




October Program

Richard Turner will present his current exhibition at Chapman University's Guggenheim Gallery Home/Office Landscapes, Contemporary Scholars' Rocks and Viewing Stones. His talk will be accompanied by a power point presentation featuring views of the exhibition as well as images of other works by artists in the show. He will discuss the works in the exhibition in relation to the contemporary art world and to traditional scholars' rocks and viewing stones. This exhibition is a first. It poses questions about the "Americanization" of these Chinese and Japanese traditions – something all of us are involved in when we collect and display stones from the Yuha or Eel River. Your responses to the work will be an important part of the evening of October 24th.

 Alert! You guessed it. October has 5 Wednesdays. Please come on the 4th Wednesday, October 24th. If you show up on October 31st, be prepared to share your Halloween candy with the cleaning crew.

Stone of the Month

This is our last meeting of the year so bring in your very **first ever** viewing stone! It could be one you found but it may also be one you purchased. Do you recall which one it was? Also, if anyone has a contender for the Year of the Rat stone, please bring that one to the meeting as well. Those folks who went on the China trip last spring know that our ship has come in. Feel free to bring any of those stones you would like to share.



This stone is Larry's first ever. It is from the Russian River.

You Can Lead A Horse to Water

We were fortunate to meet **Peter Warren** this past week. **Peter** recently completed a 4 (plus) year apprenticeship with **Kunio Kobayashi**, renowned bonsai artist and authority on viewing stones. **Peter** is almost as excited about stones as he is with his work with bonsai. During his visit the subject of stone classifications by shape came up. He reads the newsletter each month. He favors the Japanese approach of classifying a stone by the source only, for example, Kamogawa stone, indicating the stone was found in the Kamogawa River. I explained that at the Huntington we use name cards because the majority of our visitors are seeing viewing stones for the first time and need an explanation. That ended our conversation about classification.

As a club, we have discussed the same issue on many occasions and have retained the use of the titles on our show tags as used by **Covello** and **Yoshimura** and **Murata** and **Ei**. Tonight, as I reread last month's material expecting to add to it, my excuse to **Peter** and some of last month thoughts collided. I realized our classification name cards **are** a mistake, **a truly major mistake** (and in a way, insult our guests.)

We always display a variety of stones. Some are natural, some are worked. Some natural and most cut stones are explicit. With or without titles, many, if not all, first time viewers of these stones will immediately see the "mountain's" shape and beauty. That's entertainment. However, the remaining nameless stones will require some thought, contemplation and perhaps meditation. Isn't that the objective of viewing stones and specifically, *suiseki* – to evoke imagination? Some will see the world, some will continue to see amorphous lumps.

We have three levels of assistance to educate the lump people, if any. First, our docent members are there to answer questions. Second, we have periodic slide shows for those who want to know more. Finally, we will have the new pamphlet for sale for those who really want to get involved. I think it is time to change our name tags and let our guest's imagination run wild. Be the first one to say, "I've been saying this for years." I'm interested in your thoughts. I'm at crimescene@cox.net

Larry Ragle

September Meeting Notes by Linda Gill

ANNOUNCEMENTS- We have ordered club pins! We are hopeful that they will get to us by the October meeting.



- ➔ The 25th Anniversary show catalog of San Francisco Suiseki Kai will be for sale at the GSBF Convention, price \$25.
- ➔ We were reminded to see the Soosuk show Oct 6-7. [Pictures in the November newsletter]
- ➔ We were reminded that **Hanne Povlsen** will be showing both river and desert stones at the Japanese American National Museum in LA. [Story next month]
- ➔ **Jean Horton** presented **Cliff Johnson's** plans for another trip to China in the spring. [See pg 6 for details]
- ➔ The GSBF Convention needs volunteers. There are perks! Tell **Nina** if you can help.
- ➔ **Larry** passed around material for those interested in joining the NBF.

STONE OF THE MONTH- Although we had hoped for a boar stone, we were fortunate that so many not boar-ing stones were on hand. It was really fun!

Ken McLeod brought 5 stones: a monkey with a tail on a red stone & a green Madonna with child figure stone, both from the Trinity R., a jasper figure stone from the Sacramento R., a green figure stone, and a small jade cobra or mummy. **Don Kruger** brought a piglet nosing a butterfly, so he said. **Hanne** had a piglet, too, as well as a bird in a nest (2 separate stones) from China, a dragon & a bison from 'out there' in the desert (where we can't go any more). **Bruce McGinnis** had a lion on a rock from Dos Rios. **Joe James** had a bear from the Kern R., a wonderful cameo of a lady's face from the Sacramento R. He also said that there are black stones around Lake Isabella because the river is down.

Richard Aguirre returned with a rabbit. **Sharon Sommerfeld** had a lovely heart shaped stone from the Van Duzen R. that was red & green, a 'sorta' boar/'sorta' dog stone & a dog of botryoidal jade. **Jon Reuschel** had a fish & a chicken from the Yuha. **Linda** had a sitting bird from the Yuha & a dinosaur from the desert 'out there' via Hanne. **Ann Horton** showed a 'what is it?' stone, maybe a tortoise from the Baker area. **Manny** brought a lovely plateau stone with a *jakure*. **Lois** had a buzzard, a bear on a rock, a seal from the Gobi, 2 dragons (or 1 dragon & 1 sea horse) and a great Nessy. **Harry** had a black doha with a white step, a figure stone of green jasper and a green puddle stone from ... you know where. **Steve Valentine** had a cocker spaniel which folks called a Scottie. **Akio** had a picture stone with a cowboy chasing a steer. **Janet** had a pig from Garnet Hill and another from Harry's River...

Lois brought in a menagerie... a bear on a rock, right; a seahorse, below, left; a buzzard, below, right; a seal, way below, left and a dragon, way below, right.



Hanne's bison

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



September Program Notes



Linda's boar pattern stone



Steve's dog, Cocker/Scottie mix?

Preparing for the Show

Larry reminded us that with all the new information we have had this year on display, we have a perfect opportunity to upgrade our show. Preparation is key to our success. Larry brought in quite a few sand samples for everyone to see, some were appropriate for our use.

We have 3 zones of Displays:

Tokonoma - Stone of the year- a boar and a scroll, perhaps the one with Aiseki Kai Calligraphy. [Since we were unable to come up with an appropriate boar we will skip the boar and go directly to the Year of the Rat. This is a good decision since from now on we will be looking toward the next year in our annual display.]

Outer rim- Ideally, two piece displays or box displays. Each display should have a theme or tell a story. Only the curator can determine the appropriateness of multiple stones in a rim display. (see below)

Middle tables – An array of individual stones mixed with accents plants and bonsai.



Bruce's lion on a rock.

The stones in the above zones must be from the **Americas** and displayed in the traditional **Japanese** style, with the following exceptions: **One Chinese** stone from each member (12) who traveled to China this past April may be displayed as a group in a designated area as determined by the curator, commemorating the trip. Further, if stones from any country– **Japan, Korea or Italy**, for example, or stones from **China** from anyone not on the club trip, may be considered by the curator. Such stones may be shown as a group of international stones, if space is available.

Planning your display:

Ideally, the 2 piece display should follow the *Keido Sekikazari* model - a stone in a *daiza* or *suiban* on a table or Aiseki Kai club box and one other item. If the stone is a *suiseki* (any landscape scene) the second item should be an accent indicating the season or coming season, but not a bonsai. If the stone is a *chinseki* or *biseki* the accent can be a bonsai. We should strive to meet these ideals; however, if you have a different approach the curator will make the final decision (as in all cases).



Ann's "what is it" stone.

One piece displays will be considered as in the past. An acceptable stone may be of any classification if displayed in an appropriate *daiza* or *suiban* with clean adequate sand of the appropriate grain size to fill the *suiban* to within 1/8" of the rim as discussed at the September meeting. **Limit 5 displays per person.**



Manny's mountain from the Yuha

Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

What's the deal on using *suiban* with special 'water' glazing in the bottom? The rules say a stone still should sit on a little cushion of sand, right? But, I just saw a Japanese museum poster showing the stone plopped down on the bare ceramic!

Bumfuzzled in the Valley

Dear Bumfuzzled,

As near as I can tell the current 'prohibition' against placing a stone directly on the inner surface of a glazed *suiban* derives most immediately from lectures by Arishige Matsuura. However, in *Japanese Suiseki*, (**Proceedings of the Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones, May 2002**, National Bonsai Foundation, Washington, D.C. 2005, p.198) he states this as a suggestion, not a total proscription: "People often place their stones on the bare bottoms of this type of *suiban* without sand for the reason that they think the patterns on the bottom represent the sea. However, I believe that you should put sand at least underneath and around the stone." His discussion did not address what may be the critical underlying argument for filling the *suiban* with sand: the concept, as expressed in *Keido* theory – if not in all observable practice – that the sand is simply used as a neutral space filler or stand-in for abstract space with no intention that it represent either earth or water. Under this formal approach the inclusion or even suggestion of a 'real' pictorial element necessarily removes the stone from the realm of *suiseki*. My remaining discussion will simply leave such concerns to the reader and deal with my thoughts on using glazed *suiban* to display viewing stones and, particularly, in more explicit presentations.

First, the effective use of a *suiban* without sand is a relatively rare occurrence. As you noted, we most commonly encounter this situation with what you call 'water' glazing: a rather bright blue glaze with white splashes. Using a bed of sand, either hidden beneath the stone or visibly surrounding it, can serve important functions including stabilization, filling of uneven edge or bottom conformations, and perhaps most importantly, protection of the *suiban*'s glaze from scratching. (It should be noted that modeling clay or a small, largely invisible wood wedge or molded 'shoe' made out of automotive body putty can also be used to steady the stone in the desired viewing position.)

Aesthetically, I think the decision regarding the use of partial sand or no sand has to be made on a stone by stone basis, taking into consideration the qualities of the stone, the subject of the stone, and the color and pattern of the glazed ceramic to be used. Generally, light and vivid colors or remarkable patterns will

overwhelm a stone placed on them. Irregular patterns, especially 'splash' patterns, within the *suiban* are more effective if they logically relate to the stone, such as suggesting shoal waters or the submerged extension of



Reef stone (Nova Scotia, Jim Greaves)

a reef as in Fig.1 where the stone has been placed directly on the bottom. If one is to cover only a portion of the glaze with sand, special care need be exercised. For instance, a distant island stone may lose all sense of proportion if surrounded with a beach of sand (Fig. 2). In this instance, because the *suiban* has not been filled



Distant Island (Eel River, Cliff Johnson) ...too too much!

with sand, we find that the sides are too deep, the color is too bright, and the surrounding sand too prominent with respect to its coarseness, color and the quantity required to hide the edges of the cut stone — any potential feeling of atmosphere and distance is lost.

On the other hand, most shore stones can quite naturally sit on a fringe of sand. In Fig. 3, a *doban* is shown with much of its attractive interior left exposed



Coastal Rock (Eel River, Cynthia McLeod)

while a sand beach supports and sets-off an overhanging coastal rock. If only a bit of sand is to be used, it is imperative that it have a well-proportioned grain size relative to the scale of the stone being displayed -- because it will likely be 'read' as an actual beach (Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6). The more delicate coastal arch (*suimon-ishi*)



'Eretat', Coastal Arch (Arizona, Pat Coen)

lightly rests on an absolutely minimal bit of sand – just enough to stabilize the stone and fill small irregularities around the base (Fig.4). The color of the sand was



Coastal arch (Sierra Nevada, Don Kruger)

selected to blend with the pale stone. In a scene more typical of the Northwest Coast (Fig. 5), a coarser bed of sand serves as a cobble beach, while the small channel of exposed glaze accentuates the featured arch. The display of the *misaki-ishi*, (cape or headland stone,

Fig. 6) employs the sand in another, more complex pictorial manner through the suggestion of a landward connection, fringe beach and littoral drifts – one can fairly argue that such a display is too explicit and might be more at home under the category of *bonkei* (tray landscape) than as a *suiseki* or even a basic viewing stone.



Cape/Headland (Nova Scotia, Jim Greaves)

Another consideration is whether a *suiban* should remain dry (Fig. 2,4,5,6) or be shown with at least a film of water covering the bottom (Fig. 3,7). I have been told that current Japanese fashion is to avoid any visible use of water, whether or not sand is present, but perusal of older publications quickly reveals that this has not been historical practice. Without question a dry *suiban* may be used effectively. However, if one intends to occasionally spray the stone, distracting beads of water may form on the exposed surface and unattractive drying spots result. The *doban* in Fig.3 is filled with water because we often spray the stone to reveal the intense color of the nephrite jade – being able to wet a stone is one of the great benefits of using a *suiban*.

Personally, I find that the addition of water often compliments a stone: the water can visually 'fill' the uneven edges and undercuts of a stone placed with little or no sand (Fig. 1); water flowing beneath arches or the undercut ledges and sea-cut caves of coastal rocks reflects light upward, thus illuminating detail; reflections of undercut stone surfaces on the water may also reveal hidden or intricate details as well as creating a very natural scene. This practical use of water is effective without sand and also with a thin film of water 'floating' over sand, whether the sand is just placed under and around the stone or is covering the entire bottom of the *suiban*. Water, with its accompanying play of light and reflection, stimulates an automatic response that is viscerally refreshing. The inclusion of water might be considered by some to be less sophisticated, less mentally demanding, but during the hot summer months be assured that our *suiban* will contain water.

My final example incorporates many of the factors we have been considering, but with the controversial





Turtle Stone (Maine, Alice Greaves)

inclusion of a figure stone to create a very explicit natural presentation (Fig. 7). The turtle stone is displayed with sand beneath the turtle and the glaze partially exposed under a film of water. Photographed during an exhibition at Descanso Gardens, one can see the ‘realism’ further augmented by serendipitous reflections of nearby trees in the water! (Although there is a general proscription against showing figure stones in *suiban*, perhaps exceptions are sometimes justified – a topic for another day!)

In summary, the employment of a glazed *suiban* that has not been filled with sand would seldom be found within pure *suiseki* practice, but combinations of exposed glaze, sand and water can provide many options, providing deeply satisfying, if non-traditional, displays.

GuyJim

Your editor’s favorite feature: [GuyJim’s Suibanics...](#)

Wabi - (1) The irregular, uneven contour of the lip of the average *daiza* (2) a sense of imbalance generally attributed to the misplaced positioning of the feet of a *daiza* (3) the uneven walking gait of an overloaded viewing stone collector.

Sabi - (pronounced sob’ by) An emotion frequently felt upon turning a promising stone over, only to discover that the back side is fractured.

Shibui - P.C. (politically correct) stone-hunting slang used to vocalize the feeling of *Sabi*, the acceptable compromise between the masculine “Oh, s--t!” and the female “Oh, Phooey!”

Yugen - (yu-ge’in) An exclamatory warning; a common contraction of the ancient, but awkward phrase: “you better be gettin’ away from my stone collecting area or else!” [Note: This phrase is often punctuated by the visible signal of a raised rock hammer].

Zen (n. derived from the ancient scale for rating a beautiful woman: ... zix, zeven, zeight, zine, zen). A Zen is a perfect *suiseki*, thought to be attainable in theory only; the ideal stone.

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 jimgreaves@roadrunner.com or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

China Trip Notes

The China trip is presently scheduled for May 12 - 31. The trip is different from the last one in several respects. There will be more time in cities with good stone markets and less travel time to reach some localities along with several different cities.

It is expected that you will fly into Beijing, climb the Great Wall and see the Ming Tombs. Next you will fly to Kunming in southwest China and visit the Stone Forest. Next you will travel to Dali and then to Lijiang. Guilin is next with its wonderful Stone Market [shopping] and then you are off to Longshen for the hot springs. From there you will go rock hunting on the Sanjiang River. Next, Liuzhou and the Liuzhou Stone Museum then a really big stone market... shopping.... take a flight to Nanjing and then to Xuzhou and that gets you to Lingbi and lots more.... shopping! Interested? Price is about \$3200. You can add 3-4 optional days to Vietnam at the end of the tour for another \$600-\$700.

Contact **Cliff Johnson** at 626-287-2734

Show Displays

While preparing for the show, keep in mind that we would like to improve our displays with careful use of accents, sand, *shoku*, *jiita* and *jiban*.



Could the accent below have been smaller? And/or thinned out?



Show Displays continued from pg 6

Spend a little extra time with the sand in your *suiban* to make sure that it is clean, that it is even, flat and fills the *suiban* to within 1/8-1/4 inch of the rim and that it is the right color and grain size for the stone and the *suiban*.



A photograph will show any unevenness in the sand.



If you are using a daiza, don't let it be the first thing you see.



Refreshments

Thank you **Cary & Steve Valentine, Ann Horton, Hanne Povlsen and Joseph Gaytan** for the yummy sweet treats at the September meeting.



The October break will be hosted by **Joe & Arlene James, Jim & Alice Greaves, Warren & Kyra Haussler and Janet Shimizu & Phil Chang.**

Kathy Coffman writes from her new home in Ohio, "So far I have not seen any stones here while hiking suitable for suiseki - mostly shale and sandstone so far. I will let you know if I find anything of note." She loves her new job and we may even see her at our show when she visits during Christmas. Or she may join us for an early spring rock hunt. Nice to hear from you, Kathy!



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

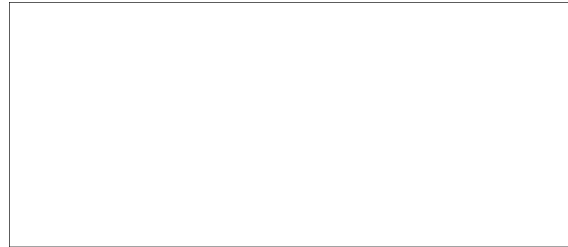
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Leaves no stone unturned

See us on the web
aiseikikai.com



Coming Events

GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION



Convention XXX, Oct 31-Nov 4. Read all about it in the August issue of this newsletter, page 7. Register now! You don't want to miss out on this exciting event. There will be rock hunting! See gsbfconvention2007.com for details.

AMERICAN VIEWING STONE RESOURCE CENTER

Exhibition: *Worlds in Stone - Viewing Stones from the Jim & Alice Greaves Collection*, Sept 1 - Oct 31, Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection, 33663 Weyerhaeuser Way South, Federal Way, WA. Days/hours for Oct: Sat.-Wed, 11-4. (253) 924-5206 Also see: weyerhaeuser.com/bonsai

AMERICAN VIEWING STONE RESOURCE CENTER

Exhibition: *American Viewing Stones - Natural Art in an Asian Tradition* (Selections from the **Jim & Alice Greaves** Collection) Sept 15- Jan 2008, Mingei International Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego. Tues - Sun, Hours: 10 - 4; Go to: mingei.org.

BONSAI-A-THON XII

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 23-24, 2008, Huntington Botanical Center, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. 7:30-4:30. This is a fundraiser so bring donations! Early bird specials, breakfast, lunch, auctions, raffles, vendors, children and adult novice workshops. Demos both days and demo material will be auctioned. **Jim Folsom's** early morning tour will be a special treat this year because it will include the new and wonderful Chinese Garden, which has its public opening on the 23rd! Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Viewing Stone Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: call 626.579.0420 or email her at: blasmrjr@aol.com

CA Aiseki Kai meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1700 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor.