

# Inside A Sentimental Enclave

*The Poetics of Miniature Landscape*

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*Ruitong Zhao*

*Aalto University*  
*Master Thesis*

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**Abstract:**

In my master thesis research, I study the relationship between poetry ( Japanese and Chinese ancient poems) and miniature landscape (*penjing* or *bonsai*) from three different directions that lead to three outcomes:

1. Through this paper, I first look into the history of art in China and Japan (1600 BC – Late 1800 CE); by tracing the origin of miniature landscape and how it was represented in paintings and woodblock prints, I find that miniature landscape is not a mere interior decoration or a part of garden art that human appropriate from nature, it is a poetic extension where the human imaginations and emotional bonds with the world are preserved. Miniature landscape gives its viewers a strong sense of belongingness and possession, and its visual elements invite all senses to open as the nostalgic memory of the past emerges from deep within.

Next, I analyse Japanese Haiku poems and Chinese Tang Poems; by paying attention to the objects and images inside the landscape where the poets let their emotions dwell, I discover that the world inside these poems is not only a place where the poets document observations of nature and express their feelings and emotions, it is also a world lived with the poetics of miniature and immensity.

Finally, based on previous examinations of miniature landscape in art history and poetry, I explain my concept of creating an atmospheric landscape of memory and imagination by combining miniature landscape and poetry, followed by thoughts and questions that have occurred to me during the process of making the installations.

2. The poetry book "*After Wishes Of The Waterfall, The Fallen Hair*" is the second part of the thesis. This book includes poems that I wrote during the period 2014 – 2017, when I was traveling between Europe and China. The poems are edited into five

themes, each of which is associated with a semi-imaginary landscape and specific emotions: Senses and Memory, You and Light, Time and Places, Fear and Saffron, Dreams and Home.

3. The third part and the final production of this thesis research is an installation work of five miniature landscapes; built with ceramics, soil, live and dead plants as well as other found materials, each is narrated by the poems from the book "*After Wishes of The Waterfall, The Fallen Hair*", This experiment of combining poetry, miniature landscape and sound is based on both my understanding of the poetics of miniature landscape in history, the sentimental landscape inside poetry, and the nature of my own poems.

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Keywords: Poetics, Poetry, Miniature Landscape, Penjing, Bonsai, Emotion, Imagination. Elsewhere.

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I would like to thank:

My father, Jin, who has his eyes, hands and mind on plants wherever he goes;

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我后来我去记忆的群岛搜集那几天的资料  
在岛上  
我遇见了很多黑色并带有金丝的毛毛虫  
发现它们的时候  
它们已经在我写了小诗的树叶上  
留下了它们生活过的  
弯弯曲曲的痕迹

When I went back to the island of memory later  
To recollect datas of those days,  
I encountered many caterpillars on the way deeper to the woods of the island.  
Their color black, with thin golden stripes.  
The moment I saw them,  
Zig-zag traces of life they had left already  
On the leaves where I wrote those poems.

August 28 2017 Helsinki Home

## Introduction



Fig. 1<sup>1</sup>

On a bright day couple of springs ago, I was in my parents' farm in northeast China, re-planting potted flowers into the soil in the Garden area near the Calming Heart Pavilion (静心亭 *jing xin ge*). Two farmers were beside me, putting up a rockwork (miniature hills) with the stones they dug from a small pond in the farm. I was curious about what kind of creation would come out of those strangely shaped stones; I kept peeking at them while minding my own business of planting flowers. After gluey, clayish mud were applied between each rock, tiny willow sprouts were planted beside, couple bowls of soil were placed at the roots of the willows and water was led into the bottom tray, the small area where the farmers were working on had transformed into a landscape of another space. Though minified and lack of reference point, it could look like backyard of a hermit's new home deep in the woods, or a place where Buddha would choose for savasana.

I was fascinated by the imaginations that were bestowed on me by this miniature landscape; a channel it was, taking my mind and vision to a different world. A poetic atmosphere was revealed after these rather simple elements of rock, tree, soil and water were put together. "Couple baskets of soil could build a hill, and the bamboos planted around the hills shaded them, as if it was another world", poet Tu Fu once marvelled about the rockwork that his uncle created in front of his wife's house.

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<sup>1</sup> Li Zhimin; Ilona Lesniewicz. Chinese Bonsai. The Art Of Penjing. Blandford Press. 1986. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.



Miniature landscape, or *penjing* in Chinese, *saikei* or *bonsai* in Japanese and *hòn non bộ* in Vietnamese, is the art of creating landscape on a tray by combining different elements, such as rocks, small trees, soil, water, related vegetation, and sometimes figurines. Inspired by the dreamy, imaginary quality of miniature landscape, many questions rise in my mind: what makes these miniature landscapes aesthetically special? What accounts for its imaginary quality and thus brings in a poetic atmosphere? How does the poetics of miniature landscape relate to poetry, if there is any? Were the poets in China, Japan and Vietnam back in old times influenced by miniature landscape, or rather vice versa? What then, is the contemporary value of miniature landscape? Is it still possible to apply miniature landscape as a means to approach poetry?



Fig. 2<sup>2</sup>

While being puzzled by these questions, I often visualize a certain landscape while reading Chinese and Japanese poems (Tang poems and Haiku), and the poetics I sense from the landscapes inside the poems, is resonating with the one I feel while looking at a miniature landscape. The vague sense of the sizes of the objects and landscapes described in poetry opens up a daydream space for the readers to ponder, to travel afar in time and distance.

“At midnight,  
Under the bright moon,  
A secret worm  
Digs into a chestnut.

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<sup>2</sup> Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

On a snowy morning,  
I sat by myself  
Chewing tough strips  
Of dried salmon.

Tonight, the wind blowing  
Through the bashō tree,  
I hear the leaking rain  
Drop against a basin.”

---- Bashō<sup>3</sup>

Moon and a worm; a banana tree and a rain drop. The poet has reminded us that large is not incompatible with small. It is the relativity of smallness and vastness through which poetic moments are captured here. “If a poet looks through a microscope or a telescope, he always sees the same thing”<sup>4</sup>, said Bachelard. Like miniature landscape, the world inside a poem is a world of itself; a solitary one. It is a miniaturized daydreaming field where vastness exists within. After the reader has observed the sentiments inside himself, he may realize that what touches the soul in Haiku and Tang Poems, is the honest but subtle expressions of the poet’s momentary, oneiric, however ever-lasting emotions and nostalgia towards his time and the fleeting world. What emotions, then, do miniature landscapes withhold, if there were any when they were made? Where do the emotions come from? What stories do they tell about the people and the landscape those people exist? The more poems are read, the tighter they reveals for me the relationship between poetry and miniature landscape.

Led by the questions mentioned above, this paper will take us -- me and you my dear readers -- on a journey to discover the poetics of Chinese and Japanese miniature landscapes, and the miniaturizing, daydreaming landscapes inside Chinese and Japanese poetry. The paper is divided into three parts:

Part one focuses on the poetics of miniature landscape; how it was created and transformed through history, its aesthetics and its subtle connection with landscape painting and poetry. By looking at some of the miniature landscapes shown in paintings

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<sup>3</sup> Young, David. Moon Woke Me Up Nine Times. Selected Haiku of Bashō. Alfred A. Knopf. 2013. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. Beacon Press. 1964. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

and ukiyo-e, we will see how it has become a place where subtle emotions towards nature and nostalgia of the past are preserved.

In part two, we will enter the daydreaming, miniaturized landscapes inside poetry by following haiku master Matsuo Bashō, Yosa Buson and Tang Poet Tu Fu. Through not only visualizing, but also feeling and sensing and connecting the poetic atmosphere with one's own memories, emotions and nostalgic moments, one may create a landscape inside his own mind.

In part three, the connection between miniature landscape and poetry will be further discovered in a rather contemporary setting, starting with observations of my relationship with writing, followed by descriptions of how my experimental poems relate to certain landscapes that are miniaturized and visualized in a series of experimental installation works. These works are made possible only after a process of researching in part one and part two, and of understanding my own writings. Here in my experimental work, poetry is the first creation, after which the landscapes within the poems are revisited; thus the miniature landscape installations are visualized and materialized. The poems don't follow much the rules and forms of haiku and Tang poems; they are rather free expressions about life in the contemporaneity of ours. Yet Haiku and Tang poems are my greatest inspirations, and I consider the essence of my writing connects deeply with the solitary and nostalgic aspects of these poems. Even the spirit of our time shares few traits of that of Bashō, Buson or Tu Fu's, the voices of solitude, nostalgia and emotional expressions are still here nowadays and are even stronger. Meanwhile, the purpose of the installations is not to recreate the landscapes that exist inside my writing, but to find means of recollecting the feeling, the atmosphere and the poetic expression of the imaginative landscapes, with the assist of elements usually used in traditional *penjing* or *saikai* (such as rocks, trees, water) and other found materials. Therefore, visually the installation works may be found rather alien for professional *penjing* or *saikai* practitioners. This experimental installation part of the thesis is also an opportunity for myself to understand my own writings through building miniature landscapes, by applying what I have learnt from researching the first two parts of the thesis. The installations were shown to the public as a part of the group exhibition TILA 2, at Galleria 2. Pirkkala. Tampere 27.1.2018 - 13.2.2018, together with the poetry book *After Wishes Of The Waterfall, The Fallen Hair*.

“泥土和根  
知道你的名字  
因为我们一起被播种在这片土地中  
山神和笋婆婆  
风过空竹  
是你的青衣（掠过）

2014年5月

Mud and roots  
Know my name,  
Since we were sown on this land together.  
Guard of the mountain,  
Grandma of bamboo shoots:  
The zephyr that passes through the hollowed bamboo,  
Is your silk pajama.

May 2014”

## I. Inside A Sentimental Container



Fig. 3<sup>5</sup>

A cool autumn day in the north, Yuan Dynasty, painter Li stood in front of the window by his desk, pondering on the view of his yard. He saw this mini pine in the tray outside by the window (Fig. 3); his thoughts fell into the past as he wrote the poem below the painting:

<sup>5</sup> Lying Pine. Li Shixing (1282 - 1328). Zhao. Qingquan. Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

*Whirly. Curvy. Bulky. Odd.*

*A fist-size stone is like Mount Tai and Mount Hua; a teaspoon of water connects with the Sea of Ming and Sea of Bo. To see those majestic landscapes, you only need to look at the true pine in the tray.*

*Fire has been on for many years. If you ask me about the situation, I would tell you, it seems that cloud and sky are swinging and about to fall. In spring breeze, or under autumn moon, the pine ever flourishes; its end as emperor's canopy and its trunk as the dragon. Follow not hermit Yili and Xiahuang; Emperor, I come to the east as the Han has called my name.*

*Its high-spirited trunk reminded me of the pine which I met once on my way up to the mountain -- roaring on an unsteady cliff; it then reminded me of a person who I met in Dingwu (Now Beijing) in a winter, who looked like poet Su. Now I am reciting Su's poem with endless passion; a stone tray is in front of me, but Su has long gone.*

*Oh pine! your secretly-darkened green.*

---- An adapted translation of Li's poem in the painting "Lying Pine"

The poet sees mountains and seas from a tray, where a fist-size rock is placed beside a mini pine that is surrounded by a small puddle of water. Such landscape contained in a tray does not only enable visions for a rather capacious landscape, it also sets up a multi-sensual atmosphere for a whole bodily experience. It had become a locus where memories and emotions were preserved, as the poet revealed in his brushwork, where painting of a miniature landscape was followed by calligraphic poem. Why does the poet prefer such combinations? How do the two forms of expression relate to each other? Why, then, a rather downward-facing, lying pine instead of a straight, soaring one? What makes *penjing/bonsai* more than just a decorative object at interior or in gardens? These questions invite us to trace in the history of *penjing* and *bonsai*, its development and influences from other art forms, its aesthetics and its role as a literal art form.

## I. A Brief History of Penjing

### 1. Before Song Dynasty (960 C.E.):

Humans have developed strong, affective ties with natural environment from the very beginning of the oldest civilizations. Appreciation of nature, imitations of nature and inspirations from nature are of the very core learning processes of the relationship

between human and landscape. As western painters and poets were inspired by the breath-taking views of mountains, lakes and grassland, the Chinese, had started their exploration about man and nature three thousand years ago from the Shang (1600- 1046 BC) and Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC) – a period of time when the practice of Taoism and Shamanism had substantial influence upon the creation of miniature landscape. Based on the Taoist and Confucian principle of “harmony between people and nature”, plants were cultivated for ornamental purposes and miniature landscapes were created already during this period.

The story of the first *penjing* has a mystical background in the Shang and Zhou, and it may be strongly related to religious rituals.

#### The Container. The Sacred.

“Pen (盆)” is a container that can be dated back to the Neolithic period, when shallow, earthenware containers with supporting feet were made in the Yangshao culture (Yellow River Region) (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5). Pen is one of the earliest vessels manufactured for the court for ceremonial uses.



Fig. 4<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 5<sup>7</sup>

Later in Western Han dynasty when incense was introduced to China through the Silk Road trade, a special incense burner, *boshanlu* (博山炉) (Fig. 6), was invented as

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<sup>6</sup> Drawing of a ceramic shard excavated in Hemudu village, Zhejiang Province. Hemudu culture is dated from 5200 BC to 4500 BC. Some researchers believe that it depicts a plant grown in a container. Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Picture of a potted plant painted on a corridor wall. The building where the painting was found dates back to Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 AD) and it was excavated in Wangdu, Hebei Province. The painting features a plant in a container with a stand. Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

another ceremonial vessel. With a shallow tray on the bottom for collecting falling ash and a cup with perforated lid raised in the centre, *boshanlu* was a uniquely designed ceramic (later bronze) vessel with decorations of sacred mountains and islands, and motifs of mythical immortals and beasts. Ceremonial vessels such as *boshanlu* and pen count as two of the few earliest discovered miniature representations, setting up the foundations for the development of *Penjing*.



Fig. 6<sup>8</sup>

Along with the incense, Buddhism was also introduced to China from India in this period; for the Chinese to understand Buddhist beliefs, Taoist terminologies were used to delivery abstract concepts of meditative and other spiritual practices. While Daoist mysticism had the practice of re-creating sacred sites in miniatures (in order to appreciate the properties of its full-size landscape despite of location), Buddhism emphasised on the use of floral altar decorations and floral motifs. Together, Daoist and Buddhist ideology and ceremonial practice had contributed immensely for the creation and development of miniature landscape. After five centuries of convergence of the two mysticisms, the Chán School of Buddhism was established in Tang Dynasty. Chán (later called Zen) was introduced to Japan in the thirteenth century, and it had profound influence on landscape poetry, Haiku and landscape painting.

#### The Landscape. A Silent Poem.

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<sup>8</sup> Boshanlu (censer). Red earthenware with an iridescent green glaze. 23 cm H (9.1 inches); 21 cm D saucer; early to Mid Eastern Han. Baran. Robert J. Boshanlu. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.  
<http://www.magiminiland.org/BigPicture/Boshanlu.html>



*Jing* ( 景 )” refers to view, scenery of a landscape<sup>9</sup>. Dao is the philosophy of balancing the yin and yang, big and small and any binary oppositions; making a miniature landscape with dwarf trees and interestingly shaped rocks applies such philosophy of yin and yang - to create "harmony between human and nature". Another reason for the Daoists to create miniature landscape is rather mythical: in Daoist legends, immortals were said to have the power to shrink landscape down to a vessel size. The first written record of miniature landscape was from Tang Dynasty, when the cultivation of dwarfed tree landscapes (*punsai*) was a quite well developed craft. Another clear record of early versions of miniature tree was found on the wall mural of Prince Zhang Huai's Tomb (706 AD) (Fig. 7), depicting two servants carrying miniature landscapes of small rockeries and fruit trees on trays.



Fig. 7 <sup>10</sup>

The first highly appreciated trees used for miniature landscapes were believed to be taken from the wild, not cultivated from seeds. These trees however, were rather distorted

<sup>9</sup> “Penjing”. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penjing>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Fresco of a person holding landscape penjing. It was discovered on the wall of a tomb build for the Tang Dynasty prince Zhang Huai (653–684 AD), excavated in the Qianling Mausoleum, Shanxi province. <http://www.magiminiland.org/Paintings/ChinaPortrayals.html#PreSong>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

ones of their kind; their trunks were full of twists and knots, their branches, unruly, spread to unexpected directions. These unusual features of the dwarfed trees were thus seen as sacred and high-spirited, even though they had little value as building materials. Poets and painters often express their appreciation towards the dwarfed trees, as they imagine the hardship the tiny trees have gone through in rough natural conditions, shaping their characters and personalities.

Besides dwarfed trees, rocks and man-made hillocks, mini pools and ponds are also important elements in *penjing*. In Yan Liben's painting *The Portraits of Periodical Offering of Tang* (Fig. 8), it depicted foreign ambassadors and their bearers came to the capital to greet the emperor with exotic tributes, many of which were uniquely shaped stones.

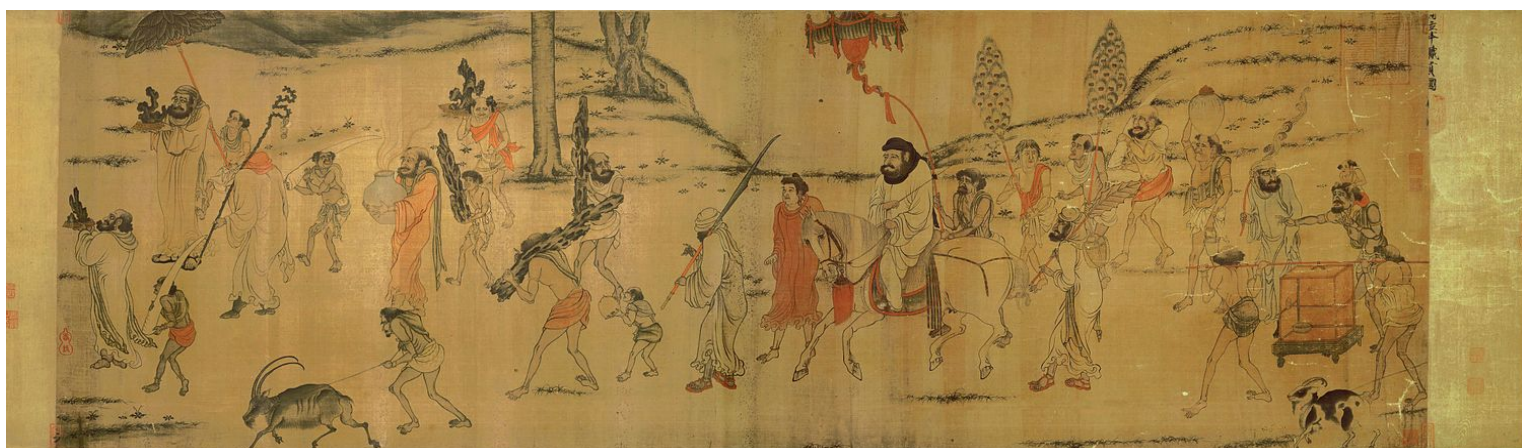


Fig. 8 <sup>11</sup>

Out of the royal court, *penjing* gained its popularity among poets and painters. In paintings and poems from Tang dynasty, miniature landscape was often a subject for the poets and painters to expand their imagination and to contemplate on life and nature; however, *penjing* was not only an object they appreciate and write, it was also a common hobby among the literates, a practice through which their hands touched soft mud, different textures of rocks and surfaces of tree trunks. “Your green - shining, as if just dipped in the lake; your needles - dragon’s whiskers, as if trimmed by scissors”, poet Li He’s (790-816) once commented in his poem *Armand Pine*.

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<sup>11</sup> The Portraits of Periodical Offering of Tang by Yan Liben (601 - 673). Song Dynasty copy in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portraits\\_of\\_Periodical\\_Offering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portraits_of_Periodical_Offering). Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

The act of shrinking natural landscape into small vessels gives us different perspectives to see the surrounding landscape. “To savour the essence of nature, while I’m confined to bed”, as Chinese landscape painter Zong Bing (375 - 443) expressed after many years of sickness, “It helps me purify my mind and realize the Dao.”<sup>12</sup>

*Penjing* developed as an art form during Tang Dynasty; In Song and Yuan Dynasty, techniques of *penjing* became much more advanced and its relationship with poetry, painting and calligraphy grew stronger. Meanwhile miniature landscape had adopted strong metaphors from the literates’ circle, as both a subject and an object.

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<sup>12</sup> Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

2. History of Penjing in China After 960 C.E. – Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasty (960 – 1912):

Representations of *penjing* have appeared in paintings of various subjects during Song Dynasty. In Northern Song Dynasty (960 - 1127), Zhang Zeduan's painted *Emperor Tang Minghuang Spying On A Bathing Lady*. In the painting (Fig. 9), subtle details in *penjing* on the lower right corner have suggested a bizarre event that is taking place in the centre: an aged, dragon-like pine with fissured barks and exposed roots is portrayed together with another blooming *penjing* on its side -- a metaphor for the uniting of masculinity and femininity.

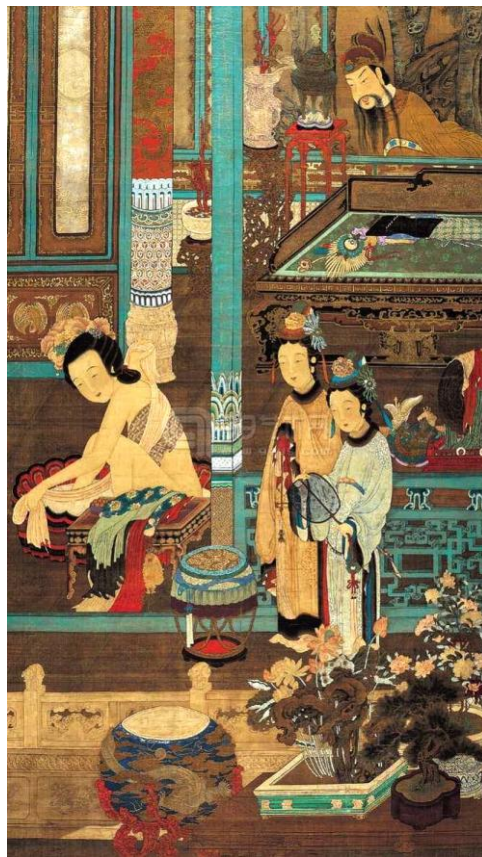


Fig. 9 <sup>13</sup>

In Liu Songnian's painting *Eighteen Scholars* (Fig. 10 and Fig. 11), Southern Song Dynasty (1127 - 1279), details from scholars' gatherings are presented; in the image on the left, scholars sitting around the table in the centre are looking at rocks, trees and blooming *penjing* on the lower part of the painting; while in the image on the right, literates are concentrating on playing go and *penjing* are left in the lower right corners, unattended.

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<sup>13</sup> Emperor Minghuang Spying On A Bathing Lady. Zhang Zeduan. North Song Dynasty (960 - 1127). Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

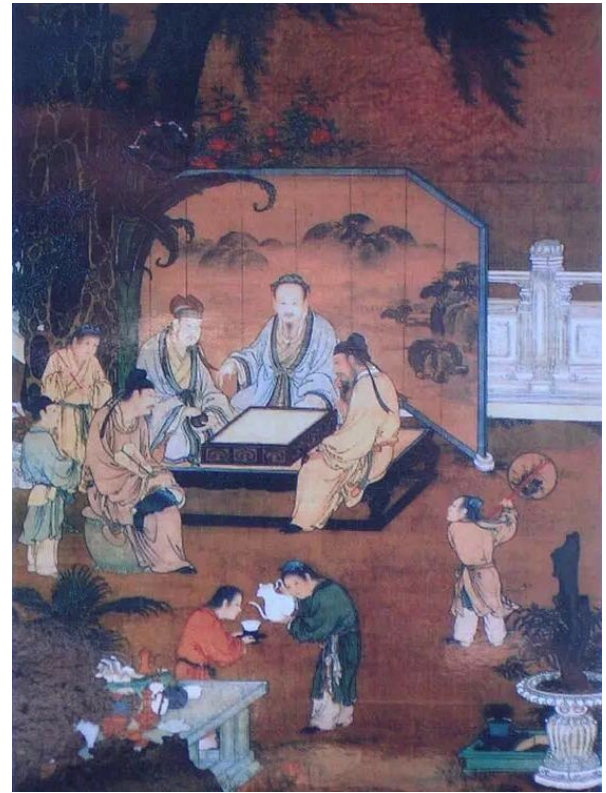


Fig. 10. Fig. 11 <sup>14</sup>

During Song dynasty, specific techniques were developed to create *penjing*, and criterias for rock appreciation were made by rock enthusiasts, painters and *penjing* amateurs. Painter, poet and calligrapher Mi Fu (1051 - 1107) for example, was obsessed with rock collecting; based on his theory, a rock would be ideal if it met the four essential qualities of shou (瘦) -- elegant and slender, zhou (皺) -- rich textures and unique furrows, lou (漏) -- eyes and holes that one leads to another, and tou (透) -- transparent, ethereal and open. His standard of aesthetics had strong impact on the styles of landscape paintings and rock appreciation in later Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasty. The image below (Fig. 12) is a portrait of Mi Fu, who was called "Madman Mi" for his eccentric obsession with collecting stones. He was bowing to a rock, which he declared to be his brother.

<sup>14</sup> Details From Eighteen Scholars. Liu Songnian (1155-1218). Southern Song Dynasty (1127 - 1279). Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.



Fig. 12<sup>15</sup>

*Penjing* was not only a highly valued hobby for the royal and the literati, it was also a part of the lives of farmers and industrial workers. In the *Drawing Book of Ploughing and Weaving* in Southern China in Song Dynasty, there were 23 scenes of rice planting, new farming technologies and silk-making, showing the importance of agriculture and sericulture in the economical development in Song dynasty. As it's shown in the woodblock prints of the drawings (Fig. 13), silkworm breeders are working beside *penjing*. This was one of the early proves that *penjing* was not only popular in the upper class.

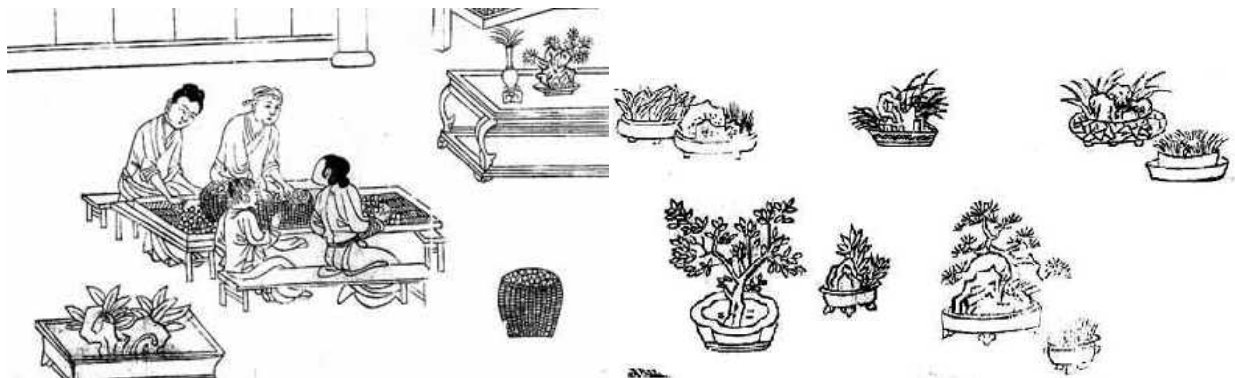


Fig. 13<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Mi Fu by Guo Xu (1456–1532). 1503. Mi Fu. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mi\\_Fu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mi_Fu). Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Pictures from *Ploughing and Weaving* (1149) by Lou Shou. Woodblock Prints. <http://www.magiminiland.org/Paintings/ChinaPortrayals.html#SongMing>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

Later in Yuan Dynasty, *penjing* was often called *xie zi jing* -- "tiny scenery", which looked even smaller than the usual size of *penjing*. *Xie zi jing* could be easily carried during travel or held in hand. Buddhist monk Yun Shangren, for example, created a *xie zi jing* during his traveling. "To see the big from the tiny -- Poetic", people commented on Yun's *xie zi jing* work. Later *Hui* ethnic poet Ding Henian remarked on the poetics of Yuan's *xie zi jing* in one of his poems: "the sun and the moon pass from one side of the sea to the other, from one end to the other end of the mountain, and so do they from one side of the *xie zi jing* to its other side." *Penjing* has become the symbol to represent the eternity of nature -- an object suggesting that men would have peaceful character and great personality by practicing *penjing* and mastering the balance of nature.

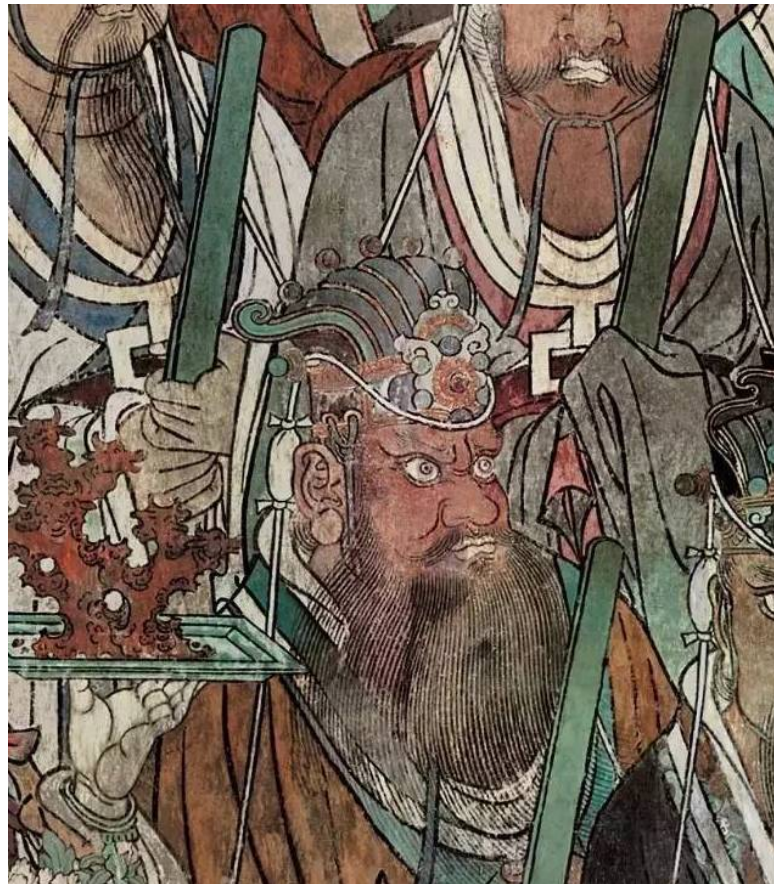


Fig. 14.<sup>17</sup>

It was not until Ming dynasty when systematic theories of the aesthetics of *penjing* were officially written by scholars. In Writer Tu Long's (1543 - 1605) book *Desultory*

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<sup>17</sup> Yongle Palace Mural. Yuan Dynasty. Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

*Remarks on Furnishing the Abode of the Retired Scholar (Fifteen Treatises For Nurturing Life)*<sup>18</sup>, potted plants was listed as one of the fifteen nourishing hobbies and materials for the spirit, among calligraphy, painting, tea, ink, incense, fish and birds, mountain studio and so on. He had also boldly claimed, that “the best *penjing* are smaller ones that can be set on a stool; then comes those that can be placed in a courtyard” (Zhao, 34).<sup>19</sup> He was also one of the first scholars who had addressed the importance of poetic image in appreciating the art of *penjing*. However, the aesthetics theory about *penjing* focused more on appreciating its visual qualities than its meanings and symbolism. More essays were written about the design and criteria for appreciation *penjing* during Ming dynasty. *Penjing* as a popular hobby of the scholars appeared to be a trendy deed in Ming dynasty.

In Qing dynasty, *Penjing* had more clear divisions based on the designs and styles from different areas in China: tree and forest *penjing*, landscape *penjing*, and water and land *penjing*. In writer Su Ling’s *On Penjing*, plants were classified based on their nature and characters. Based on Su Ling, among all the *penjing* plants, there are four sages (Golden oxalis, boxwood, winter jasmine and false cypress), seven virtues (Yellow Mountain pine, Chinese weeping cypress, elm, maple, holly, gingo and Chinese sweet plum) and eighteen scholars (Bambusa multiplex, camellia and goji for example). Meanwhile, landscape garden was extensively developed during this time -- from royal garden in the Forbidden City to the mansions and villas of the southern businessmen; *penjing* played a significant role in the process of creating landscape gardens.

### 3. History of *Penjing* in Japan – Heian to Meiji Period (794 – 1912 C.E.)

It was during the period of Late Tang and early Song Dynasty when the art of *penjing* was introduced from China to Japan, between the late Heian Period (794-1185) and the early Kamakura Period (1192-1368). The first tray landscapes were thought to be brought to Japan as a religious gift from the *Chán* School of Buddhism in China. The philosophy of *Zen* (Japanese *Chán*) Buddhism had had profound influence on the identity and aesthetics of *bonsai* in Japan, as Chinese Buddhist monks began to teach in Japanese monasteries and introduce the art of making and appreciating miniature

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<sup>18</sup> Claunas Craig. *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, University of Hawaii Press 2004. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. pp. 29 - 30

<sup>19</sup> Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 34.



landscapes (Covello&Yuishimura)<sup>20</sup>. *Bonsai* - as the Japanese call it - were appreciated for its unique aesthetic quality -- its beauty in severe austerity. "A full size tree that is left growing in its natural state is a crude thing. Only when it is kept close to human beings, who fashion it with loving care, that its shape and style acquire the ability to touch one." (Baran. J. Robert.)<sup>21</sup>, Bonsai scholar Robert J. Baran concluded in a work of fiction written during the kamakura period. Such discourse -- a rather bold and even impolite account for nature in praise of man's touch, forms a very different philosophy of aesthetics from that of the west.

Like in China, *bonsai* started to appear first in paintings (11-16th century) (more specifically handscroll paintings) and it got popular in woodblock prints later in Edo Period (1603 - 1868). Sometimes the representation of *bonsai* stayed rather abstract, for example when shown together with poetry, while sometimes it appeared to be a part of the narratives of a painting. For instance, in the story of *Hachi-no-Ki* (The Potted Trees), a well-known *Noh* play written by Zeami Motokiyo (1363 -1444), the impecunious samurai Tsuneyo contributed his last three beloved *bonsai* trees to be burned in order to provide warmth for a traveling monk:

*Tsuneyo "How cold it is! And as the night passes, each hour the frost grows keener. If I had but fuel to light a fire with, that you might sit by it and warm yourself! Ah! I have thought of something. I have some dwarf trees. I will cut them down and make a fire out of them."*

*Monk: "Have you indeed dwarf trees?"*

*Tsuneyo "Yes, when I was in the World [of society] I had a fine show of dwarfed trees; but when my trouble came, I had no more heart for tree fancying, and I gave them away. But three of them I kept -- plum, cherry, and pine. Look, there they are covered with snow. They are precious to me; yet for this night's entertainment, I will gladly set light to them."*

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<sup>20</sup> Covello. T. Vincent. & Yishimura. Yuji. The Japanese Art Of Stone Appreciation, *Suiseki and Its Use with Bonsai*. Charles E. Tuttle. 1984. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Baran. J. Robert. History Of Bonsai. <https://www.bonsaiempire.com/origin/bonsai-history>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

Monk: "No, no, that must not be. I thank you for your kindness, but it is likely that one day you will go back to the world again and need them for your pleasure. Indeed it is not to be thought of."

Tsuneyo "My life is like a tree the earth has covered; I shoot no blossoms upward to the world."

Wife: "And should we burn for you these shrubs, these profitless toys."  
22

---- Translation of the play quoted From Baran. Robert J. Hachi-No-Ki, A Perspective.

Plum and pine - which the Chinese praised as two of the three highest-spirited trees which feared not the hardship of winter, were kept by Tsuneyo even when he lived in poverty. His generous act was rewarded later by the monk, who was actually a disguised official. Here *bonsai* was portrayed as something luxurious for the pleasure of the eyes, but it also had a strong metaphorical connotation – it being seen as someone who could endure the hardship of life and bear unique characters and vitality despite of a merciless growing environment. The two images below depicted the dramatic moment when tsuneyo was holding his knife and was about to cut the *bonsais* for providing warmth for the monk.



Fig. 15. <sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Baran. J. Robert. *Hachi-No-Ki, A Perspective*. Originally published in the *ABS Bonsai Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 1992. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. pp. 3-4, 23.



Fig. 16<sup>24</sup>

During Edo period (1603 - 1868), ukiyo-e artist Utagawa Hiroshige created his print series *53 Stations of the Tōkaidō* (1832), depicting travelers' life on road with backgrounds of the sceneries of the Tōkaidō landscape. Later, artist Utagawa Yoshishige made another series of prints, *53 Stations of the Tōkaidō As Potted Landscapes* (1848) (Fig. 17), which were said to be representations of actual potted landscapes (*saikei* or *bonkei*) made by a man called Kimura Tōsen. (*Tōkaidō gojusantsugi hachiyama zue.1848*)<sup>25</sup>. Here *bonkei* rather than *bonsai*, are shown in a less narrative setting as in Nichimura Shigenaga's prints; each print from the series of the *53 Tōkaidō Stations As Potted trees* focuses more on the scenery of the station as a landscape of its own. The metaphorical language and the poetics of the miniature landscape are still present, but have melted in its visuals. From a walk to the making of landscape prints, from the making of miniature landscape -- the *saike*, to the making of prints of the potted landscape, such a loop of inspiration shows

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<sup>23</sup> Nichimura Shigenaga (1697-1756). *Onna Hachi-no-ki (Female Version of "The Potted Trees")*. *hosoban* (15.4 x 29.5 cm or 6-1/16 x 11-5/8 in.), ink on paper, with hand-applied color and *nikawa*. <http://www.magiminiland.org/Paintings/JapanPortrayals.html#Tokugawa1>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770). Parody of Mitate Hachi-no-ki (The Potted Trees). Woodblock Print (*chūban*: approx. 30 x 19 cm). <http://www.magiminiland.org/HachiNoKi.html>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Utagawa. Yoshishige. *Tōkaidō gojūsantsugi hachiyama zue. 1848*. Smithsonian Library. <https://archive.org/search.php?query=subject%3A%22Bonkei%22>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

how the creation of miniature landscape merge with other forms of art, together shaping the way of seeing and presenting landscape during this period in history.



Fig. 17<sup>26</sup>

In the end of Edo period, prints had revealed the social shift in Japan, from an isolated feudal society to a more open and modern society that started to accept western influence on its culture and political structure. In Utagawa Sadahide's *yokohama-e* print (ukiyo-e woodblock prints depicting foreigners and scenes of the Yokohama port) shown below (Fig. 18), a foreign man was admiring the blooms of a *bonsai* tree - an object that possibly reminded him of his wife who was in the portrait painting hanging on the wall behind. In such case, the *bonsai*, was represented less as an appropriated landscape from nature but more as an object that drew emotional, nostalgic thoughts for the viewers. The blossom from a foreign potted tree could recall someone so close, though being far away from him.

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<sup>26</sup> Utagawa Yoshishige. Three prints From the 53 Stations of the Tokaido As Potted Landscapes (1848). Smithsonian Library. <https://archive.org/search.php?query=subject%3A%22Bonkei%22>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: VICCA, 2018.



Fig. 18 <sup>27</sup>

During Meiji period (1868 - 1912), *bonsai* and *saikei* still appeared in *Ukiyo-e* prints as a common subject; however, the subject of these prints were more related to females; the practice of *saikei* and *bonsai*, in combination with *ikebana* and tea ceremony, was categorized as popular hobbies and even necessary etiquette for women.

In *I Want To Make It Bloom Early* (Fig. 19), one of Artist Tsukioka Yoshitoshi print series -- *Mitate tai zukushi* (*Collection of Desires*), it portrayed *bijin* (beautiful women) with their secret thoughts, wishes and desires -- a *bijin* with a purple scarf, gazing at her left with her mouth slightly open, eyebrows lifting and eyes widely open with hope, was holding a small *bonsai* in her right hand. The print was made during the period when western culture started to influence people's daily lives. The wish to make the *bonsai* bloom early in this particular print, together with other wishes from the series --; *I want to go abroad* (Fig. 20); *I want to drink a cup of wine* (Fig. 21); *I want to be massaged* (Fig. 22), revealed the longing for beauty, for different lifestyle and pleasure in women's mind. An old practice, yet with a new wish -- *bonsai* had gained its popularity in the daily lives of the Japanese. Though still seen as an object that offers luxury and pleasure, it had a

<sup>27</sup> Utagawa Sadahide. American merchant exceedingly delighted with long awaited cherry blossoms of a miniature tree. 1861. <http://www.magiminiland.org/Paintings/Japan1800to1868.html> Source of Origin: Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

different social connotation in Meiji period, as the citizens had a different view towards their own traditions after western culture was introduced to the country.



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Fig. 19 – Fig. 22. Yoshitoshi. Tsukioka (1839 - 1892). . Mitate tai zukushi (Collection of Desires). <http://www.yoshitoshi.net/series/desires.html>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.  
 Fig. 19: I Want To Make It Bloom Early.  
 Fig. 20: I Want To Go Abroad.

Such change had also shown in Chikanobu's print, *Eastern Customs: Enumerated Blessings* (Fig. 23), which portrayed the familiar pursuit of calligraphy by three elegantly attired women. A dramatic pine with flourishing grass on its bottom planted in a glazed blue and white porcelain pot, occupied the centre of the print, while on it's right stood a western style clock, unveiling the fact that western object and aesthetics were slowly accepted by the Japanese society.



Fig. 23<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 24<sup>30</sup>

Feature of prints made during Meiji period was that traditions were juxtaposed with the new: women in traditional kimono vs women in Dutch dresses, traditional practices like *bonsai* and calligraphy were presented in a space filled with objects from the west (Fig. 25).

Fig. 21: I Want To Drink A Cup Of Wine.

Fig. 22: I Want To Be Massaged.

<http://www.yoshitoshi.net/series/desires.html>

<sup>29</sup> Chikanobu. Toyohara (1838–1912). *Eastern Customs: Enumerated Blessings*. <http://www.magiminiland.org/Paintings/JapanPortrayalsb.html#Meiji>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Chikanobu. Toyohara (1838–1912). *lady and bonsai*. 1896.

<http://www.magiminiland.org/Paintings/JapanPortrayalsb.html#Meiji>. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.



Fig. 25<sup>31</sup>

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi was recognized as the last great master of *Ukiyo-e*; after Meiji restoration, representations of miniature landscapes were mostly seen in photographs, lithographs and sometimes lacquer paintings.



Fig. 26<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Chikanobu. Toyohara (1838–1912). *Typical Meiji Pastimes*. 1890 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toyohara\\_Chikanobu#/media/File:Y%C5%8Dsh%C5%AB\\_Chikanobu\\_Utsushio\\_Kajin\\_Shu.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toyohara_Chikanobu#/media/File:Y%C5%8Dsh%C5%AB_Chikanobu_Utsushio_Kajin_Shu.jpg). Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Lacquer painting of various subjects. bonsai shibata zeshin. Author unknown. 1882. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. <https://fi.pinterest.com/pin/23643966764085679/?autologin=true>



Photographs offered real, but also dreamy representations of bonsais and their practitioners (Fig. 27, Fig. 28) -- their faces appeared dreamy and their mind seemed to be traveling to elsewhere, a beautiful place with an imaginary landscape.



Fig. 27<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 28<sup>34</sup>

Most resources on the history of *penjing* and *bonsai* discontinued after Qing Dynasty in China and Meiji period in Japan. There were little records on this subject during World War I and World War II, but after World War II, the practice of potting and trimming small trees had been picked up by people again after a long break, especially in Japan, as the need and wish to reconnect with nature and restore peace, nationally and personally, had increased after the war. *Bonsai* together with Ikebana and tea ceremony re-gained their popularity among the Japanese. Behind these practices was the philosophy of Zen that helped transform chaos into order, noise into peace. In China, the renaissance of *penjing* arrived much later in 1970s, when economy started to burst after the communist party enhanced its regime.

<sup>33</sup> Shimooka Renjo (1823 - 1914). Scene Around Table With Bonsai. Photograph.1865-1870. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.  
<https://fi.pinterest.com/pin/168392473541671454/?lp=true>

<sup>34</sup> Unknow Photographer. Florist Shinichi Suzuki. Photograph. 1870. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.  
<https://fi.pinterest.com/pin/23643966764088996/?lp=true>

Miniature landscape is not a mere interior decoration that humans appropriate from nature, but an extension where their emotional bonds with the world and nostalgia of the past are preserved. It gives the viewers a strong sense of belongingness and of possession of an imaginative landscape. “The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it,” Bachelard remarked after Schopenhauer’s “The world is my imagination” (Bachelard, 150)<sup>35</sup>. To enable one to be at an imaginary place is a powerful gesture; as sizes shrink, meanings and values become condensed and enriched. The process of cultivating, nurturing and shaping something from nature creates a bond, a dialogue between the outside world of change and the inner world of imagination. However, such process doesn’t follow logic, as Bachelard also suggested in his book *The Poetics Of Space*: “one must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large and what is small.” What, then, is the “beyond logic”? And where can one find such dialogue between the outer and the inner?

Here come the poets.

## II. A Poet’s Imaginative Refuge

### i. On The Combination Of The Outer Observations and The Inner Responses -- Sensing Dreamy, Sensual Atmosphere

*“Drip drip, the dew  
as if to wash  
this dusty world”  
-- Bashō*

*“One insect  
asleep on a leaf  
can save your life”  
-- Bashō<sup>36</sup>*

When the poet’s eyes are occupied, so does his heart; he senses his surroundings and his vision stretches, nearby and afar. Poetry is a bridge, a channel that connects the poets’ outer observations and inner responses: a drop of dew washes a dusty world; an insect asleep can save a life. What dramatic but uplifting responsive thoughts from such ordinary scenes of the smallness! One drop of dew to wash a dusty world -- a secret wish

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<sup>35</sup> Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press. 1964. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Young, David. *Moon Woke Me Up Nine Times. Selected Haiku of Bashō*. Alfred A. Knopf. 2013. (Sources of all the following poems by Bashō are as above). Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

was drawn from the heart of Bashō as his thoughts reflected on dripping dew; Whose life is there to be saved? We do not exactly know. But what we can recognize from here is the sudden sense of deep joy he gets from a mere glimpse of the woods.

*Black forest*  
*nothing you say matters*  
*it snows all morning*  
-- Bashō

A morning with endless snowfall. Stubborn. Wordless. Motion without sound. A timeless scenery. A cold, lonely but cozy atmosphere to reside. Did Bashō try to have a conversation with his world of black forest and snow? “Nothing you say matters” suggests an attitude of reverence and surrender, accepting not only the actual condition of living but also his own sorrow and even despair, yet at the same time, joy. The obscurity from “you” makes one question the identity of “me” -- the self. Where to find Bashō’s self? Myself?

<i>It's in everyone's mouth</i>	<i>At this mountain pass</i>	<i>Sound of an oar hitting a wave</i>
<i>the red leaf tongue</i>	<i>me and the lark</i>	<i>freezes the bowels</i>
<i>of autumn</i>	<i>lounging in the sky</i>	<i>night crying</i>
-- Bashō	-- Bashō	-- Bashō

The self is reflected in everything he sees and senses; the self does not exist but only in the oneness with his world. Being as playful and imaginative as a child, he finds the same intense red in his tongue and the red leaf of autumn; he wanders on his days with lark in the sky. From autumn leaves to tongue, from the sound of an oar hitting a wave to the bowels, from an outer observation to an inner sensation, the poet travels from his physical world to somewhere imaginative -- a place with a dreamy atmosphere, and the door where he enters such place is the contrasting scenery and the landscape inside his poems. Being through non-being, the poet is deeply connected with his world, imagination as his tentacles; senses as the tools that break the boundaries:

Sound and Space:

<i>Birdsong and moonlight</i>	<i>total silence</i>
<i>leak through</i>	<i>then cicada-buzz</i>
<i>the bamboo grove</i>	<i>drilling the rock</i>

-- Bashō

Texture and Color:

*Hailstones, dark sky,  
large snow flakes mixed in --  
a patterned cloth!*

-- Bashō

-- Bashō

*Plum blossoms along  
the path through the fields  
Not quite red or white*

-- Buson<sup>37</sup>

*Tea-plant flowers --  
whether white or yellow  
is uncertain*

-- Buson

Smell and Sound, Light and Movement:

*this evening  
cherry blossoms' scent  
enough to ring the temple bell*

-- Bashō

*Loving this  
snow aroma  
singing wind*

-- Bashō

*The moonlight begins to fall  
on four or five people --  
dancing*

-- Buson

Leaving out extra explanations and connections, the poets have preserved the essence of such dreamy moments with his open senses; as these words remain fragmented, they give space for the readers to explore freely, to complete a whole picture by filling it with their own imagination (Young, xii)<sup>38</sup>. The imagined world of the poets is a miniaturized space in a constituted state. Here there are the relativities of miniature and immensity, of nearness and distance, of motion and quietude, and of lightness and weight. In a daydreaming state, we do not see where the image starts, and as Bachelard puts it, daydream (imagination and contemplation) always begins the same way, an image or an object flees nearby and right away it takes off afar (Bachelard, 184)<sup>39</sup>: zooming in, a miniaturized world appears; zooming out, details lose its sharpness in exile into immensity and distance. Such dynamic move is however, motionless. The poetics resides in such relativity of motion and motionlessness of an imagined landscape. Light and airy, this bodiless journey appears to be. But where does the weight of the body lie?

*I live like a priest  
my name will be lost  
in a river of fallen leaves  
-- bashō*

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<sup>37</sup> Addiss. Stephen. *The Art of Haiku: Its History Through Poems and Paintings by Japanese Master*. Shambhala Publications, Inc. 2012. P. 179. (Sources of all the following poems by Buson are the same as above). Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Young. David. *Moon Woke Me Up Nine Times. Selected Haiku of Bashō*. Alfred A. Knopf. 2013. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Bachelard. Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press. 1964. P. 184. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

The heaviness comes with time and will eventually flow away with time. “Lost in a river of fallen leaves” -- the weight of time, of age and body, is transformed into water, ever flowing, coming and going; or into an intense smell, a momentary sensation. The poet becomes one with his landscape, he feels the heaviness of the immensity of his actual world, and so does the lightness of his miniaturized world of imagination. A contrast, thus appears in this process of zoom-in and zoom-out, enabling both the poet and his readers to shift their perspective and vision to a different space -- space of elsewhere. How do poets balance out such contrasts in his life?

ii. On The Four Emotions -- Joy and Sorrow, Love and Loneliness. A Nostalgic, Fleeting World

Inside a highly contrast landscape, the poet’s life is spiced by birds and flowers, rain and snow, views of faraway mountains and sound of a nearby cascade -- each spice holds a message and sparks a connection; the poet chooses to taste it. The sweetness of joy, the bitterness of sorrow, the acidity of fear and the hotness of love.

Joy:

The first melon quarter it or cut it in slices? -- <i>Bashō</i>	Today, tonight is no time to be asleep -- moon viewing! -- <i>Bashō</i>	Let’s go snow viewing fall down a lot before we get there
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Sorrow:

<i>sight of that mountain makes me forget i’m getting older</i> -- <i>Bashō</i>	Listening to hail body feels like an old oak -- <i>Bashō</i>	I’d use young leaves to wipe the tears from your blind eyes -- <i>Bashō</i>
--	---	--

Love:

leaving soon thanks, flowers, for your hospitality -- <i>Bashō</i>	Flowers bloom everywhere fun-loving priest available wife -- <i>Bashō</i>	I’m touched by this chrysanthemum it weathered the typhoon -- <i>Bashō</i>
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Loneliness:

A pheasant’s cry suddenly missing my mother and father -- <i>Bashō</i>	Cool of the evening watching the melons grow you should be here -- <i>Bashō</i>	A bell at sunset no one to hear it this spring evening -- <i>Bashō</i>
---	--	---

Nostalgia of The Past:

The Emperor’s tomb what kind of memories live in that fern?	<i>The summer world floats in the lake</i>
--	--

-- Bashō

*waves wash over*

-- Bashō

The poet with four emotions, naked and blurry. The subtlety is within this blurred nakedness. A landscape with fuzzy background – the first melon in an early summer night, the moon as his landscape before falling asleep, falling down in the contrasting landscape of white and darkness -- a landscape of joy, behind a silk curtain. An extremely simple landscape, with a rather mundane object, but together they make a sensible landscape for the emotions. Why a certain landscape is associated with certain emotions and memories? What elements from a landscape have such power to recall a deep voice from within? These questions rise during the process of understanding poetry, and they have become the guidance for the artistic practice of making miniature landscape for my thesis research.

### iii. On The Contrasting Sizes and Dimensions of An Imaginative Landscape – The Intimate cosiness of Elsewhere

As I have pointed in the previous text, that the relativity of smallness and immensity in poetry creates a special, obscured sense of space for the readers, the play of scales in the poet's mind is a process of constructing and deconstructing such space. A movable landscape. A flickering sense of existence. He can associate with pine needles one moment, and galaxy the next (Young, vii) <sup>40</sup>. Miniature -- a small, enclosed region, warm and intimate, bears gentle cosiness within. It soon becomes the "ultimate" landscape that the poet attaches to; and the images of such mini landscape do not correspond to the images of the reality any more. It has become a pod that carries greatness, which is then transformed into a milieu as malleable as the poets, or the dreamers desire (Bachelard, 157) <sup>41</sup>.

Pine mushroom  
nameless tree leaf  
stuck to it  
--Bashō

Piles of quilts  
now on distant mountains  
I watch both  
--Bashō

Poets help us to discover joy from within -- the joy of looking at a small object, while experiencing immensity of the landscape we exist. Between a pine mushroom and a tree

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<sup>40</sup> Young, David. *Moon Woke Me Up Nine Times. Selected Haiku of Bashō*. Alfred A. Knopf. 2013. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. vii

<sup>41</sup> Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press. 1964. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 157

leaf, cosiness inside immensity for a cold night; between piles of quilts and the mountains, immensity of calmness and intimacy, outside and inside, the infinite intimate space. Such enlarged intimacy comes from tranquillity. Piles of quilts, distant mountains, he watches both. A tranquil gaze from a pair of humble eyes, images have imprinted on the imaginative mind, floating with waves of calmness and contemplation -- a process of an emergence of being.

Butterfly cruising  
across a field  
made of sunlight  
-- Bashō

Midnight  
By the West Pavilion, on a thousand feet of cliff,  
Walking at midnight under my latticed window.  
Flying stars pass white along the water,  
Transparent beams of moonset flicker on the sand.  
At home in its tree, notice the secret bird:  
Safe beneath the waves, imagine the great fishes.  
By Yangtse and Han the mountains pile their barriers.  
A cloud in the wind, at the corner of the world.  
-- Tu Fu (Translated by A. C. Graham) <sup>42</sup>

One may not be aware of the sizes of objects in the poems while reading, but as long as the images of these objects are contemplated, the immensity of each object, an enlargement, a miniature, or a distortion, will appear in front of one's eyes, coated with a layer of dreamy and surreal-looking mist. At a corner of the world, one encounters with butterflies, field of sunlight, cruising; stars, water, sand, transparent beams of moonset, secret bird, waves, the great fishes -- small but big, cosy but distant. Writing -- especially poetry, is humans' reality of here and elsewhere. The world inside poetry is not just mere impressions and memories, it is a world lived with the poetics of miniature and immensity.

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<sup>42</sup> Tang Dynasty Poets. Translated by A. C. Graham. Poems of The Late T'ang. Penguin Books. 1977.  
Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

## II. Artistic practice

### 1. **My relationship with writing and translation:**

When I was a child, I had problems reading books. My mom recalled that I would flip a book, open it at a random page and start reading out loud; after a while I would start from another random page and consume reading. I had kept such reading habit till early twenties, except in some occasions when I was required by the school to finish some books. Fragmentation, is an image impressed in my mind repetitively while reading, and so it is as I write. It is something natural, something even a bit taken for granted by myself; thus subconsciously, It has become my way to write, to be, and ultimately, to live. When I first read Chinese poems at school, I considered some poets tried too hard for presenting a complete, panoramic image of the mountain and water landscape -- the majestic, the macroscopic and the heavy; while some poets focused on the small, the light, and the fragmented; poems of the latter kind seemed to come out as natural breathes, effortless. It was the latter, which I valued significantly then, for their lightness that had stroked my soul with the weight of a feather. Some years ago as I encountered Haiku, once again I saw the contrasting landscape of the big and the small, of the background and the foreground, of the real and the imagined, but this time, it's the combined space of the big and the small, the heavy and the light, still and motion that speaks to me. A new perspective it has brought to me. Seeing one from the other, and seeing the self through all -- I am only a reflection on the clear water that passes:

“Piles of quilts  
snow on distant mountains  
I watch both.”  
-- Bashō

To deliver a clear message, it's better to make a complete sentence, while to convey a sentimental thought, fragmentation is the carrier that takes the nostalgia directly to the heart. Fragmentation is the fabric that carries our imagination to travel afar to nearby, from still to motion without the prolonged transition through the current reality. Poetics lives inside fragmentation.

Our contemporary reality is created with more fragmentation than ever – the hybridity of different cultures and disciplines, and us the hybrid product. The boundaries



among different fields of knowledge are more vague. The poetics in the lives of the ancient Chinese and Japanese poets, lives inside clouds and frogs, snow and quills, rain and bamboo, moon and tea; we still have these elements in our contemporary world perhaps -- the moon is still the moon that Bashō saw with his naked eyes, but with footprints of astronauts and cameras that take photos of the earth; the tea we drink might still have a taste of the tea in Tu Fu's hut, yet with some possible particles of plastics in our tea water. The poetics of our contemporaneity still retains the taste of love and fear, metaphors and ironies, but of drastically more lonesome and confusion. Nature used to be the icon. Now loneliness, plastics, fraud and more loneliness, of a theatrical life.

Through the fragmented writing I scribbled during the past four years, I recorded my fragmented thoughts while being in different landscapes. My words as pieces of broken mirrors; my mind as a fragment of the contemporary consciousness; my body as a part of the global migrating tentacles that sense the change. The writings were left behind after they were done and hadn't been revisited since, like precious memories that one wanted to save the extract of its sweetness for later. The first time I re-read them recently -- a mix of my scratchy handwritings of English and Chinese, they appeared to me as a complete mess -- debris in an excavation field; I couldn't recognize my language. Time once puts on our past an alien mask, but seasons them with captivating spices. As I kept re-reading these old writings, they familiarized themselves, first through my senses. It was an exuberant feeling when a stream of sunbeam coming from a piece of old writings shone on the present thought. Each poem in the book stayed as fragmented as they were originally, while the order the poems was arranged and categorized, not by time, but by five themes: senses and memory, you and light, time and places, fears and saffron, dreams and home. Each theme is associated with a particular landscape in the installation:

-- Senses & memory: an imagination -- landscape of an island

It is landscape of an abstract field. Mysterious shapes and textures and lives, inviting eyes to rest upon, hands to touch and nostrils to search. Moving. Ever-changing. Misty. fluid or solid, airy or rooted -- it connects; it shares; it tunes all the noises in.

-- You & light: landscape of forest

In the northern forest of drastic contrast, light and shadow, dark green. The real. The aged. And you -- the shine that reflects all colours.

(Something to be considered while recapturing the landscape of mountain, sea and forest based on Bachelard:

The relationship between miniature and immensity:

*“Far from the immensities of sea and land, merely through memory, we can recapture, by means of meditation, the resonances of this contemplation of grandeur. But is this really memory? Isn’t imagination alone able to enlarge indefinitely the images of immensity? In point of fact, day-dreaming, from the very first second, is an entirely constituted state. We do not see it start, and yet it always starts the same way, that is, it flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere, in the space of elsewhere.”*

The relationship between the work of art and imagination:

*“works of art are the by-products of this existentialism of the imagining being, and the real product is consciousness of enlargement.”*

The relationship between stillness and the size of the still object:

*“immensity is within ourselves. it is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and cautions arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man. It is one of the dynamic characteristics of quiet daydreaming.”<sup>43</sup> )*

-- Time & places: landscape of labyrinthine city

A landscape made of sweat -- field of huge effort. Made to get mind lost. Illusionary and shiny, till one gets blind. Doors, tunnels and boxes, open, leading to surreal dimensions of material black holes.

-- Fears & saffron: landscape of construction

An inbetween-scape in transformation in the ever-going cycle of construction and deconstruction. Monotonic grey. Something half-born; something broken; something hanging; something falling; somewhere empty; somewhere exploding; somewhere being torn; somewhere being distorted; someone cutting; someone digging; someone hitting; someone dying.

-- Dreams & home: landscape of a garden

A field full of evanescence -- the coming and going of bizarre dreams, the altered contemporary sense of home and roots. It is a true luxury to have and maintain as something that can refresh the mind and body regardless of the rotten reality of time.

These themes are the invisible threads that hold my thoughts and emotions and connect my senses tightly with the moment and the nostalgic atmosphere resides within a landscape. The idea of rearranging the order of the poems into something more narrative

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<sup>43</sup> Bachlard. Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press. 1964. Ruitong Zhao: *The Thesis*. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018.

in the audio is born out of the process of experimenting with building miniature landscape based on the poems. When words meet spaces, a dialogue, or a communication, is created in between. The communication is carried by sound so that words dance in space -- space that can understand words. Harmony then, is hoped to be achieved, after such a conversation. What then, one may still ask, is the need to rearrange the order of the poems? Won't space understand uncategorized, fragmented words? The relationship between the words and the space created in this context is a relationship of compensation, that the landscape does not only represent the words, and the words do not just depict the landscape, but rather, each provides for the other something new and something unexpected, while each maintains the atmosphere of the other. Therefore, the change of the poems in the audio is a part of this compensation process, during which a new and unexpected spice is sprinkled.

Translation is a process of creating through changing the carrier of information -- language, and thus through applying the new cultural connotations of the words of the adapted language, bringing in a new tone that can even surprises the author himself. In my case, the material to be translated is poetry, and that the translator is the author himself. Therefore, I want to open up on the two parts: one is on the translation of poetry and second, on the author as translator.

When loss and change of meaning is unavoidable through translation, it is important for the translated to have at least one thing left from the original. For fiction and other logic driven text, the one thing that holds the original and the translated together is the line created by order -- order of events or order of time, or the continuity of the logical mind. However, for poetry, whose form contains not much sense of order and whose content follows not much of any logic, what is the element that holds the senses of the original in the translated? The essence of non-poetry text lies either in the wholeness of a storyline, or the systematic layout of ideas, while in poetry, the juice is in the fragmentation and the fluidity of the flow of mind and senses. Thus, it is the sensible, atmospheric quality of the original text on which the flow of mind can be embarked that should be passed on to the translated. Therefore, as the translator of these poems, I am in a process of achieving preserving the subtle, dreamy, nostalgic and any other atmospheres that the original text contains.

Secondly, author being his own translator often creates a dilemma, and the final product of the translated is neither a new work nor the same work as the original. But what

I've learnt, is that translating is a process of visualizing. On one hand, the language of Chinese characters is a visual landscape on its own, and when it is translated to alphabetic words, the elements that construct the visuals which hide inside words changes from strokes to alphabets, thus the dynamics of visualization has changed; on the other hand, the process of translating between any two languages involves cultural visualization and redefining visual, cultural connotations, and this is the magic touch that balances what's lost and what's created in translation.

## **2. Touching My Own Feelings --- Aesthetic Accounts Of Penjing and Its Implication On The Artistic Practice**

### **i. On the naturalness of materiality:**

Every detail of a *penjing* matters for its aesthetics. A *penjing* is valued by its naturalness and the uniqueness of its shape -- are the roots buried or lifted, are trunks straight or twisted? Do branches point upwards or downwards? What is the texture and colour of the leaves? How long is the flowering season and how much nutrition is needed for making fruits. What are the textures, shapes and colours of the rocks? The key aesthetics of *penjing*, based on scholar Zhao Qingquan, is its naturalness (Zhao, 16)<sup>44</sup>. However, I consider it quite confusing to say so, since the process of caring for a *penjing* is a process of restrain and control. It is true that the seeds, plants, soil are taken from nature, and the naturalness is their nature. Can the seeds, plants and soil in any way not be natural? What does the naturalness mean in this context, I wonder. After closer observation of *penjing* during four seasons, I found that maybe "nurtured naturalness" (with a strong gesture of imitation of nature) was what the author really meant, that by taking care of a piece of nature throughout the year, the naturalness of the *penjing* could render the caretaker of *penjing* and his surroundings a peaceful atmosphere.

Artistic Practice: The miniature landscape installation will apply natural materials such as plants, rocks and soils, and these will be the basic elements of the experiments. I choose to keep the material as organic and natural as traditional *penjing*, because I consider the naturalness the essence of the materiality of *penjing* as a piece of artwork. Using fake plants and other industrial materials could be a possible alternative, but they would fail to show the changes of life through time. The beauty resides in the change and imperfection of life where sentiments are born. Naturalness also means impermanence and ever-changing -- from nothingness to substance, from blooming to dying, from the

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<sup>44</sup> Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 16.

sensible present to the dreamy past, to an airy future, thoughts are coloured with a mixture of joy and sorrow, nostalgia, wabi-sabi.

ii. On a balanced composition -- eight pairs of oppositions:

Based on previous *penjing* scholars, a masterpiece of *penjing* would create harmony after balancing the following eight pairs of elements: dominance and subordination; emptiness and substance; denseness and sparseness; roughness and meticulousness; firmness and gentleness, entirety and individuality, lightness and heaviness, and emotions and image. The following images are examples of *penjing* that applies these eight pairs of relations (Fig. 29 – Fig. 36).



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Fig. 29 – Fig. 32. Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 84.

Fig. 29 Enjoying Nature. Dominance and Subordination.

Fig. 30 Spring. Denseness and Sparseness.

Fig. 31. Inquiring of the Moon. Emptiness and Substance



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36<sup>46</sup>

Behind such aesthetics of the composition of *penjing* was the Daoist philosophy of yin and yang, the idea of a harmonious coexistence between two opposite elements. The relationship between one pair of the eight -- emotion and visual image, however, is not quite of opposition but compensation. As shown above in Fig. 36, the scene portrayed in this water and land *penjing* was created based on a Tang poem, in which the poet depicted a lonesome, worried man standing on his balcony and staring at a misty forest in the distance. The bare branches, standing still, spoke no words but the loneliness of the man.

Artist Practice: Visually *penjing* is aimed to represent natural sceneries in a small scale. However, a *penjing* is considered the best when it's created not only from what the

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Fig. 32. Two Dragons over a Valley. Firmness and gentleness.

<sup>46</sup> Fig. 33 – Fig. 36. Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 85.

Fig. 33. Gorges. Roughness and Meticulousness

Fig. 34. Sailing out the Gorge. Entirety and Individuality.

Fig. 35. Camels and the Sea. Heaviness and Lightness.

Fig. 36. Forest In the Distance. Emotion and Visual Image.

artist sees with his eyes, but from what he feels with his heart (Zhao, 84)<sup>47</sup>. For a poet, he writes what he sees with his eyes, what he feels with his senses and his heart. Therefore, when a poem is adapted into a landscape *penjing*, every detail in the visual composition of such *penjing* will become a component that carries and delivers the mood and feelings that reside in the poem. Some poems are airy and some are grounded, the process of writing poetry is a journey of searching for the balance between lightness and heaviness, between being and non-being, between substance and nothingness. In the installation, audiences may still find traces of the artist balancing different opponents -- something that can be found in traditional *penjing*, but since it is an experimental work, the audience may also find dramas and even failures of trying to achieve harmony, plus that the writings which the installations are based on contain something far away from a peaceful natural scenery.

iii. On the poetics of a symbolic image:

The literates often see reflections of themselves in elements from nature. A rock, for example, symbolizes eternity, while water suggests intelligence and fortune. Trees are thought to reveal human characters -- some are valued as sages while some are of virtue and some as scholars. The poetics of *penjing*, according to scholar Zhao Qingquan, are embedded in its symbolism and the unity of boldness and restraint in its visual scenery (Zhao, 27)<sup>48</sup>. Throughout the history of *penjing*, its poetics is mainly discovered from its visual image. However, there are more poetics hidden in the stillness and quietness of the atmosphere in which *penjing* resides, in the unspoken feelings and emotions of the artists and audiences of *penjing*. In the artistic experiment part of my thesis, I am exploring these two parts of the hidden poetics, by including audio of poetry with ambient sound and a printed version of the poems in addition to the visuals from the installation. Often after potting and trimming, a *penjing* is given a short name that reveals a little details, such as the location where the artist is imagining while working on it, and this short name may be the only place where feelings and emotions are expressed. (sometimes the feelings are hidden in the words that are chosen in the name of *penjing* because of the inexplicitness of Chinese and Japanese language).

The symbolism of plants and flowers is not an unfamiliar topic in the history of art and architecture. The social, cultural and religious meanings of certain plants in paintings

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<sup>47</sup> Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 84.

<sup>48</sup> Zhao. Qingquan. *Penjing: The Chinese Art of Bonsai*. Better Link Press. 2012. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. P. 27.

and sculpture often offer important information as one tries to understand such artwork. For *penjing*, the symbolism from the type and the shape of the plants is even stronger than in other forms of art, because *penjing* remind rather abstract, non-figurative. In the process of making the installations, why for example, does the poet choose landscape of island to “translate” the language of senses and memory? Why a garden landscape for dreams and home? Why a dead bamboo and a dried olive here, a piece of wood and a puddle of water there?

#### Artistic Practice: Highlight on the building process

Hand-building ceramics: The ceramic trays, or slabs, are made by throwing sheets of clay onto the ground, dried and high fired at 1240 Celsius degree inside electric kiln. I want to use the most simply and primary act to make the base for the miniature landscapes. Ceramic slabs are rather fragile material, but it's one of the earthiest material humans made the very first pieces of art with. After firing, the spirit of nature is melted and saved inside the hardened clay. I consider this process of making slabs an important part of the poetics of what the slabs hold inside of them. The repetition of throwing a sheet of clay on the ground and picking it up with my hand, throwing it again and again is a meditative process that empties the mind and let the mind wanders and daydreams in the vast space of elsewhere.

The making of visual and audio parts:

Besides ceramics, I choose to use living and dead plants, dried flowers, soil, rocks, grains, seeds, wood, glass, cotton and rusted iron pieces from old equipment for horses. This is a rather random choice, though the placing of each item is precisely planned. The audiences may make different associations with these materials, while in the headphone, a soundscape made of poetry reading and background sound track is narrating, leading their imagination to a dreamy place. The visual and the audio together, create an atmospheric space for the viewers to open their sense, to wander, to sink in and to explore their own memories of time and place, of dreams and home. The process of putting all the materials and the process of editing the sound resonate with the process of writing poems. They are all processes of creating and connecting fragmentations, fragmentations of language, of sound and of images. <sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Fig. 37- Fig. 47. Documentation of Installation Work: The Poetics Of Miniature Landscape in group exhibition TILA 2.

Fig. 38. Fig. 39. Details of installation You&light.

Fig. 40. Fig. 41. Details of installation Sense&memory.

Fig. 42. Fig. 43. Details of installation Time&places.





Fig. 37

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Fig. 44. Fig. 45. Details of installation Dreams&home.  
Fig. 46. Fig. 47. Details of installation Fears&saffron.



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47

### 3. Why It Is Important To Include Miniature Landscape In Contemporary Art?

#### Why Poetics?

The art of *Penjing* and *Bonsai* in China and Japan are considered to be a part of gardening practice, and their techniques and forms stick strictly to the tradition. The ways *penjing* and *bonsai* were represented have not changed much for centuries, and the audiences who have seen them are often impressed more by their unusual shapes than their symbolisms and poetics. Though the trees themselves are from nature where poetics lies upon -- therefore, to appreciate their unusual shapes is to appreciate their visual poetics, it is also important to look for what's behind the visible. This does not mean that one needs to read poetry in order to understand the subtlety of miniature landscape, even poetry may be the "something extra" that helps the audience merge with the miniature landscape. It does mean, that while one is observing the visual elements of *penjing* or *bonsai*, it is beneficial to put oneself into the mode of a wanderer, of a daydreamer, so that imagination can take place and let oneself see those that are behind the visible. As for the artist, who can do almost anything with miniature landscape (and of course they are not obligated to change the way how the public sees miniature landscape), one thing they can do is to experiment on the way how miniature landscapes can be built and represented, and to show a real, less perfect human-nature relationship through a *penjing*-in-process, failed or dead *penjing*, instead of a perfect looking final product of miniature landscape.

Some contemporary artists have already made bold gestures using *bonsai* or miniature landscape in their works, creating new phenomenon and giving new means to *penjing* and *bonsai*. *Frozen Pine* by Japanese artist Makoto Azuma, for example, challenges the idealistic, traditional way of arranging and seeing a *bonsai* tree. "Alter Nature: We Can" -- as his exhibition title suggests, the artist is trying to communicate how humans manipulate, distort, displace and design nature (modernmet)<sup>50</sup>. Jailed in a glass box, or shaped by a frame, the frozen pine (the *shiki*) is not any more a natural tree, but a spectacle. Behind the spectacle is the subtle relationship between nature and us. In traditional practice of *penjing* and *bonsai*, the core aesthetics is based on the concept "from nature and higher than nature". As controversial as such aesthetics sounds, Azuma's representations of nature receive voices of high appreciation, as well as feedbacks of negative critics.

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<sup>50</sup> Mymodernmet. Frozen&amp: Suspended Bonsai Tree Sculpture. Nov. 17. 2011. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. <https://mymodernmet.com/extraordinary-bonsai-tree-sculptures/>



Fig. 37 <sup>51</sup>

Another example of contemporary miniature landscape is tree sculptures made by Cuban artist Jorge Mayet. His works touch on the mysterious bond between memory and miniature landscapes, which don't have the background of the traditions of *penjing* or *bonsai*, but they certainly contain the poetics of such places of "elsewhere" between the real and the imagined landscape. Mayet's works originate from his own memories of the natural landscape that surrounds him, personal and emotional. The artist says the works are nourished by experiences from his homeland Cuba, where nature is a made-up reality, romanticized and mythicized in public representations. However, the messages behind the visuals of his works express the essential qualities of our collective contemporary reality.

Mayet and Azuma have challenged the way nature is represented to the public in contemporary art scenes, and their gestures make the audiences contemplate on the relationship between us and nature, between landscape of our reality and landscapes born from memories and imaginations.

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<sup>51</sup> Makoto Azuma. Frozen Pine. Shiki I. 2011. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. <http://azumamakoto.com>





Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40<sup>52</sup>

Miniature landscape is one of the earliest multi-media art forms. As it is often categorized into gardening art as something to please the eyes (or architecture modelling for the practical reason of downsizing a massive construction complex), its ability to pass on an important, poetic message is hidden. It is important to not only just restore its

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<sup>52</sup> Fig. 39. Mayet. Jorge. Tornado de mis raíces. 100 x 60 x 60 cm. 2010. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. <https://richardtaittinger.com/artist/jorge-mayet/>

Fig. 40. Mayet. Jorge. Hanging Tree Sculptures. 2008 – 2009. Ruitong Zhao: The Thesis. Helsinki: ViCCA, 2018. <https://richardtaittinger.com/artist/jorge-mayet/>

symbolic, poetic attribute in its original tradition, but also to update such attribute with contemporary milieu -- the current situation of how man and his landscape are connected.

#### **4. Future Project:**

The research process has offered me valuable insights of miniature landscapes from history, philosophy and techniques of *penjing* practice. I find it a great method for me to learn about nature, about myself and the connection between the two. This is only a starting point of my study in this subject, and I wish to carry it on continuously and take it further. Some details of the original plan of the installations have not been accomplished due to limitations of time and place; however, they have become motivations for my future works of miniature landscape. In the next project, for example, I want to explore narrative poetry; I imagine the miniature landscape being at outdoors, within another landscape, with more elements such as water and scents; I would like to invite a group of people (poets, visual artists and anyone likes to daydream) to create a collective miniature landscape. It is important for me to see poetic expressions of myself, of another person and of a collective, because to experience large and small, one needs the “beyond logic”, one of which I believe, is poetics.

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