse in a private room. The party then continued in **Hanne Povlsen's** motel room where close to twenty people were happily squeezed together.

In 2002 with our desert collecting sites quickly disappearing, **Larry** asked for volunteers to help find a new site. **Jack Dennis** raised his hand and suggested the Yuha Desert. **Mas Takanashi**, founder of San Diego Bonsai gave Aiseki Kai the go ahead to share the



Aiseki Kai's Yuha Desert stone seekers, November 2002

area with his group, something that many members did not agree with. Interestingly, we used to find San Diego newspapers at our Saddle Peak Hills site.

The first trip was in April of that year. The group included **Nina** and **Larry Ragle**, **Manny Martinez**, **Bill Hutchinson**, **Harry Hirao**, **Joe James** and **Jack Dennis** and it was quickly obvious this site would be worth coming back too. Calexico was the nearest town, about fifteen miles to the east.

It was originally thought that we could camp in the open desert but with the border only a few miles away and obvious signs that the Yuha was a thoroughfare for illegal's (flagged water stations) the club decided to stay in Calexico at the Best Western, John Jay Inn. Happily their pool area was right up our party alley. **Jack Dennis** and **Sachiko** would bring their outstanding chicken chili and the club would furnish the drinks and snacks. Cars getting stuck in sand complicated the next few trips and we finally had to limit access to 4WD vehicles only. But this has not been a problem as twenty to thirty stone hunters annually make it into the Yuha and eventually the pool party. We still do that!

The November 2011 desert trip was lead by **Richard Aguirre** to a new area near Tecopa, a very interesting place about ten miles beyond our old hunting grounds at Saddle Peak Hills. It is on private property and a few good stones were found (see January 2012 newsletter, pg 2). This was somewhat of a homecoming for the club. Thirty years ago many members would end a hard days effort at Saddle Peak Hills relaxing in the hot springs at Tecopa.



Above and below: our campsite, Saddle Peak Hills, about 1986

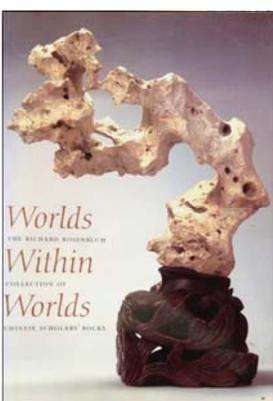


## THE 2012 INTERNATIONAL STONE APPRECIATION SYMPOSIUM

### Grantville, Pennsylvania

### Rick and Mimi Stiles

Arguably, the biennial International Stone Appreciation Symposium has been the premier event for stone enthusiasts in the United States for some time. The organizers, **Sean Smith, James Doyle, Martin Schmalenberg, Arthur Skolnik, Glenn Reusch,** and **Bill Valavanis** are national leaders. Over the years, they have attracted the best-of-the-best to the podium, and this year was no exception.



Headliners included the incomparable **Seiji Morimae**, whose family history in horticulture dates back 500 years, the charming **Anna Rosenblum Palmer** who assisted her late father **Richard Rosenblum** in amassing the finest collection of Chinese scholars rocks ever, and the ever popular Chinese expert **Kemin Hu**. **Palmer** staged a special

exhibit of *gongshi* from the **Rosenblum** collection and gave a heart-warming talk that provided insight into the special relationship she had with her father.



Stiles, Morimae, and Wil in display workshop

We were privileged to participate in the workshop conducted by **Seiji Morimae** who also gave three lectures in the plenary sessions, and conducted individual stone critiques. **Morimae's** stature can be difficult to comprehend. He is the scion of 18 generations of expertise. He teaches Japanese horticulture and gardening in a Chinese university. Four years ago he created what surely must be the ultimate *bonsai* and *suiseki* group, the Genkokai. This elite entity began with 16 masters committed to four

principles: (1) Do not do anything shameful, (2) Do not put your names forward, (3) Conduct your practice in a quiet and refined manner, and (4) Pass the knowledge forward.

These principles of modesty and exquisite refinement found expression in "The First Exhibition of the Genkokai" at the Hoshun'in sub temple of the famous Kyoto Zen temple Daitokuji in January 2010. One fortunate visitor to this non-public display said, "It is as if the entire exhibition is one single, spiritual work of art."



Genkokai Show

**Morimae** treated his audience in Pennsylvania to a slide presentation and discussion of this amazing exhibition. He also presented each attendee with a booklet telling the story of the Genkokai and explaining the formal practice of display, step by step. These will become instant collector's items, especially since **Morimae** offered to autograph copies.

We learned that the Japanese *suiseki* display practices we know today are not as old as one might think. Contemporary standard display developed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to that time, the history can be complicated and confusing. About 500 years ago, upper echelons of Japanese society practiced *bonsai* and displays were simple.

In these earlier times, travel was difficult for various reasons. Although the idea of an iconic landscape like Mt. Fuji might have been compelling, even aristocrats could not have expected to see such a sight in person, or at least not very often. The character *kazan* was used to express the idea of miniature man-made landscapes that could be borrowed from nature to create "temporary" mountains in aristocratic gardens. Evocative stones could capture the experience of being

out in the landscape. One could bring nature into the private space.

Stone appreciation permitted aristocrats to appreciate the essence of Mt. Fuji without actually having to travel to Mt. Fuji. For aristocratic women, the situation was more restricted yet. Female members of these households were never permitted to leave the premises.



Floating Bridge of Dreams

Display schemes for iconic stones from even earlier eras, such as Yume no Ukihasi “Floating Bridge of Dreams” which was owned by **Emperor Go Daigo** (1288-1339) adds further confusion. The proportions of stone and *doban* might seem wrong today. Paradoxically, this treasure might not fare well in a contemporary master critique – except for one thing. His impeccable object was paired with its Chinese bronze at a distant point in history when these two items were valued as individual masterpieces. They came together as individual objects of high esteem, unconstrained by any established set of rules regarding harmony.

Another venerable example, Sue no Matsuyama “Eternal Pine Mountain” also dates back 500 years. **Morimae** told a personal story about this famous stone which last appeared in a public *suiseki* exhibition 30 years ago. At that time **Morimae** discovered that someone had ground down the base using manual methods. High moral dudgeon regarding cut stones is commonplace in some circles, but it seems that even spectacular historical treasures can have this issue.

**Morimae** does not support the position that one must never cut stones. He believes the issue is one of the heart. You should have the proper feeling in your heart when you look at a display. You should also be thinking of the heart of the person who made the display, and not whether the stone has been cut. It is important to look at the display and appreciate it for what it is. Perhaps he is saying there could be shame in

criticizing a stone presented by a person who has a good heart. It wouldn't be right to look too deeply for imperfections.

**Morimae** also made a number of comments regarding the various effects of age on *suiseki*. He began by comparing the beauty of a recently constructed championship golf course with a Zen garden hundreds of years old. Both landscapes are beautiful. But they are not comparable. They cannot be measured one against the other. Time has affected the ancient garden, in visible and invisible ways. Moreover, the sophisticated viewer appreciates these effects in both conscious and unconscious ways.



Morimae demonstrating tokonoma display

Of course, there is more to be learned about *suiseki* display and placement than can be conveyed in a day or two, even by a master. **Morimae** mesmerized the audience repeatedly by creating displays in a large *tokonoma* purposely built for the show by **Sean Smith**. This was pure wizardry. Time and again, **Morimae** would change one small element and produce a completely different effect, with what appeared to be effortless grace, illustrating the gap between master and pupil.

Perhaps the rest of us can take heart from the notion that perfection can be an elusive goal. **Morimae** told a story about **Katayama Ichu**, the master whose training influenced the current generation of high level masters in Japan. If there was even the smallest defect in a *suiban* display, he would not accept it. He compelled his students to achieve perfection.

But then, when perfection had seemingly been achieved, he confounded their expectations. After a *suiban* placement was deemed “perfect” he would alter it by moving the stone ever so slightly. **Morimae** says he slowly began to understand that this was right. These minute adjustments relaxed tension and made the placement correct.

**Morimae** also offered some gentle advice to those of us who are not Japanese. “When people say they understand Japanese things, I wonder a little about

that,” he said. He would really like to see people learn the basics of Japanese *suiseki* and then adapt it to their own circumstances. “When a Japanese person looks at images of the American Wild West, they don’t completely understand.” Would “Little House on the Prairie” be the analog of a hut stone? What would be the analog of Devil’s Tower in Wyoming? Would it be Mt. Fuji?

From an American perspective, such analogies don’t work very well and **Morimae** seems to be indicating that they are equally awkward from the Japanese perspective. Nevertheless, he expresses his polite belief that an American idiom can be found. No Japanese master can define it. Americans must do that for themselves.

**Richard Turner** raised this issue recently and coined the phrase “aesthetic colonials” to describe the position of those hewing strictly to principles they deemed to be purely Japanese. No one could be a more purely Japanese practitioner than **Seiji Morimae**. Yet he seems to be encouraging his American friends to have the courage to step up and explore American themes.

American esthetic models surely exist. For example, American painters of the Hudson River School borrowed landscapes too. They created their own particular vision of the American wilderness from 1825-1875. Conceivably, the American stone appreciation community might be able to discover its own idiom through a similar process. It may simply be a matter of giving proper attention to our own American version of “temporary mountain” landscapes.

Moreover, Japanese *suiseki* dogma may not be quite what it seems. Apparently, absolute perfection is not absolute. There is too much tension in perfection. **Katayama Ichu** gave his students permission to alter the perfect and release this tension. Clearly, **Seiji Morimae** has one of the most finely honed senses of perfection in the art. His teaching is a miracle. Perhaps, like **Katayama Ichu** or any wise parent, he sees that his American followers need permission to embrace their own esthetic.

Loving one thing does not mean abandoning something else. No doubt, the American community will continue to focus much of its attention on contemporary standard Japanese display. The exquisite example of Genkokai demonstrates how much remains to be learned. Speakers such as **Peter Warren** have the expertise to continue the conversation. **Peter** gave a brilliant talk on *shoku* history and traditions, sharing information that can be very difficult to find since few written sources are available to the English language audience.

Yet certainly there is room for other voices. When **Richard Rosenblum** saw his first scholars rock, he exclaimed, “What’s that? I want that!” and the world experienced a breakthrough in perception. Stones of this type were largely unappreciated -- dusty artifacts from unknown artisans. The power of the **Rosenblum** vision changed everything. It was strong enough to rock the establishment and convince museum authorities of its validity in a miraculously short period of time, scarcely two decades.

We have other visionaries in our midst. **Hanne Povlsen’s** collection of desert ventifacts is an American masterpiece. **Ralph Johnson’s** malachite extravaganza should rightly be regarded in the same league as the **Rosenblum** collection.



Vendor area display

New artistic initiatives are popping up all the time. We found **Anthony Ankowicz** in his vendor booth at the Symposium. He offers some astonishing large stones from Lake Huron in fabulous bases carved from black walnut. **Seiji Morimae** himself remarked that some of **Ankowicz’s** work should be in a museum. **Morimae** has also been a buyer of non-traditional *suiban*

designs from another vendor, Pennsylvania potter **Ron Lang**. Expect to see more innovation from **Lang** next fall in Oregon at the bonsai exhibit being prepared for the Portland Art Museum by artist **Ryan Neil**.

**Chung Kruger** also highlighted an important distinction when she pointed out that the Korean-American Soo-suk Club of Southern California focuses on Korean-American stones, not Korean stones exclusively. Although she places her LA group squarely within a long and impressive Korean tradition which dates back to 600 AD when stones were first transported to Korea from China, she gives rightful emphasis to the American moiety.

Much more needs to be known about the Korean tradition. Personages such as **Cho Myun Ho** wrote 7000 poems and articles about stones in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a treasure trove that calls out for scholarly analysis. “When I look at you my crystal mountain, I feel that I have entered Heaven’s precincts.” Attendees at the 2012 Symposium clearly felt themselves to be in Heaven’s precincts during these four days in Pennsylvania.

### Security/Docent Schedule

Our show at the Huntington is just around the corner! **Linda** is looking for you to sign up as docents/security for our show. Naturally, **anyone showing is expected to participate** but all members are welcome. Let her know **all** the days and times you will be available.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Dec 27	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30
Dec 28	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30
Dec 29	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30
Dec 30	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30
Dec 31	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30
Jan 2	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30

**Linda** can be reached at **818.833.9883** or email her at **bigredlinda@earthlink.net**

**We need you.** Check your calendars and select your days and times. Tell **Linda** when you can work if the listed times are not convenient. Please arrive 5-10 minutes before your time slot. **Remember your purpose:** you are there to educate and to secure our displays. **Linda** said, "It's a great chance to get better acquainted with your fellow 'stoners' and we encourage all members to come and serve even if you aren't showing. You'll learn a lot and it's fun!!!"

### 23rd Anniversary Exhibition at the Huntington

**Dec 27 - Jan 2, 10:30-4:30,**

**Set up: Dec 21-22**

**Stones and plants on Dec 22**

**Plants/trees go home that day and return  
Dec 27 by 9:30**

### 2012 Show Labels

**Designation** (choose one only, a, b or c)

- a. *Poetic Name* ('*Sitting with Fan Kuan*')
- b. Descriptive identification (e.g. Distant Mountain)
- c. Japanese classification (e.g. *Toyama-ishi*) \*

**Source** (choose one only)

- a. Specific Site (e.g. Eel River, California)
- b. Generic source (e.g. River, Desert or Coast) and/or State, Province or Region (e.g. Great Basin, Rocky Mountains, Northwest Coast)

**Name of Exhibitor**

\* Hopefully, retaining some usage of Japanese names will impart a sense of the international and historical aspect of stone appreciation. Since this year we will use Japanese **or** English names on individual stone labels, it is suggested that the Japanese names be reserved primarily for stones that can be understood by the public without explanation in either language, such as a *yamagata-ishi* that can clearly be seen as a mountain. Note: If uncertain, the general categories below that are listed in **Matsuura's** 2010 book may help.

Mountain shaped stones	<i>Yamagata-ishi</i>
Island stones	<i>Shimagata-ishi</i>
Shore or coastal stones	<i>Iwagata-ishi</i>
Waterpool stones	<i>Mizutamari-ishi</i>
Waterfall stones	<i>Taki-ishi</i>
Plateau stones	<i>Doha</i>
Stepped or terraced stones	<i>Danseki</i>
Stones with an opening (caves, arches, tunnels)	<i>Domon</i>
Figure stones & hut stones	<i>Sugata-ishi &amp; kuzuya-ishi</i>
Pattern stones	<i>Monyo-ishi</i>

\* Labels will be consistent, made by **Kit Blaemire**, and will be 3 lines total. Remember, you are limited to 5 stones or displays per person, space available.

\* We will have 1 table for international stones. The best from each country will be displayed, curator's choice.

\* If you have a multiple stone themed display, please contact **Jim Greaves** for labeling instructions.

**California Aiseki Kai** meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1670 W. 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor. We do not meet in Nov-Dec.

### Contact People

<b>Programs:</b> Larry Ragle	949.497.5626	cfsmail@cox.net
<b>Treasury/Membership:</b> Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	ragle@cox.net
<b>Annual Exhibit:</b> Jim Greaves	310.452.3680	jimgreaves@roadrunner.com
<b>Exhibit Set Up:</b> Marge Blasingame	626.579.0420	margeblasingame@att.net
<b>Refreshments:</b> Lois Hutchinson	714.964.6973	wlhutch@verizon.net
<b>Historian:</b> Ray Yeager	760.365.7897	ryeager890@aol.com
<b>Webmail:</b> Bill Hutchinson	714.964.6973	hutch@aisekikai.com
<b>Newsletter:</b> Larry and Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	ragle@cox.net



### Newsletter Committee

**November Contributors:** Linda Gill, Ray Yeager, Jim Greaves, Rick & Mimi Stiles and Larry Ragle.

**Mailing:** Flash Partch

**Editor:** Nina Ragle

We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to [ragle@cox.net](mailto:ragle@cox.net) no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

Ragle  
P.O. Box 4975  
Laguna Beach CA 92652

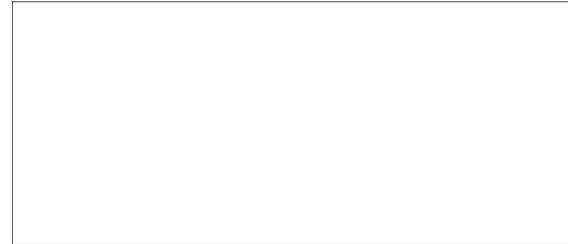
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



*Leaves no stone unturned*

See our website:

**aisekikai.com**



## Coming Events

**Happy Holidays**

“A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral.” ~*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry* (Sent by Ann Horton)

Freeman Wang 626-524-5021  
**Suiseki, Viewing Stone Sale**  
**On line store:** eBay shop  
Advanced search seller "thestoneking"  
<http://stores.ebay.com/thestoneking>

**Stone Sales Ken McLeod**  
209-605-9386 or 209 586-2881  
[suisekiken@sbcglobal.net](mailto:suisekiken@sbcglobal.net) ~ [californiasuiseki.com](http://californiasuiseki.com)

**Dues are Due.** Become an e~subscriber and save a tree: Send \$10 to CA Aiseki Kai c/o Nina Ragle, P.O. Box 4975, Laguna Beach, CA 92652-4975.

**Huntington Show Dates:** December 27-  
January 2, closed on New Years Day.  
Friends' Hall. **Tell your friends!**

### BONSAI-A-THON XVI

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 23-24, 2013, Huntington Botanical Center, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, 7:30-4:30. This is a fundraiser so bring donations! Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Viewing Stone Collection. For more information:

**Marge Blasingame:** [margeblasingame@att.net](mailto:margeblasingame@att.net)



**Aiseki Kai presents: Anna Rosenblum Palmer** at the Huntington, March 13, 2013.

## Refreshments



Thank you **Kit Blaemire, Akio Okumoto, Kazue Takada, the Josephson's** and the **Hutchinson's** for the October goodies. We have the best chef's for our break time snacks buffet.

Thank you everyone for our outstanding goodies all year long! There's no meeting in November so save up those recipes for our holiday party on January 23rd.